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High Crosses, the Sun's Course, and Local Theologies at Kells and Monasterboice

BEING made of stone, High Crosses are static objects. But the Irish ones were all originally erected out-of-doors (a few have recently been brought in from the weather).[1] When the sun shines on the High Crosses (and Ireland occasionally has sunny days), it produces shadows that move gradually but continually. This factor, though obvious, has not much figured in the literature.[2] At dawn on a good day, the sun's rays first strike the top of the east side of a monument, then swiftly illuminate the whole of the east side. Towards midday, the sun swings around to shine directly on the south side and, towards evening, the sun finally shines directly on the west side. The sun shines on the north side directly only after the spring and before the autumn equinoxes. Even then, the slanting rays of the sun strike the north side of a cross directly only early in the morning and late in the evening. Most of the day, even in summer, the north side is in shadow. Those monuments that still stand on their original sites (e.g., the two completed high crosses at Monasterboice) suggest that High Crosses were usually erected with their broad sides facing east and west. In midday sunshine, the shadow of such crosses narrows, so it appears like the shadow of a pillar. The shadow of such a monument is cross-shaped in the morning, and again gradually achieves its cross-shape towards evening. Whether consciously or unconsciously, monks or nuns in community are likely to have associated the shadow of their cross(es) with the daily *horarium* of their life in the monastery, and so to have felt their cross(es), at least in a general and informal way, to be not dissimilar to sundial-pillars.[3]

This paper enquires into the theological logic of two of the crosses at Kells, Co. Meath, and of two of those at Monasterboice, Co. Louth. It enquires how the sequences of individual panels on such crosses add up to theological statements. As part of this enquiry, the paper asks whether the designers saw the sun's daily course (and perhaps even its seasonal course) as contributing to the unity of each cross. Should we see the theological program of each cross as unfolding gradually, from morning to evening: as being dynamic rather than static?

The commissioners of two Insular High Crosses, at Bewcastle in Cumberland (Northumbria) and at Moone, Co. Kildare, seem definitely to have intended that the sun's daily course should provide a guide to the theological program of their monuments. The Bewcastle cross-shaft still stands where it has always stood (Fig. 1). As part of a panel of vine-scroll on the south side of the cross, the designers inserted a sundial. At Bewcastle, the morning sun shines directly on the great vine-scroll that covers the east side of the monument; the midday sun shines directly on the south side with its sundial; and finally the setting sun shines on the west side, which has a rich figural program. On each of three panels, there is

1. At least one Northumbrian High Cross, at Rothbury, may have been originally erected indoors: see R. N. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors* (Toronto, 1996), 9. The Northumbrian Ruthwell Cross may originally have been erected out of doors, but moved within a building (the local church?) in the ninth century; see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' Tradition* (London and Toronto, 2005), 47.

2. An exception is J. Streit, *Sun and Cross: The Development from Megalithic Culture to Early Christianity in Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1984), but this scholar does not examine the figural programs of the high crosses at all closely. For a preliminary essay on the theme, see É. Ó Carragáin, "Visual Theology within a Liturgical Context: The Visual Programmes of the Irish High Crosses," in *L'Irlanda e gli Irlandesi nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio della Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, LVII (Spoleto, 2010), 708–55, and figs. 1–41.

3. Such as the sundial-pillar that still survives at Monasterboice: see R. A. S. Macalister, *Monasterboice* (Dundalk, 1946), 69–70.

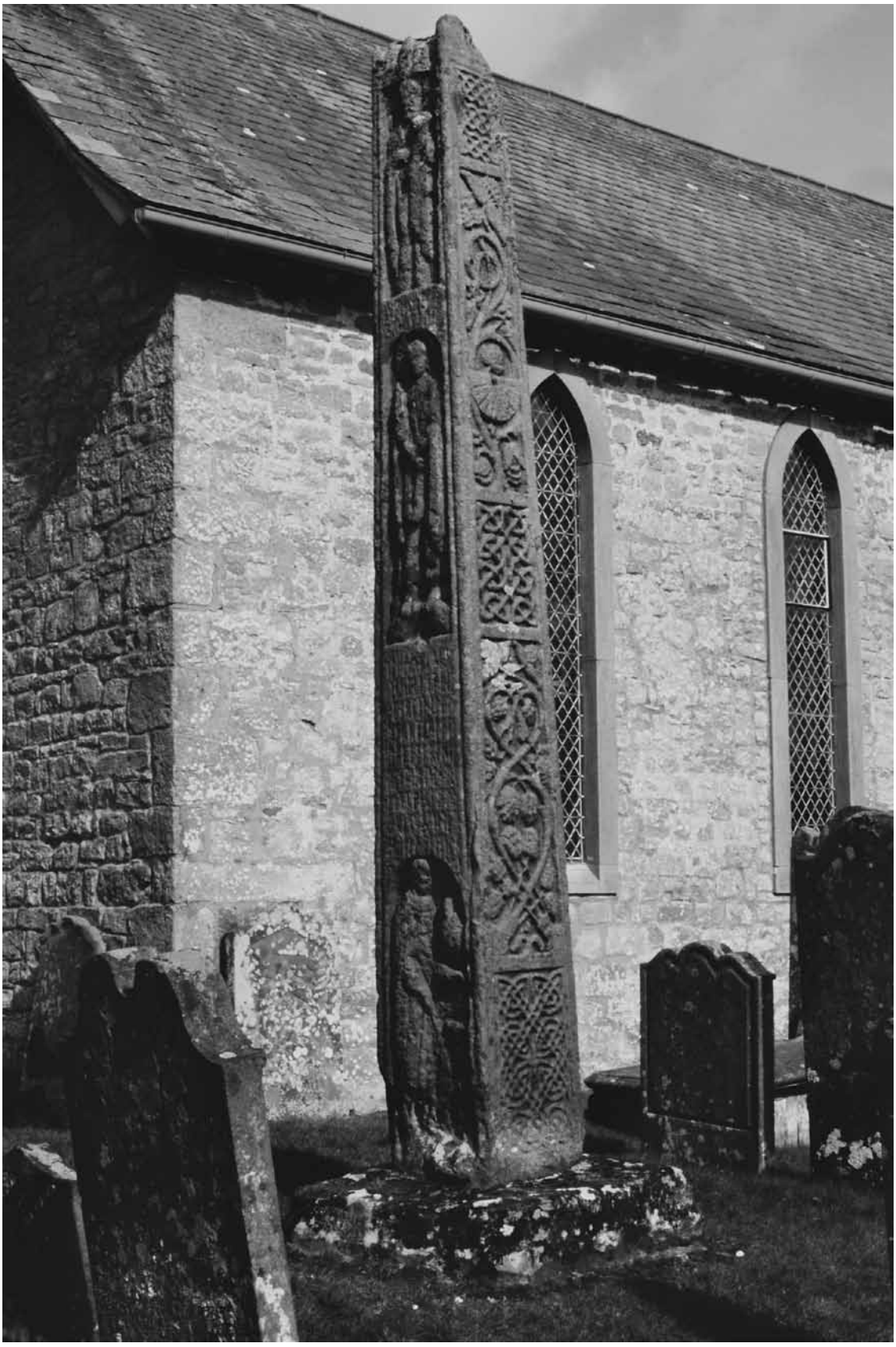


Fig. 1. The Bewcastle Cross, south and west sides (photo: Ross Trench-Jellicoe).

a standing human figure and one or more animals. Each day, at evening, the sun's course defines the west side as the climax of this sequence of three sides.[4]

This was appropriate: from earliest times, Christians prayed facing east, in expectation of Christ, whom they expected to come "as lightning cometh out of the east" (Matt. 24:27) at the Parousia, the full revelation of his majesty: then also the Cross itself, the "sign of the Son of man" (*signum filii hominis*, Matt. 24:30) was to appear in the heavens. It has long been recognized that the panel of "Christ acclaimed by the beasts" adapts the iconography of Psalm 90:13, "thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon."[5] But the Bewcastle sculptors have converted their beasts from evil to good: their inner paws (now worn by rain), still touch; it is likely that, originally, they crossed to form an "X" pattern (as they still do in a similar panel at Ruthwell).[6] If so, the crossed paws alluded to the *Chi* symbol, the initial letter of the messianic title, "Christos" (Greek for "the anointed one," or "the king"; the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title "Messiah"). The two creatures cannot be identified as asps, basilisks, lions, or dragons: they are simply living beings, animals. But in the Old Latin text of the Canticle of Habakkuk (3:1–19), the text of that canticle usually sung liturgically in Northumbria, it was prophesied of the Messiah that "between two living beings you will become known (3:2)."[7] In the Roman liturgy, there was one moment in the year when these two texts, Psalm 90 and Habakkuk 3:2–3, were sung together: as responsories after the Old Testament readings intoned at the ninth hour (about 3 p.m.) on Good Friday, at the liturgical synaxis that commemorated the death of Christ.[8] This panel, in which the beasts acknowledge Christ in the desert, seems therefore to allude also to Good Friday, when Christ's divinity and human courage were both made manifest at the Crucifixion. An ancient Christian tradition held that Christ faced west on the cross.[9] It was appropriate that allusions to chants sung at the ninth hour on Good Friday, and so to the Crucifixion, should appear on the west face of Bewcastle. In this article we shall enquire to what extent the idea that Christ faced west on the Cross helps us to appreciate the unity and dynamism of the Kells and Monasterboice High Crosses.

The Base of the High Cross at Moone

As Françoise Henry has explained, the designers of the base of the cross at Moone, Co. Kildare (Fig. 2),[10] provided a figural program that clearly was intended to unfold during the course of each day, as the sun swung from the east towards the west.[11] The program on the base is based on fundamental principles of scriptural history and typology. The beginning of human history is represented at the top of the east side of the base, where the rising sun would shine directly on it: the fall of Adam and Eve. Below that scene come, in due chronological sequence, two Old Testament scenes that stand in significant thematic contrast with it: Abraham's willing sacrifice of Isaac, and Daniel's fidelity in the lions' den. If the fall of man was a negative event in human history, the actions of Abraham, Isaac, and Daniel indicated that

4. On the Bewcastle Cross, see R. Bailey and R. Cramp, *Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands,* Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, 11 (Oxford, 1988), 61–72 and figs. 90–119.

5. All references to the Psalms are to the Vulgate numbering and text. Vulgate quotations are from R. Weber (ed.) *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem,* 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994); English translations of the Vulgate are from the Douay version (London, 1914), for its closeness to the Latin.

6. É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* (as in note 1), 204 and note 122 (on Bewcastle); 201–208 (on Ruthwell and Bewcastle).

7. Bede, *On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk,* trans. S. Connolly with an introduction by D. Scully (Dublin, 1997), 68.

8. É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* (as in note 1), 183–88.

9. See the Irish vernacular commentary on the Mass in the Stowe Missal, ed. and trans. W. Stokes and J. Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses Scholia Prose and Verse,* 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1901–1903; reprinted Dublin, 1973), 11, 252–55: par. 15, at 254: "for westwards was Christ's face on the Cross, to wit, *contra civitatem,* and eastwards was the face of Longinus; what to him was the left to Christ was the right." See also É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* (as in note 1), 160. The idea that Christ on the Cross faced "against the city" may allude to Yahweh's complaint against the faithless in Isaiah 65:2, a verse quoted by St. 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.'"

10. P. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1992), 1, 154–6; 11, figs. 508–19. I will refer to this, the indispensable reference-work on the subject, throughout the article; and I wish to thank Dr. Harbison, not only for my figs. 3–6, but for much encouragement and genial discussion.

11. F. Henry, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin, 1964), 39.



Fig. 2. Moone, base of High Cross, west (photo: Colum Hourihane).

the tragic fate of humankind could, through fidelity and courage, be reversed. On the south side of the base, we move from the Old Testament to the New: at the top of the base we find the three children in the fiery furnace, and as the base broadens we get two New Testament desert scenes: the flight into Egypt, and the five loaves and two fishes, which recall the feeding of the five thousand in the desert, the only miracle described in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13–21 and parallels). Strange stylized animals, with baton-like bodies and dogs' heads, flank the loaves. The two flanking animals hint that in the bread, and in terms of the Good Friday Habbakuk chant, Christ is here to be known "between two living creatures." [12] At the narrow top of the west side of the base, the Crucifixion is represented (Fig. 2). This image of the heroic death of Christ, the second Adam, recalls and reverses the image of the Fall of Adam and Eve on the opposite, east, side. It would seem that at Moone, as at Bewcastle, the community accepted the idea that Christ faced west on the Cross. Below the crucifixion scene, there is a stylized image of all twelve apostles, in three rows of four. The image recalled Christ's commandment to his apostles, "going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). It thus emphasized the relevance of scriptural history to the period when the cross was erected, and to places at the edge of Europe, like Ireland. [13]

Unlike the images on the other three sides, those on the north side of the Moone base are not based on scriptural history. Instead, they provide images of the first monks, Saints Paul and Anthony of Egypt: saints particularly revered at Irish monasteries as the founders of monasticism. [14] At the narrow top of the base, the saints sit to break bread that the raven, which flies rather ponderously above their heads, has brought from heaven. Below, St. Anthony is flanked by two human figures with animal heads. This triad, or "figure-of-three" tableau, visually recalls the crucifixion scene on the west side,

12. É. Ó Carragáin, "The Meeting of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony: Visual and Literary Uses of a Eucharistic Motif," in *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney,* ed. by G. Mac Niocaill and P. F. Wallace (Galway, 1988), 1–58, at 21.

13. On the importance of the "ends of the earth" theme in Insular writings, 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. by S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Collection: "Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest," 34) (Lille, 2005), 119–45; also D. Scully, "The Third Voyage of Cormac in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae:* Analogues and Context," in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin,* ed. by A. Minnis and J. Roberts (Turnhout, 2007), 209–30 (at 222–30).

14. On the Life of St. Anthony as a model for Adomnán's *Vita*

where Christ is flanked by Longinus and Stephaton (Fig. 2). We shall find that such triadic patterns are important to the design of other High Crosses, and particularly to those at Monasterboice. At the bottom of the north side of the cross, a large scene of interlaced monsters complements the tableau of the temptations of St. Anthony, just above. The north side brings the program of the cross beyond the New Testament era, into the monastic present: the eremitic way of life, which began far to the south in the Egyptian desert, now culminates at monasteries (like Moone, Kells, and Monasterboice) at the northern ends of the inhabited earth. The Moone designer sees the monastic founders as heroes who provide models for modern times. Their desert exploits visually echo, and bring closer to home, the New Testament desert scenes on the other side of the cross-base: the flight across Sinai into Egypt, and Christ's feeding of the five thousand in the desert. Furthermore, the figures at Moone of Saints Paul and Anthony, and the temptations of St. Anthony, were probably understood to be apotropaic, as turning away evil. The north, with its darkness and cold, was naturally associated with the powers of evil.[15] These monastic heroes, by facing the darkness of the north and conquering monstrous temptations, provide protection for the community. At Kells and on at least one of the Monasterboice crosses (Muiredach's cross) we will find that tableaux of Saints Paul and Anthony were associated with the north side of the monuments. Throughout Europe, anchorholds, or dwellings for enclosed ascetics, tend to be located in, or accessed from, the north side of churches, and this tendency has recently been noted in Irish anchorholds.[16]

Kells: The Market Cross

In modern times, the Market Cross at Kells (Figs. 3–6) has not stood in its original site, and we can only speculate where its original site can have been.[17] We can therefore only speculate about the original orientation of the cross. It has been moved around, and is about to be moved again. The town of Kells has just been bypassed by the M3 motorway, and it is planned to place the Market Cross once more in the main street as part of pedestrianization. I shall proceed on the hypothesis that, as at Moone, the crucifixion scene originally faced "west": to emphasize that this orientation is speculative, I place directional references to this cross between quotation marks. Speculative though it be, the theory suggests another parallel with Moone: here, as at Moone, the scene of Adam and Eve would have faced "east," and therefore would have appeared on the "first" broad side of the cross. On this cross the scenes associated with the monastic saints, Paul and Anthony, would have been associated with the "north" side, as at Moone. All four sides of the base of the Kells Market Cross are covered with secular figural sculpture. The base of the "east" side shows four horsemen, riding in procession sunwise, i.e., from right to left. Sunwise movement predominates among the figures of the four panels of the base: the only exception is the battle scene on the "south" side where, naturally enough, two groups of warriors confront each other: even on this side of the base the majority of the warriors (four out of six) advance sunwise.

(1) *The "East" Side:* The vertical sequence of four major scenes on the "east" side of the cross (that is, the three panels of the shaft with the central tableau at the crossing, directly above them) is arranged thematically, not chronologically (Fig. 3). The central scene of the crosshead, usually identified as "Daniel in the lions' den," is clearly designed so as to "prefigure" or "foreshadow" the shape of the crucifixion scene on the other side of the crosshead. The central human figure, Daniel, has his arms outstretched from the elbow, in the "orans" or prayer posture that itself looks to the Crucifixion. The four lions are arranged around the Daniel's body so as

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Columbae, see M. Herbert, *Iona Kells and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988), 130, 137, 142; also 249 (on Paul and Anthony); on Adomnán's (and Columba's) use of Jerome's *Vita Pauli,* see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* (as in note 1), 153–60.

15. B. Maurmann, *Die Himmelsrichtungen im Weltbild des Mittelalters,* Münstersche Mittelalterschriften, 33 (Munich, 1976), 135–203.

16. T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual, and Memory* (New Haven and London, 2010), 271, 281, and 291.

17. See H. Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells* (Tara, 1981), 1–9. For cautionary remarks on the possible orientation of High Crosses, see K. Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha: Eschatological Theophanies and Irish High Crosses* (Amsterdam, 1997), 126–7.



Fig. 3. Kells, Market Cross, first broad side (originally east?) (photo: Peter Harbison).

to emphasize his centrality to the scene: two lions flank his lower body, two flank his head and shoulders. Margaret Stokes correctly saw that this arrangement was designed to visually recall *Majestas Domini* images, in which Christ is surrounded by the four Evangelists.[18] Because of such visual reminiscences, Daniel is presented both as a prefiguration of Christ's Passion, and also of his second coming in glory. This central Daniel-tableau is surrounded by other scenes that encouraged a typological reading. The small transitional scene of David with his lyre on the lower arm of the crosshead reminded educated onlookers that the Psalms were the richest single

18. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 105; Roe, *Kells* (as in note 17), 30.

Old Testament source for images of Christ's life and Passion.[19] Abraham sacrifices Isaac on the left ("southern") arm of the crosshead, and the Roman canon of the Mass (as found, for example, in the Stowe Missal), compares the Eucharistic offerings to "munera pueri tui iusti abel et sacrificium patriarche nostri abrache," the offerings of your just servant Abel and the sacrifice of our father Abraham.[20] At the top of the shaft, the fall of Adam and Eve (left side of panel) and Cain's murder of Abel (right side) stand in clear thematic contrast with the Daniel image at the crossing. The sin of Adam and Eve brought death into the world, while Abel prefigured Christ in two ways: by offering God an acceptable sacrifice (Genesis 4:4–5), and by his death, which was motivated by Cain's jealousy when his own sacrifice was rejected (Genesis 4:8). There is a close unity between the Adam/Cain diptych at the top of the shaft, and the crosshead just above it.

The lower two panels on this side of the shaft are also profoundly unified. At the foot, above a narrow panel of spiral decoration (suggesting, perhaps, the depths of the earth or of the sea?),[21] a panel vividly dramatizes the moment of Christ's Resurrection, one of four analogous scenes on Irish High Crosses.[22] Christ still lies in the tomb. His feet and body are visible, but damage to the right of the shaft has eliminated his head. The tomb is still covered by a heavy slab of stone, represented as a thick bar above the body of Christ. Above the slab of stone, two seated soldiers slump in sleep: their bodies bend forward so much that the tops of their helmets almost, but do not quite, touch. By emphasizing that the soldiers sleep, the designer of the panel (or of the original model which the sculptors of the three surviving Irish scenes each adapted to their own purpose) may have been thinking of Psalm 75:6–7:

> All the foolish of heart were troubled.
>
> They have slept their sleep (*dormierunt somnum suum*): and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.
>
> At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they have all slumbered that mounted on horseback (*dormitaverunt qui ascenderunt equos*).

Early medieval Psalters equipped with *tituli Psalmorum* and Psalter-collects regularly encouraged monastic singers to see Psalm 75 as referring to the Resurrection.[23]

In the panel, the moment when the angel descends to roll back the stone at the entrance to the sepulchre (Matt. 28:2) has not yet come, but it is just about to happen: between the bodies of the sleeping soldiers a tall Latin cross, long-stemmed like a processional cross, stretches down almost (but not quite) to the slab over the tomb. On either side of the transom and head of the tall cross, and between the sloping spears of the sleeping soldiers, two small figures, presumably angels, sustain the cross in its upright position. To their right, there is a slightly larger winged figure: presumably the angel whom the three Marys will find sitting on the tomb when they arrive on Easter Sunday Morning (Matt. 28:2). It is clear that the sculptor has tried to represent precisely the "mysterious moment of Resurrection" in which Christ, who still sleeps in death, is just about to rise in victory. Helen Roe convincingly saw the cross in this scene as a "symbol of the Resurrection."[24] She also made the important suggestion that the slender cross, here and at Monasterboice, "may be derived, I consider, from the account of

19. M.-J. Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (III^e–V^e siècles)*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 219–20, 2 vols. (Rome, 1982–5).

20. *The Stowe Missal,* edited by G. F. Warner, 2 vols., Henry Bradshaw Society xxxi and xxxii (1906–15), reprinted in one vol., 1989, Part ii, 13.

21. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), i, 105.

22. On all four scenes, see Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 286–7; and R. Stalley, "European Art and the Irish High Crosses," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy,* Section c, 90 (1990), 135–58 (at 149–53). The scene on the Tall Cross at Monasterboice is examined below; on Durrow, see Harbison, *High Crosses*, i, 81 and ii, figs. 254–55. On Clonmacnois, see Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), i, 51 and ii, fig. 139; and A. M. Luiselli Fadda, "The Mysterious Moment of Resurrection in Early Anglo-Saxon and Irish Iconography," in Minnis and Roberts, *Text, Image, Interpretation* (as in note 13), 149–68.

23. See the *Tituli* and Psalter collects edited by F. M. Arocena and J. A. Goňi, *Psalterium Liturgicum: Psalterium Crescit cum Psallente Ecclesia,* 2 vols. (Rome: Vatican, 2005), i, 236–7. Of 23 texts edited there, at least 10 refer to the Resurrection: it is clear that the Psalm was regularly sung on Holy Saturday and on Easter Sunday. It was also sung in celebration of Christ's baptism (at least 2 of the texts), a tradition that, as we shall see, is relevant to the context of the analogue to this panel on the west side of the Tall Cross at Monasterboice.

24. Roe, *Kells* (as in note 17), 28.

the Resurrection in the Apocryphal Gospel of Peter, where it is related that, at the moment of the Resurrection, a great cross reaching to the skies appeared from the tomb."[25] The suggestion was brilliant, though not quite accurate. It is worthwhile looking again at the Gospel of Peter:

> 9. 34. Early in the morning, when the Sabbath dawned, there came a crowd from Jerusalem and the country round about to see the sealed sepulchre. 35. Now in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers were keeping guard, two by two in each watch, there was a loud voice in heaven, (36) and they saw the heavens open [cf. Matt. 3:16f. and parallels] and two men come down from there in a great brightness and draw near to the sepulchre. 37. That stone which had been laid against the entrance to the sepulchre started of itself to roll and move sidewards, and the sepulchre was opened and both young men entered [cf. Matt. 28:1 ff.].
>
> 10. 38. When those soldiers saw this, they awakened the centurion and the elders, for they also were there to mount guard. 39. And while they were narrating what they had seen, they saw three men come out from the sepulchre, two of them supporting the other and a cross following them (40) and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was being led reached beyond the heavens. 41. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying, 'Have you preached to those who sleep?' [cf. I Peter 3:19], 42. And from the cross there was heard the answer, 'Yes.'[26]

The Kells and Monasterboice panels do not simply translate the Gospel of Peter into visual terms. In the apocryphal gospel, two angels come down from heaven, enter the sepulchre when the stone has rolled itself back, and come forth from the tomb in a triad of figures: Christ at the center, sustained on each side by an angel. The triadic *sustentatio*-tableau was important in royal and imperial processions, and subsequently in Christian liturgical ceremonies. The Gospel of Peter triad expresses Christ's divinity by placing him at the center, and by insisting that, while the heads of the angels reached to heaven, Christ's head reached beyond the heavens. His divinity makes him, in St. Ambrose's memorable phrase, *gemine gigas substantiae*, "a giant of twin substance," at once human and divine:[27] In the gospel, the cross has some human characteristics: (a) it can move around by itself, and (b) it not merely speaks, but speaks for the silent Christ. It was Christ who, in the first epistle of Peter, "preached to those spirits that were in prison" (I Peter 3:19) after his death, so that "for this cause was the gospel preached also to the dead" (I Peter 4:6). But in the Gospel of Peter it is the cross which, when asked by a voice from the heavens, answers that it has done so.[28] In short, the cross is here, as Helen Roe suggested, a symbol of Christ: a sign of Resurrection.

To form a single coherent image, the Kells panel telescopes successive elements of the apocryphal narrative. Here, as in the apocryphal gospel, we have a visual triad: but the two angels sustain, not Christ (who still lies in the tomb) but the cross, the symbol of the victory Christ is at this very moment about to achieve. The juxtaposition of the cross and the still-entombed body places a, characteristically Irish, emphasis on the grave. The idea that the grave of a founder-saint was his "place of resurrection" (*locus resurrectionis*), like Christ's grave in Jerusalem, was a major motif in Irish hagiography.[29] It has recently been shown that the motif deeply influenced Irish monastic topography and architecture.[30] An

25. Roe, *Kells* (as in note 17), who refers to *The Apocryphal New Testament,* ed. by M. R. James (Oxford, 1924), 92–3.

26. *The Apocryphal New Testament,* trans. by J. K. Elliott (Oxford, 1993), 156–7; for the Greek text, see *Los Evangelios Apócrifos,* ed. by A. de Santos Otero, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (Madrid, 1999), 383–4.

27. Ambrose, Advent hymn "Intende qui regis Israel," also known, from the *incipit* of its second stanza, as "Veni Redemptor gentium," Strophe five. *Early Latin Hymns*, ed. by A. S. Walpole (Cambridge, 1922), No. 6, 50–7; for commentary, see *Ambroise de Milan, Hymnes*, ed. by J. Fontaine and J.-L. Charlot (Paris, 1992), No. 5, 263–310 (at 291). On the *sustentatio*-tableau in ceremony and ritual, see 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), 398–436 (at 413–24).

28. For a discussion of this passage, see J. D. Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (Eugene, Ore., 2008), 335–93.

29. H. Lutterbach, "Der *Locus Resurrectionis*—Ziel der irischen Peregrini. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Eschatologie im frühen Mittelalter," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, 89 (1994), 26-46.

30. T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches* (as in note 16), 73.

Irish monastery owed part, at least, of its sacredness to the fact that it encompassed the *locus resurrectionis* of its founder, and so of its community, gathered with him to share in Christ's victory.

The Gospel of Peter, especially in the question "have you preached to those who sleep?" and in the affirmative answer of the Cross, directs our attention to Christ's descent into Hell. At Kells, just above the panel under discussion there is a panel showing an armed male figure: his giant body spans the panel from top to bottom; he is armed for battle, with spear and shield. At first glance, a modern onlooker might think he is walking from left to right, but his upper body and head face the onlooker frontally. The sculptor, in order to emphasize that this warrior is advancing directly towards us, has placed his right leg ahead of his left. In his advance, the warrior was originally flanked by twelve smaller figures, also armed with shields: six, in three rows of two, on either side of the central figure (damage to the right of the panel has deprived us of two of these flanking warriors). They all face towards, and gaze wide-eyed upon, the advancing central figure. 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.[31] In her discussion of this panel, Helen Roe refers, convincingly, to Psalm 23:7–8:[32]

> Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in (*introibit rex gloriae*).
>
> Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle (*Dominus fortis et potens Dominus potens in proelio*).

In the course of the liturgical year, Psalm 23, or antiphons from it, was used in a number of different contexts.[33] Three contexts were particularly important: each of them involved one or more *adventūs.* The first was the Incarnation, when Christ entered the Virgin's womb to take on human nature. In Christ, divinity and humanity would henceforth be indissolubly united in "one flesh" (cf. Gen. 2:24), and Mary's womb would therefore be the "bridal chamber [*thalamus*]" from which, at the Nativity, Christ would merge rejoicing, like a giant, to run his way (Psalm 18:6, discussed below). The Incarnation was celebrated above all before Christmas, during the Advent season. The Passion and Resurrection involved two *adventūs.* The first of these was the entry into Jerusalem, celebrated on the Sunday before Easter ("Palm Sunday"). In their accounts of the Entry into Jerusalem, all four gospels had quoted the triumphal *adventus*-poem, Psalm 117 (verse 26: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"): this psalm naturally figured prominently in all Palm Sunday liturgies.[34] The second *adventus* of this week, the descent into Hell, was commemorated on Holy Saturday and during the Easter Vigil: we shall see how important was Psalm 23 in the ways this event was imagined. Christ completed his life on earth with another *adventus,* his triumphant return to heaven: on Ascension Thursday, the *adventus*-images of Psalms 18 and 117 were again used to celebrate this.[35] This pattern of triumphal *adventūs* would be completed in future time, with Christ's return in glory at the Parousia, the second coming: thus it was natural to see the *adventus*-images of Psalms 18, 24 and 117 as always having an eschatological dimension.

Early medieval readers and liturgical singers saw the various *adventus*-psalms as related, and as referring to the successive *adventūs* in which Christ's heroic achievement was realized. Psalm 18 made it clear that Christ's expedition encompassed all languages and peoples (verses 4–5): it was natural, therefore, to see the psalm as referring to

31. On the *Adventus* motif, see P. Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, Adventus Christi: recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive* (Paris, 1994).

32. Roe, *Kells,* (as in note 17), 30.

33. A good perspective on the different contexts can be obtained by reading through the 29 psalm-*tituli* and psalm-collects edited by Arocena and Goňi, *Psalterium Liturgicum* (as in note 23), 74–73. On the uses of Psalm 23, see also Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha* (as in note 17), 90–94.

34. Matthew 21:9, 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35 and 19:38; John 12:13. For the contexts within which Psalm 117 was used, and the ways it was interpreted, in the early Middle Ages, see the 62 psalter-*tituli* and collects edited in Arocena and Goňi, *Psalterium Liturgicum* (as in note 23), 380–84.

35. For psalter-*tituli* for Psalm 18 that refer to the Ascension, see Arocena and Goňi, *Psalterium Liturgicum* (as in note 23), 56–9, nos. 349, 352, 354, 378, 380-81. For similar references in the *tituli* and collects for Psalm 117, see *idem*, 380–84, nos. 2252, 2356, 2578, 2580.

the preaching of the apostles who, with the aid of their successors like Saints Patrick and Columba, had brought the gospel to the ends of the earth.[36] Verses 6–7 not only referred to Yahweh as a giant, but saw his actions as having the cosmic scope of the sun's daily course:

> He hath set his tabernacle in the sun: and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber,
>
> Hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way (*exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam suam*).
>
> His going out is from the end of heaven,
>
> And his circuit even to the end thereof: and there is no one that can hide himself from his heat.

We have seen that both the Gospel of Peter and St. Ambrose used images of gigantic stature to refer to the hypostasis in Christ of divine and human natures.

Any conscientious monk or nun at Kells, who regularly recited the Psalter, would have immediately understood this panel in terms of the *adventus*-psalms (in particular Psalms 18 and 23): the Resurrection implied the Harrowing of Hell, victory over the powers of darkness, the bringing of the gospel to all nations, and Christ's return in Judgement. The twelve attendant warriors of the panel probably refer, like those at Moone (Fig. 2), to the mission of the apostles. Scholars, in their concern to find a single "subject" for it, have hitherto read the panel too literally. I would suggest that any one of several phrases from Psalms 23 and 18 would provide a better, because more flexible, caption for the panel: for example, *Dominus potens in proelio* or *Exultavit ut gigas*. Such captions would not exclude the possibility that the designer intended references to such heroic Old Testament figures as, for example, David (author of the Psalms) or Joshua (Christ's namesake, who made the triumphant *adventus* across the Jordan into the Promised Land). But the designer and original audience would have valued such heroic leaders primarily as prefigurations (like Abraham, or like Daniel in the lions' den) of Christ's victory. The account of Christ's descent into Hell in the *Acts of Pilate* (the Gospel of Nicodemus) is basically a *midrash* (a meditation and explication, by means of narrative) on Psalm 23 and what it implied. A short quotation, from a much longer narrative suffused with reminiscences of Psalm 23 and related texts, suffices to make the point:

> And again there came a great voice as of thunder saying, "Lift up your gates, princes, and be lifted up, you gates of Hades, and the King of Glory shall come in." And Hades, seeing that the voice had twice cried, said as if not knowing, "Who is the King of Glory?" And David answered and said to Hades, "I recognize the words of this cry, for I prophesied the same through his spirit. And now, as I said before, I say to you, "It is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, he is the King of Glory."[37]

Narrative accounts of Christ's descent into Hell, such as the *Acts of Pilate,* make clear the intimate connection between the giant advancing warrior at Kells and the representation of Christ's *locus resurrectionis* just below, with its glorified Cross held by angels:

> Then all the saints, worshipping him, cried out saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" [...] Then all the saints of God asked the Lord to leave as a sign of victory the sign of his holy cross in the underworld that its most impious officers might not retain as an offender any one whom the Lord had absolved. And so it was done. And the Lord set his cross in the midst of Hades and it is the sign of victory which will remain to eternity.[38]

The visual transition at Kells between Christ's *locus resurrectionis,* the glorified cross sustained by angels, and Christ's heroic *adventus,* creates a convincing two-panel metaphor for the Resurrection and what it implied (including its eschatological dimensions).

(11) *The "South" Side:* The large panel on the base representing a battle-scene visually echoes another scene of strife: the panel at the end of the "south" arm, where David defeats the lion (Fig. 4). David faces west, as do most of the figures in the battle-scene on the base. The panel at the foot of the shaft shows a male figure spearing a deer: either a hunting scene or, as Peter Harbison has suggested (in personal comments and in the present

36. The 39 psalm-*tituli* and psalter-collects edited in Arocena and Goñi, *Psalterium Liturgicum* (as in note 23), 56–7 and 59, give a good impression of the range of the early medieval interpretations of Psalm 18.

37. *Acts of Pilate* (Latin A), Sec. 5 (21), par. 3, trans. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1999), 193.

38. *Acts of Pilate* (Latin B), Sec. 9(25), par. 2 and 10(26) par. 1, trans. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1999), 203; for the Latin text, see de Santos Otero, *Los Evangelios Apócrifos* (as in note 26), 463–4.



Fig. 4. Kells, Market Cross, first narrow side (originally south?) (photo: Peter Harbison).

volume), a scene inspired by the motifs, found on Late Roman and Byzantine diptychs, of games in the circus. Three scenes from the Old Testament complete the side: as identified by Harbison, they come in chronological order, reading downwards from the ring: (1) Moses and the pillar of fire; (2) Samuel anoints David, and (3) the Judgment of Solomon. The scenes link David's victory over the lion at the end of the "south" arm to the secular (?) hunt at the foot of the shaft and the battle scene on the base. We shall find a similar set of scenes, but with clearer visual unity, on the "north" side of this cross.

(111) *The "West" Side:* At the crossing, the crucifixion panel brings to fulfillment the image of Daniel, surrounded by lions, on the opposite side of the cross (Fig. 5). The panel at the bottom of the shaft has been obliterated: in its place, an inscription tells how the cross was re-erected by Robert Balfe, "souveraine of the corpora-



Fig. 5. Kells, Market Cross, second broad side (originally west?) (photo: Peter Harbison).



Fig. 6. Kells, Market Cross, second narrow side (originally north?) (photo: Peter Harbison).

tion of Kells" in 1688. Above the inscription, the three surviving panels all represent miracles of Christ: reading upwards, Harbison identifies them as "suffer little children to come unto me," "the healing of the centurion's servant," and (directly below the crucifixion, as the shaft narrows towards the cross-head) "the multiplication of the loaves and fishes." The explicitly Eucharistic theme of the "multiplication" is placed just below the crucifixion, just as, on the other side of the cross, prefigurations of the crucifixion, such as the death of Abel and the sacrifice of Isaac, were placed on or near the cross-head. This panel is triadic: Christ, at the center, is flanked by two figures who receive the loaves from him. The base of the west side represents a hunting scene: again, the figures (hunter and animals) move sunwise, right to left.

(iv) *The "North" Side:* At the end of the arm, Paul and Anthony are represented breaking bread in the desert (Fig. 6). The Eucharistic symbolism of the scene is clear. Between the bodies of the standing saints the raven dives from heaven, holding a circular loaf in its beak. The saints hold their hooked staves between their bodies, so that the staves cross to form an X- or *chi*-pattern. Below the crossed staves, on the ground between the legs of the saints, there is a small chalice. The *chi*-patterned staves thus unify the bread with the chalice, visually indicating that in these Eucharistic images, and between the "living creatures" (*animalia*) Paul and Anthony, Christ is to be recognized.

The association of the "north" side with the monastic saints, Paul and Anthony, is at least as strong as it was at Moone. On the "first" (east) broad side, the temptation of St. Anthony is represented on the right-hand "north" arm (Fig. 3). In this panel, St. Anthony stands between two animal-headed demons: we have seen a similar triad at Moone. On the second ("west") broad side (Fig. 5), the central crucifixion tableau is flanked by two scenes, one at the end of each arm of the transom. It is possible that both scenes represent miracles by the Egyptian saints, though many scholars have argued that the figures to the right (on the "south" arm) may represent the defeat of Simon Magus by Saints Peter and Paul.[39] Of the two scenes, the one to the left, on the "north" arm, is more likely to represent St. Anthony. As Harbison suggests, the male figure, who seems to be warding off temptation in the form of a woman, is "probably to be identified as St Anthony because of the tau-shaped crozier which he carries."[40] If Harbison is correct, then all three sides of the "north" arm of the cross represent scenes from the lives of Saints Paul and Anthony. The harmonious Eucharistic "meeting of Saints Paul and Anthony" at the end of the transom contrasts with the neighboring scenes of temptation on each of the broad faces.

The base of the "north" side again shows a scene in which animals are being hunted, this time by a centaur with a bow and arrow. Once more, the action moves sunwise, from right to left. Between the base and the cross-head, four scenes survive on the shaft. One of them, the second from the bottom of the shaft, is badly damaged. The scenes have proven difficult for scholars to identify (the various suggestions are listed by Harbison).[41] All three of the undamaged panels visually echo the Paul and Anthony scenes on the transom. At the bottom of the shaft, the two wrestling figures bend forward towards each other, so that their struggling bodies form a *chi*-shape: their advancing legs also reinforce the pattern. The *chi*-pattern again appears in the crossed staves in the third panel from the bottom. Just under the ring of the cross-head, the "Cernunnus" figure, a horned and bearded male flanked by two animal-headed, long-tailed figures (subordinate demons?) provides a parody of the triadic temptation of St. Anthony on the "first" ("east") side of the transom. The designer has provided a series of parodic "antitypes" of the Eucharistic "meeting" of the saints at the end of the transom, while also encouraging onlookers to visually link that "meeting" to the triadic "temptations" on the broad faces.

Kells: Cross of Saints Patrick and Columba, or Cross of the Tower

(i) *The East Side:* As I have written elsewhere of this cross, I simply wish to record here some ways in which it echoes, and contrasts with, the Market Cross.[42] The

39. The various identifications of this panel are recorded by Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), i, 108.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, i, 104.

42. Ó Carragáin, "Meeting" (as in note 12), 16–20; "Visual Theology" (as in note 2), 736–40.



Fig. 7. Kells, Cross of St. Patrick and St. Columba, first (east) broad side (photo: Archaeology Department, University College, Cork).

designer of this cross clearly thought in liturgical terms. This "first" side of the crosshead contains the most spectacular and coherent set of Eucharistic images on any Irish High Cross (Fig. 7). On the upper arm, David with his harp, seated on the left (south) side, looks at Christ, seated opposite him, who distributes five loaves to the multitude: their heads form two rows of six, at the top of the scene. Just below the feet of David and Christ, two fishes are crossed to form a *chi*-pattern. They thus provide a *titulus* or caption for the scene of Christ's miracle just above; but they also act as a transitional motif for the mat with seven bosses that occupies the crossing. The seven bosses recall Christ's second Eucharistic feeding in the desert, when he fed four thousand people with seven loaves and "a few fish" (Matt. 15:32–39; Mark 8:1–10). The bosses are not, of course, realistic representations of loaves. The designer was primarily interested, not in realism, but in the numerical contrast between "five" and "seven." The feeding of the five thousand took place to the west of the Sea of Galilee, in Israelite territory, and the five loaves were associated with the way in which Christ fulfilled the Pentateuch: on the upper arm, David looks forward to the way in which the Messiah will provide sustenance for his own people. The feeding of the seven thousand took place in the Decapolis, to the east of the sea of Galilee, in non-Israelite territory; that feeding was associated with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so with the mission of the Church to provide spiritual sustenance to all peoples, even to the ends of the earth. The mat with seven bosses is flanked by two thematically relevant scenes: the sacrifice of Isaac (south arm, to the left) and the meeting of Saints Paul and Anthony (north arm, to the right). Once more, therefore, as at Moone and on the Market Cross, the monastic saints are associated with the north side of a cross. In this panel references to the Mass are particularly strong (Figs. 7 and 9). Not only does the raven dive from heaven with the circular loaf in its beak: each of the saints reaches forward to break the loaf with the arm furthest from the spectator. Each grasps his crosier with the hand nearest the spectator; while two book-satchels, hanging from their arms or perhaps from the arms of the chairs in which they sit, remind us that each Mass contained two spiritual feasts: the first, a feast of the words of Scripture (in the ceremony of readings) prepared for the second, the Eucharist itself.

The base and shaft provide a coherent prologue for the Eucharistic sequence on the crosshead. On the base there is a hunting scene which, as usual, moves sunwise, from right to left. At the bottom of the shaft a panel of delicate interlace includes cross- and *chi*-patterns. Directly above, negative scenes of death are once more, as on the Market Cross, balanced by positive scenes in which death is overcome: the diptych of "Adam and Eve" and "Cain killing Abel" are balanced by the "Three Children in the fiery furnace" and (at the top of the shaft, just under the mat and bosses) "Daniel in the lions' den." That Daniel prefigures Christ is indicated by the fact that just two lions, two *animalia,* flank his body.



Fig. 8. Kells, Cross of Saints Patrick and Columba, second (west) broad side (photo: Archaeology Department, University College, Cork).

Fig. 9. Kells, Cross of Saints Patrick and Columba, east and north sides of north arm and upper arm: Saints Paul and Anthony with book-satchels (east side of north arm); David slays the lion or bear (north end of transom); Saints with books or reliquaries (north side of crosshead) (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

(II) *The South Side:* At the end of the arm David, slaying the lion, faces toward the west; his triumph is echoed or parodied by a number of other animals or monsters on this side.

(III) *The West Side:* Each element within the unified "second" broad face of the cross was designed to fulfil the images of the "first" (east) side (Fig. 8). On the base, the chariot-procession moves sunwise, from right to left. At the foot of the shaft, the delicate interlace of the opposite side is now answered by a much bolder pattern in which two human-headed figures emphasize the *chi*-shape even more unmistakably. They thus provide a *titulus* or caption for the Crucifixion scene just above, which brings to fulfillment the Adam-Cain-Furnace-Daniel images on the opposite side. The image of an eagle, just above Christ's head, recalls the Resurrection ("thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's," Psalm 102:5) and thus provides a visual transition to the scene of the Parousia at the crossing. In this scene, the mysterious symbols of the seven bosses on the crossing of the "first" side find their fulfilment: the majestic Christ, flanked by two *animalia,*

is to be recognized in both human and in symbolic forms: above his head, a human figure (an angel?) holds aloft a mandorla in which Christ is glorified as the Agnus Dei.

(IV) *The North Side:* At the end of the transom, David once more subdues the lion and once more, as on the south arm, faces west: the designer has subordinated right-left or sunwise movement in favor of having David lean, as on the south side of the cross, towards the fulfillment of Christ's victory on the "second" broad side. On the upper arm, two robed monastic figures, seated and holding books or reliquaries, face towards the north (Fig. 9), evidently in apotropaic mode. They may, as Harbison suggests, represent the patrons to whom this "PATRICII ET COLUMBAE CRUX" was dedicated.[43] The animals or monsters over their heads visually link these saints, who hold books or reliquaries on their laps, to the founders of monasticism, Saints Paul and Anthony, sitting with their book-satchels on the north arm of the "first" broad side (Fig. 9).

Monasterboice: (A) The Tall Cross

At Monasterboice two completed crosses still stand in their original positions. Each stands immediately to the south of one of the two churches on the site.[44] The sun was important for the architects of Irish churches. Not only were they often oriented, but it has been shown that the southern windows of churches, where the original windows survive, provide reliable evidence of where, within the buildings, altars were placed.[45] Each of the two completed Monasterboice crosses stands near the south side of one of the churches on the site. The present churches date from after the millennium, and we should perhaps think of the great stone crosses as originally overshadowing wooden churches. However, hints survive in the fabric of the North Church, next to the Tall Cross and Round Tower (Figs. 10–11), to suggest that there was a pre-Romanesque church on the site.[46] In that case, there would have been a clear contrast between the explicit ideological programs of the stone crosses, and the much plainer buildings near them.

(1) *East Side:* All the panels on this side of the cross show Old Testament scenes, and all emphasize the role of kingship (Fig. 10). At the bottom of the shaft, there is a unified sequence of four scenes. It is structured as an "envelope pattern," which can be represented as an ABBA pattern: two scenes of David's heroism (A below, A1 above) frame two other great turning points in scriptural history (B below, B1 above). In the order in which each panel is placed on the cross relative to the others, the four panels represent:

A1. David with the head of Goliath; Samuel anoints David [fourth panel from base].

B1. Moses strikes water from the rock [third panel].

B. Abraham sacrifices Isaac [second panel].

A. David protects his sheep from the Lion [lowest panel].

This is the tallest Irish High Cross to survive. It is possible that the designer referred to the height of the cross in his choice of scenes. Harbison has suggested that the fifth panel from the bottom of the shaft represents Samson pulling down the house-pillar. The slender pillar, with its capital, visually echoes David's spear, with the head of Goliath on top, in the panel just below. A tottering pillar is appropriate towards the top of the shaft of this tall cross (which, fortunately, though its base is damaged, has not tottered yet). The sixth panel from the bottom of the shaft represents Elijah ascending in his chariot to heaven: again, a scene relevant to the top of a tall shaft. A small panel of interlace completes the east side of the shaft.

At the center of this "first" side of the cross-head is a magnificent scene of kingly might, which several scholars have seen as an expansion of the triumphant *adventus* on the "east" side of the Market Cross at Kells. Whether the scene represents David as King of Israel,[47] or Joshua

43. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 108 and 111. R. Stalley, "The Tower Cross at Kells" in *The Insular Tradition,* ed. by C. E. Karkov, R. T. Farrell, and M. Ryan (Albany, N.Y., 1997), 115–44 (at 133) suggests a convincing political context for this dedication: the abbacy of Máel Brigte mac Tornáin (891–927), abbot of Armagh as well as of Kells, and thus *comharba* (successor) of both St. Patrick and St. Columba.

44. See the useful plans of the site in Macalister, *Monasterboice* (as in note 3), 18, and in H. M. Roe, *Monasterboice and its Monuments* (Dundalk, 1981), 26.

45. T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches* (as in note 16), 77–78.

46. T. Ó Carragáin, pers. comm.

47. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 148. See the discussion in Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha* (as in note 17), 86–88 and 90–92,

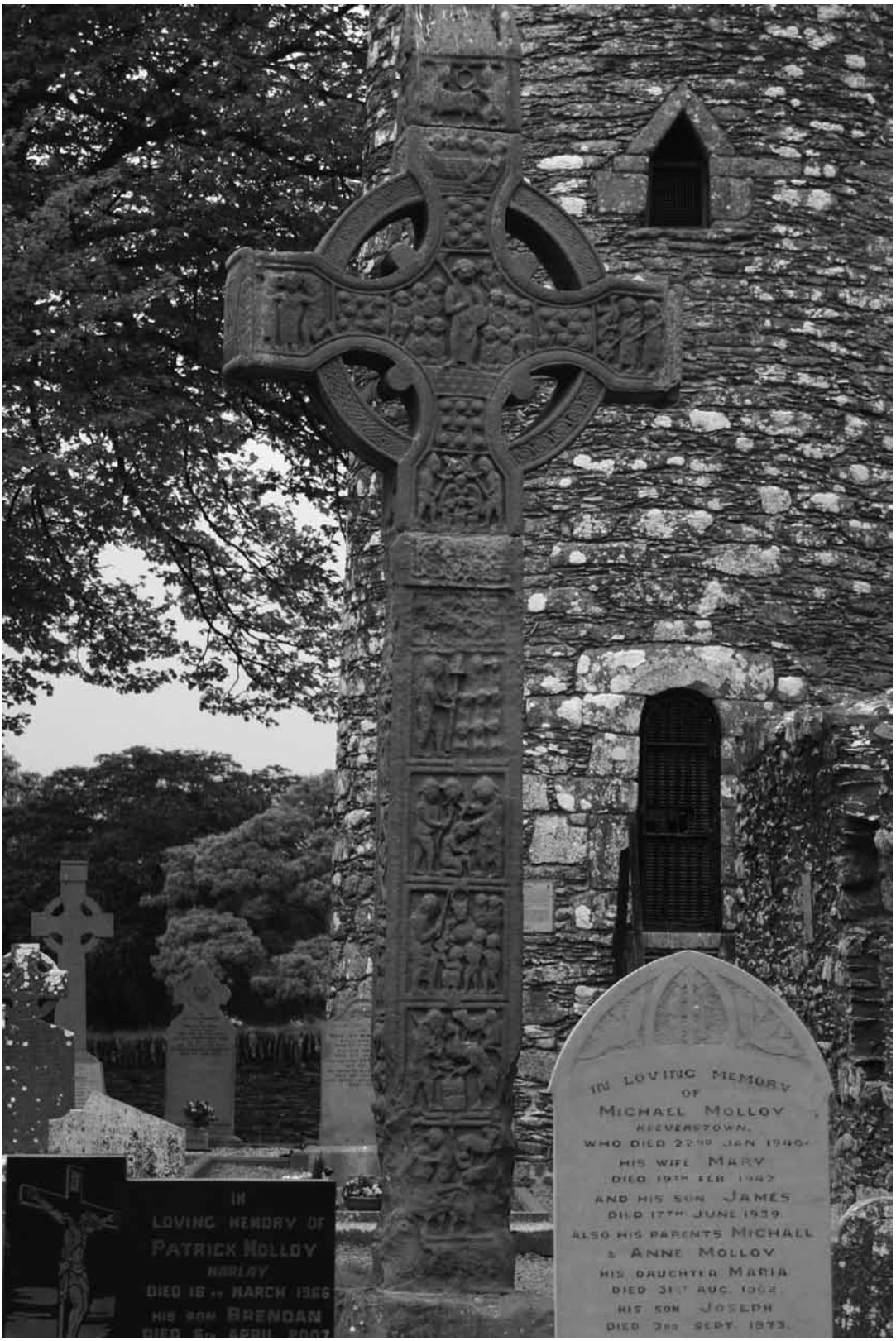


Fig. 10. Monasterboice, Tall Cross, first (east) broad side (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).



Fig. 11. Monasterboice, Tall Cross, south and west sides of the shaft (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

advancing into the Promised Land (as Dr. Harbison argues in the present volume), or is to be seen in eschatological terms, the designer of the cross-head clearly considered the scene to prefigure or even to represent Christ, because he has placed it just above a prefiguration of Christ's victory: on the lower arm of the crosshead, "the three children in the fiery furnace" acts as a transition between the shaft and the cross-head. The scene at the crossing is one of acclamation rather than *adventus:* the central warrior stands at the top of a set of three steps. He is flanked by five seated warriors on each side. A small eleventh figure floats to the right of the central warrior, while above the scene, on the upper arm, Christ saves Peter from drowning. The juxtaposition of Peter's near-drowning, the mysterious "eleventh" figure, and the ten seated warriors provides sufficient hints of the twelve apostles (of whom one, Judas, betrayed and another, Peter, denied Christ). Each arm of the transom has a scene of ecclesiastical triumph: the temptation of St. Anthony (on the left or south arm) and, on the right (north) arm, a scene which has been variously identified: either as Paul and Anthony overcoming the devil in human form, or as Peter and Paul bringing about the fall of Simon Magus.[48]

(11) *The South Side (Right Side):* Harbison has suggested that the two figural scenes on this side may represent scenes from the infancy of John the Baptist: below, Zachary and Elizabeth proceed from right to left (sunwise): Elizabeth carries a child in her arms, the infant John (Fig. 11). Above, Zachary, stricken dumb, writes the name of John on a tablet presented to him by the standing figure on the right.[49] The panel of ornament that separates the two scenes may possibly support Harbison's theory. It represents two *chi*-patterns, one above the other; as we have seen, *chi*-patterns refer to the messianic title, Christ.

who rightly emphasizes the eschatological dimensions of the scene, and its relevance to the monastic life, conceived of as *militia Christi*, "soldiering for Christ."

48. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), (Paul and Anthony); Roe, *Monasterboice,* 55 (Simon Magus).

49. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 149; Roe, *Monasterboice,* 58, saw the panels as unidentifiable.

The early medieval Church took great care to relate the birth of the Baptist to that of Christ. At the Annunciation, the archangel Gabriel tells Mary that her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, is six months with child (Luke 1:36): John the Baptist was, therefore, six months older than Jesus. If Jesus was "the light of the world" (John 1:4–5; 8:12), John "was not the light, but came to testify to the light" (John 1:8). John the Baptist himself proclaimed, of Christ, that "he must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Extrapolating from these scriptural themes, Western Christian liturgies, both Gallican and Roman, had by the sixth century constructed a symmetrical cycle, spanning the solar year at solstices and equinoxes, to celebrate Christ's Incarnation. This solar Incarnation-cycle emphasized how closely the sun's course united the conceptions and births of the two cousins, but also emphasized the uniqueness of Christ's Incarnation by placing John's conception and birth in direct contrast with it. Christ's conception (at the Annunciation) was placed at the Spring equinox in the Julian calendar, a day when the sun definitively overcame the winter darkness (VIII kalendas Apriles: 25 March, a day that for centuries had, in Christian scholarly circles, been understood to be also the anniversary of the Crucifixion). Christ's birthday or Nativity had, since the fourth century, been celebrated on the winter solstice (VIII kalendas Januarias: 25 December), when the unconquered sun began its victory over the darkness. In significant contrast, John's conception (six months before the Annunciation) was celebrated on the Autumn equinox (VIII kalendas Octobres: 24 September), when the dark night "triumphed over" (became longer than) the daytime, and his birthday or Nativity was celebrated on the Summer solstice (VIII kalendas Julias: 24 June) when the sun, at the height of its course, began to turn towards the darkness. In short, the unique Incarnation of Christ, the light of the world, was associated with the "growing days," when the sun overcame the darkness; while John "gave testimony to the light" in the sense that his conception and birth, celebrated on the "lessening days" when the darkness grew stronger, provided a yearly pledge that the unconquered sun, now lessening towards winter, would, in the coming spring, lengthen once more into fullness. Harbison's suggestion that this south side of the Tall Cross contained elements of a John the Baptist cycle provides a possible context for the panel with *chi*-symbols between the figural panels representing the birth and naming of John. Such a sequence would have been particularly appropriate on the south side of the cross, on which the sun shone directly in its daily and yearly course.

(III) *The West Side* (*Left Side*)*:* For the second broad side, the designer of the Tall Cross achieved an impressive visual, and conceptual, unity (Fig. 11). On the shaft, i.e., at the center of the visual design, there is a series of four triads or "figures of three": this fourfold sequence refers to Christ's Passion and to its aftermath (his resurrection and glorification): Harbison identifies the four triadic scenes as (reading downwards from the crosshead) the soldiers casting lots for Christ's garments; the raised Christ; *traditio clavium*; and the three holy women at the tomb. Between this central, visually unified, fourfold sequence and the base, the designer has provided a two-panel sequence, of different design from the four triadic panels. Conceptually and visually, this two-panel sequence provides a prelude or exordium for the whole program of the west side. Above the four triadic panels a narrow band of ornament (now badly worn) provides a transition to the crosshead, at the center of which is the Crucifixion. A visual variant of the triadic motif, a bird between two soldiers holding sticks aloft towards the feet of Christ, leads our eye towards the crucifixion. Another visual variant of the triadic motif, St. Peter (with sword drawn) stands between two smaller figures who hold torches or lanterns. This image recalls that of Christ saving the drowning St. Peter on the opposite side of the cross (Fig. 10), and leads our eye to the skeuomorphic church at the head of the cross where, as Harbison suggests, Pilate washes his hands.[50] In the skeuomorphic church Pilate (a ruler-figure) echoes, and brings into a New Testament context, the figure of Manasseh's repentance on the opposite side of the "church" housecap.[51]

Just above the base, the two-panel prologue or exor-

50. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 151 and fig. 863. On the figure of Pilate in early medieval Ireland, see C. Hourihane, *Pontius Pilate, Anti-Semitism, and the Passion in Early Medieval Art* (Princeton, 2009), 112–16.

51. Cf. 2 Chronicles 33:12; for this identification of the panel, see Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 148.



Fig. 12. Monasterboice, Tall Cross, west side, bottom of shaft: the baptism of Christ in the Jordan (above) and the moment of Resurrection (below) (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

dium encompasses the beginning and end of Christ's public life (Fig. 11, left side; Fig. 12). In chronological terms, it reads downwards. The second panel from the bottom represents Christ's baptism in the Jordan.[52] Each day, the sun's course, having traversed the images of the Baptist's birth and naming on the south side (Fig. 11, right side) would have prepared onlookers for this scene. 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."[53] The water of the river Jordan is emphasized: 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 center, up to his waist in water. Christ's lower position leaves space for a prominent bird, the dove of the Holy Spirit, to hover, with wings outstretched, over his head.

Just below, a panel represents the mysterious moment of resurrection. Here, as at Kells, Clonmacnois, and Durrow, the panel is placed at the bottom of the shaft: again, the panel's placing emphasizes the *locus resurrectionis* theme. Christ's head (now badly worn) seems to have lain towards the left of this panel (in contrast to Kells, but like the analogous panel at Clonmacnois). Above the grave, as at Kells, the Cross is sustained by two angels, their heads more schematized than those of their equivalents at Kells.

The two-panel exordium at the base of the shaft has an important role in the iconographic program of the Tall Cross. The birth and naming of John the Baptist on the south side had already marked the transition between the Old Testament and the New. Now, at the foot of the "second" broad side, this exordium decisively establishes that the concern of the second broad side will be the Passion and its contexts. Each panel portrays a moment when "the heavens opened," to use the words of the Gospel of Peter (quoted above). The Cross sustained by angels in the lower panel is paralleled by the hovering dove in the upper. We have moved from shadows to reality, from the prefigurative *Dominus potens in proelio* at the crossing of the "first" east side, to Christ's mission and heroic death. Christ's baptism in the Jordan was the model for all Christian baptisms: and early medieval baptismal ceremonies saw the rite as an imitation of Christ's death and resurrection.[54]

52. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 149–50, 250–52, and figs. 494 and 821.

53. Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, 150. On baptism in early medieval Ireland, see N. Whitfield, "A Suggested Function for the Holy Well?," in Minnis and Roberts, *Text, Image, Interpretation* (as in note 13), 495–514; T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches* (as in note 15), 197–208.

54. Cf. Romans 6:1–4; on this theme, see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood* (as in note 1), 139–41.



Fig. 13. Monasterboice, Tall Cross, north side, Man among monsters panel (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

(IV) *The North Side:* The tall cross now stands so close to the south wall of the north church (a later construction than the cross) that overall photographs are difficult to take.[55] The ends of both arms of this cross are decorated with fretwork. Under the ring, a winged griffin faces to the left, his head turned back towards his tail. Below the griffin comes a panel of interlace, then another quadruped. More interlace brings us to a "man among monsters" image (Fig. 13). It is triadic: two animals, each on its hind legs, reach their bodies up along the sides of standing male figure, who wears long hair and a long garment. With their doglike heads the animals bite, or perhaps snarl at, the man's ears. The central figure has been identified with Daniel in the lions' den, and with the temptations of St. Anthony. After another panel of fretwork and spiral bosses, the triadic pattern is repeated. At the center of the panel, David is seated in state, with an orb in his raised right hand and a shield in his left. A bird is perched on his left shoulder, presumably another reference to the Holy Spirit (as in the baptism panel on the west side). The triad is formed by hounds who are "shown upright and with their backs to his legs, each craning its neck backward so that their snouts meet across David's lap."[56] The hounds visually echo the animals who flank the "man among monsters" in the upper triad. As in the north side of the Moone cross-base, men and *animalia* (whether monstrous or friendly) is a major motif in this "second" narrow side.

Monasterboice: (B) Muiredach's Cross

I have written elsewhere of the structure of this monument,[57] and will confine my remarks to (a) the relevance of the sun's course to the program of the cross, and (b) the association of Paul and Anthony with the north side. Muiredach's cross has the most perfectly integrated program of all the Irish High Crosses. Its theological coherence gives it the simplicity of great art.

(I) *The "First" (East) Broad Side* spans the whole of human history, from the fall of man (Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel) to the Second Coming, while (III) *The Second (West) Broad* side concentrates on the central turning point in human history: the Crucifixion and its implications. On both broad sides, chronology is subordinated to thematic and visual unity. Thus, on the first side the designer placed Moses above, and therefore "after," David and Goliath, so as to place Moses, striking the rock, near the visually similar panel of Mary showing forth the Christ child to the wise men. The visual pairing makes the important point that "that rock [struck by Moses] was Christ" (I Cor. 10:4).[58] The second (west)

55. The ones in Harbison, *op.cit.,* II, figs 497-99, are the best available in print.

56 Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), I, 151.

57. Most recently in "Visual Theology" (as in note 2), 741–48.

58. É. Ó Carragáin, "The Ruthwell Cross and Irish High Crosses: Some Points of Comparison and Contrast," in *Ireland and Insular Art, A.D. 500–1200*, ed. by M. Ryan (Dublin, 1987), 118–28 (at 120).

side is visually unified by the use of triads. The lowest of these, beginning the program, represents the arrest and mocking of Christ as "King of the Jews." It is reasonable to object that this panel should have been placed higher, directly below the crucifixion.[59] But the designer created a thematic progression within the four triads below and above the crucifixion: from suffering (arrest and mockery, first triad) through recognition and power (second and third) to exaltation (Ascension, at the top of the west face, in the skeuomorphic housecap).

(11) *The South Side:* This has two narrative panels (Fig. 14). On the gable end of the skeuomorphic housecap, a mounted figure rides westward, towards the sunset. With his right arm, he holds out a book before his body. Two winged angels hover to left and right of his head: the angel on the right seems to hold a censer, swinging behind the horseman's back. Scholarly opinion divides between identifying the scene as Christ's entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week, and seeing the rider as one of the four horsemen of Apocalypse 6:1–6.[60] I would suggest that it is not based on a single scriptural passage, but designed to recall several. The high-stepping horse (surely no donkey) would seem to rule out a realistic representation of the Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:7–11). The presence of angels suggest that Harbison was right in seeking an apocalyptic context for the panel; but a pair of adoring angels seems more appropriate to the Messiah than to a horseman of the Apocalypse. Just above the scene, in the gable of the housetop, three large bosses are crossed with three small, in a chiastic pattern, which suggests a double reminiscence of the Trinity. The finials of the skeuomorphic church gable form a *chi*-pattern, which again suggests "*Christos*," the Messiah. The designer has exploited the visual frame provided by the skeuomorph: the concepts of "church" and "temple" are relevant to the scene. All three synoptic gospels place the cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:12–17) directly after the entry into Jerusalem. By emphasizing that the horse-rider holds a book, the designer may have wished to combine reminiscences of the *adventus*-psalms we have discussed above (Psalms 18, 23 and 117) with Malachi's urgent prophecy:



Fig. 14. Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, south side, end of transom and gable wall of skeuomorphic church housecap (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

> Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you see, and the angel of the testament whom you desire shall come to his temple [*et statim veniet ad templum suum* |

59. An objection made by Roger Stalley, "European Art" (as in note 22), 147, note 52.

60. Most scholars, including myself in previous publications, have interpreted the scene as the Entry into Jerusalem: see the list in Harbison, *High Crosses* (as in note 10), 1, p. 143. These scholars include Helen Roe, *Monasterboice and its Monuments*, 38. Peter Harbison, *High Crosses*, convincingly sees the scene as apocalyptic, and refers to Apocalypse 6:1–6 (the first horseman).

> *dominator quem vos quaeritis*]. Behold he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. And who shall be able to think of the day of his coming? And who shall stand to see him? For he is like a refining fire and like the fuller's herb. (Malachi 3:1–2)

The designer has fused the *adventus*-motif with that of the Temple. To this end, rather than simply giving a realistic representation of the "Entry into Jerusalem," he provided a symbolic image of a royal *adventus.* On this "first" narrow side, the designer juxtaposed two images of judges: above, within the housecap, the messianic horseman riding to judgement and, below, Pilate washing his hands. An onlooker proceeding around the cross sunwise, from south to west, can see that the designer provided the Pilate panel with two complementary contexts. It provides a prelude for the Passion-scenes at the same level of the west side; but at midday a shining sun encourages onlookers to relate the Pilate panel to the figural panel above it on the crosshead, and therefore to compare and contrast two rather different *dominatores* (cf. Malachi 3:1): Pilate (avoiding judgement), and Christ the judge, who once entered Jerusalem to cleanse his Temple, and who "presently [...] will come to his temple" to judge all humankind.[61]

(iv) *The North Side:* On the second narrow side we also have two figural scenes (Fig. 15). Within the gable end of the housecap-"church" Paul and Anthony break bread in the desert. The sculptors here must have had the same model as those of the Kells Market Cross, or one very like it. On the gable above the saints, the curving bodies of three living creatures emerge from the large central boss. Two of these *animalia* flank the tail of the bread-bearing raven, over the heads of the two saints. Between the bread and the Eucharistic chalice between their legs, Saints Paul and Anthony cross their staves in a *chi*-pattern, which itself echoes the *chi*-pattern of the finial at the top of the gable: in the bread and wine Christ is to be recognized. Below, at the northern end of the transom, Christ is recognized both in positive and negative senses. Three adoring angels hover over his head, but he himself sits between two standing soldiers. His hands are tied. He turns his head to the right, where the soldier seems to about to strike at his cheek with a rod. The rods which the soldiers hold, pointing towards Christ's head, form a visual parody of the *chi*-patterns in the skeuomorphic church above. This panel of the mocking of Christ supplements the Passion-scenes at the same level of the west side; but also provides an ironic reminder that the



Fig. 15. Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, north side, end of transom and gable wall of skeuomorphic church housecap (photo: Éamonn Ó Carragáin).

61. On Pilate as judge in early medieval commentary, see C. Hourihane, *Pontius Pilate* (as in note 50), 52–83.

recognition of Christ as king could, on occasion, involve mockery.

The way in which High Crosses relate to the sun's course is a factor that should be taken into account when considering how their iconographic programs were experienced in the course of the day and of the year. The question of the original orientation of crosses should not be ignored, even when we have to speculate about what that original orientation was. On four of the five Irish crosses we have examined, Paul and Anthony panels are associated with the north side or the north transom of the cross. The evidence from the fifth, the Tall Cross at Monasterboice, is ambiguous. Some panels, such as "Christ the giant" on the Market Cross at Kells and the messianic rider within the skeuomorphic "temple" on top of Muiredach's Cross, are possibly designed to recall important scriptural texts and liturgical chants, rather than to portray particular scenes or persons. There is a remarkable variety in the theological programs of the five crosses we have examined. Within that variety there appear to be some "house styles": at Monasterboice, for example, there is a particular emphasis on triadic panels. The theological coherence of the figural High Crosses, and the different theological emphases between them, merit further enquiry.