

## Christian Inculturation in Eighth-Century Northumbria: The Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses

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The Bewcastle and Ruthwell high crosses are among the finest sculptural monuments to survive from Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>1</sup> They are of interest, not just to specialists in Anglo-Saxon sculpture, but to anyone interested in inculturation: that is, in the ways in which Christianity can interact with cultures that receive it, and express itself in terms that make sense within these cultures while at the same time transforming their values. The designers of both high crosses were deeply imbued with, and sympathetic to, contemporary Anglo-Saxon secular values, but they were concerned to mould those values towards a new vision. In order to “sing a new song for the Lord” the designers used images and poetic texts that their communities would comprehend. Literate nuns, monks, and clerics would have easily understood all aspects of these crosses; their meaning was also available, to some extent at least, to the illiterate laity who, once interested, could easily be further instructed.

The Christian spirituality reflected in both crosses is deeply influenced by contemporary communal worship: those modern interpretations of the monuments that have failed to take account of the liturgical references in them have invariably failed to do justice to the coherence of both crosses. Such modern interpretations have found themselves forced, in effect, to fragment the monuments.<sup>2</sup> In particular they have failed to appreciate that Ruthwell gives detailed expression to theological ideas found in embryo on the Bewcastle Cross, or, to put it another way, that Bewcastle preserves, and develops in its own way, elements of a theological program more fully developed at Ruthwell. On balance, more likely Bewcastle is the earlier cross, but, as we shall see, it is also possible that Bewcastle adapted elements of the Ruthwell program to its own, rather different, devotional purposes.

Although there is lively discussion about the dates of these monuments, there is a growing consensus that both are to be dated to the first half of the eighth century: as it were, to the “Age of Bede” (who died in 735) or to the generation after his death. The Bewcastle designer used a separate stone for the cross-head: a socket for the cross-head survives at the top of the surviving shaft. Experienced and reliable antiquarians recorded the cross-head as being in place as late as 1607, but it went missing soon after.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how, or precisely when, the cross-head was lost: perhaps in a storm, perhaps in an unrecorded outburst of iconoclasm, or perhaps even because the local antiquaries became anxious to possess a cross-head that had an English runic inscription, *ricæs drihtnes*, “of a powerful lord.” This inscription provides one possible key to the meaning of the Bewcastle Cross: as we shall see, the whole cross is the symbol “of a powerful lord.”

The Ruthwell Cross is also built from two stones, but here the designer used the second stone for the upper part of the cross-shaft as well as for the equal-armed cross-head. This upper stone was broken into fragments when Protestant iconoclasts pulled the cross down in 1642. In fragmenting the cross, iconoclasts went so far as to bury a large chunk of the broken upper stone deep in the graveyard of Ruthwell parish church. However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Henry Duncan, the Presbyterian minister of Ruthwell and an excellent antiquarian, was able to reconstruct the cross convincingly. Failing to find the transom of the cross (which may also have been smashed, and then buried in the churchyard), the Rev. Duncan had a local mason construct a new transom; he was able to work out its dimensions from the

lower and upper arms of the cross-head which survive.

### ***The Bewcastle Cross***

The Bewcastle cross-shaft stands today where the cross has always stood: in the open air, in the churchyard, just to the south of the present parish church at Bewcastle (fig. 5; *the illustrations are found on the accompanying CD*). The churchyard is enclosed by the *vallum* of a Roman fort, originally one of the advance fortifications to the north of Hadrian's Wall. The site, which the Roman imperial army had shaped at the apogee of their empire, was apparently inhabited by some sort of Christian community by the early eighth century. What sort of community that was we do not know (laity, religious, or both? if religious, clerical, or monastic, or both?), but their great cross suggests that some members of the community, at least, were nuns, monks, and/or clerics.

The sun's daily course provides the best guide to the dynamic symbolism of the surviving cross-shaft: it would have naturally suggested to any community living within the Bewcastle *vallum* that the cross should be read sunwise. Each morning the rising sun shines on the great vine-scroll or Tree of Life that unifies and enlivens all of the east side of the shaft (fig. 6a) Each of the eight surviving volutes of the scroll, except the smallest one at the very top of the shaft, is inhabited by a bird or animal-like creature feeding on the grapes or berries of the Tree. The foliage scroll or Tree of Life, particularly when inhabited by humans or animals, was an ancient, pre-Christian, symbol of life, fruitfulness, and hence prosperity.<sup>4</sup> In Christianity the Tree of Life lost none of its ancient associations with sustenance, fertility, and life, but Scripture and liturgical practice combined to give it a new range of meanings, above all the union of the Christian church with Christ (see John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches").<sup>5</sup> Eucharistic celebrations reinforced the identification, in particular with the blood of Christ, and gave it a new eschatological urgency: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor 11:26). The great Bewcastle Tree of Life is sculpted in a Roman or Mediterranean visual tradition, but eighth-century Northumbrian onlookers are likely to have remembered that actual trees had always had important religious functions for them, as for other Germanic peoples.<sup>6</sup> At Bewcastle a sculptural language imported from the Mediterranean gave new life to an ancient natural religious symbol: as Richard North put it, "The need was local, if the style was not . . . By legitimizing a need for leaves and branches on the cross, Roman vine-scroll could assist the transition from superstition to doctrine."<sup>7</sup>

Each morning, as the sun rose towards its zenith, its course was mapped by the sundial (by far the earliest English sundial to survive), a central feature of the south side of the cross-shaft (figs 6b and 7a). The sundial inhabits a large panel of vine-scroll, visually reminiscent of the great Tree of Life on the east side, though no animals inhabit the south side. Reading from the bottom of the shaft, this large foliage scroll is the fourth of five panels of abstract ornament on this side. In the five panels the designer took care to juxtapose distinct visual traditions: two large vine-scrolls (reading upwards, panels two and four), in a Mediterranean style, alternate with three smaller panels of interlace (one, three, and five), in an insular style that recalls the carpet-pages of the Book of Durrow, the Lindisfarne Gospels, and the Book of Kells.<sup>8</sup> It is as if the designer wished to celebrate the variety of visual languages that had recently become available to the community: Mediterranean and insular, Germanic as well as Celtic. The first (lowest) panel of insular interlace has at its center a small equal-armed cross: the panel, at the foot of the shaft, provides a foundation-stone for the program of the whole side.<sup>9</sup> All three panels of insular

interlace have the added fascination of a visual puzzle, a *trompe l'oeil*: the unhurried onlooker soon discerns that diagonal lines unite the individual panels of interlace, forming chiastic (X-shaped) patterns that unify each panel. We will find that chiastic references play a central symbolic role in the figural panels of the west side. Between each of the five panels the designer left a thin flat band that may once have been inscribed with a short incised or painted text, such as a name. No legible inscription has survived from the five surviving bands on this south side. We will return to this feature later, as it recurs, with two surviving inscriptions, on the opposite (north) side of the cross-shaft.

After noon, the sun begins to shine directly on the four large panels on the west side (figs 7a and 7b). Reading from bottom to top of the shaft these comprise: (1) a standing male figure: on his left wrist perches a large hawk- or eagle-like bird. Modern scholars are divided as to whom this male figure represents. Some have seen the panel as a portrait of Saint John the Evangelist (though he is usually represented seated, not standing), identified by the large eagle-like bird.<sup>10</sup> In the nineteenth century, and again in recent years, other scholars have favored a secular interpretation: an aristocratic donor, such as one of the kings represented on early Anglo-Saxon coins.<sup>11</sup> In this case the hawk perched on his left wrist would indicate his aristocratic status.<sup>12</sup> If we accept the “secular aristocratic patron” interpretation as a working hypothesis, this panel provides a remarkably unmilitary portrait of an early medieval aristocrat. In Old English heroic poetry, when you advanced to do battle you let your hawk fly away to safety from your wrist, and faced your human enemies. This Christian monument may possibly celebrate here the aristocratic arts of peace; it certainly does not celebrate the military arts of war.<sup>13</sup>

The second panel, just above the portrait of the peaceful aristocrat, is filled with nine lines of runic script. Unfortunately only scattered runes are still legible. The panel opened with the statement that “this victory-symbol [*sigbecn*] was erected by Hwætred,” and it seems to have ended with the formula “pray for their souls.”<sup>14</sup> It is reasonable to speculate that the panel may have contained a list of commissioners or benefactors, and perhaps prominent clerics, monks, and/or nuns connected with the Bewcastle community, and that the list may possibly have included the name of the aristocrat portrayed with his hawk just below the runes.

The third panel, just above the runes, clarifies the function of the long runic inscription. This panel portrays a majestic figure of Christ. In his left hand he bears a closed scroll, and his right hand is raised in blessing. His feet rest on the snouts of a pair of animal-like creatures. The panel recalls the early Christian iconography of Psalm 91:13:

You will tread on the lion and the dragon,  
The asp and the basilisk you will trample under foot.

Psalm 91 (Latin, 90), “*Qui habitat*,” was sung every single night at Compline, just before going to bed: its promise of divine protection against “the terrors of the night” (verse 5) must have been familiar to every educated monk, nun, and cleric. When tempting Christ in the desert the devil himself had quoted, out of context, verse 12 of the psalm, “he has given his angels charge over you” (Matt 4:6). Therefore, verse 13 of the psalm, “you will tread on the lion and the dragon,” was usually interpreted as foretelling Christ’s rejection of the temptation and his defeat of the devil. In Western liturgies, Saint Matthew’s account of the temptation provided the Gospel lection for the first Sunday in Lent. The psalm sings of faith and confidence in God; thus, in order to reiterate the psalmic context ignored by the devil, the Church ensured that Psalm 91 echoed

through all the Mass-chants that Sunday.<sup>15</sup>

Psalm 91 had already, from the earliest Christian centuries, been an important element of the most moving moment in Holy Week. From at least the fourth century, i.e., long before a six-week Lent began to be celebrated, it was sung at Rome on Good Friday at the ninth hour during the service of readings commemorating Christ's death. The Psalm was then sung, to a very ancient chant, as a response to the second Old Testament reading, the account in Exodus 12 of how the Paschal Lamb should be slain, prepared, and eaten.<sup>16</sup> This solemn chant continued in Roman use throughout the early Middle Ages, and would have been familiar to any Northumbrian clerical or monastic community. When sung at the moment in which Christ's death was commemorated, Psalm 91 provided a moving elegiac lullaby for Christ, the fallen hero who would defeat death itself by rising again:

You will not fear the terror of the night,  
or the arrow that flies by day,  
Or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
or the destruction that wastes at midday (verses 5–6).

But the Bewcastle panel cannot simply be seen as illustrating a verse from Psalm 91. For a start, the two animals cannot easily be interpreted as lions and dragons, asps or basilisks. The designer has simplified them into anonymity; they are simply "living creatures, beasts, animals." Secondly, although Christ's feet rest on their snouts, these animals do not look downtrodden. The designer has converted them from symbols of diabolic power into positive figures. Their paws are raised to acclaim Christ in an animal variant of the ancient attitude of prayer, the *orans* gesture (used, for example, during the eucharistic prayer of the Mass). As part of this gesture their inner paws meet: though the paws have been damaged by centuries of rain and frost, it is probable that they originally crossed to form a chiastic or X-pattern. Such a gesture would provide a visual reference to the Christian "chi-rho" symbol so important in the great insular gospel-books at Durrow, Lindisfarne, and Kells, and we have already seen that the X-pattern is a feature of the riddling interlace panels of the south side of the shaft. The visual gesture, in which these animals cross their paws between their bodies, proclaims the majestic figure above them to be "the anointed one" (Greek, *Christos*), the Messiah.

The beasts' gesture makes Christ known, literally, "in the midst of two animals." On Good Friday at the ninth hour, in the Roman ceremony commemorating the moment of Christ's death, an ancient chant based on the Old Latin text of Habbakuk 3:2–3 was sung in response to the first Old Testament reading (Hosea 6:1–6). Like Psalm 91, all of the Cantic of Habbakuk was well known to any ecclesiastic, as it was also sung throughout the year each Friday at Lauds.

The cantic, and the Good Friday chant based on it, both proclaimed of Christ that "you will be recognized in the midst of two living creatures" (*in medio duorum animalium innotesceris*). In more senses than one, therefore, the Bewcastle Cross is the monument "of a powerful lord" as its lost cross-head once proclaimed. Just above the majestic figure of Christ two lines of runes give Christ's name and title: *gessus kristtus*. The crossed paws between the two animals' bodies visually echo the X-shaped "g" rune with which this runic title begins. Thus these converted beasts, silent as sculpted figures must be, bend towards each other in an eloquently cooperative *orans* posture so as to acclaim *gessus kristtus* as the Messiah. The closed scroll that the majestic Christ holds in his left hand is an image of the Book of Life. This is the heavenly book which only

the triumphant Lamb can open, and in which all Christians hope to find their names inscribed. Christ's right hand can be seen to bless, not merely the Book or Scroll of Life, but also the beasts who proclaim him. His gesture further implies that the names in the panel of runes, and the peaceful aristocrat (or saint?) who stands with his hawk (or eagle?) at the foot of the shaft, are safely inscribed in Christ's heavenly *Liber Vitae*.

At the top of the shaft a standing figure of John the Baptist, clad in rich robes as a member of the heavenly liturgy, points across his body with his right index finger to acclaim Christ who now stands triumphant as the Lamb of God, cradled in John's left arm, his sacrifice accomplished. The panel complements the majestic Christ just below in a number of ways. It encourages the onlooker to see that Christ should be acclaimed, not only in his majestic humanity, but also as the triumphant Lamb of the heavenly liturgy described in the Book of Revelation, chapters 4 and 5. As we have seen, the prescription for the preparation of the Paschal Lamb formed the second reading on Good Friday in liturgies based on those of the city of Rome. In addition, from about 700 the chant "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis" ("Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us") had been introduced into the Mass of the Roman rite to accompany the breaking of bread for Communion. The new chant was known, for example, to the Northumbrian monastic scholar Bede. The chant was sung by assistant clerics and the people while the celebrant silently broke the eucharistic loaf. The breaking of bread in the Mass was regularly interpreted as symbolizing the breaking of Christ's body on the Cross on Good Friday.<sup>17</sup>

Taken together these two portraits of Christ, human and symbolic, intimately associate the west side of the Bewcastle cross-shaft with the Good Friday liturgy: a natural association on what may have been the earliest Northumbrian figural high cross. The west side is the culmination of the dynamic program of the cross. It was appropriate to refer to Good Friday chants and readings on this side of the cross-shaft because it was believed that Christ faced west on the Cross.<sup>18</sup> Early Christians often faced east in order to pray: people who prayed in front of this side of the Bewcastle Cross must have felt that the majestic Christ was blessing them also, and not merely the scroll, the animals at his feet, and the patrons named in the runic panel just below.

If the west side was the culmination of the program on the cross-shaft, the north side provides it with a carefully-designed prelude (figs 8a and 8b). This side is a creative variation on the design of the south side.<sup>19</sup> Again we have five panels, but this side has only two small panels of insular interlace instead of three as on the south side. At the foot of the shaft and at its top (reading upwards, panels one and five) two large panels of uninhabited foliage-scroll, in the Mediterranean style, provide an outer frame for the whole shaft. The insular interlace panels (panels two and four) provide an inner frame. Thus the large central panel, of chequer patterns, is given an elaborate double frame. The central panel is a triumph of trompe l'oeil (fig. 8b). Alternate squares of raised and depressed stone create squares of light and darkness on this, the only side of the cross rarely illuminated directly by the sun, but behind which the sun can always be seen in late morning and early afternoon.<sup>20</sup> These patterns of light and darkness produce multiple and shifting references to small equal-armed crosses, some dark, some bright: these tiny crosses may have visually echoed the now-missing cross-head, which was probably equal-armed, like the surviving Ruthwell cross-head.

As on the south side, the designer left four narrow bands between the five panels of the north side: each band provides space for an incised or painted inscription. One inscription has

survived, between the lower foliage scroll and the lower insular interlace panel (reading upwards, panels 1 and 2), the female name *kynibur\* g*, Cyniburh, who may have been a benefactress of a community at Bewcastle, or perhaps an abbess or prioress. The survival of this one name helps us to understand the strategy of the cross: the appeal that closes the panel of runes on the west side, “pray for their souls,” presumably applies to Cyniburh also. Names may have been incised or painted on some or all of the other bands on this side, as on the opposite side. If other names once existed on the strips on the north and south sides, three sides of the cross (north, south, and west) made names part of the larger design of the shaft. This cross reminded onlookers that other persons, living and dead, needed their prayers.

At the very top of the north side, in the damaged area just above the upper Tree of Life, a fragmentary runic inscription *ssu/s* is still legible: it would seem, a fragment of another version of the sacred name *gessus*, Jesus. We have already seen that the sacred name was also inscribed in runes in the space between the human (*majestas*) and symbolic (Agnus Dei) portraits of Christ on the west side, and that the crossed paws of the converted animals at the feet of the *majestas* visually echoed the X-shaped initial rune for “g” in that version of the sacred name. As further references to X-patterns can be discerned in the panels of insular interlace on the south and north sides, a major feature of the cross-shaft is its continued references to the sacred name Jesus Christ. The Bewcastle designer seems to have designed the whole cross as a “sign of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:30), a central and ancient Christian metaphor. The Bewcastle community, who hoped that their names would be inscribed in the Book of Life (as in the scroll blessed by Christ in majesty on the west side), commissioned a monument each side of which emphasized that as “living stones” they had been incorporated, by Baptism and the Eucharist, into Christ the “living stone,” the “corner-stone, chosen and precious” (I Peter 2:4–10). Other visual metaphors for this hope are the birds and animals who feed from the grapes of the great Tree of Life on the east side. Another central theme of the Bewcastle Cross is how, through the cross, Paradise is restored. Christ, in the panel where he blesses the beasts who acclaim him, is presented as the Second Adam who, from the beginning of Lent, “was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him” (Mark 1:13). Adam had been placed in Paradise as lord of the animals late on the sixth day of the week of creation (Gen 1:26–31), a Friday. Now, by his heroic death, on Good Friday at the ninth hour, Christ has restored in human beings the majestic divine image (Gen 1:27) that Adam had lost.

The Bewcastle Cross was designed to be lived with. Members of the Bewcastle community, who each day saw the sun illuminate the sides of the cross in due order, would have become gradually aware of its dynamic and progressive unity. The north side, touched slantingly by the sun’s rays only near the height of summer, provides the first stage of the program. The chequers of its carefully-framed central panel associate the cross with both light and darkness: an idea developed by the sundial on the south side. From morning to evening the sun progresses from the great image of the Tree of Life on the east side, via the south side with its sundial, towards the human and animal images of the west side. This daily progression suggests that east and west sides are also to be related to each other as balanced images: thus the Tree of Life leads to the Book of Life; Christ’s blood (the vine-scroll) to Christ’s body; feeding birds and animals to confident and majestic humans in harmony with animals.

The sundial, which indicates the seasonal course of the sun more reliably than its daily course, suggests an important relationship between the two majestic standing human figures on the upper half of the west side, Christ blessing the scroll of the *Liber Vitae*, and John the Baptist

acclaiming the Lamb of God, who alone can open that scroll and reveal the names of those to be saved (Rev 5:9) (fig. 7a). John the Baptist was conceived six months before Christ (Luke 1:36); while Christ was the light of the world (John 1:4–5; 9:5), his cousin the Baptist was not himself the light, but came to testify to the true light which enlightens everyone (John 1:8–9). The Baptist himself had expressed their relationship in the following words: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). The early medieval liturgy associated these scriptural themes with the cosmic imagery of the sun’s yearly course. It celebrated the physical conceptions of Christ and John at the equinoxes of the Julian calendar: Christ on 25 March (the eighth day before the kalends of April), when the sun begins to get the upper hand over the darkness, and John on 24 September (the eighth day before the kalends of October), when the sun begins to be conquered by the autumnal darkness. It celebrated the births of Christ and John at the solstices: Christ’s on 25 December (the eighth day before the kalends of January) when, at the darkest time of the year, the sun begins to “increase” against the winter dark; and John’s on 24 June (the eighth day before the kalends of July) when the sun, having reached its apogee, begins to “decrease.” This Christian solar cycle, which is reflected for example in the martyrology of Bede,<sup>21</sup> can be summarized as follows:

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

In short, the early medieval church, by means of the solstices and equinoxes, inscribed a great cross-pattern across the changing year, so as to make each of the four seasons recall the incarnation, and John the Baptist its messenger (Mark 1:2: Latin, *angelus*). Of these four cardinal dates 25 March, the spring equinox in the Julian calendar, was particularly rich in symbolism: an ancient Christian learned tradition, going back to Tertullian and Hippolytus, held that Christ had died on 25 March, the anniversary of his conception. Such a tradition was accepted by the Irish and British, as well as by Roman tradition followed by the Anglo-Saxons: it showed that Christ, the “powerful lord” of history, did all things at appropriate times and seasons, so that “the heavens show forth the Glory of God” (“Caeli enarrant,” Psalm 19:1) each year as well as each day.

A community relatively near cultural borderlands between Anglo-Saxon and Pictish or British territory, interested, as we have seen, in visual symbols of cultural diversity, is likely to have found this tradition appealing. In the seventh century, the different methods of calculating Easter had been a source of tension between some Anglo-Saxon clerics, who followed Roman use, and some Irish clerics, who had a different method of calculating Easter. After such tensions it made good sense to stress an ancient tradition that all these communities accepted: that the first Good Friday had fallen at the ancient Julian equinox, the anniversary (and, from the late seventh century, the feast) of Christ’s incarnation at the Annunciation. On that spring day of birth and death, the day on which the history of the universe had been forever changed, the Roman (Julian) solar cycle within which the Annunciation was celebrated had “met with” the Jewish (Paschal) lunar cycle that determined when the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God,

should be celebrated. The height of panels three-five of the south side (the foliage panel which contains the sundial within its frame of insular interlace) corresponds closely to that of the two panels of the Christ-Baptist sequence on the west side (fig. 7a). Thus the movement of the sun from the Tree of Life (east side) past the sundial and its flanking panels (south side) towards the Christ-Baptist sequence (west side) gently hinted, each day, at the Christian solar incarnation-cycle.

We shall find that the Ruthwell designer found more urgent and vivid ways to show the significance, within salvation history, of the linked births of Christ and John. At Ruthwell the relations between incarnation and passion, between Baptism and Eucharist, between water and blood, become major issues.

### ***The Ruthwell Cross***

The Ruthwell designer seems to have known the Bewcastle Cross, and to have planned to produce a creative variation on its theological themes. The antiquarian Richard Bainbrigg stated in a Latin note to William Camden, written between 1599 and 1601, that this “cross of wonderful height” then stood within Ruthwell parish church. The cross has a large base, on which later sculptors added a crucifixion panel (on the first broad side, directly under the Annunciation panel). The panel has been dated to the end of the eighth century, perhaps two generations after the cross was first designed and sculpted. When first erected, the cross probably stood in the open air, with its heavy base buried as at Bewcastle. When the Ruthwell cross was brought out of the weather into a building, its base could be left exposed above ground level and the new panel added. The Ruthwell designer included, on the second broad side, a variation of the paired panels at Bewcastle representing Christ acclaimed by the beasts and John the Baptist acclaiming the Agnus Dei. As we have seen, both of these panels refer to Good Friday ceremonies, and Christ was believed to have faced west on the cross. It seems reasonable therefore to suppose that, as at Bewcastle, these panels originally faced west. At Ruthwell Christ acclaimed by the beasts comes at the top of the lower stone, while John the Baptist comes at the foot of the upper stone. The sculptors of the upper stone were given creative freedom to emphasize the individuality of that stone: to provide it with its own lower borders (flat, and suitable for inscription), and to vary creatively the placing of runes and Roman letters, for reasons which we will later examine. One of the most attractive features of early medieval art (as of early medieval liturgy) is the way it accommodates creative variation and artistic independence within an overall unity.

The Ruthwell designer produced a radical variation on the concepts of the Bewcastle Cross. The Ruthwell Cross has no provision for inscribing the names of local benefactors or prioresses: it would appear that its designer was not interested in the central feature of Bewcastle, the cross as a symbolic *Liber Vitae*. There is no longer a sundial, and so a later generation at Ruthwell could think it appropriate to move their great cross inside, out of the sun. As well as eliminating the sundial, the Ruthwell designer avoided patterns of insular interlace such as we find on the north and south sides at Bewcastle: he or she would find other visual means to celebrate what Roman and Celtic traditions held in common. Instead, he or she concentrated on expanding the Mediterranean Tree of Life motif, making it central, and providing it with its own striking ekphrastic vernacular commentary. Two matching Tree of Life images now cover all of the sides of the shaft that originally faced north and south: not only the lower stone, but also the upper stone as far as the transom. The Ruthwell designer altered the shape of the cross-shaft: while

the Bewcastle shaft is almost square at the bottom (56 x 54 cm), at Ruthwell the two sides occupied by the Tree of Life are narrower than the other two sides. The other sides (originally facing east and west) were made broad so that extensive figural programs could be sculpted on them but, as we shall see, those programs take their meaning from the great paired vine-scrolls that form the symbolic center of the cross.

Unlike the Bewcastle designer, the designer at Ruthwell seems to have provided every single panel of this cross with an extensive *titulus*, usually but not always with narrative content. None of the *tituli* that have survived is simply a personal name or set of names, and none is ever a mere label to identify its panel. Instead, every single *titulus* seems to have been ekphrastic, consisting of a relatively extensive narrative about, or else a coherent theological comment on, its panel. These *tituli* were designed to suggest appropriate contexts within which each panel could be understood, and to hint how the audience should respond to the panel. To provide space for these extended *tituli* the designer provided every panel with flat vertical as well as horizontal borders, so that *tituli* that began on a horizontal border could flow uninterrupted (at times in the middle of a word) onto a neighboring vertical border, and so that on occasion the ekphrastic narrative or description could flow around all four borders of a panel. This feature is unique in early medieval insular sculpture, whether Anglo-Saxon, British, Pictish, or Irish: the Ruthwell *tituli* are far more extensive than those found on all the other insular high crosses put together. The *tituli* of the first broad side of the upper stone, as well as of the vine-scrolls on the narrow sides, are in runes: in this the designer was possibly inspired by the runes of the Bewcastle Cross. But the Ruthwell designer departed from the Bewcastle model by extensive use of Latin. Latin was usually inscribed in Roman capitals, but on at least one panel, the Visitation on the first side of the upper stone, a Latin *titulus* is inscribed in runes. In due course we will suggest a reason for this highly significant exception.

The Ruthwell designer provided the rooted vine-scrolls on the lower stone (i.e., those parts of the vine-scroll that anyone familiar with runes could easily read) with a carefully-edited verse narrative, in English and in runes, of the heroic death of Christ. The narrative begins on the side of the cross that would probably have faced north originally, the side of the cross on which the sun only shone in high summer, and then slantingly (fig. 9a). In the middle ages the north was associated with spiritual darkness and the power of demons. The vernacular crucifixion narrative is highly original. Unlike the four Gospels, which tell how the Cross came to Calvary with Christ, borne by Simon of Cyrene (the synoptic Gospels) or by Christ himself (John 19:17), the English vernacular poem envisages the Cross already in place before Christ confronts it. Thus the English poem creates a disturbing encounter between Christ, who courageously chooses death, and a startled Cross, which sees itself required, not to defend its Lord unto death as any loyal warrior would do, but to stand fast and become its Lord's killer. The Cross was, in this way, required to become an apparent traitor to its lord, in the presence of enemies who mock them both: the most agonizing dilemma an Anglo-Saxon poet could imagine. The opening sentence of the English poem runs across the top of the lower stone and then, in a great column of runes, down the right-hand side of the vine-scroll:

God almighty stripped himself  
when he willingly chose [*wolde*] to ascend the gallows  
brave before all men: I dared not bow . . .<sup>22</sup>

In choosing the gallows, God reveals himself: the narrative begins with a theophany. The first

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

The verb *wolde*, which I translate as “willingly chose,” literally means “willed”: the verb concentrates our attention on Christ’s will. The nature of Christ’s will(s) was at the center of a major theological controversy of the period 630–720, a controversy that led to schism between the church in East and West, and to the martyrdom of a pope (Martin I, 649–55). While some Eastern emperors and their theologians held that Christ had a single will, the divine will, which he shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Western Latin Church, supported by an Eastern theologian of the quality of Maximus Confessor (also martyred by the emperor, in 662 c.e.) held that Christ, if he was fully human as well as divine, must have had two wills: while he freely chose his actions through his own human will, he also fully participated in the divine will, never acting against it: “not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).<sup>23</sup>

In this first *sententia* Christ’s ascent of the Cross is at once a divine action (that of almighty God) and humanly courageous (Christ is “brave before all men”): *mōd* (cf. modern German *Mut*) is the central human quality of a Germanic warrior. The phrase “brave before all men” is creatively ambiguous in Old English, as in modern English: it can mean both “braver than all human beings” and also “brave in the sight of all human beings.” In its balancing of the divine title (almighty God) with heroic courage, the first Ruthwell titulus closely parallels the classic formulation of the Western (“dythelete” or “two-will”) position in the canons of the Lateran Council called by Pope Martin in 649 c.e.: that Christ “willed and effected our salvation at once divinely and humanly,” and that his human and divine wills were “coherently united.”<sup>24</sup> It was primarily for calling this council that Pope Martin had been imprisoned and martyred. All can see that Christ, in choosing to ascend the cross, embodied a new and subversive kind of heroism, based not on violence to others, but on self-giving even to the death of the cross. This first sentence of the first titulus already moves from divinity to humanity: it already embodies, in miniature, the kenotic structure of the whole Ruthwell poem.

The second sentence of the titulus is inscribed on the left side of the vine-scroll: to read it we have to move from right to left, following the sun’s daily course. The sentence concentrates on the dilemma of the Cross. By going through with its terrible act of obedience to Christ’s implied command, the Cross is intimately united to Christ, by mockery and by Christ’s blood.<sup>25</sup> Once more, when the poem refers to Christ’s heroic choice it coherently unites the divine and the human: phrases that can connote his divinity as well as his human power (“a powerful king,” “the lord of heaven”) are combined with the human, literally kenotic, image of Christ’s blood, poured out from his side at the moment of his death:

I [lifted up] a powerful king,  
The lord of heaven I dared not tilt  
men insulted the pair of us together; I was drenched with blood

poured [from the man's side]<sup>26</sup>

The English narrative is unique in Christian literature in concentrating on the dilemma of the Cross, required to kill its lord. The *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius, a widely-read Latin Christian epic, presented Christ's approach to Calvary as a triumphant royal advance (*adventus*); but Sedulius, and other Latin Christian poets such as Juvencus and Venantius Fortunatus, unlike the English poet, saw the role of the Cross at the crucifixion as unproblematic: for Sedulius, the Cross even "exults" as it bears Christ.<sup>27</sup> It was natural for a monastic poet to present Christ's approach to Calvary as an *adventus*, because several royal *adventus*-ceremonies are described or referred to in the Psalter.<sup>28</sup> For an early eighth-century monastic poet the word *adventus* may have recently taken on a new and complementary meaning: it had come to refer to the midwinter liturgical season of Advent, which prepared for the nativity of Christ at Christmas. In the last decades of the seventh century at Rome the papal *schola cantorum* (adapting earlier Gallican customs) had instituted its own tightly-organized four-week Advent season.<sup>29</sup> The readings for that season always included Saint Luke's accounts of the annunciation and of the visitation.<sup>30</sup> The annunciation lection provided a good analogue for the dilemma of the startled Cross when Christ confronted it. Since the late fourth century theologians had held that already, before the annunciation, the Virgin Mary had taken a vow of perpetual virginity.<sup>31</sup> This meant that for early medieval audiences Mary's question to the angel Gabriel, "How can this be, since I know not man?" (Luke 1:34), expressed a serious dilemma: should she refuse the divine command, or should she break her vow? Bede implies the dilemma in his Advent homily on the annunciation lection, and also in his commentary on Luke: "'How,' she asked, 'can this occur, that I conceive and give birth to a son, since I have determined to live out my life in the chaste state of virginity?'"<sup>32</sup>

Early medieval audiences saw the annunciation, and hence the incarnation, in terms of a heroic royal *adventus*. Bede (paraphrasing Gregory the Great) understood the Archangel Gabriel to personify divine strength and courage:

And so the angel Gabriel was sent by God. Rarely do we read that the angels appearing to human beings are designated by name, but, whenever this occurs, it is so that they may even by their very name suggest what ministry they have come to carry out. Now Gabriel means "strength of God" [*Gabrihel namque fortitudo Dei dicitur*], and rightly he shone forth with such a name, since by his testimony he bore witness to the coming birth of God in the flesh. The prophet said this in the psalm, The Lord strong and powerful, the Lord powerful in battle [Psalm 23/24:8]—that battle, undoubtedly, in which he [Christ] came to fight the powers of the air [Ephesians 2:2] and to snatch the world from their tyranny [*Illo nimirum proelio quo potestates aerias debellare et ab earum tyrannide mundum ueniebat eripere*].<sup>33</sup>

For Gregory and Bede, Mary encountered, in Gabriel, the strength or courage of God: Latin *fortitudo* denoted spiritual strength (courage, *fortitude*) as well as physical strength.

In late seventh-century Rome the annunciation lection had acquired another new use. It would continue to be chanted during Advent, but it was now also chanted on the new Feast of the Annunciation, on 25 March, the date of the spring equinox in the Julian Calendar. As we have seen, Christian writers had for centuries considered that date to be the anniversary of Good

Friday. It seems likely that the Annunciation feast was celebrated at Hexham, i.e., near the Ruthwell area, after Bishop Wilfrid returned from Rome and was made bishop of Hexham in 706 c.e., perhaps a generation before the Ruthwell Cross was erected. At Rome Wilfrid had been accompanied by his chaplain Acca, who would succeed him as bishop of Hexham in 709.<sup>34</sup>

This new use of the annunciation pericope on the anniversary of the crucifixion provided the English poet with a model for a new and heroic crucifixion narrative, a royal *adventus* that revealed the unity between Christ's divine and human wills. On 25 March Mary had encountered "the strength or bravery of God" in Gabriel; now the English poet retold the crucifixion as a tragic variant of the annunciation, in which on 25 March the startled Cross encountered "the strength or bravery of God" in Christ himself, "brave before all men." The concept of variation, which we have found useful in examining the Bewcastle cross-shaft, is crucial in appreciating the poet's strategy: the differences between these two events are as significant as the similarities. Gabriel had immediately calmed Mary's fear, resolved her dilemma, and waited to hear her willing assent to God's plan. The English poet narrates the crucifixion as a silent and tragic ordeal. The Cross gets no explanation of what is happening: instead of receiving an angel's reassurance, it has to endure, with Christ, the mockery of their enemies. It is only when these terrible events are long past that the Cross can in the poem sing of its silent ordeal when confronted with *fortitudo Dei*, the bravery/strength of God. The poet uniquely grasped that at both the incarnation and the passion Christ acted in cooperation with created beings who were each, in different but comparable ways, startled but obedient: Mary at the incarnation, and the Cross at the passion.

To read the two great columns of runes in which the first *titulus* is set out we have had to move from the right border of the inhabited vine-scroll to its left border (fig. 9a). If we now continue, following the sun's daily course, we come to the first broad face of the cross: the side that, it is likely, originally faced east. Each morning the rising sun would have shone directly on images of the two great Advent lections: the annunciation (at the bottom of the shaft) and the visitation (on the damaged upper stone, the top of the shaft). The annunciation (figs 9b and 10a) is represented as a confrontation between the archangel Gabriel, who advances from the left, and the Virgin Mary, who shrinks back slightly: the angel's halo begins four centimeters in from the left border of the panel, while Mary's halo touches the right border; Mary's dress swings back so far that its hem invades the right border. With her right hand Mary points at her own body just under her chin—a gesture expressing her perplexity—while her left hand clutches her dress in front of her body as though in surprise or alarm. The long Latin *titulus* comes from near the beginning of the lection. Though damaged, it can be reconstructed as Luke 1:28: "The angel, coming in, said to her: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.'"

The idea that Mary is blessed among women seems to have been still more strikingly expressed in the damaged Latin *titulus*, in runes, for the visitation panel on the upper stone (fig. 11). On the left border the name "Martha" can be made out: it seems likely that that damaged border at one time bore the names "[Maria et] Martha," with reference to the sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany. The upper border apparently reads *Maria m[ate]r*, "Mary the mother [of Christ]." The damaged inscription on the right border begins with the word *dominnæ*, "ladies"; its continuation is lost. Thus the visitation panel seems to have praised Mary among other "ladies," as the annunciation panel had done ("in mulieribus"). It was particularly appropriate to name Mary and Martha of Bethany among these ladies, for the usual Gospel for the feast of the Virgin

Mary's death and entry into heaven (15 August) was the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42). On that day, the greatest Marian feast of the year, Christ's praise of Mary Magdalen, "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her," was by implication applied to the Virgin herself. In other words, the liturgy used Christ's praise of Mary of Bethany, who had chosen not to act as handmaid but to listen to the Lord's word, as an analogy for the greater honor which, precisely on this feast of her entry into heaven, the Lord gave his own mother, the handmaid of the Lord whose free choice to bear the Word would cause all generations to call her blessed. The designer could hardly have found a more forceful way to express the idea that Mary was blessed among women.

The visitation panel itself (fig. 11) represents the two mothers, Mary (left) and Elizabeth (right), who celebrate their pregnancies with remarkably physical gestures. Elizabeth's open left hand, on which the separate fingers and thumb can be distinguished, touches and feels the life within Mary's womb, while Mary's right forearm reaches out to touch her cousin's left upper arm. Mary thus agrees, and collaborates with, the exploratory gesture of her cousin.

The Ruthwell designer directed our attention to the significance of pregnancy in the visitation scene by placing a vivid archer, drawing his bow, in the small panel just above (fig. 11). Slung over the archer's left shoulder, and hanging down in front of his body, a large satchel acts as his quiver. In the satchel is a rectangular object, its edges slightly bevelled: the satchel seems to be a book-satchel, and the square object a copy of the Gospels or of Scripture. This archer seems to take his ammunition from the word of God: in Christian commentary, archers were traditionally seen as images of the preacher, who shoots the words of Scripture into the hearts of his audience.<sup>35</sup> But it is likely that the reference to preaching in this vivid panel is more specific than this. The entrance chant for the midsummer feast of the birth of John the Baptist, 24 June, declared of John that

from my mother's womb the Lord has called me by my name: he has made my mouth like a sharp sword; he has protected me under the covering of his hand, and placed me like a chosen arrow. [Psalm:] It is good to give praise to the Lord [Psalm 92:1]. [For the repetition:] The just shall flourish like the palm tree [Psalm 92:12].<sup>36</sup>

The Epistle for that midsummer Mass was Isaiah 49:1–7, and its opening verses provided every literate cleric with the source of the Introit just quoted:

1 Listen, you islands, and give ear, you people from far off,  
the Lord has called me from the womb:  
from the womb of my mother he has remembered my name,  
2 and he has made my mouth like a harp sword:  
in the shadow of his hand he has protected me, and has made  
me like a chosen arrow; in his quiver he has hidden me.

The Christian scholarly tradition universally applied all of this chapter of Isaiah to Christ himself; in particular, it affirmed that Christ was "like a chosen arrow" hidden in God's quiver when he grew to life in Mary's virginal womb.<sup>37</sup> The liturgy of 24 June, in singing that John the Baptist was the "chosen arrow" hidden in God's quiver, was a startling example of how liturgical use could proclaim new dimensions of meaning in scriptural texts. Such hyperbole was an appropriate gift to John on his birthday. It reminded all how close John, the messenger (*angelus*: Mark 1:2) and

the preacher par excellence, was to his cousin, Christ: if Gabriel's name indicated that he personified "fortitudo Dei," the courage or strength of God, John's name indicated that he represented "him who was full of grace, or the grace of God."<sup>38</sup> It was to emphasize the unique closeness between the cousins that the church had constructed the Christian solar cycle, centered on the solstices and equinoxes, that we have already discussed. Placed as it is, the archer image provides a vivid metaphor for what was central to the visitation scene: the hidden presence, and mutual recognition, of these two "chosen arrows." The archer panel made it impossible for a monastic audience to ignore the physicality of the visitation scene just below it. There the sculptor concentrates on the moment when both mothers spontaneously react to John who, leaping for silent joy within Elizabeth's womb, has physically proclaimed Christ's presence. The archer panel insists that this dramatic moment should be understood, not as a static isolated "icon," but as a crucial stage in the historic process that had already transformed the history of those "islands" at the end of the earth, Ireland and Britain, and of that "people from far off," the Northumbrians. The archer, a heroic image, emphasizes that Christians are always called to be heroic: not merely to understand history, but to change it. The archer panel, encapsulating the dynamism of this side of the cross-shaft, encourages a monastic audience to remember that the annunciation (at the foot of the shaft: 25 March) would, after the visitation, lead first to the midsummer nativity of John the Baptist (24 June),<sup>39</sup> then six months later to the midwinter nativity of Christ (25 December), and thus to Christ's heroic victory over death (25 March). Although there is no sundial on the Ruthwell Cross the sun's yearly course, marking the seasons by solstices and equinoxes, is central to its meaning.

Between annunciation and visitation the designer juxtaposed two images of encounter with Christ (fig. 10b). First, just above the annunciation panel Christ heals the man blind from birth (John 9:1–38), an image of conversion; then, above it and just below the visitation panel, the woman who was a sinner kneels at the feet of Christ (Luke 7:36–50), an image of repentance. The long captions for these panels quote from the appropriate Gospel pericopes, each of which has Lenten associations. The healing of the man blind from birth in Saint John's Gospel (9:1–38) was chanted on Wednesday of the fourth week in Lent, at a major ceremony (the "opening of the ears" or *apertio aurium*) in which the catechumens preparing for Easter baptism were symbolically presented with the four Gospels.<sup>40</sup> The high relief sculpture represents the dramatic moment when Christ, having mixed earth with his own spittle, anoints the sightless eyes of the man born blind. Like the archangel Gabriel in the panel just below, Christ leans forward slightly. A thin incised line runs from Christ's right hand to the blind man's face: a rod may originally have been attached along this line, to represent, in a vivid three-dimensional image, the rod with which Christ applied to the blind man's eyes earth that he had mixed with his spittle. The sculptor followed early Christian iconography and, in concentrating on the moment of anointing, focused our attention on an action that symbolized the incarnation. Augustine had seen Christ's mixing of his own spittle with (*adam-like*) earth as symbolizing the way in which Christ had, in his own person, forever unified the divine with the human: "And we were born blind from Adam, and we have need of him who enlightens. He mixed saliva with earth: 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'"<sup>41</sup>

The lection telling of the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36–50) was read just before Lent. Gregory the Great, followed by Bede, identified this repentant woman with Mary Magdalen. Thus the Ruthwell community would have seen this vivid scene as beginning a major spiritual biography: the repentant love which here brought her forgiveness would lead Mary Magdalen to stand by the cross on Good Friday (John 19:25), and, on Easter Sunday, to be commanded by

the risen Christ to announce the resurrection to the apostles (John 20:17).<sup>42</sup> The Ruthwell *titulus* emphasizes how intense her repentance was: “She brought an alabaster box of ointment, and standing behind, (beside) his feet, she began to moisten his feet with tears, and with the hair of her own head she wiped (them)” (Luke 7:37–8). These verses were paraphrased in a Roman antiphon sung on Holy Thursday, the day when public sinners who, in order to do Lenten penance, had been formally “expelled” from the church on Ash Wednesday, were reconciled to the Church in time to celebrate Good Friday and Easter as members of the Christian community.<sup>43</sup> The sculptor has skewed Christ’s legs towards the right of the panel so that both of his feet are visible (fig. 10b). Mary’s intent face bends over his right foot to bathe it with her tears, while she stretches out her right arm and hand to dry his left foot with a smooth hank of her hair. Mary Magdalen responds here to Christ’s humanity, symbolised by his feet, with an intense love which will lead her, as the great contemplative, to worship his divinity by anointing his head (Mark 14:3, 8; Matt 26:7). As Bede put it,

By our Lord’s head, which Mary anointed, is represented the sublimity of his divinity, and by his feet the humility of his incarnation. We anoint his feet when we proclaim with due praise the mystery of the incarnation which he took upon himself, we anoint his head when we venerate the loftiness of his divinity with an assent that is worthy of being spoken of.<sup>44</sup>

The Ruthwell designer created a sequence of five panels (including the archer) which, of all early medieval sculpture, most coherently celebrates how Christ’s incarnation provides a model for the catechuminate and the rites of Christian initiation (fig. 9b). During the Lenten scrutinies of the catechumens the bishop told them that “already [in Lent] having conceived you the pregnant Church rejoices,”<sup>45</sup> and images of pregnancy and new birth predominated in the baptismal ceremonies of the Easter vigil. Pope Leo I the Great (440–61) repeatedly linked the rebirth of the Christian neophytes from the baptismal font to Christ’s birth from Mary’s womb:

He placed in the font of Baptism that very origin which he had assumed in the Virgin’s womb. He gave to the water what he had given to his Mother. For, the same power of the Most High and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) that caused Mary to bear the Saviour makes the water bring the believer to new birth.<sup>46</sup>

At Ruthwell the annunciation and visitation panels provide an enclosing envelope, a symbolic womb for the central images, of conversion and repentance. Not only are the blind man and Mary Magdalen represented at the moment when they come to spiritual birth, they are also represented at the moment when they, like the Virgin, begin to bring Christ to birth, when they begin to be a “brother and a sister and a mother” to Christ.<sup>47</sup> On Easter morning the angels addressed Mary Magdalen simply as “woman” (John 20:13), and, when he appears to her, Christ at first also calls her “woman” (v. 15); only then, when she tells him she is seeking for Christ’s body, does he call her by her name, “Mary” (v. 16) for the first time in the scene. Saint Ambrose saw in this an image of how all spiritual growth, for men as well as for women, meant re-enacting the Virgin Mary’s role at the incarnation: “when she did not believe, she was ‘woman’; when she begins to be converted, she is called ‘Mary’: that is, she receives her name who brings Christ to birth, for now she is a soul who spiritually brings forth Christ.”<sup>48</sup>

It is possible that the original transom of the Ruthwell Cross, which has never been found, represented a baptismal scene, possibly John baptizing Christ in the Jordan: later cross-

transoms, representing such scenes, have survived from Northumbria.<sup>49</sup> Above the transom the small panel at the head of the cross has survived: this fragment was mistakenly reversed in the nineteenth-century restoration. It depicts an eagle, with hooked beak, clinging to a vine-scroll: in baptism the youth of the neophytes was renewed “like that of the eagle.”<sup>50</sup> In the context of a baptismal scene on the transom the eagle, another image of life renewed, would have brought to an appropriate climax the profound meditation, on this side of the cross, on how the stages of Christian initiation re-enacted those of Christ’s incarnation and birth.

Continuing sunwise around the cross we come to the second narrow side, which probably faced south originally (fig. 12). Like the opposite narrow side it is covered by a great inhabited vine-scroll. The titulus for the vine-scroll on this southern side of the lower stone brings the vernacular verse crucifixion-narrative to its conclusion. Once more the designer has carefully edited the *titulus* to form two great columns of runes, each of them a coherent sentence. The first runs across the top of the lower stone, and then down the right hand side of the vine-scroll:

Christ was on the cross [+ *krist wæs on rōdi*]  
 But eager ones came thither from afar  
 noble ones came together: I beheld all that:  
 I was terribly afflicted with sorrows:  
 I bowed {to the hands of the men}<sup>51</sup>

The first clause of this sentence encapsulates in four words the reason why the symbol of the cross has always been central to Christian liturgy and art. In this epitome the poet uses the technical word for a Christian liturgical cross (*rōd*, modern “rood”) for the only time in the poem: it is in bearing Christ that the Cross, fulfilling its destiny, is revealed as a rood. On the other side of the cross, the poem had begun with a theophany of the courage, at once human and divine, of “Almighty God” as revealed in Christ, “brave before all men.” This second side begins with a double epiphany of how the Rood “raises up” Christ (cf. John 12:32): at this point both the Rood and Christ (Greek *Christos*, “the anointed one,” “the Messiah”) are named by their true titles for the only time in the poem. After this epiphany everything in the poem changes: this second titulus methodically reverses the themes of the first. On the opposite (north) side, the Cross and Christ were together mocked by their enemies; now Christ’s followers hasten from afar to the Cross. Referring to Christ’s prophecy in John 12:32 that “if I be raised up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself,” the poet has created a poetic narrative of how each Christian community is created by being drawn together around Christ crucified (*ecclesia* derives from “calling together”).<sup>52</sup> In the first titulus the Cross was required to stand immobile and to kill its Lord, but now, in an image that has no parallel in medieval art, literature, or theology, the Cross bows down to present the body of Christ to his gathered followers.

In the fourth and final sentence of the poem they contemplate that dead human body (the Northumbrian poem uses the word *līc*, “a corpse”), emptied even of its blood. Divine kenosis can go no further:

Wounded with arrows  
 They laid him down limb-weary [*limwæsignæ*];  
 They stood at the head and feet of his dead body.  
 There they looked upon [the lord of heaven].<sup>53</sup>

The heroic metaphor “arrows” (the poet uses the word *strāel*, which can mean “spear” as well as “arrow”) is flexible enough to encompass the wound of the spear in Christ’s side as well as the wounds of the nails in his hands and feet. The image keeps our attention concentrated on the pouring out of Christ’s blood. Christ has become “limb-weary” through the wounds in his limbs. The wonderful adjective “limb-weary” is the earliest recorded example of English understatement (litotes). In *Beowulf*, to be “battle-weary” is used to mean “killed in battle”; here, to say Christ is “limb-weary” means that he has been “brought to death by [the wounds in] his limbs.” The closely-related kenotic metaphors of stripping/emptying provide the unifying images behind the whole Ruthwell poem. Christ’s followers who here contemplate his “limb-weary” body look on him whom they themselves have pierced, through their sins.<sup>54</sup>

The final image of the poem, of a new kind of hero “who in his own self bore our sins on his body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice,”<sup>55</sup> presented any audience at Ruthwell who read the runes or heard them chanted with an urgent challenge. How were they, today and at Ruthwell, to look upon this body? how to recognize it? how to react to it? The Ruthwell designer provided an unforgettable response to this challenge. If we move, taking the hint provided by the columns of runes, and following the sun’s daily course, to the side of the cross that probably faced west originally, we come upon the sequence of two panels we have already seen at Bewcastle: Christ acclaimed by the beasts and, directly above, John the Baptist acclaiming the Agnus Dei. But the Ruthwell designer has transformed the meaning of the sequence by putting it in a new context. These two panels now form the third and fourth stages of the five-fold sequence of panels which, of all early medieval sculpture, most coherently explores how Christ is to be seen and recognized, particularly in the Eucharist and in the Good Friday liturgy.

Reading upwards, Christ is first represented as a child in his mother’s lap borne from Egypt back to Israel: here he fulfills the manna which once fed the people of Israel in their desert wanderings.

Next, Christ is recognized in the breaking of bread: the second panel represents two standing male figures in flowing ecclesiastical robes who together break a loaf of bread between them (fig. 13a). At the Irish Columban monastery of Iona visiting priests were honored by being asked to celebrate the community Mass; at the breaking of bread the priest called the abbot of the monastery to him so that together they could break bread in imitation of the first monks in Egypt. Saint Anthony the abbot had visited the first monk, Saint Paul of Thebes, in his desert hermitage, and they had broken between them the loaf brought miraculously from heaven by a raven. The Iona liturgical tableau had been created, perhaps by the founder Saint Columba himself, as an enacted image of monastic courtesy, expressed through eucharistic celebration. The Ruthwell panel refers primarily to this Irish Columban custom, while its titulus recalls the episode (in Jerome’s *Vita Sancti Pauli*) from which Iona had developed its eucharistic tableau: “Saints Paul and A[nthony, hermits] broke bread in the desert.”<sup>56</sup> Scenes representing or referring to Saints Paul and Anthony breaking bread in the desert are common on Pictish (Columban) monastic monuments and on Irish high crosses, but, apart from Ruthwell, we have no other certain English example. It is possible that the Iona tableau was imitated by the Ruthwell community in order to honor visiting priests. Whether or not this happened, the panel shows us the Ruthwell designer reaching out beyond the Roman liturgy to a liturgical tableau practiced at Iona: this Ruthwell panel, an eirenic image of monastic courtesy placed in a eucharistic setting, is itself a startling and moving example of courteous exchange between the

Roman and the Irish liturgical traditions.

Thirdly, Christ is acclaimed by the natural world, with particular reference to the chants sung on Good Friday at the ninth hour. As at Bewcastle the majestic Christ blesses the closed scroll in his left hand and the beasts at his feet, but now the theme of the *Liber Vitae*, central to the Bewcastle design, is subordinated to that of eucharistic recognition of Christ, the new Adam. The beasts, by crossing their paws in acclamation of Christ, once more silently proclaim that the harmony of Paradise has been restored (fig. 13a). Now their crossed paws echo, not an X-shaped g-rune as on the Bewcastle Cross, but the similarly shaped Greek letter *chi* in the divine name on the panel's upper border: "IhS XPS IVDEX AEQUITATIS," "Jesus Christ the judge of fairness." The rest of the titulus reminds the audience of the story's beginning, and of the beginning of Lent: "Beasts and dragons recognized in the desert the Saviour of the World." The temptation of Christ (in Matthew 4:1–11) always provided the Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent. The Ruthwell titulus recalls another version of this narrative, Mark 1:13: "he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him." The designer composed a titulus that echoed Mark, not Matthew, so that, by its reference to Mark's "wild beasts," the panel could link the desert sojourn of the first Sunday to the culminating ninth hour on Good Friday when the cantors sang in succession the two ancient chants, first from Habbakuk ("you will be known in the midst of two animals") and then from Psalm 91 ("you will tread down the lion and the dragon"). In this way the panel could encapsulate the unity of the season of Lent.

Fourthly, on the damaged upper stone at the top of the shaft John the Baptist acclaims the Agnus Dei: once more, a variant of the corresponding Bewcastle panel (fig. 13b). The context of this panel on the upper stone enables us to see with particular clarity how and why the Bewcastle program was expanded at Ruthwell. Bewcastle had hinted at the unity between the incarnation and the passion, in particular by its references to the sun and the Christian solar cycle; this idea is now fully expanded at Ruthwell. On the upper stone, John the Baptist pointing to the Agnus Dei fulfills the promise of the visitation-archer sequence at the other side. On that first side the "chosen arrows," John the Baptist and Christ, were still "hidden in [God's] quiver": the quiver of Scripture, the quivers of Elizabeth's and Mary's wombs. Now, on the second side, John is fully revealed. Though already clad in soft garments as part of the heavenly liturgy, he is still the messenger (*angelus*), acclaiming Christ as the Agnus Dei, the center of that liturgy (Rev chs. 4 and 5). The visitation panel on the first side was inscribed in Latin, but in runes, a native alphabet associated with secrecy and riddles, and all other (now fragmentary) inscriptions on that first side of the upper stone are also in runes. But what was once hidden is now revealed: on the second side the Agnus Dei panel is again inscribed in Latin, but this time in Roman script, the script and language in which liturgy and Gospels were proclaimed. On this second side of the shaft Christ acclaimed by the beasts is flanked by an image with Roman associations (as we have seen, the Agnus Dei chant had recently been introduced from Rome to accompany the breaking of bread for Communion) and, below, by an image with Irish associations (two ecclesiastics break bread, in imitation of the Iona tableau and of the first monks of Egypt). As we have seen, the breaking of bread for Communion was understood to symbolize the breaking of Christ's body on the cross by the nails and spear: thus the upper three panels of this side of the Ruthwell shaft provide a unified and ecumenical image of how Christ's heroic death was made present in daily Mass, and above all in Good Friday liturgies.

Although the transom is missing, enough fragments of the cross-head remain to make it certain that this side represented the four evangelists, each identified by his symbol. These four would have surrounded another portrait of Christ at the crossing: probably a bust-portrait, but possibly, once more, the Agnus Dei. Saint Matthew with his symbol, the angel, survives below the missing transom; Saint John with his eagle survives on the upper arm (now mistakenly reversed). Thus the portrait of Christ, at the center of the cross-head, was probably flanked by images, on the transom, of Saint Mark with his lion and Saint Luke with his ox. If so, here once more Christ was to be recognized *in medio duorum animalium*, in the midst of two animals. The cross-head, structured as a quincunx, provided a unified five-fold symbol of the heavenly liturgy. It brought the program of the whole cross to a triumphant eschatological conclusion, but also referred back to the Lenten catechumenate, and so to the first broad side of the cross. In the Roman liturgy the Lenten instruction of the catechumens included a “passing on of the Gospels” in which the celebrant explained how the symbol of each evangelist epitomized his Gospel.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Liturgical Inculturation***

The Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses, both, are triumphs of liturgical inculturation.<sup>58</sup> Bewcastle adapts images of the tree and the sun’s course, important in native pre-Christian religion as well as in pre-Christian Mediterranean traditions, to Christian purposes. To imply the importance of union with Christ it refers to a number of complementary metaphors: the Cross as an integrative image forming “the sign of the Son of Man”; salvation as involving inscription in the Book (or Scroll) of Life; Christians as “living stones” joined to Christ the “corner stone”; the Church, sustained by the Eucharist, as “the body of Christ” whose members can help each others by their prayers. The Ruthwell Cross expresses several of the Bewcastle themes, but in a more developed and radical manner. It makes the Tree of Life even more central, the symbolic core of the cross. Its designer edited, from a pre-existing English vernacular poem, two matching ekphrastic narrative tituli for the twofold Tree of Life. The central theme of this poem is Christ’s courage, and his startlingly new kind of heroism, based not on pride and aggression but on kenotic self-giving: the central symbol for this is Christ’s blood, which drenches the Cross. The poem presents the crucifixion as an heroic advent, and the Cross as a loyal Germanic follower who is agonizingly required, first to stand fast and bear its lord to his death, and then, in eloquent silence, to bow down to present its lord’s dead body to his followers.

Contemplation of the vine-scrolls in the narrative order of their tituli leads the audience to follow the sun’s daily course around the cross, and thus to contemplate the two broad sides in due order. When we move sunwise from the narrow to the broad sides, we proceed from the ancient runic crucifixion narrative (the runic verse tituli) to a figural program that explores the implications of that narrative for the Ruthwell community; then, continuing our sunwise movement, we return to the second stage of that ancient foundation-narrative before again exploring its present-day implications. From the first runic titulus dramatizing the Cross’s confrontation with Christ “brave before all men” we move to Mary’s confrontation with *Fortitudo Dei* at the annunciation. This scene begins a rich sequence of images presenting the incarnation and growth of Christ in the Virgin’s womb as the model for all spiritual growth. From the second titulus, telling how the Cross presents Christ to his followers, we move to a richly coherent sequence of images showing the ways Christ is to be recognized in daily Mass, and especially in the Good Friday liturgy.

The Ruthwell Cross builds on the concepts found in brief in the Bewcastle Cross, to present the

life of this Christian community as centered on the passion of Christ, mediated to them by the two great sacraments, *aqua et sanguis*: Lenten catechumenate and baptism, culminating in the Eucharist.<sup>59</sup> Though there is no sundial at Ruthwell, an important feature of the monument is how the liturgy proclaims the Christ-event by means of the sun's seasonal course through the equinoxes and solstices. The sun's daily course was also marked on this monument. Each morning, when at Lauds clerics, monks, and nuns sang the Benedictus, the dawning sun could be seen behind and (usually) to the right of John the Baptist acclaiming the Agnus Dei. When this happened, John's right index finger, pointing across his body, could be seen to point beyond the Agnus Dei to the morning sun, *oriens ex alto*.<sup>60</sup> Each evening, when at Vespers they sang the Magnificat, the sun set behind the eloquent visitation panel where Mary, on the point of intoning her great canticle, does not face directly towards her cousin but partially out beyond the panel, as though to involve the spectators in her song.<sup>61</sup> When the cross still stood in the open air (and assuming that it then was oriented as the Bewcastle shaft still is) Elizabeth (the figure on the right) gazed fixedly, not only towards Mary, but towards the afternoon sun.

When these crosses were first erected, local audiences must have experienced "the shock of the new" when looking at such sophisticated sculpture. These crosses transformed the idea of standing stones, an important feature of the pre-Christian landscape of Britain and Ireland, to new Christian purposes.<sup>62</sup> Bewcastle was concerned with memory: it proclaimed that Christianity offered the possibility that history itself could be sanctified: that it created new and intimate relationships between present and past generations by offering them participation in Christ through the communion of saints. Such participation, enacted in Eucharistic celebration, would offer all (not just those important people named on the cross) the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. It seems likely that the Ruthwell designer, familiar with the Bewcastle Cross, worked out much more extensively the implications of these subversive beliefs, though it would also be possible to argue that the Bewcastle designer preserved from the Ruthwell Cross only those two panels vital to the theme of *Liber Vitae*. Ruthwell redefines nobility much more radically than Bewcastle: there are no names of local aristocrats or patrons at Ruthwell, and no "falconer." At Ruthwell nobility depends, not on aristocratic birth, but on radical responses to Christ who called to his kingdom, not the rich, powerful, and pious, but outcasts and sinners. An important key to understanding the imagery of the Ruthwell Cross is the Christian tradition of *sermo humilis*: the idea that the fate of poor people is every bit as important as that of the powerful (*quia respexit humilitatem*, Luke 1:48). For people brought up on poems such as *Beowulf*, where the heroes are aristocratic to a man, this idea must have been shocking.<sup>63</sup> Suddenly, on the Ruthwell Cross, what happens to ordinary people becomes of vital importance: we are invited to interpret our lives, and the course of history, in terms of a blind man, a woman who was a sinner, pregnant mothers, monks sharing bread. Suddenly, women become major protagonists, not the secondary figures they are in poems such as *Beowulf*: five images of women survive on the Ruthwell Cross, including three of the Virgin Mary. Suddenly, God becomes not merely human, but humane: healing, forgiving, blessing, and in harmony with newly-converted beasts and dragons, those threatening presences against whom the pagan hero Beowulf had struggled to the death. Here, on the sixth day at the ninth hour, the universal harmony of Paradise is recreated. Animals now feast from the eucharistic Tree of Life, and symbolize the heavenly liturgy in which the Ruthwell community already participate. Here, where the Eucharist is celebrated eagles gather on the upmost arm of the cross; on the upper stone, Christ is acclaimed as the Lamb; at the culmination of the visual program on the broad sides the evangelists' symbols place Christ yet again in the midst of animals.<sup>64</sup> Around the Tree of Life, the symbolic core of the cross, the runic verse *tituli* that sing

of the encounter between the Cross and Christ present, perhaps for the first time in written form, a new human ideal: a humility at once kenotic and heroic.

The primary function of both crosses was devotional: central to each is an image of Christ in majesty, blessing created beings, but their devotional strategies were different. While the Bewcastle Cross assured its community of their incorporation as “living stones” into the Book of Life and the Body of Christ, the Ruthwell Cross demonstrated to its community in much greater detail how, through the *aqua et sanguis* (John 19:34) and, for some, the monastic life, they could participate in Christ’s incarnation, passion, and heroic victory over death.

## ENDNOTES

1. The best description of the Bewcastle Cross is in Richard Bailey and Rosemary Cramp, eds., *Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands* (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2; London and Oxford: The British Academy and Oxford University Press, 1988), 19–22 and 61–72; a description of the Ruthwell Cross will be found in Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the “Dream of the Rood” Tradition* (London and Toronto: the British Library and Toronto University Press, 2005). On the cultural background of the crosses, see Richard N. Bailey, *England’s Earliest Sculptors* (Publications of the Dictionary of Old English 2; Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), especially 42–44, 52–53, 61–70.

2. Two recent examples: Fred Orton, Ian Wood, and Clare Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments* (Manchester: University Press, 2007); Patrick W. Conner, “The Ruthwell Monument Runic Poem in a Tenth-Century Context,” *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008), 25–51.

3. The Elizabethan antiquarians are Reginald Bainbrigg, who wrote a Latin note on the Ruthwell Cross, and, separately, another on Bewcastle Cross for William Camden in 1599–1601, and Nicholas Roscarrock, who wrote Camden a note on the Bewcastle Cross in August 1607. See *Ritual and the Rood*, 13, 33.

4. See Jennifer O’Reilly, “The Art of Authority,” in *After Rome*, ed. Thomas Charles-Edwards, 140–89 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), at p. 153.

5. Tullio Veglianti, ed., *Dizionario teologico sul Sangue di Cristo* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 1167–75 :“Sangue dell’uva”; cf. Gen 2:9; Ps 1; Prov 3:18; Rev 2:7; 22:2.

6. Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 267–96.

7. North, *Heathen Gods*, 290.

8. Bailey and Cramp, *Cumberland*, 65–66.

9. Bailey, *England’s Earliest Sculptors*, 66.

10. Bailey and Cramp, *Cumberland*, 69–70.

11. For the coins, see Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to*

*Eighth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95–98.

12. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors*, 67; *Ritual and the Rood*, 41–42.

13. *Ritual and the Rood*, 46–47.

14. R. I. Page in Bailey and Cramp, *Cumberland*, 65.

15. *Ritual and the Rood*, 120–23.

16. *Ibid.*, 186–87.

17. *Ibid.*, 160–64.

18. *Ibid.*, 160.

19. Bailey and Cramp, *Cumberland*, 65–66.

20. This north side originally received the slanting rays of the sun in the period just before and just after the Summer solstice when the sun would have appeared to rise a little to the north-east of the shaft. Nowadays the south wall of the nave of Bewcastle parish church, just north of the cross-shaft, prevents the setting sun from shining on the monument.

21. See Henri Quentin, ed., *Les martyrologes historiques du moyen âge: Étude sur la formation du martyrologe romain* (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1908), 50, 52, 54, 55.

22. For an edition of the Old English text, and detailed commentary, see *Ritual and the Rood*, 79–80.

23. *Ibid.*, 81–83, 225–28.

24. *Ibid.*, 82.

25. On Christ's blood as a symbol of kenosis, see Veglianti, *Dizionario*, 734–40: "Kenosi."

26. For an edition of the Old English text, see *Ritual and the Rood*, 80–81.

27. *Ibid.*, 4–7.

28. See especially Ps 24:7–10; Ps 119:19–29.

29. See James W. McKinnon, *The Advent Project: The Later-Seventh-Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 125–53.

30. *Ritual and the Rood*, 85–86.

31. The crucial figure in introducing the idea seems to have been Augustine. See Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 181–82, and note 71 on p. 293 for further references.

32. *Homilies on the Gospels*, tr. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, 1 (Cistercian Studies Series 110; Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 24, translating Bedae Venerabilis Opera, 2,

*Opera Homiletica: Bedae Venerabilis Homiliarum Evangelii Libri II*, ed. D. Hurst (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina [=CCSL] 122; Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 17, lines 129–32; see also *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, 3, *Opera Exegetica*, 3: In *Lucae Evangelium Expositio*, ed. D. Hurst (CCSL 120; Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), 33, lines 550–51.

33. *Homilies on the Gospels*, 1: 20, translating homily 1:3 (on Luke 1:26–38), CCSL 122, 14–15, lines 19–28. Bede provided a more extensive version of the same passage in his commentary on Luke: CCSL 120, 30, lines 432–9. In both passages Bede is adapting Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 34 (on Luke 15:1–10) lines 213–21, ed. Raymond Etaix (CCSL 141; Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 307. For discussion of the tradition of seeing the incarnation as a heroic *adventus*, see *Ritual and the Rood*, 84–85, 106, and notes. It was Bede’s unobtrusive but original idea to transfer the passage from its original context (a discussion of archangels) to discussions of the annunciation narrative itself.

34. *Ritual and the Rood*, 245–47.

35. *Ibid.*, 141–43.

36. René-Jean Hesbert, ed., *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Brussels: Vromant, 1935; reprinted, Rome: Herder, 1967), Introit for the Nativity of John the Baptist (VIII Kalendas Iulias: 24 June), 134–35, No. 119.

37. Jerome’s interpretation sums up a rich and consistent tradition of Christian commentary on these verses. Following the New Testament itself (Acts 13:44–9, 2 Cor 6:1–2, Rev 7:13–17), Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Jerome all interpret Isaiah ch. 49 as a prophecy of Christ’s incarnation and mission: they never refer the chapter to John the Baptist. For a wide-ranging survey, with translations from these authors, see R. L. Wilken, with A. Russell Christman and M. J. Hollerich, eds. and trans., *Isaiah Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* (The Church’s Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 363–74.

38. Jerome, *Liber Interpretationis Hebraicorum Nominum*, ed. Paul de Lagarde (CCSL 72; Turnhout: Brepols, 1959), 136, line 6: “Iohannan cui est gratia uel domini gratia.”

39. Apart from the Introit and Epistle for 24 June, discussed above, scriptural images that, for any Christian community, recall the visitation dominate the Masses for the Nativity of John the Baptist and for its Vigil (23 June): Luke 1:13–14 (Introit of vigil Mass); Jeremiah 1:4–10 (Epistle of vigil Mass), echoed in the Gradual of the day Mass, based on Jeremiah 1:4 and 1:9.

40. On the lection and the ceremony, see *Ritual and the Rood*, 127–28. In eighth-century Northumbria the “catechumens” are likely to have been infants, held in the arms of their godmothers.

41. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, ed. R. Willems (CCSL 36; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), tr. 34, 9: p. 315, lines 6–8; trans. John W. Rettig, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 28–54* (Fathers of the Church 88; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 67. See also tr. 44, 2, *ibid.*, p. 382, lines 3–24; trans. Rettig, 176.

42. *Ritual and the Rood*, 128–37.

43. *Ibid.*, 131–32.

44. Bede, *Homeliarum Evangelii*, 2, 4 (CCSL 122), 210, lines 105–10; trans. Martin and Hurst, 2:37.
45. “Iam uobis conceptis prignans gloriatur Ecclesia”: see *Ritual and the Rood*, 137.
46. Sermon 25, 5 (CCSL 138:123), as translated by Jane Freeland and Agnes Conway, *St. Leo the Great: Sermons* (Fathers of the Church 93; Washington: Fathers of the Church, 1996), 103. See *Ritual and the Rood*, 139.
47. *Ibid.*, 138.
48. Ambrose *De Virginitate* 4, 20 (PL 16:271); *Ritual and the Rood*, 136–37.
49. *Ibid.*, 146–47.
50. *Ibid.*, 143–46; Psalm 103:5.
51. At the end of this sentence, and the next, runes have been lost through damage: the text is supplied from the later manuscript text of the narrative in *The Dream of the Rood*, in the Vercelli Book. See *Ritual and the Rood*, 180–81, for an edition and commentary on the Old English text.
52. *Ibid.*, 181.
53. *Ibid.*, 181–82, for the original text and further discussion.
54. See Zech 12:10, cited in John 19:37 and Rev 1:7.
55. I Peter 2:24: cf. Isaiah 53:5, 1 John 3:5
56. See *Ritual and the Rood*, 153–60.
57. For the *apertio aurium* ceremony in which the Gospels were “passed on” see *Ritual and the Rood*, 144–46.
58. On inculturation, see *ibid.*, 223–79, with further bibliographical references.
59. For use of the phrase *aqua et sanguis* (see John 19:34) to denote Baptism and Eucharist, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 1:6, xix [*De Officiis*], pars. 39–40; Veglianti, *Dizionario*, 1194–1202: “Sangue e aqua”; and also *Ritual and the Rood*, 123.
60. Luke 1:78: “in which the rising Sun has come from on high to visit us.” This morning phenomenon can still be seen at Bewcastle, where the cross-shaft is *in situ*. Shortly before and after the Summer solstice, the sun appeared to rise to the northeast of the cross-shafts and then, climbing to its zenith, swung southwards in the course of the morning. See John E. Wood, *Sun, Moon and Standing Stones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 59, fig. 4.2, and, for Christ as *Oriens*, see Robert B. Burlin, *The Old English Advent: A Typological Commentary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), 98–104.
61. *Ritual and the Rood*, 282.

62. On such stones, see *Wood, Sun, Moon and Standing Stones*.

63. On *sermo humilis*, see Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (Bollingen Series 74; New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 25–81.

64. See Matt 24:28: “where the body is, there will the eagles be,” as discussed in *Ritual and the Rood*, 143–46.

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