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CRUCIFIXION AS ANNUNCIATION: THE RELATION OF 'THE DREAM OF THE ROOD' TO THE LITURGY RECONSIDERED[1]

Éamonn Ó Carragáin

Although the Crucifixion is described in *The Dream of the Rood*, there are remarkably few reminiscences of the Passiontide liturgy in the poem. As H. R. Patch put it, 'the poet seems to have had little to work on for a basis, either as a source or as a guide … No hymn or piece of liturgy seems to have furnished him a model, and nothing could be more different in spirit and manner than his work and the type of hymn probably accessible to him'.[2] Rosemary Woolf agreed that 'the influence of Latin hymnody is confined to a few phrases';[3] and she developed Patch's conclusions as follows: 'whilst the poem is obviously not a Biblical paraphrase in conventional style, yet it is influenced hardly at all by Latin hymns, nor by certain antiphons of the liturgy, such as lie behind the treatment of the Crucifixion in the *Crist*'.[4] Miss Woolf went on to argue that the most important influences were not liturgical at all but doctrinal: 'the influences to be considered are, in fact, not of the kind that can be isolated in any specific text, but rather those of the religious thought of the poet's period, in particular its philosophical view of the person and nature of Christ and definition of the Redemption'. [5]

Miss Woolf s article performed an important service in shifting critical attention from the rather mechanistic search for verbal parallels for individual passages — such as is implied by Patch's expression, 'no … *piece of liturgy*' — towards deeper questions about the poem's strategy, and its relation to 'the religious thought of the poet's period'. The importance of liturgy and dogma for the poem springs precisely from the fact that for the original audience they would not have been merely collections of texts, but factors controlling devotional practice. In particular, the liturgy was for a monk (and to a lesser degree for every cleric) a way of life, which gave shape to his day, to his week and to his year.[6] Miss Woolf's article demonstrated how complex was the presentation of Christ

1 I wish to thank various scholars who read versions of this paper and offered me advice on it. in particular M. B. Parkes, C. J.E. Ball, John Braidwood, Mary Clayton, David Howlett, Duncan Macrae Gibson, Alastair Minnis, Elisabeth Okasha and Jane Roberts.

2 'Liturgical Influence in *The Dream of the Rood*'. *PMLA*, XXXIV (1919). 233–57 (p. 233).

3 'Doctrinal influences on *The Dream of the Rood*'. *Medium Aevum*. XXVII (1958) 137–53 (p. 137 note 2).

4 Woolf, *ibid*., p. 137.

5 Woolf, *loc. cit*.

6 See J. V. Fleming, *'The Dream of the Rood* and Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', *Traditio*, XXII (1966), 43–72 (this article contains cogent criticisms of Woolf's theory): on the centrality of the liturgy in monastic devotion, see D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* Cambridge. 1950), p. 451: J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York. 1961), pp. 232–49.

in the poem, and how this complexity reflects the consensus which the Church had reached by the Council of Chalcedon (A. D. 449). Nevertheless, the poem itself does not read like a conscious contribution to a theological debate. Its tone is not at all argumentative, and its complexity should rather be understood as the richness of a fully assimilated tradition which has moved beyond polemic, and in which a complex Christology is freely and unargumentatively placed at the service of devotion. *The Dream of the Rood* contains its own explanation of its crucifixion narrative. This explanation, which begins at line 78, is in devotional terms and makes no reference to Christological debates. Miss Woolf ignored this part of the Vercelli text except for a brief dismissive footnote to the final page of her article:' … that part of the poem which follows the description of the Crucifixion must surely be a later addition by a writer of the school of Cynewuir.[7] This may well be so: Kenneth Sisam has remarked that between the Ruthwell Cross (ea. A. D. 700) and the Vercelli Book (ea. A. D. 970–1000) the history of the text 'must be one of movement and change that stretches the imagination'.[8] It is indeed probably better to think not of one but of two separate though related poems: the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion Poem and the Vercelli Book poem (to which the title *The Dream of the Rood* should be confined). However, when Miss Woolf dismissed lines 78ff. of *The Dream of the Rood* as irrelevant to the concerns of the narrative part of the poem, she implied that the person who wrote these lines misunderstood, or at least was not interested in, the Christological concerns which she saw as being central to the Crucifixion narrative in both texts. She implied therefore that there was not a consistent tradition within which the theme of the related poems was interpreted in the Anglo-Saxon period, so that the concerns which inspired the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion Poem ceased to be important to the person(s) who modified that poem into the Vercelli *Dream of the Rood*.

I shall argue that there is no need to suppose any such discontinuity in the interpretation of the poems in the Anglo-Saxon period. Although it is best to consider the Ruthwell Cross and Vercelli texts as separate poems, each with its own textual and structural problems,[9] nevertheless there is a clear thematic continuity between them. The presentation of Christ in both poems is just as complex and orthodox as Miss Woolf showed it to be; however the genesis of the Ruthwell Cross poem should be sought not in Christological controversies but in the liturgical innovations of the Northumbrian Church in the early eighth century. The sort of cleric who, in the tenth century, read the Vercelli *Dream of the Rood* would also have found such liturgical concerns comprehensible and important. My method is to approach the Ruthwell and Vercelli texts as separate problems

7 Woolf, p. 153 note 34; see Fleming, p. 53.

8 *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), p. 122; see also *The Dream oft he Rood*, ed. M. J. Swanton (Manchester, 1970), p. 38.

9 The Ruthwell Cross Poem is considered in its own right by D. Howlett, 'A Reconstruction of the Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem'. *Studio Neophilologica*. XLVIII (1976). 54–8.

and to interpret each text in relation to its immediate context. This procedure allows us better to understand the way two Anglo-Saxon audiences, separated in time by two hundred and fifty years and in place by the length of England, would have interpreted the texts. An examination of the contexts of the two poems suggests that both audiences were aware of a single (basically liturgical) way of looking at them. Instead of a discontinuity of tradition (and a consequent structural discontinuity between the narrative of *The Dream of the Rood* and the explication of this narrative in lines 78ff.) we find a remarkable continuity. As Professor E. G. Stanley has pointed out, a difficulty in understanding *Beowulf* is that we have no traditional explanation of that poem going back to Anglo-Saxon times.[10] In the present case we are better off: we have two related texts and two contexts. An interpretation which fits each text and its context may indicate a traditional interpretation of both texts dating back to the early Anglo-Saxon period.

In another paper I have examined certain aspects of the iconography of the Ruthwell Cross, and suggested some ways in which this iconography is relevant to the Ruthwell Crucifixion poem.[11] The present paper concentrates on the Vercelli text. I shall enquire how *The Dream of the Rood* was understood by tenth-century readers and, in particular, by the person who copied the poem into the Vercelli Book. Everything we know about the man who gathered the Vercelli texts indicates that he was not interested in developing (in Miss Woolf's words) a 'philosophical view of the person and nature of Christ and definition of the Redemption'. The Vercelli texts, as a whole, do not reflect any interest in theological polemic; they are entirely devotional, ascetic and eschatological. The Vercelli Book seems to have been intended for personal use: it is not consistently arranged according to the liturgical year, nor provided with the systematic rubrics which would have enabled it to be used as an homiliary.[12] On the other hand, the man who brought the texts together was clearly familiar with liturgical observance, and several parts of his collection seem to ha,·e been arranged with an awareness of the devotional atmosphere of different seasons of the liturgical

10 *Continuations and Beginnings*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London, 1966). p. 104.

11 'Liturgical Innovations Associated with Pope Sergius and the Iconography of the Ruthwell & Bewcastle Crosses', *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. R. T. Farrell. British Archaeological Reports, 46 (Oxford 1978), pp. 131–47.

12 See D. S. Scragg, The Compilation of the Vercelli Book'. *ASE*. 11 (1973). 189–107: for a full description and facsimile of the manuscript. see C. Sisam. *The·Vercelli Book*. Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 19 (Copenhagen. 1976): I discuss the organisation and presentation of the Vercelli texts in my Ph. D. thesis, 'The Vercelli Book as an Ascetic Florilegium' (Queen's University of Belfast, 1975). I discuss more fully the place of *The Dream of the Rood* within the Vercelli collection in 'How did the Vercelli Collector interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?', *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. P. M. Tilling , The New University of Ulster, Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Learning, 8 (Coleraine, 1981), pp. 63–104.

year. Homilies I–IV are an example. These homilies are written into a separate group of quires (fols. 1–24, quires I–III). Homilies I and III are associated with the Lenten season,[13] while the eschatological material of Homilies II and IV provides urgent motives for repentance. Taken together, Homilies I–IV form a devotional group, a separate booklet of material suitable for Lenten reading. Similarly, Homilies V and VI both deal with the miracles which preceded Christ's birth; between these homilies the collector copied *Andreas* and the short *Fates of the Apostles*. As St. Andrew's feast (30 November) always fell within the octave of the first Sunday in Advent, these four items would have provided suitable devotional reading for the Advent season.[14]

The Vercelli collection is best understood as *florilegium* — a collection of texts made primarily for personal use.[15] The palaeographical features of the manuscript indicate that it was written piecemeal, from such sources as came to hand over a considerable period of time; for this reason, the person who wrote the manuscript ·should be seen not simply as 'the Vercelli scribe', but as 'the Vercelli collector', a man not simply doing a job of copying but gradually gathering together the texts which he found most relevant to his spiritual life. The interests of the Vercelli collector were, to judge from the texts which he gathered, primarily ascetic: he seems to have intended the manuscript to aid him in 'conversion of his way of life' (*conversio morum* — the second monastic vow prescribed by St. Benedict's Rule).[16]

The explicit exhortations to repentance in lines 78ff. of *The Dream of the Rood* fit in very well with the preoccupations of the Vercelli collector; they may even have prompted him to include the poem in his *florilegium*. The presentation of lines 78ff. in the manuscript may indicate that the Vercelli collector felt that it was a passage to be meditated with some care — with the sort of reading given a classic description (later, in the twelfth century) by St. Anselm: 'not … in a turmoil, but quietly, not skimmed or hurried through, but taken a little at a time,

13 Homily I, which will be discussed below, is a paraphrase of the Passion according to St. John, the lection for Good Friday; Homily III refers to 'þyssum halgum lengten fæstenes' ('this holy Lenten fast') 12v18. These homilies are edited by Max Förster, *Die Vercelli-Homilien*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, XII (Hamburg, 1932).

14 These four items occupy fols 25r-56r of the manuscript. Homilies V and VI are edited by Forster, pp. 107–37.

15 On this genre of devotional literature, see H. Rochais, 'Florilèges latins', in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris, 1937–), V, cols. 435–60, under 'Florilegès spirituels'; H. Rochais, 'Contribution à l'histoire des florilèges ascétiques du haut moyen age latin: le *Liber Scintillarum', Revue Bénédictine*, LXII (1953), 246–91; H. Rochais, 'Le florilege anonyme pour Alagus, manuscrit Rei ms 443', *Revue Benedictine*, LXVII (1957), 141–50.

16 *Sancti Benedicti Regula*, ch. 58; see *La Règle de saint Benoît*, ed. A. de Vogüé and J. Neufville, 6 vols (Paris, 1971–2), II, p. 626ff. See also C. Mohrmann, 'La langue de saint Benoît', in *Études sur le latin des chrétiens*, 3 vols (Rome, 1961–5), II, pp. 325–45 (especially pp. 343–5).

with deep and thoughtful meditation'.[17] The beginning of the passage is denoted by a capital letter ('Nu ðu miht gehyran' 105v15, *Dream* 78)[18] and the end of the passage is denoted by a full stop (a *punctus*), with another capital letter for the beginning of the next section of the poem ('Nu ic þe hate', 105v26, *Dream* 95). The passage between these two capital letters has a simple rhetorical structure such as might be appreciated by any meditative reader: it consists of three antitheses followed by a comparison between the Cross and Mary.

The antitheses have a common theme: that the past history of the Cross, miserable though it was, has fitted it to be a patron for mankind. The first antithesis looks back over the story which the Cross has just told, and contrasts this with the glory now paid to it by all creation. The description of the glorification of the Cross here is clearly reminiscent of the description of the Cross at the beginning (especially lines 11–12) of the poem:

> Nu þu miht gehyran hæleð min se leofa
> þæt ic bealuwara weorc gebiden hæbbe
> sarra sorga is nu sæl cumen
> þæt me weorðiað wide ond side
> men ofer moldan ond eall þeos mære gesceaft.
> gebiddaþ him to þyssum beacne
>
> 105v15–18, *Dream* 78–83a.

> Now you may hear, my beloved warrior, that I, the work of evil ones, have endured bitter sorrows. The time has now come in which men throughout the earth and all this glorious creation honour me, and pray to this sign.

The second antithesis contrasts the suffering of the Son of God upon the Cross with its paradoxical effect, that the Cross can now heal all those who reverence it:

> on me bearn godes
> þrowode hwile forþan ic þrymfæst nu.
> hlifige under heofenum. ond ic hælan mæg.
> æghwylcne anra þara þe him bið egesa to me
>
> 105vl8–21. *Dream* 83b-6.

17 'non sunt legendae in tumultu, sed in quiete, nee cursim et velociter, sed paulatim cum intenta et morosa meditatione'. — *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1958–61), III, p. 3; translated by Sister Benedicta Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, (Harmondsworth, I 973), p. 89. For a discussion of this passage, see H.Barre, *Prières anciennes de lOccident a la Mère du Sauveur* (Paris, 1963), p. 6.

18 As the manuscript presentation of *The Dream of the Rood* is relevant to my argument, I shall quote from the facsimile of the manuscript ed. by C. Sisam (above, note 12). My references are to folio and line, followed by a reference to the printed text of the poem. In extended quotations I preserve the punctuation and capitalisation of the manuscript, but divide the verses according to modern printed editions.

> On me the son of God suffered for a while: therefore I now tower glorious aloft beneath the heavens, and I am able to heal every one of those who are in awe of me.

The final antithesis expresses still more clearly the devotional importance of the Cross. Formerly, the Cross was the hardest of tortures for mankind, but now it has cleared for them the way of life:

> iu ic wæs geworden wita heardost.
> leodum laðost ærþan ic him lifes weg
> rihtne gerymde reordberendum
>
> 105v21–3 *Dream* 87–9

> Formerly I had become the hardest of tortures. most hateful to the people, before I opened the true way of life for all mankind.

The devotional importance of the Cross is finally driven home by a comparison. The Cross has been glorified over all 'hill trees'[19] even as Mary has been glorified over all women:

> hwæt me þa geweorðode wuldres ealdor
> ofer holmwudu hcofonrices weard.
> swylce swa he his modor eac marian sylfe
> ælmihtig god. for ealle menn
> geweorðodc ofer eall wifa cynn.
>
> 105v23–6, *Dream* 90–4.

> Indeed, the lord of glory, the guardian of the heavenly kingdom then honoured me over [all other] hill-trees, just as almighty God also honoured his mother Mary herself over all the race of women, for the sake of all mankind.

This comparison between the Cross and Mary forms, therefore, the climax of a carefully structured paragraph.[20]

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19 For this interpretation of the manuscript 'holmwudu', see Swanton, p. 128; *The Vercelli Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, IT (Ne York, I 932), p. 64, where the reading 'holmwudu' is retained, and pp. 131–2, where it is briefly discussed. See also C. T. Berkhout, 'The Problem of Old English "holmwudu"', *Medieval Studies*, XXXVI (1974), 429–33.

20 The *Magnificat* (Luke i, 46–55) sung daily at vespers (see J. Mearns, *The Canticles of the Christian Church* [Cambridge, 1914], pp. 52, 63–5), likewise ends with three successive antitheses on the workings of Providence (Luke i, 51–3), followed by a passage in which Mary looks back over God's dealings with Israel in the past in order to explain the honour He had given her (Luke i, 54–5). It is impossible to prove that the *magnificat* influenced lines 78–94 of *The Dream of the Rood*, but as the canticle was the most important Marian text, completely familiar to any cleric from daily use, the structural parallel is suggestive. Other scholars have suggested that the comparison between the Cross and Mary may be significant:

The comparison between the Cross and Mary would probably, for a tenth-century cleric, have explained some puzzling features of the poem up to that point. In particular, it would have suggested a reason, based on his experience of the liturgical year, for the unusual way the Crucifixion narrative had been presented. The Vercelli collector would probably have agreed with Professor Patch and Miss Woolf that 'nothing could be more different in spirit and manner' than the way the Crucifixion was described in *The Dream of the Rood* and the way it was presented in the hymns, lections and homilies appointed to be read on Good Friday. The Vercelli collector included a Good Friday homily in his *florilegium*,[21] and in this homily (a paraphrase of the Passion according to St. John, the lection for Good Friday) the events of Good Friday are seen to demonstrate Christ's patience and humility, rather than His heroic power: 'ond he þa þis eall se heofonlica fæder geðeldelice ond eadmodlice for us þrowode ond abær' ['and the heavenly father (*sic*) patiently and humbly suffered and bore all this for us'].[22] In contrast to *The Dream of the Rood*, Vercelli Homily I *is* of a piece with the atmosphere of the Good Friday liturgy, in which the altar was stripped, the Mass was not celebrated, and the reading of the Passion of St. John was followed simply by intercessory prayers, the veneration of the Cross, and Communion (the 'Mass of the Presanctified').[23] In Vercelli Homily I, demonstration of Christ's power is reserved for the harrowing of Hell, after Christ lay in the tomb:

> Menn þa leofestan hwæt ure drihten ælmihtig god þa his haliga lichama in þa halgan byrgenne geseted wæs. þurh þa myclan miht his þære ecean godcundnesse he in helle astah. ond he þær ealle þa fæstan carcern gebræc þæs ecan deaþes.[24]
>
> Beloved people, lo, our Lord Almighty God, when His holy body had been put into the holy tomb, descended into Hell through the great power of His eternal divinity, and there He broke all the secure prisons of eternal death.

The Passion according to St. John emphasises that Christ was led to Calvary, and that He carried His Cross to the place of execution:

> Tunc ergo tradidit eis illum ut crucifigeretur. Susceperunt autem Iesum, et

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e.g., J. V. Fleming (1966) (note 6 above) p. 60; C. T. Berkhout (1974) (note 19 above) p. 6; John H. Cleland, 'The Art of *The Dream of the Rood*', *Faith and Reason*, V (1979) 3–25. I have been unable to consult Cleland's article before the present paper went to press, but rely on the summary of it in *Old English Newsletter*, XIV (1980), p. 42.

21 Vercelli Homily I (see note 13 above).

22 5v17–18; Förster, p. 25.

23 See J. W. Tyrer, *Historical Survey of Holy Week. its Services and Ceremonial*, Alcuin Club Collections. 29 (London, 1932), pp. 118–29. 128–40.

24 9r5–9; Förster, p. 43.

> eduxerunt. Et baiulans sibi crucem exivit in eum, qui dicitur Calvariae locum, hebraice autem Golgotha: ubi crucifixerunt eum, et cum eo alios duos hinc et hinc, medium aucem Iesum.
>
> Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.[25]

This passage is paraphrased and expanded in Vercelli Homily I, which emphasises that Christ was led to Calvary, that He carried His Cross 'a certain part of the way' thither,[26] and that He was suspended on the Cross between the two thieves by Pilate's soldiers and the Jews. Notice the recurrence of verbs — such as *lædan* and *ahon* — which emphasise Christ's passivity:

> he polatus urne crist iudeum agef ond sealde his agene men mid. ond heht hine to rode lædan. ond hine ahon. þa namon hie hine ond læddon to þære stowe. þær hie hine eft on ahengon. ond he sylfa bær þa rode sumne dæl þæs weges þe hine man eft on aheng. þa æfter þam ahengon hie hine on þam clife. þe hie heton golgoðða. ond twegen sceaðan him on þa twa healfa. ond hine urne drihten crist on middan ahengon.[27]
>
> Pilate gave our Christ to the Jews, and provided his own men as well, and ordered Him to be led to the Cross and hanged. Then they seized Him and led Him to the place where they afterwards hanged Him; and He Himself bore some part of the way the Cross on which He was afterwards hanged. Later, they hanged Him on the hill which they called Golgotha, and two criminals on either side of Him; and they hanged our lord Christ in the midst.

Both in devotional atmosphere and in narrative detail, the Good Friday lection is very different from Christ's ascent of the Cross as presented in *The Dream of the Rood*:

> geseah ic þa frean mancynnes
> efstan eine mycle, þæt he me wolde on gestigan.
>
> 105r10-l l, *Dream* 34–5.
>
> I saw the Lord of mankind hastening with great valour as He wished to mount upon me.

25 John xix, 16–18. For scriptural translations I use the Douay version.

26 This homily continually expands St. John's text by reminiscences of the synoptic gospels. Here, the homilist is evidently thinking of how Jesus was helped to carry the Cross by Simon of Cyrene (Matthew xxvii, 32: Mark xv, 21: Luke xxiii, 26).

27 6v23–7r7: Förster, pp. 30–1.

Rosemary Woolf has pointed to the crucial shift of perspective in *The Dream of the Rood*: 'that the Cross is already in position and watches Christ advancing to it seems to be the poet's own variation'.[28] The readers of the poem share in the Cross's consciousness of the Crucifixion, and all elements of the scriptural account which would conflict with this confrontation between the Cross and the advancing Christ — the soldiers and thieves of John's gospel, for example — are suppressed.

The comparison between the Cross and Mary in lines 90–4 provides a context within which this shift of perspective can be understood. The comparison would have directed the attention of a tenth-century cleric to the feast of the Annunciation, which was believed to have occurred on the same date as the Crucifixion, thirty-three years earlier. The Crucifixion was liturgically celebrated on the variable feast of Good Friday; but it was agreed that the first Good Friday had fallen on the anniversary of the Annunciation, 25 March (the spring equinox in the Julian calendar).[29] The coincidence that Christ died on the thirty-third anniversary of His conception, exactly thirty-two years and three months after His nativity (25 December), showed that the Saviour 'did all things at the appropriate places and times'.[30] The coincidence was valued as an aspect of God's control of human history, a control celebrated for example by the *Beowulf* poet:

> se geweald hafað
> sæla ond mæla; þæt is soð metod.[31]
>
> He bas control over times and seasons: that is true Providence.

A tenth-century cleric would have been aware that the feast of the Annunciation was also the anniversary of the Crucifixion. Of nineteen English liturgical calendars which survive from the tenth and eleventh centuries, sixteen imply familiarity with the tradition. It is true that only one of the nineteen explicitly notes the coincidence in its entry for the 25 March: 'EQUINOCTIUM. Conceptio Sanctae Marie. Crucifixio domini'.[32] The function of a calendar was to serve as a guide to liturgical practice, and so the other eighteen devote their space

28 Woolf, p. 146.

29 See *Bedae Opera de Temporibus*, ed. C. W. Jones (Cambridge, Mass., 1943), pp. 6–7; V. Loi, 'II 25 Marzo data pasquale e la cronologia Giovannea della Passione in eta patristica', *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, LXXXV (1971), 48–69.

30 'Ornnia propriis locis et temporibus gessit Salvator' — Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris er Novi Tesramenti*, ed. A. Souter, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, L (Vienna, 1908), Quaestio lv, p. 100, as quoted in Loi, p. 53.

31 *Beowulf*, 1610–11; *ASPR*, IV, p. 50.

32 Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS 150, fol. 4r: F. Wormald. *English Kalendars before A. D. 1100*, Henry Bradshaw Society, LXXII (London. 1934), p. 18.

for 25 March to the major feast to be celebrated on that day, the Annunciation. However, fifteen of the calendars clearly indicate familiarity with the coincidence of the Crucifixion on the anniversary of the Annunciation by noting 'Resurrecio domini' under 27 March.[33] The anniversary of the Resurrection must, of course, fall on the third day after the anniversary of the Crucifixion. *The Old English Martyrology* gives a clear account of the tradition in its entry for 25 March:

> On þone fif ond twentegðan dæg þæs monðes com Gabrihel se engel ærest to sancta Marian mid godes ærende, ond on þone dæg sancta Maria wæs eacen geworden on Nazareth þære ceastre þurh þæs engles word ond þurh hire earena gehyrnesse, swa þas treowa þonne hie blostmiað þurh þæs windes blæd. … ond þa æfter twa ond þritegum geara ond æfter þrym monðum wæs Crist ahangen on rode on þone ylcan dæg; ond sona swa he on þære rode wæs, þa gescæfte tacnedon þæt he wæs soð god.
>
> On the twenty-fifth day of the month the angel Gabriel came to St. Mary the first time with God's errand, and on this day St. Mary became pregnant in the town of Nazareth by the angel's word and by the hearing of her ears like the trees, when they blossom under the breeze of the wind. … After two and thirty years and three months Christ was crucified on the same day, and when he was on the cross, the creation immediately proved that he was true God.[34]

An Anglo-Saxon cleric would have been all the more ready to associate the Crucifixion with the feast of the Annunciation because it was in Annunciation homilies (rather than in homilies read on Good Friday) that he would have found descriptions of that heroic power which *The Dream of the Rood* attributes to Christ. In St. Luke's account of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that 'the power of the Most High ("virtus Altissimi") shall overshadow thee' (Luke i, 35), and in her canticle of thanksgiving, the Magnificat, Mary says that God 'hath shewed might in His arm ("fecit potentiam in brachia suo")' (Luke ii, 51). The Fathers found the theme of God·s power symbolized in the name of the archangel Gabriel. St. Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologiae*, explains the name as follows:

> Gabriel Hebraice in linguam nostram vertitur fortitudo Dei. Vbi enim potentia divina vel fortitudo manifestatur, Gabriel mittitur. Vnde et eo tempore. quo erat Dominus nasciturus et triumphaturus de mundo, Gabriel venit ad Mariam, ut ilium

33 For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library. MS Digby 63. fol. 14v (Wormald. p. 4). Only three of the calendars printed by Wormald make no reference to the tradition (see Wormald. pp. 32. 158 and 256).

34 *The Old English Martyrology*.ed. G. Hcrzfield. EETS o.s. 116 (London.1900). p. 48 (Old English text), p. 49 (translation). Celia Sisam, 'An Early Fragmcnt or the Old English Martyrology', *RES*, n.s., IV (1953), 209–20 (p. 217) has argued that this Mercian text circulated in the South of England from the late ninth century.

> adnuntiaret qui ad debellandas aerias potestates humilis venire dignatus est.[35]
>
> The Hebrew word Gabriel is translated into our language as 'the valour of God'. Thus whenever the divine power or valour is made manifest, Gabriel is sent. And so, at that time in which the Lord was to be born and triumph over the world, Gabriel came to Mary, to announce Him who condescended to come humbly in order to defeat the powers of the air.

Such ideas are found in homilies on the Annunciation from the sixth to the tenth centuries. Before Isidore, St Gregory the Great had expanded in similar terms on the etymology of the name Gabriel,[36] and Bede paraphrased Gregory's homily as follows:

> Gabrihel namque fortitudo Dei dicitur. Et merito tali nomine praefulget qui nascituro in carne Dea testimonium perhibet. De quo propheta in psalmo: *Dominus*, inquit, *fortis et potens dominus potens in proelio*. Illo nimirum proelio quo potestates aerias debellare et ab earum tyrannide mundum ueniebat eripere.[37]
>
> Gabriel is called 'the valour of God' and he is fittingly resplendent in such a name, because he gives testimony to God about to be born in the flesh. The prophet had spoken about this in the psalm: 'The Lord is strong and powerful, the Lord is powerful in battle' (Psalm XXIII, 8) — in that battle indeed, in which He came to defeat the powers of the air and to rescue the world from their tyranny.

Bede's homily was incorporated into the Carolingian homiliary of Paul the Deacon, which was a major source for the homilies of Ælfric.[38] In his homily for the Annunciation, Ælfric paraphrased Bede as follows:

> Se heah-engel, þe cydde þæs Hælendes acennednysse, wæs gehaten Gabrihel, pret is gereht, 'Godes strengð', þone he bodode toweardne, þe se sealm-sceop mid þisum wordum herede, "Drihten is strang and mihtig on gefeohte". On ðam gefeohte, butan tweon, þe se Hælend deofol oferwann, and middangeard him ætbræd.
>
> The archangel, who announced the birth of Christ, was called Gabriel, which is interpreted, *God's strength*, which he announced was to come, and which the psalmist praised in these words, "The Lord is strong and mighty in battle". In the

35 *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), I, Book VII, ch. v. 'De Angelis', sections 10–11.

36 *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Book II, Homily xxxiv; *PL*, lxxvi, 1251.

37 *Homeliarum Euangelii Libri II*, ed. D. Hurst, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 122 (Turnhout, 1955), p. 15.

38 See C. Smetana, 'Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary', *Traditio*, XV (1959), 163–204 (p. 188).

> battle, without doubt, in which Jesus overcame the devil and took from him the world.[39]

The traditional interpretation of Gabriel's name, and the traditional picture of Christ coming at the Annunciation to defeat the powers of darkness, is also found in the Blickling Annunciation homily. It is clear, therefore, that the *topos* was familiar, not merely to Ælfric who was directly influenced by Carolingian models, but to earlier homilists writing in English. It is such pre-Ælfrician vernacular material that we find in the Vercelli Book, and so the Blickling homily is of particular interest:

> Eala men þa leofeslan, mycel wæs þes ærendwreca, & mycel ærende brohte he; forþon his nama wres gereht 'Godes strengð'. Wel þæt wæs gecweden, forþon þe se hæfde mægen ofer ealle gesceafta þe he towearde sægde & bodode; & his rices ongin, ne his mihte, ne his mægcn-þrymmes næfre gewonad ne weorðeþ, ac he bið aa ece.
>
> O dearest men, great was this messenger, and a great message brought he, wherefore his name signifies 'the strength of God'. Well was he so named, since he whose coming he spake of and announced had power over all creatures; and neither the beginning of his kingdom, nor his might nor his majesty shall ever be diminished, but he shall be ever eternal.[40]

The heroic Christ of *The Dream of the Rood* is more closely paralleled by this series of descriptions of how Christ defeated the devil through His incarnation, than by the Passion narratives read on Good Friday.[41]

More remarkable are the parallels between the situation of the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* and that of Mary in St Luke's account of the Annunciation. Both the Cross and Mary are obedient to a divine command which at first sight seems to them to go against nature. The way the Cross trembles when the warrior-Christ embraces it ('bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte' 105r17, *Dream* 42 — 'I trembled when the warrior embraced me') is reminiscent of Mary's disturbance at the angel's message: 'who having heard, was troubled at his saying ("turbata est in sermone eius"), and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should

39 Text and translation from *Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. B. Thorpe, Ælfric Society, 2 vols (London, 1844–6), I, pp. 194–7.

40 Text and translation from *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. R. Morris. EETS o.s. 58, 63 and 73, reprinted as one volume (Oxford, 1967), pp. 8–9. .

41 The references to the defeat of 'aerias potestates· in Gregory, Isidore and Bede may have influenced the passage in *The Dream of the Rood* (lines 51–6) where the biblical darkness over all the Earth at Christ's death is seen in terms of contrast (and, by implication, opposition) between Christ's body, the 'scirne sciman' ('bright shining one') and the shadow which 'forð eode / wann under wolcnum' ('went forth, dark under the clouds').

be' (Luke i, 29).[42] As Mary was commanded to bear Christ into human life so the Cross must bear Him to His death — it is forbidden to participate in the lament of all creation at the death of Christ, and must instead become His slayer (*bana*).[43] Mary's acceptance of a role she does not as yet fully understand — 'be it done unto me according to thy word ("secundum verbum tuum", Luke i, 38)' — is paralleled by the Cross's obedience to 'the Lord's word':

> þær ic þa ne dorste ofer dryhtnes word
> bugan oððe berstan. þa ic bifian geseah
> eorðan sceatas ealle ic mihte
> feondas gefyllan hwæðre ic fæste stod.
>
> 105r11–14, *Dream* 35–8.

> Then I dared not, against the Lord's word, move or break when I saw the surface of the earth tremble; I could have felled all the enemies: however I stood fast.

The similar glory given to the Cross and Mary, in lines 90–4 of *The Dream of the Rood*, is a reward for the similar trials they both underwent on 25 March.

There is a simple and effective strategy behind the reshaping of the scriptural Crucifixion narratives in *The Dream of the Rood*: it presents the Crucifixion as the fulfilment of what was foretold by Gabriel at the Annunciation. Gabriel, 'the valour of God', announced to Mary that she would bear the Son of God who would reign forever (Luke i, 32). At the Crucifixion Christ Himself, 'the young warrior (that was almighty God) strong and courageous' —

> geong hæleð þæt wæs god ælmihtig
> strang ond stiðmod
>
> 105r14–15, *Dream* 39–40

— hastens to the Cross where He at once shows forth His divine nature and defeats the powers of darkness.

Reminiscences of the Annunciation scene are not merely found in the Cross's narrative and explanation; they also occur in the dream-vision frame in which this narrative is placed. The primary function of the dream-vision setting is to make clear the relevance of the Cross's narrative to the spiritual life of the reader of the poem. The Cross, in the latter part of its speech (lines 95ff.) announces to the Dreamer the 'message' it had received on Calvary, and commands the dreamer

42 J. Canuteson, 'The Crucifixion and the Second Coming', in *The Dream of the Rood*, *Modern Philology*, LXVI (1969). 293–7, has commented on the 'feminine passivity' shown by the Cross in this passage (pp. 295).

43 105v6, *Dream* 66, 'beornas on banan gesyhðe'. On the significance of this passage. Stt J. V. Fleming (note 6 nbovc). pp. 44–6.

to announce the message to other men — including the reader of the poem. From this point onwards, the role of the Cross is reminiscent of Gabriel rather than of Mary. We have, however, been prepared for this aspect of the Cross's speech by the opening paragraph of the poem. There the Cross was described as 'the angel of the Lord':

> beheoldon þær engel dryhtnes
> ealle fægere þurh forðgesceaft.
>
> 104v13–14, *Dream* 9–10.

As it stands in the Vercelli Book, this passage can only be construed with 'ealle fægere' as subject agreeing with the plural verb 'beheoldon' and 'engel dryhtnes' as object. I would translate the sentence as follows: 'all fair beings throughout time and creation looked upon the angel of the Lord there'.[44] The passage is metrically difficult, but no satisfactory emendation has been suggested and several recent studies have defended the manuscript reading.[45]

The layout of the text in the Vercelli Book may indicate that the Vercelli collector (and perhaps the scribe of the exemplar whose layout he may have tried to reproduce)[46] felt that the presentation of the Cross as 'engel Dryhtnes' was important. Lines 1–12 of *The Dream of the Rood* are clearly marked off in the manuscript as a separate paragraph — as it were, a prologue to the poem. A section-mark (a *positura*)[47] has been placed at the end of this paragraph in the manuscript. A small space after the *positura*, at the end of the line, has been left blank. The scribe began the next paragraph not only with a new line in the manuscript, but with a *litera notabilior* or capital ('SyIlic', 104v I 7, *Dream* I 3). The scribe had already used a *litera notabilior* to mark the beginning of the final clause of this 'prologue' ('Ac hine þær beheoldon …', 104v15, *Dream*

44 See Swanton (note 8 above) p. 103, where the various interpretations of the line are discussed. I use 'time and creation' to translate *forðgesceafl*, which has both temporal and spatial connotations.

45 W. F. Bolton, "'The Dream of the Rood' 9b: 'Engel' = 'Nuntius'?", *Notes and Queries*, 213 (1968), 165–6; the manuscript reading is kept in *ASPR* II, p. 61 (with a note on p. 130), and in Swanton's edition (see his note, p. 103). Both of these editions suggest that the word *engel* may refer to Christ; but, as Bolton has pointed out, it must refer to the Cross. T. E. Pickford, 'Another Look at the *Engel Dryhtnes* in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, LXXVII (1976), 565–68, agrees with Bolton. Although Swanton and Bolton had both pointed out the difficulties of such an interpretation, William Helder has revived the theory that "*engel dryhtnes* is Christ on the Cross': 'The *Engel Dryhtnes* in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Modern Philology*, LXXIII (1975), 148–50 (p. 149): this reading would destroy the clear distinction between the roles of the Cross and Christ preserved elsewhere throughout the poem.

46 For examples of how the Vercelli Collector seems to preserve aspects of the layout of his exemplars, see C. Sisam (note 12 above), pp. 37–44.

47 For a discussion of this term,, see M. B. Parkes, 'Punctuation, or Pause and Effect'. in *Medieval Eloquence*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley and London. 1978). pp. 127–42.

11). This final clause parallels and reinforces the preceding clause, in which the Cross is called ‘engel dryhtnes’: the verb ‘beheoldon’ is repeated, the subject-phrase ‘ealle fægere þurh forðgesceaft’ is recalled by the phrase ‘eall þeos mære gesceaft’, and the object ‘engel dryhtnes’ is again referred to, this time by the accusative pronoun ‘hine’. The parallelism seems intended to emphasise the startling presentation of the Cross as ‘engel dryhtnes’, and the verbal parallelism is emphasised by the manuscript layout. If we emend that puzzling but striking reading, the parallelism is lost. I give the passage with manuscript capitalisation and punctuation, but set out as verse. I differ from most modem printed editions in putting ‘ealle’ on the same line as the rest of the subject-phrase ‘fægere þurh forðgesceaft’:[48]

> beheoldon þær engel dryhtnes
> ealle fægere þurh forðgesceaft ne wæs ðær huru fracodes gealga.
> Ac hine þrer beheoldon halige gastas
> men ofer moldan ond eall þeos mære gesceaft:
> Syllic wæs se sigebeam ond ic synnum fah
>
> 104v13–17. *Dream* 9–13.

> All fair beings throughout time and creation looked upon the angel of the Lord there: that was indeed no criminal’s gallows — but holy spirits, men throughout the earth and all this glorious creation looked upon it there. Wonderful was the wood of victory. and I stained with sins …

The Dream of the Rood opens with a ‘prologue’ (lines 1–12) in which at midnight (a time traditionally associated, through the liturgy, with Christ’s incarnation)[49] all creation looks upon the Cross as *angelus domini*. A cleric aware of the coincidence of Crucifixion and Annunciation on 25 March would have been alerted by this ‘prologue’ to further reminiscences of the Annunciation in the poem.

Once we are aware of the reminiscences of the Annunciation scene in *The Dream of the Rood*, we can better appreciate the dynamic structure of the poem. *The Dream of the Rood* is based on a series of transformations from passivity to activity, from fear to heroic action. The central heroic figure is Christ, who

48 With the word *ealle*, line 10a would form a two-stress hypermetric verse introduced by a long anacrusis. See Jane Roberts, ‘A Metrical Examination of the Poems *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. LXXI (1971), 91–137 (p. 114 paragraph 42).The word *ealle*, however, might possibly have been added by a scribe who wished to strengthen the subject-phrase and so emphasise the devotional meaning of the sentence.

49 See B. McGrath, ‘He Came All so Still’, *The Bible Today*, VI (1963), 580–5; S. Manning, *Wisdom and Number* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1962), p. 163; B. Raw, ‘As Dew in Aprille’, *MLN*, LV (1960), 411–4 (p. 413), and B. Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (London, 1978), pp. 131–2.

hastens to the Cross ‘with great valour’ (‘elne mycle’, *Dream* 34): He is in the poem the exemplar of heroic action, to whom both the Cross and the Dreamer respond. The Cross has at first to react passively to *this* encounter with Christ, but finally is allowed to participate in Christ’s heroic freedom. The first moment of its transformation comes when it can bow down ‘humbly, with great valour’ (‘ea mod, elne mycle’, *Dream* 60) to give up the body of Christ to His disciples: the phrase is a clear reminiscence of the moment in which Christ first appears in the poem. The Cross proceeds to tell the Dreamer how its role has been transformed: the *litera notabilior* (capital letter) with which this paragraph begins in the manuscript indicates a new stage in the poem’s development (‘Nu þu miht gehyran hæleð min se leofa …’ , 78–94 [‘Now you may hear, my beloved warrior …]). The Cross then orders the Dreamer in his turn to announce to other men the significance of his *vision*; in the manuscript, another *litera notabilior* indicates a new stage in the poem’s argument:

> Nu ic þe hate hæleð. min se leofa.
> þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum
> onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam
> se ðe ælmihtig god on þrowode.
> for mancynnes manegum synnum.
>
> 105v26–8, *Dream* 95–9.

Now I command you, beloved warrior, to relate this vision to mankind: reveal in words that it is the tree of glory on which almighty God suffered for the many sins of mankind.

The Cross therefore gives to the Dreamer, not merely the message to be learnt from its experiences, but the role itself of ‘messenger’. The Dreamer, at first frightened by the visionary Cross and passive to its message (‘ic þær licgende lange hwile’, *Dream* 24: ‘I lying there for a long while’), finally reacts to the message of the Cross with heroic valour. The phrase ‘elne mycle’ is used for the third time in the poem to indicate the transformation of the Dreamer’s role:

> gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode
> elne mycle þær ic ana wæs
> mæte werede
>
> 106r11–12, *Dream* 123–5.

> I then began to pray to the Cross with a happy spirit, with great valour, where I was alone, with few companions.

The poem itself is the Dreamer’s ‘annunciation’ to the reader; the first words of *The Dream of the Rood* fulfil the explicit command of the Cross:

HWæt ic swefna cyst secgan wylle …

104v7, Dream I.

Lo, I will relate the best of dreams …

The reader himself is clearly intended to complete the sequence of 'annunciations' which the poem incorporates, and to participate in his turn in Christ's 'great valour', mediated to him by the Cross and the Dreamer.

The reminiscences of the Annunciation scene in *The Dream of the Rood*, if they are accepted, have some wider implications for the understanding of the poem which I shall now try briefly to explore. The historical tradition, that both the Annunciation and the anniversary of Christ's Crucifixion fell on 25 March, enabled the poet to unite in a profoundly imaginative way two major elements of the liturgical year. *The Dream of the Rood* looks beyond the coincidence of Crucifixion and Annunciation on 25 March to the deeper contrast between. on the one hand, Lent and Passiontide, and, on the other, the series of feasts celebrating Christ's incarnation. Christ's death and resurrection were celebrated in the variable feasts of the Easter cycle (dependent on the phases of the moon) which dominated the liturgical year from Lent to the end of the 'Sundays after Pentecost'. Christ's incarnation, on the other hand, was celebrated in a series of feasts reckoned by the sun's course; the Annunciation, Advent, Christmas and Epiphany were calculated from 25 December, the winter solstice in the Julian calendar. It is important to notice how much of a unity was preserved in the feasts celebrating the incarnation. The lection for the feast of the Annunciation (Luke i, 26–38) was usually read again during the weeks preceding Christmas.[50] Bede's homily on this lection (quoted above p. 11) is in the best manuscripts headed '*DE ADVENTV DOMINI*' and assigned to the weeks before Christmas.[51] One preoccupation of the feasts celebrating the incarnation was the unity of Christ's life, seen as a single mission accomplished with irresistible power. The Blickling Annunciation homily is a good example. After describing the Annunciation, it goes on to tell how

> He þa Drihten on þære fæmnan brydbure, & on þæm gerisnlican hehsetle onfeng lichoman gegyrelan to his godcundnesse. Þa wæs gesended þæt goldhord þæs mægen-þrymmes on þone bend þæs clænan innoðes; & he þa æfter nigan monða

50 See *The Roman Gospel-Lectionary*, ed. W. H. Frere, *Studies in Early Roman Liturgy*, *II*, Alcuin Club Collections, 30 (London, 1934), pp. 25 and 56: *Das römische 'Capitulare Evangelorium'*, ed . T. Klauser, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen, 28, second edition (Münster. Westphalia. 1972). pp. 43, 89, 127 and 168. -

51 Sec the rubrics for this homily, printed by Hurst (note 37 above). p. 14. In the homiliary of Paul the Deacon, this homily is assigned to the Wednesday before Christmas: see R. Grégoire, *Les Homéliairies du moyen âge* (Rome, 1966), p. 78. Paul the Deacon provided no homily for the Annunciation. and so Ælfric drew on this Advent item for his own Annunciation homily (quoted p. 11 and note 39 above).

fæce forðeode, swa se witga be þon cyþde, & þus cwæþ: 'Drihten asette on sunnan his hus, & of þæm uteode swa swa brydguma of his brydbure'. Þæt wæs þonne þæt se wuldorcyning on middangeard cwom forþ of þæm innoþe þære a clænan fæmnan, & þa swa se hyhtenda gigant, swa Drihten on middangearde bliðe wunode oþþæt he becom to þæm heahsetle þære rode on þæm upstige call ure lif he getremede. He sealde his þone readan gim, þæt wæs his þæt halige blod, mid þon he us gedyde dæl-nimende þæs heofonlican rices; ond þæt geweorþeþ on domes dæge þæt he cymeþ to demenne cwicum & deadum.

The Lord in the chamber of the virgin, in that seemly throne, took a bodily garment for His divinity. Then was sent the treasure of divine majesty into the bond (receptacle) of the pure womb [of the virgin]. And after an interval of nine months he came forth, as the prophet declared concerning him, thus saying: 'The Lord hath set his house in the sun, and from it hath gone out as a bridegroom from his bridal chamber'. That came to pass when the King of Glory, upon this earth, cameforth from the womb of the ever-pure virgin; and then as the exulting giant so the Lord dwelt joyfully on the earth until he came to the throne of the rood, in the ascent of which all our lives he supported; and he gave his red gem, which was his holy blood, and thereby made us participators of the heavenly kingdom; and it shall come to pass on Doomsday that he will come to judge the quick and the dead.[52]

The image of Christ as 'se hyhtenda gigant' in this passage is based on Psalm XVIII, verses 6–7:

In sole posuit tabernaculum suum;
et ipse tanquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo
exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam.
A summo caelo egressio eius,
et occursus eius usque ad summum eius;
nec est qui se abscondat a colore eius.

he hath set his tabernacle in the sun;
and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber
hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.
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.

In his commentary on this passage, St. Augustine dwells, as the Blickling homily was later to do, on the unity of Christ's mission and on the divine urgency with which this mission was fulfilled:

52 Text and translation from Morris (note 40 above), pp. 8–11. Similar ideas are to be found in Thorpe, *Homilies of Ælfric*, I, p. 200.

> Ipse *in sole posuit tabernaculum suum*; hoe est, ille tamquam sponsus, cum Verbum caro factum est, in utero uirginali thalamum inuenit; atque inde naturae coniunctus humanae, tamquam de castissimo procedens cubili, humilis misericordia infra omnes, fortis maiestate super omnes. Hoc est enim, *gigas exultant ad currendam uiam*, natus est, creuit, docuit, passus est, resurrexit, adscendit; cucurrit viam, non haesit in uia. … Quam autern uiam cito cucurrit uis audire? *A summo caelo egressio eius, et occursus eius usque ad summum eius.*[53]
>
> He himself *set his tabernacle in the sun*, that is, like a bridegroom, when the Word was made flesh, He found a bridal bed in the virginal womb; from which He came forth united to human nature as though from the most chaste of bridal chambers, humble below all in His mercy, powerful above all in His majesty. This, then, is how *he hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way*: He was born, grew, taught, suffered, rose again, ascended; He ran the way, he did not halt on the way … Do you wish to hear what course He ran so swiftly? *his going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof*

The first and last images of Christ in *The Dream of the Rood* seem to be influenced by a similar conception of the unity and urgency of Christ's mission, His irresistible swiftness and power. At the moment when Christ first appears in the poem, His valour is linked with the way He hastens to mount the Cross:

> geseah ic þa frean mancynnes
> efstan elne mycle. þæt he me wolde on gestigan.
>
> 105r10–11, *Dream* 34–5.
>
> I saw the Lord of mankind hastening with great valour as He wished to mount upon me.

At the end of the poem, Christ's return to His homeland in heaven is explicitly seen as the victorious accomplishment of an expedition (*siðfæt*):

> se sunu wres sigorfæst on þam siðfate
> mihtig ond spedig. þa he mid manigeo com
> gasta weorode on godes rice
> anwealda ælmihtig englum to blisse.
> ond eallum ðam halgum þam þe on heofonumær
> wunedon on wuldre þa heora wealdend cwom
> ælmihtig god þær his eðel wæs:
>
> 106r29–33, *Dream* 150–6.
>
> The Son was victorious on the expedition, mighty and successful, when He, the

53 Augustine, *'Enarrationes' in Psalmos*, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 38–40, 3 vols (Turnhout, 1956), I, pp. 109–10.

sovereign Lord, came with the multitude, the retinue of spirits, into the kingdom of God — to the joy of the angels and of all the holy ones who had previously dwelt in glory in Heaven, when their Ruler came. Almighty God, where His homeland was.

The last third of *The Dream of the Rood* (lines 100ff.) is dominated by thoughts of Christ's imminent second coming to judge the earth:

hider eft fundaþ
on þysne middangeard mancynn secan
on domdæge dryhten sylfa
ælmihtig god ond his englas mid.
105v31–106rl, *Dream* 103–6.

The Lord himself with His angels will return again hither to seek out mankind on this earth, at the Day of Judgement.

It is worth while noting that such an eschntologicul perspcctive is found in the liturgy of the Advent season in the tenth century. The faithful were not allowed to celebrate Christ's advent on earth without being reminded of His imminant return as Judge. Gospel lections describing the Last Judgement were read in the weeks before Christmas,[54] and homilies describing the Last Judgement were assigned to the Sundays after the Epiphany in tenth- and eleventh-century English homiliaries. Indeed, Vercelli homilies VIII and IX, which describe the Last Judgement, are assigned to the Sundays after the Epiphany in eleventh-century homiliaries.[55]

Perhaps the strongest reason for thinking that the reminiscences of the Annunciation scene in *The Dream of the Rood* are significant is that there was nothing esoteric about the tradition that the Crucifixion had taken place on the thirty-third anniversary of the Annunciation. As we have seen, the tradition was widely known throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, so that a man like the Vercelli collector — no great scholar, but familiar with the shape of the liturgical year — would have easily recognised and responded to references to the tradition. The coincidence of the Crucifixion and Annunciation would have been of particular interest to the people who, some two hundred and fifty years before, had erected the Ruthwell Cross. For them, the 25 March had just become an important liturgical feast. The iconography of the Ruthwell Cross seems to contain certain references to liturgical innovations made in Rome by Pope Sergius I (686–701 A. D.), innovations which were becoming known in

54 For example, Luke xxi, 25–33 was read in the Roman Liturgy on the second Sunday in Advent. See W. H. Frere (note 50 above), pp. 24 and 56; Klauser, pp. 43, 89, 127 and 168.

55 Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 48 art. 7: no. 309 arts. 7 and 8.

Northumbria in the early eighth century.[56] One of these was the feast of the Annunciation, celebrated on the day which previously (for example, in the Calendar of St. Willibrord, which dates from the first decade of the eighth century)[57] had been seen as the anniversary of the Crucifixion. At the foot of the South face of the Ruthwell Cross is a panel representing the Crucifixion, and directly above it a panel representing the Annunciation. The inscription around this panel, of which only the opening words 'INGRESSUS A(NGELUS)' now survive, was most probably based on Luke i, 28: Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit, Ave gratia pleta; Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus'.[58] ('And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women'.) This verse is given as the antiphon to be sung at the offertory of the Mass on the feast of the Annunciation in the earliest surviving Roman antiphonaries.[59] The juxtaposition on the Cross of these two panels seems to indicate that the community at Ruthwell had begun to celebrate the new feast, and were aware that it fell on the anniversary of the Crucifixion.

The Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion Poem presents the dilemma of the Cross as we have seen it in *The Dream of the Rood*. Here, also, the Cross is forced to bear its Lord to His death: 'hælda ic ni dorstæ … ic þæt al biheald . saræic wæs miþ sorgum gidroefid'.[60] ('I dared not bow … I beheld all that; I was grievously afflicted with sorrow'.) Christ is presented as an heroic figure — as 'god almeʒttig', 'modig fore allæ men', 'riicnæ kyninc heafunes hlafard' ('almighty God', 'brave before all men', 'the powerful king, the lord of the heavens') who, instead of being led to the Cross, approaches it and mounts it of His own free will 'þa he walde on galgu gistiga' ('as he wished to mount on the gallows').[61] Mr Frank Willett has suggested that 'it is not inconceivable that the original poem was inspired by the Ruthwell Cross itself, and especially composed for inscription upon it'.[62] It is perhaps more likely that both the poem, and the Annuciation and Crucifixion panels juxtaposed on the Ruthwell Cross, were independently inspired by the same event: the recent introduction to Northumbria of the feast of the

56 See note 11 above.

57 This calendar does not mention the Annunciation under 25 March, where its entry reads Dominus crucifixus est: et Sancti Jacobi fratris domini: et immolatio Isaac'. The reference to Isaac is in another, later, hand. See *The Calendar of St. Willibrord*, ed. H. A. Wilson, Henry Bradshaw Society, 55 (London, 1918), fol. 35v (Plate III), p. 5 (transcription) and pp. 24–6 (notes). Wilson (pp. x–xi) dates this calendar between 701 and 709.

58 See .E. Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 111.

59 *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex*, ed. R. J. Hesbert (Brussels, 1935), no. 33, pp. 42–5.

60 In these quotations from the Ruthwcll Cross Poem. I have followed D. Howlett (note 9 above), pp. 57–8.

61 *Ibid*.

62 F. Willett. 'The Ruthwell and Bewastle Crosses — a Review, Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, XCVIII (1956–7), 95–136 (p. 111).

Annunciation.

The major difference between the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion Poem and *The Dream of the Rood* is that the former was intended to complement a public monument, while the latter is adapted to an essentially private activity, the meditative reading of an ascetic *florilegium*. There was no need to explain the 'ic' ('I') of the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion poem, or to explicate its themes: the Ruthwell Cross itself was the speaker, and the poem had its place in the devotional significance of the Cross as a whole. However, a version of the poem may already have begun to circulate for private reading before the Ruthwell Cross was erected, or soon after. In this version, there would have been a clear need to provide elements with which a private reader could identify. The figure of the Dreamer, whose experience provides a paradigm of the way in which a reader should react to the poem, was evidently designed to fill this need.

We may conclude that there is no necessary dichotomy between the intellectual interests of those who first read the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion poem and those who read the expanded *Dream of the Rood*. Lines 78ff., and in particular the comparison between the Cross and Mary, are very relevant to the interpretation of the earlier part of the latter poem. There was a continuous tradition which provided a context within which both texts could have been interpreted by their respective audiences. Both the Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion poem and *The Dream of the Rood* sprang from an unbroken tradition of monastic devotion informed by experience of the liturgy.