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XXIII

THE CROSS IN THE LIFE AND
LITERATURE OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS

BY

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PREFACE

The Old English poems, *Elene*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and the Doomsday Vision in the *Christ*, express a remarkable spirit of veneration for the Cross. The purpose of this study is to furnish a setting for these poems with respect to this devotion to the Cross. It is to find what were the ideas of the Cross inherited with Christianity; how much these ideas entered into the life and thought of the Anglo-Saxons; whether, in brief, this sentiment must be regarded as peculiar to Cynewulf and the poet of the *Dream of the Rood*, or whether it was more or less characteristic of the civilization to which these poems belong. It is also to discover whether this spirit found expression in forms other than poetry, whether it was more predominant at one time than another, and to account, if possible, for its existence.

These questions, and others suggested by them, will be taken up in the following pages; and, in attempting to provide a background for the Old English poetry of the Cross, I hope that some light may be thrown on the cultural history of this early and comparatively obscure period.

The translations of Old English prose that I have used are frequently quoted direct from the versions that accompany the texts in the editions cited. In the case of the poetry I have used Garnett's translation of the *Elene*, Whitman's of the *Christ*, and the *Translations from Old English Poetry*, edited by Cook and Tinker, which includes a translation of the *Dream of the Rood* by Miss Iddings.

In the references to texts and authorities, the abbreviations in the foot-notes should be recognized without special mention. Where the name of an author only is cited, the work is the only work facing his name in the bibliography, in the edition there mentioned. Some texts of the *Patrologia Latina* are reprints from other editions. In these the paging of the original is preserved by black-faced numerals. As the references in the indices of these volumes is to the original rather than to the actual paging, I have followed that system here.

CHAPTER I

VARIETIES OF CROSS-WORSHIP

The event of supreme importance in the history of the worship of the cross as an emblem of the Christian faith was the conversion of Constantine, which occurred in the year 312. This was the starting-point for all the adoration of the cross in the Middle Ages, and the one event which at a bound lifted the emblem from disgrace, and crowned it with glory and honor.

Up to that time the cross had been the Christian's reproach. While to him it was associated with the sacrifice of his Redeemer, to the world it meant only shame and misery. And because, with Paul, he gloried in the cross of Christ, he was taunted with being a 'worshiper of the cross' (*crucicolus*), a term which the Fathers resented and repudiated. So, to avoid the charge of stauolatry, and to save the symbol of the faith from the sport and malice of the pagans, the early Christians as a rule refrained from open representations of the cross. Instead, they used emblems, the '*cruces dissimulatæ*,' such as the letter Chi, the anchor, the so-called Swastika cross, and, chief of all, the famous Chi Rho monogram.

But after the vision of the cross in the heavens, and the subsequent conversion of the Emperor, the cross needed no longer to remain in hiding. Shortly after his conversion Constantine forbade magistrates or great land-owners any longer to use the cross as an instrument of punishment. So, while at first the ideas of ignominy were yet too freshly associated with the cross for it to be exalted publicly, and the monogram remained the favorite emblem, it came to pass that, as actual scenes of crucifixion faded from memory, the monogram steadily receded, and the cross came to the front. By the time of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons

the cross had replaced its former associations of shame by those of honor, its praises were sung like those of a god, and it was 'adored' by a formal ceremony of the church.

In the year 597, the missionary band led by Augustine landed in Kent, and established the Christian faith once more on British soil. Then followed a period of some four centuries and a half before the coming of the Normans. It is in the remains of this period that we must look for the ideas of the cross as they prevailed among the Anglo-Saxons.

Without a minute knowledge of the literature and rituals of the Roman, the Gallic, and the British churches it is impossible to define the sources for all the Anglo-Saxon ideas and practices under this head. But it is possible to give the facts as they are found, and to examine them in the light of such a general survey of the previous history of the Christian church as may be gained from authoritative works of reference. We may take as a starting-point the legendary history of the cross.

I. THE CROSS IN LEGEND

(a) *The Wood of the Cross*

The root of the mediæval legends of the True Cross is in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. Just after the announcement is made in hell that Christ is on his way to release the prophets and patriarchs, Seth, at his father's bidding, relates the ancient prophecy made to him by the archangel Michael (14. 3-8):

I, Seth, when I was praying to God at the gates of Paradise beheld the angel of the Lord, Michael, appear to me, saying, I am sent unto thee from the Lord; I am appointed to preside over human bodies. I tell thee, Seth, do not pray to God in tears and entreat him for the oil of the tree of mercy wherewith to anoint thy father Adam for his headache, because thou canst not by any means obtain it till the last day and times, namely till five thousand and five hundred years be past. Then will Christ, the most merciful Son of God, come on earth to raise again the human body of Adam, and

at the same time to raise the bodies of the dead, and when he cometh he will be baptized in Jordan. Then with the oil of mercy he will anoint all those who believe on him; and the oil of his mercy will continue to future generations, for those who shall be born of water and the Holy Ghost unto eternal life. And when at that time the most merciful Son of God, Christ Jesus, shall come down on earth, he will introduce our father Adam into Paradise, to the tree of mercy.

From this story developed during the Middle Ages a rich and varied body of legends, the general tenor of which runs as follows: When Adam fell sick unto death, he bade his son Seth go to the gate of Paradise and beg for a drop of the healing oil from the Tree of Life. But the archangel Michael answered Seth with the prophecy of the Messiah, and gave him instead a twig (according to some accounts a seed, in others three seeds) from the Tree of Life. When Adam died, Seth buried him on Golgotha, exactly where the cross of Christ was to stand. The seed, or shoot, he planted in Jerusalem, where it grew into a great tree. In Solomon's time it was cut down, on account of its beauty, to be used in the building of the temple; but as it proved always too short or too long to fit any place whatever, it was rejected, and finally thrown over the brook Kedron for a foot-bridge. When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon she refused to set foot upon it, declaring that one day it would cause the destruction of the Jews. Accordingly, Solomon caused it to be thrown into the pool of Bethesda, to the waters of which it imparted healing virtues. Finally, at the time of the trial of Christ, the beam came to the surface, and the Jews took it and made of it at least the upright part of the cross.

The Gospel of Nicodemus is found in an Old English translation, and the story of Seth's visit to Paradise was doubtless always familiar. But it is not till the fourteenth century that we find this elaborate story developed.¹ During the Anglo-Saxon period there seems to have been no

¹ Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood*.

✓ legend of the wood itself. In the *Dream of the Rood*, for example, there is no hint of the tree planted in Jerusalem, cut down by Solomon, and taken from the Pool of Bethesda for the Crucifixion. The Rood itself speaks, saying:

It was long, long ago
 Yet I recall, when, at the forest's edge,
 I was hewn down, and from my stem removed.¹

As to the kind of wood of which the cross was composed, there was a wide divergence of opinion. Chrysostom, for example, had applied the words of Isaiah: 'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious,'² to the different parts of the cross. And finally, in the *Golden Legend*, the version is given which has survived the rest, namely, that the upright part of the cross was of cedar, the cross-beam of cypress, the piece on which the feet rested of palm, and the slab on which the title was fastened of olive.

✓ But at the period which we are studying, or at least among the Anglo-Saxons, there seems to have been no canon in the matter. The quotation from the *Dream of the Rood* just cited shows that the author of that poem did not conceive of the cross as made of more than one kind of wood. (Pseudo.?) Bede, however, says:

The cross of the Lord was made of four kinds of wood, which are called cypress, cedar, pine, and box. But the box was not in the cross unless the tablet was of that wood, which was above the brow of Christ, on which the Jews wrote the title, 'Here is the King of the Jews.' The cypress was in the earth and even to the tablet, the cedar in the transverse, the pine, the upper end.³

But he is not quite sure about the box, and in the *Riddle on the Cross* there is a totally different enumeration. There the parts are described as ash or maple,⁴ oak, the 'hard yew'

¹ ll. 28-30.

² 60. 13.

³ *Patrolog. Lat.* 94, *Collectanea* 555.

⁴ No. 56. *Bibl. der A. S. Poesie*, Wülcker-Grein.

⁵ *hlin*, the meaning of which is doubtful.

and the 'dark holly.' Evidently the question was still a matter for individual speculation.

In his *Book of the Holy Places*, Bede speaks of the relic of the True Cross preserved at Constantinople as possessing a wonderful fragrance: 'A chest containing the relic is laid on a golden altar and exposed to view. As long as it remains open on the altar a marvelous odor spreads through the whole church, for an odoriferous liquor like oil flows from the knots of the holy wood, the least drop of which cures every complaint with which a man may be afflicted.¹ So, according to the *Martyrology*, the fragrance is 'a wonderful odor, as winsome as if there were collected there all kinds of flowers.'² Ælfric, also, in his account of the Exaltation of the Cross, dwells on this fragrance of the cross:

There was also another marvel, so that a winsome odor steamed from the Holy Cross when it was on its way home throughout the land, and filled the air; and the people rejoiced on account of their being filled with the odor. No perfume could give out so delightful a smell.³

This idea of fragrance may have originated in the lines of Fortunatus,

Funde aroma cortice
Vincens sapore nectare,⁴

but possibly it can be traced back further.

(b) *Relics of the True Cross in England*

In the metrical homily by Ælfric on the Exaltation of the Cross, quoted above, the writer says: 'It is, however, to be known that it—the cross—is widely distributed by means of frequent sections to every land. But the spiritual signification is always with God, ever incorruptible, though the tree be cut in pieces.' But there are not many references to relics of the True Cross finding their way to England during

¹ *Opera*, ed. Giles, 4, 440.

² *Æ. H.* i. 108-13.

³ *Mart.* 648.

⁴ 'Vexilla Regis' 2. 25-6.

the Anglo-Saxon period. In his life of St. Felix, Bede relates the havoc made by a conflagration that threatened an entire town. While the people were at church praying for assistance, Felix went home and, 'taking a small splinter of the wood of our Lord's cross, threw it into the midst of the fire. Immediately the flames subsided, and the small fragment of wood effected what so many men with abundance of water had not been able to accomplish.' Æthelstan received a piece of the cross, enclosed in a crystal, from King Hugh of Brittany,¹ and Pope Marinus² gave a fragment to King Alfred.

The so-called Brussels Cross bears these lines in Old English, reminiscent of the *Dream of the Rood*:

Rood is my name. Once long ago I bore,
Trembling, bedewed with blood, the mighty King.

From this it must be inferred that the wood was regarded as a fragment of the True Cross. This wood is bound together by strips of silver, as Ælfric says the cross was adorned by Helena after the Invention.³

It is evident, however, that relics of the True Cross had not yet become numerous in England during the period we are studying, and were regarded as gifts appropriate for kings and popes to bestow and receive.

(c) *The Vision of Constantine*

But the most popular legends of the cross were those that clustered about the vision of Constantine, including the stories of the Invention and the Exaltation, which were always associated with it. The famous story of the appearance of the cross in the heavens is connected with the victory of Constantine over Maxentius on the 28th of October, 312. It was the defeat and death of Maxentius upon this battle-field that made Constantine Emperor of the West. The story of the vision as told by Eusebius, which accord-

¹ Wm. Malmesb. p. 397. ² *A.-S. Chron.* A. 883. ³ *Æ. H.* 2. 306.

ing to his account was related to him by the Emperor himself, and ratified by an oath, is the best known. He says of Constantine that—‘about midday, when the sun was beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens above the sun and bearing the inscription, “Conquer by this.” At this sight, he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which . . . witnessed the miracle.’¹

Lactantius, Rufinus, and Sozomen tell only of a dream in which Constantine saw the cross and its accompanying inscription. And the Old English poem *Elene*,² the anonymous eleventh-century homily on the Invention of the Cross, and Ælfric’s sermon on the Invention,³ all tell of the cross as appearing in a dream in the early morning rather than as an apparition in the sky shortly after midday. The fact that these three Old English versions—one of the eighth, and the others of the eleventh century—agree in this important variation, shows that the accounts which the Anglo-Saxons had of the vision of Constantine were not taken directly, at least, from Eusebius, but had come from one of the other three, Lactantius, Rufinus, or Sozomen. According to Professor Cook,⁴ ‘Ælfric derives his information on the subject from Rufinus’ version of Eusebius.’ It is probable that this was also the source for the other two Old English accounts.⁵

¹ Tr. Cook, *Christ*, p. 90.

² Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood*.

³ *Homilies*, 2. 302.

⁴ *Christ* 19.

⁵ Two minor variations may be noted: 1. Ælfric adds a detail omitted by the rest: ‘He [Constantine] bade then be forged of beaten gold a little rood, which he laid on his right hand, fervently praying the Almighty Ruler that his right hand might never be polluted with the red blood of the Roman people.’ 2. There is a variation in date between the *Elene* and the anonymous homily: the former sets the year as 233 A. D.; the latter, 133 years ‘after Christ’s passion and ascension to heaven.’

(d) The Invention of the Cross

Closely linked with the legend of the vision of Constantine is that of the Finding of the True Cross by Helena, the mother of the emperor, and that of the Exaltation of the Cross, or the restoration of the cross to its place of honor in Jerusalem by Heraclius. Both were familiar to the Anglo-Saxons. The two most detailed accounts of the Invention are Cynewulf's poem *Elene*, of the eighth century and an anonymous homily of the eleventh, both of which have just been quoted among the chief sources of the Constantine legend. The *Elene* tells the story with great spirit. The expedition is described as a magnificent emprise, the aim of which was to gain the most precious object in the world. The whole has a distinctly warlike coloring, and suggests an expedition of viking warriors; but the story is the same as that of the well known legend. The details of the narrative of the homily vary scarcely at all from those of the *Elene* version.¹

(e) The Exaltation of the Cross

The chief account in Old English of the Exaltation is Ælfric's homily on that subject.² In this, the course of the story is the same as that of the accepted legend of the church. If there be any original contribution to the story it is in the elaboration of details, and in the speeches put into the mouths of the characters. One is significant enough for quotation:

¹The few may be noted. In the *Elene* the element of perfume, which is dwelt upon by almost all, is omitted. It is 'a vapor like smoke' which reveals the hiding place of the crosses. In the homily it is 'the sweetest smell of all the most precious perfumes.' In the *Old English Martyrology* the brief paragraph under May 3d combines the smoke and the perfume. "There came up a smoke of delightful smell from the ground where the cross was found." Again, in the homily, it is a voice from heaven that bids Helena forge the nails on her son's bridle; in the *Elene* it is the advice of an elder of Jerusalem.

² *Homilies*, 3, 144.

And then the Emperor exclaimed with joy: 'O thou marvelous rood on which Christ deigned to suffer, and quench our sins with his precious blood! O thou rood shining more than the stars, glorious on this earth! Greatly art thou to be loved, O holy and winsome tree that wast worthy to bear the prize of all the earth! Be mindful of this assembly which is here gathered for the honor of God!'

. This ardent devotion, as we shall find, was not peculiar to Ælfric.

To review briefly the legend of the cross: We find that as yet there was no legend of the tree of the cross, and no canon of belief as to the varieties of wood of which the cross was composed. But of the history of the cross after the crucifixion there is abundant material; evidently the stories of Constantine, Helena, and Heraclius were perfectly familiar. The differences in these versions from the older stories are of small importance, the greatest variation from the accepted legend being the story of the vision of Constantine, which does not follow the original account of Eusebius.

II. THE CROSS IN THE CHURCH

(a) *The Church Edifice*

The home of the cross was naturally the church. The cruciform church edifice had been known from a very early period. Indeed, whether the plan was at first consciously adopted out of reverence for the symbol of Christ, or whether it was the natural modification of the old Roman basilica, there are remains of churches of the epoch of Constantine which have for their ground-plan the cross.

Among the Anglo-Saxons, 'all the churches,' says Lingard, 'mentioned by the most ancient Saxon writers are of a square or quadrilateral shape, and were probably built after the plan of the basilica at Rome, "in quadrum" (Bede, *Hist.* 2. 14), "templum quadratum" (Alc. *Op.* 2. 530). But Æthelwold, a monk of the monastery of St. Peter on the east coast of Bernicia, who wrote about the year

810, mentions not only a square but a cruciform church, the first of that form noticed in our annals (*Æthel. De Abbat. Lind. 120-22*).¹

But according to another record,² Oswald built his church *in modum crucis* in memory of the victory of Heavenfield, and indeed upon the battle-field itself. In this case there was, of course, special significance in building the church cruciform, because it was the cross which gave Oswald the victory. But if the record is reliable, it shows that the cruciform church was not unknown in the early history of the faith among the Anglo-Saxons. Later, however, the practice became more common, and remains of cruciform churches of our period—for example, that of Stow in Lincolnshire, and that at Dover—exist to this day. But the practice did not become conventional till about the time of the Crusades.

After the edifice had been completed, it was consecrated throughout by the cross. The bishop marked a cross with chrism at various places on the walls, and afterwards on these spots crosses were carved or painted, and sometimes crosses of metal were affixed. The altar-stone also was consecrated at the four corners and at the centre, and at these places as well crosses were carved. All this was in accordance with a custom of the church which has been traced to the fourth century.³ The legend of Edward the Confessor tells how Westminster was dedicated by angels who 'sprinkled' and 'marked' it 'with twelve crosses.'⁴

(b) *The Altar-Cross*

The cross that held the place of honor within the church was that upon the altar. The custom of placing a cross upon the altar is very old, though it did not become general till the ninth century, and then it was the plain cross, and

¹ *Hist. and Antiq.* I. 371.

² *Hist. Church of York*, I. 434.

³ This rite is given in detail in the *Egbert Pontifical*.

⁴ *Ann. Cambr.* 237.

not the crucifix. In fact, the plain cross was on the altar more often than the crucifix till as late as the sixteenth century.¹ In the Anglo-Saxon church there was generally, at any rate, an altar-cross which either stood upon the altar or was suspended over it. It was, in the richer churches at least, of the most precious materials, for the cross was the symbol of the Redeemer, and as such nothing was too precious to lavish upon it.²

(c) The Altar-Cross as a Crucifix

In speaking of the crucifix among the Anglo-Saxons, Rock says: 'Before all and above all other images in their estimation was that of the crucifix. The figure of Christ was frequently of the purest gold, a masterpiece of workmanship, and fastened by four nails to a cross of wood overlaid with plates of gold in which were set precious stones.'³ Now it is noteworthy that in the long prayer offered at the consecration of the cross in the Egbert *Pontifical*, while the gold, the wood, the crystal, etc., are mentioned, there is no reference whatever to a crucified figure. It runs:

'Radiet hic Unigeniti Filii tui splendor divinitas in auro, emicet gloria passionis in ligno, in cruore rutilet nostræ mortis redemptio, in splendore cristalli nostræ vitæ purificatio.'

The word *cruore*, by the way, suggests that the cross was painted red. This was a very ancient custom in Rome,⁴ and it is not unlikely that it was practised in England. Aside from the word just referred to, in the charters a boundary cross is sometimes mentioned as a 'red cross';⁵ the *Dream of the Rood*⁶ and the *Christ*⁷ represent the cross

¹ Seymour, p. 209.

² For the significance of this ornament, see the prayer quoted below.

³ l. 305.

⁴ Ebert, *Ueber den Traum*, etc., p. 83.

⁵ Earle, *Charters*, p. 291, No. 909.

⁶ l. 24.

⁷ l. 1101.

as bloody or red; and some of the ancient consecration-crosses have vestiges of red paint.¹

In the same *Pontifical* is an adoration-ceremony, containing a prayer to be said when the cross is adored, and this might seem at first glance to indicate that there was a figure of the Savior upon the altar-cross:

Domine Jesu Christe, adoro te *in cruce ascendentem, spineam coronam in capiti portentem*; deprecor te ut ipsa crux liberet me ab angelo percutiente. Domine Jesu Christe, adoro te *in cruce vulneratum, felle et aceto potatum*; deprecor te, ut tua mors sit vita mea.

But the prayer continues:

Domine Jesu Christe, adoro te *descendentem ad inferos, liberantem captivos, . . . ascendentem in cœlum, sedentem ad dextram Patris; . . . adoro te venturum in judicio*, etc.,

showing that these conceptions of Christ have no reference to anything upon the actual cross.

This is confirmed by the fact that all Anglo-Saxon crucifixes represented the Savior, not with a thorny crown, but with the diadem of a king.² The older tradition generally prevailed, representing Christ as ruling in majesty, not suffering in agony. The '*spineam coronam in capiti portantem*' of the prayer could not in any case refer to a crucifix. Further, an illumination which pictures Cnut presenting a great golden jeweled altar-cross to the Abbey of New Minster (Hyde Abbey)³ represents this cross as without the crucified figure. All this evidence, negative and positive, together with the fact that plain altar-crosses, rather than crucifixes, prevailed in Christian Europe generally till as late as the sixteenth century, makes it almost certain that among the Anglo-Saxons the altar-cross was always plain.

(d) *The Crozier as a Crucifix*

In speaking of the crozier, or archiepiscopal cross, Rock affirms that 'while it is frequently shown in monuments as

¹ *Archæologia* 48, 456.

² Rock i. 306. Note also legend of Dunstan, *Vita S. Dunst.*, Rolls Series, 5, 63. p. 113.

³ *Palæog. Soc. Facs.*, Series 2, Vol. 1, pl. 16.

a mere cross without any kind of image upon it, still we have good reasons for believing that not unoften it bore on each of its two sides a figure of our Lord hanging "nailed to the rood."¹ But the 'good reasons' that he adduces are a manuscript drawing of the twelfth century, and a grave-brass of the fifteenth. The drawing of Archbishop Elga, already referred to, represents him as holding a crozier which is plain. Indeed, among all the facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that I have seen I have not found a single picture of a crucifix, and while there is plenty of evidence that crucifixes were known in England before the Norman invasion, they were certainly not in use during the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period, and it is useful for our purpose to make some distinction.

(e) *The Crucifix*

As early as the fifth century there were beginnings of a tendency to represent Christ's person without relation to the cross. To the early Christian a realistic representation of the person of Christ would have savored of idolatry, and to represent him crucified, an act of sacrilege. But there was evidently a craving for some visible representation of the Atonement. At first the Lamb was used as the symbol of the Divine Sacrifice, employed in conjunction with the cross in a great many varieties of combination,² which reached their climax in the eighth and ninth centuries.³

But long before the eighth century another step had been taken. The cross was depicted in union with ideal portraits of the Savior, generally as a beautiful youth holding a cross in his hands.⁴ In a manuscript of the sixth century a cross is drawn with a bust of Christ surmounting the top, and similar figures have been found in painting and mosaic.⁵

¹ 2. 232.

² Walcott, *Sacred Archaeology*, p. 341; Didron, *Christ, Icon. s. v. Lamb.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Seymour, p. 158.

⁵ Jameson, *History of Our Lord*, p. 320.

The transition from this ideal portrait of Christ over the cross to the entire figure outstretched and nailed thereon is a short one. The earliest picture of the crucifixion comes from the Orient; it is in a Syrian manuscript of the Gospels, dating from the year 586.¹ Not long after this, Pope Gregory the Great presented Theodolinda with a cross of gold on which the crucifixion is represented in enamel, the work of a Greek artist.² But pictures of the crucifixion were still very rare a hundred years after. The council 'Quinisextum in Trullo,' of the year 692, gave formal sanction to the custom of representing the actual figure of Christ instead of the symbolical figure of the Lamb,³ but most representations of the crucifixion were still in painting or mosaic.

So, as we have seen, at the time of the mission of Augustine representations of the crucifixion must have been extremely rare, as it was nearly a hundred years after when the custom received the formal sanction of the Church. It is therefore absurd to call the silver cross that figured in the procession of Augustine a crucifix—as Miller does, for example, in his translation of Alfred's Bede. The passage in the Ecclesiastical History is as follows:

'Bæron Crīstes rōde tācen, sylfrene Crīstes mǣl mid him.'

Here 'Crīstes rōde tācen sylfrene Crīstes mǣl,' translates Bede's 'cruce[m] (pro vexillo ferentes) argenteam.' Miller translates the Old English thus: 'They bore the emblem of Christ's cross—and had a silver crucifix with them'—a translation not warranted in the least.⁴

The faith was introduced into England before crucifixes were known, and when pictures of the crucifixion, even in painting or mosaic, were very rare. Still it is too much to say, with the writer in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, that up to the time of Charlemagne 'all representations of the crucified form of our Lord alone, as well as pictures,

¹ Cutts, *Hist. Early Christ. Art*, p. 198.

² Martigny, p. 227.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, E. E. T. S. 95-96, p. 59.

reliefs, and mosaics, in which that form is the central object of the scene, may be considered alike symbolical, and without historical realism or artistic appeal to the emotions.' Bede¹ mentions among the treasures brought by Benedict Biscop from Rome in 678 a painting of the serpent raised up by Moses, paralleled by one of the Son of Man 'in cruce exaltatum.' This is the earliest example of a picture of the crucifixion in England that we have; still it is not a crucifix.

One of the earliest examples of an actual crucifix in western Europe is that which Charlemagne presented to Pope Leo III, of the date 815.² But that it was not an object of worship in the Gallican church of that time seems clear from the tenor of the famous capitularies on the subject of image-worship, published by the Emperor some years before.

The earliest mention of a crucifix in England is one in the legend of St. Dunstan,³ belonging therefore to the tenth century. But it is not unlikely that after the final victory of image-worship in the great iconoclastic controversy, crucifixes gradually found their way into England during the latter part of the ninth century.

According to Lingard,⁴ after the burning of the Abbey of Medeshamstede (Peterborough), and the massacre of the monks by the Danes, the victims were buried in one wide grave; on the surface a small pyramid of stone was placed, bearing a record of the disaster, and opposite the pyramid, to protect the spot from being profaned, a cross was erected on which was engraved the image of Christ. As the massacre took place in the year 870, it shows that the carving of an image upon the face of the cross was already practised in the latter part of the ninth century.

On stone crosses belonging in all probability to the tenth century is frequently carved a rude image of the Savior.⁵

¹ *Hist. Abb.*, Sec. 9, in *Op.*, *Hist.*, ed. Plummer, p. 373.

² *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, p. 514.

³ *Vita S. Dunst.*, auctore Osberno; Rolls Ser. 63, 113.

⁴ *Hist. Antiq.*, etc., 2. 234.

⁵ *Brit. Arch. Journ.*, 44. 300.

In documents¹ of the late tenth and eleventh centuries there are references to the crucifix, showing that by that time it had come into general use. In the tomb of Edward the Confessor was found a golden crucifix.²

It is not improbable, as Rock supposes, that the image may have been carved on processional and archiepiscopal crosses in the tenth and eleventh centuries, though as yet I have found no evidence to prove it. But the altar-cross continued plain certainly till the Norman Conquest, and probably for several centuries after.

Ælfric makes no allusion to the crucifix, but orders his flock to pray to the cross,³ and it is evident that in his day the cross was the significant thing, whether or not an image was upon it—and it was the cross that was adored. It was still, as in its ancient uses, the emblem of the Savior. This is further brought out by the Old English words for the cross, which wholly ignore the presence of an image. It is the 'rōd'—the 'rood' or 'cross'; or the *Crīstesmāel*, the symbol of Christ; a *rōde tācn* 'rood token'; or 'Crīstestācn,' and so on, not one of the terms having the special significance of a crucifix. The word '*Crīstesmāel*' is most frequently translated 'crucifix,' but for no reason that I can discover. The word means only the 'symbol of Christ,' which is the precise significance of the cross in the early church. This word is frequently used to designate the plain cross-mark signed at the end of charters⁴ to represent the sign of the cross, and, in short, is found over and over again where it must mean simply a cross.⁵

In conclusion, we may say that the crucifix was practically unknown in England before the ninth century and that it

¹ e. g. *A. S. Chron.* 1070; see also *AA. S. Ethelred*, *AA. SS. Boll. Junii* 4. 571, and *AA. SS. Boll. Junii* 2. 329 (Margaret of Scotland).

² *Archeologia* 3, 390.

³ *Canons of Ælfric*, ed. Thorpe, *A. S. Laws*, p. 449.

⁴ e. g. *A. S. Chron.* E. 656, 963.

⁵ e. g. Oswald's Cross, Alfred's *Bede*, p. 154; sign of cross, *Lchdm.*

did not come into general use till about a hundred years before the Conquest.

(f) *Ceremonial Honoring of the Cross*

The two festivals of the cross, the Exaltation and the Invention (September 14 and May 3 respectively), were both observed in the Anglo-Saxon church, at least from a period which is covered by the Egbert *Pontifical*, since it contains benedictions for use on those days.¹ In the Anglo-Saxon church these were single feast-days; later in the Sarum use the Invention became a double feast.

The ceremony of the Adoration of the Cross was celebrated by the Anglo-Saxons, as by the rest of the Christian church, on Good Friday. The ceremony is given in full by Rock (v. 3, pt. 2, pp. 88 ff.),² but here we need only the opening. In the following quotation I have substituted 'cross' for 'crucifix' (which Rock uses throughout), for reasons already discussed:

'A muffled cross was held up by two deacons, who stood half-way between the choir and the altar. From this spot they carried this veiled rood toward the altar, before which they laid it down on a pillow. After due time this cross was unshrouded by the two deacons, who, in doing so, uttered in a low chant "Behold the wood of the Cross." Then barefoot, as he and all the other clergy were from the very beginning of the day's service, whoever happened to be the celebrant, whether bishop, abbot, or priest, came forward, and halting thrice on the way to throw himself on the ground, in most lowly wise kissed the cross. After him followed the clergy, then the people, to offer this same token of homage to their crucified Lord. All the while this kissing of the cross was going on, the choir sang the

¹ pp. 86, 89.

² Also, *Concordia* 2. 76 ff. (cf. Durand, *Rationale* 6. 77. 21, p. 229) and 182, 184 ff., 385, 665, 735, 833, 870, 895; *Durham Ritual* 93. 150.

anthems—*Ecce lignum crucis, Crucem tuam adoramus, Dum Fabricator mundi*, and the hymn *Pange, lingua*.

‘It was also the custom of the celebrant to repeat, besides the seven penitential psalms, a prayer before the cross. All the sacramentaries contain prayers to be said when the cross is adored.’

Following the ceremony of adoration on Good Friday was another, which, according to Rock, was ‘not insisted on for general observance,’ but was a rite which might follow the prayer of adoration. This ceremony is worth quoting because it shows how literally the cross was the ‘symbol of Christ.’ In this very simple liturgical drama the cross plays the role of Christ’s person in the burial and resurrection. I quote the description in Fosbroke’s *British Monachism*:¹

Because on that day was the burial of our Savior, an image of a sepulchre was made on a vacant side of the altar, and a rail drawn around it, where the cross was laid until it should have been worshiped, . . . The deacon’s bearers wrapping it in the places where it had been worshiped, i. e., kissed, brought it back to the tomb, singing certain psalms, and there laid it with more psalmody. There it was watched till the night of Easter Sunday, by two, three, or four monks singing psalms. On easter day, the seven canonical hours were to be sung in the manner of the canons; and in the night, before matins, the sacrists, because our lord rested in the tomb, were to put the cross in its place. Then during a religious service four monks robed themselves, one of whom in an alb, as if he had somewhat to do, came stealingly to the tomb, and there, holding a palm branch, sat still till the responsory was ended; then the three others, carrying censers in their hands, came up to him, step by step, as if looking for something. As soon as he saw them approach, he began singing in a soft voice, ‘Whom seek ye?’ to which was replied by the three others in chorus, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ This was answered by the other, ‘He is not here, he is risen.’ At which words the three last, turning to the choir, cried, ‘Alleluia, the Lord is risen.’ The other then, as if calling them back, sang, ‘Come and see the place,’ and then rising, raised the cloth, showed them the place with-

¹ A fairly close translation from the *Regularis Concordia Monachorum* ascribed to Dunstan, or with more probability to Ethelwold (*Anglia* 13. 426-428).

out the cross, and linen cloths in which it was wrapped. Upon this they laid down their censers, took the cloths, extended them to show that the Lord was risen, and singing an anthem, placed them upon the altar.

(g) *Private Worship*

In the Canons of Ælfric it is written¹ that Christians should "pray to the holy rood so that they all greet the rood of God with a kiss." But in his sermon on the Invention of the Cross, Ælfric says: 'Christian men truly should bow to the hallowed rood in the name of Jesus, for although we have not that on which he suffered, its likeness is nevertheless holy, to which we can ever bow in our prayers to the Mighty Lord who suffered for men; and the rood is a memorial of his great passion, holy through him though it grew in a wood. We ever honor it for the honor of Christ, who redeemed us with love through it, for which we thank him as long as we live.'²

Moreover, it is written in the life of Alcuin³ that whenever he saw the cross he bowed towards it, whispering these words:⁴ 'Tuam crucem adoramus, Domine, et tuam gloriosam recolimus passionem.' Ceolfrith also, 'worshiped' the cross which accompanied him when he set out from Wearmouth for Rome. The deacons of his church went with him on board the vessel, carrying lighted tapers and a golden cross. When he had reached the other side of the river 'he worshiped the cross, then mounted his horse and departed.'⁵

It is evident from these examples alone that the worship of the cross was not restricted to the 'adoration' of Good Friday, or even to the customary devotion paid to it in the church,⁶ but was practised by individuals in private.

¹ *A. S. Laws*, ed. Thorpe, p. 449.

² *Hom.*, 2, 306.

³ *Vita*, etc., *Patrolog. Lat.* 100.

⁴ The same prayer is in the *Durham Ritual*, p. 140.

⁵ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* 2. 392, ed. Giles.

⁶ *Durham Rit.*, pp. 149-150.

(h) The Nature of the Adoration

But whatever this adoration may have amounted to in practice, in theory it was not a worship of the cross itself, Ælfric concludes his sermon for the fifth Sunday in Lent thus: 'Through the tree came death to us, since Adam ate the forbidden apple; and through the tree came to us again life and redemption. In the holy rood-token is our blessing, and to the cross we pray, *by no means however to the tree itself, but to the Almighty Lord* who hung for us on the holy rood.'¹ So also Alcuin, who was foremost in honoring the cross, says: 'We prostrate ourselves bodily before the cross, mentally before the Lord; we venerate the cross by which we were redeemed, and we invoke him who redeemed us.'² This is clearly indicated by the prayer of the Adoration ceremony, already quoted, and the same thing is true of all other prayers 'to be said when the cross is adored.' The cross was the visible symbol of Christ; to this the worshiper bowed his head, but in the words of his prayer he invoked Christ.

However, it was a distinction difficult to maintain, and, as we shall find later, the cross became, probably as a result of this adoration, endowed with a personality to the point of being deified. In the early days of the faith the Christian repudiated the name of 'cross-worshiper,' but at the time which we are studying there was no longer reproach in the name. Aldhelm, for example, calls himself 'worshiper of the cross' as a synonym for Christian.³

III. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

The visible, material cross—*crux exemplata*—was not more important in the service of the church and the life of the Christian than the cross in its invisible or imaginary

¹ *Homilies* 2. 240.

² *Patrolog. Lat.* 75. 479.

³ *Pref. Liber de Virgin.*, *Patrolog. Lat.* 89. 103. Lingard 2. 107 gives references to the author of the Life of St. Willibald, and one of his correspondents, who uses the same term.

form, the 'sign of the cross' or *crux usualis*. Long before the Christian dared to expose the symbol of his Lord in outward, visible form, this was his countersign among his fellow-disciples, his profession of faith before his enemies, and his comfort and resource for every event, from the trivial details of daily life to the deepest experiences of joy or sorrow.

The original method of making the sign was to mark a cross on the forehead with the thumb or fore-finger.¹ The same mark could also be applied to blessing parts of the body or other objects. In the sixth century another method had risen into favor, in which the hand was raised to the forehead, then drawn down to the heart, then to the left shoulder, then to the right.² These were the two chief methods—the small cross and the large cross—and there were in the making of the latter a variety of methods of holding the fingers, with a corresponding variety of significations.

Both the small and the large cross were known in Anglo-Saxon England. In the Egbert *Pontifical* the sign is referred to as made *cum pollice* or *cum digito*.³ Alcuin, in speaking of the celebration of the Mass, evidently has the cross in mind.⁴ Boniface says: 'Habete Christum in corde, et signum sanctæ crucis in fronte,'⁵ and there are many other references to this small cross upon the brow. According to William of Malmesbury's account of the Life of St. Dunstan, this usage persisted in his day; for, as the saint beheld Edgitha making the sign frequently upon her brow, he cried, 'May that hand never decay!' And it was proved

¹ Kraus, *Realencycl. Christ. Alt.* p. p. 252.

² *ibid.*

³ Egbert, *Pontif.*, pp. 36. 40.

⁴ *Patrolog. Lat.* 100. 499: 'Crucem in fronte ponit diaconus, . . . deinde in pectore.'

⁵ *Opera*, ed. Giles, 2. 97.

after her death that the hand that made the sign remained uncorrupted.¹

Possibly the long life of this earlier use among the Anglo-Saxons was due to the great number of legends with which they were familiar which went back to the time when the small cross was the only one in use; and also to their adherence to rituals which were probably of very early origin. But in the Blickling Homilies Christians are exhorted to bless all their bodies seven times with Christ's rood-token.² In this the reference seems to be to the large cross. Ælfric describes this as follows: 'A man may wave about wonderfully with his hands without creating any blessing, unless he make the sign of the cross. In that case the fierce fiend will soon be frightened on account of the victorious token. With three fingers one must bless himself for the Holy Trinity.'³

By the same authority we are told that the sign of the cross in its origin goes back to Christ himself;⁴ therefore, since the Savior gave this token to his disciples, it had the added dignity of a sacrament.

(a) *The Sign in Ritual*

The idea which underlay the use of the sign in the ritual of the church was its power to purify the person or object so blessed from the presence of evil spirits. This is brought

¹ Zöckler, p. 247, refers to this princess as an example of self-inflicted cross-torture, that she scratched the sign of the cross upon her forehead an innumerable number of times with her sharp thumbnail. The only reference to anything of the sort whatever is the passage mentioned above, wherein I find no hint of anything beyond the usual crossing of the forehead. The passage is as follows: 'Viderat eam sanctus Dunstanus in consecratione basilicæ beati Dionisii . . . pollicem frequenter dextrum protendere et signum crucis fronti a regione pingere.' Wm. Malm., *Gesta Pontif.*, p. 189.

² p. 47.

³ *Homilies* I. 462.

⁴ *ibid.* 2. 508. Also *Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. Thwaites, p. 17: 'And se Hælend . . . rōde tācen ofer Adam geworhte.'

out by what Alcuin and Wulfstan have to say on its use in baptism. 'The breast also,' says Alcuin, 'is anointed with the same oil, so that the entrance for the devil is closed by the sign of the Holy Cross. The shoulder-blades are also signed, so that there may be a defense on all sides.'¹ Wulfstan says: 'In the christening that one performs previous to baptism there is great significance. When the priest christeneth, he breathes on the man, then signs him *in modum crucis*. After that, through God's might, the devil becomes speedily much discouraged.'²

Of the use of the sign in particular rites there is no need of discussion here. As far as I can discover, its use in the various ceremonies of the Anglo-Saxon church was the same as in the Mother Church. It was used a countless number of times, giving sanctity and weight to every rite—common to all and uniting them all.

But its usefulness was not confined within the walls of the church or monastery. It was the Christian's ready weapon for every time of need. Alcuin says, explaining why Christ chose crucifixion rather than some other form of death: 'He did not wish to be stoned or cut down by a sword, because we should not be able to carry always with us stones or a sword with which we should be protected. But he chose the cross, which is expressed by an easy movement of the hand, and with which we may be protected against the wiles of the enemy.'³

It was first of all a defense against the assaults of the devil. Bede, in his letter to Bishop Egbert, advises him to remind his flock 'with what frequent diligence to employ upon themselves the sign of our Lord's cross,'⁴ and so to fortify themselves and all they have against the continued snares of unclean spirits. He recommends it especially as a safeguard against evil thoughts.⁵ Alcuin says that the first act

¹ *Patrolog. Lat.* 100. 127.

² *Patrolog. Lat.* 75. 428.

³ *ibid.* 9. 270.

⁴ *Hom.*, p. 33.

⁵ *Opera*, ed. Giles, I. 135.

upon waking in the morning should be to mark upon the lips the sign of the cross.¹ Wulfstan says: 'Be ever thy food and thy rest directed of God and blessed with the holy cross.'²

If the sign had not as yet become prescribed in the rite of supreme unction, the dying man himself fortified his passing spirit by the sign of hope. Bede, in his story of Cædmon's death, tells how the holy man, 'after he had signed himself with the sign of the holy cross, laid down his head upon the pillow, and fell asleep for awhile, and so in quiet ended his life.'³

Belief in the efficacy of this sign was supported by a great body of legends in which its powers as a talisman are most conspicuous.⁴ They point the moral that safety demands that it should accompany every act of life, and show that devils, the forces of nature, and the ills of the flesh, are all subject to the wonder-working sign.

It is only to be expected that, if so many had been healed of their ills in the past, the faithful and believing should look for its salutary powers for their own benefit in the present. So, very naturally, the sign of the cross invaded the province of medicine. The position of the church in regard to disease and cure by natural means was that diseases were the work of demons, that mediums are useless and contrary to what St. Ambrose declared was 'celestial science—watching and prayer.'⁵ Among the Anglo-Saxons, however, the use of natural remedies was by no means despised, as the three volumes of Cockayne's *Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms* testify. Mingled with these natural remedies, however, are prescriptions in which theology also has a

¹ *Patrolog. Lat. (Lib. de Psalm.)* 101. 468.

² *Homilies*, p. 250.

³ *Eccles. Hist.* 4. 24.

⁴ e. g. *Blickl. Hom.*, p. 243; Ælfric, *Hom.* 3. 170; Alfred's *Bede*, p. 402, et al.

⁵ Quoted by A. D. White, *Hist. Conflict Science and Theology* 2. 26.

share, a sort of combination of the powers of earth and heaven.¹ Others are purely religious charms, summoning the aid of the Evangelists, the letters Λ and Ω , and above all, the sign of the cross.²

Of course the demon-theory of disease and misfortune, and the method of cure by a charm or fetich, are common to all primitive peoples. The pagan Saxons had their formulas as well as the Christians, and in these *Leechdoms* are found curious mixtures of Christian and pagan fetich.

There are a few charms in which the cross to be made is an actual, material cross. A long charm for bewitched land mentions four crosses to be made of aspen.³ This charm contains a prayer which is significant in its conception of the cross. 'Commend thy prayer,' it runs, 'to the praise and glory of Christ and St. Mary, and the *Holy Rood*.' This appears to give the cross a foremost place among the Saints, as if it had a sacred personality of its own. This idea of a divine personality in the true cross itself is further brought out in the charms for bringing back strayed or stolen cattle. As the true cross had been lost for centuries, and then discovered by Helena, it was deemed appropriate to invoke its aid in recovering that which was lost. The following is one of a group that differs only in unimportant details:

As soon as anyone says that thy cattle are lost, say first before thou say anything else,

Bethlehem was named the town where Christ was born.

It is renowned through all the world.

So may this deed become famous among men,

Through the Holy Rood of Christ. Amen.

Then pray thrice toward the east, and say thrice, *Crux Christi ab oriente reducat*; then pray thrice toward the west and say thrice, *Crux Christi ab occidente reducat*; then pray thrice toward the south and say thrice, *Crux Christi ab austro reducat*; then pray thrice toward the north and say thrice, *Crux Christi ab aquilone reducat*. *Crux Christi abscondita est et inventa est*. The Jews cru-

¹ e. g. *Lchdm.* 2. 350.

² e. g. *ibid.* 2. 140.

³ *Lchd.* 1. 399.

cified Christ, they did the worst of deeds, they hid that which they could not hide. So may this deed in no wise be hidden, through the Holy Rood of Christ. Amen.'¹

The most famous, and perhaps the simplest, of these cross-charms was the practice of 'touching for the King's evil,' which began with Edward the Confessor in 1041. Originally this touching was done simply by marking upon the sufferer the sign of the cross.

(b) As an Oath

It had been a pagan custom to begin all important acts, public or private, by a religious ceremony, as, for example, a sacrifice. So the Christians for the same acts crossed themselves, swore upon relics, and in their legal and ecclesiastical documents invoked the name of God. In the fifth century began the custom of applying a cross-mark at the beginning of documents, in the place of invocations, and at the end beside the name of the signer, as a guarantee of good faith. This custom must have come to the Anglo-Saxons with the introduction of Christianity.

In this usage the 'sign of the cross' was, of course, not the invisible sign made in the air or upon the body with the finger or hand. It was a form in which the *crux exemplata* and the *crux usualis* seem to have blended. But there seems to have been no distinction felt between the marking of a cross with ink upon a document or the marking of the invisible cross.² Each was called the *signum* or *vexillum crucis*, the *rōde tǣcn*, or *Crīstes mǣl*.

The wording to the conclusions to these documents makes it clear that the Anglo-Saxon understood its use as a means of binding the terms of an agreement by an inviolable oath. For example, in a charter of Wihtred's of the year 697³ it is written: 'This gift the hands of all present confirm with the

¹ *Lchd.* 3. 60.

² e. g. *Codex Dipl.* No. 154, *rōde tǣcn*. The same word is used for the *crux usualis*, Ælfric, *Hom.* 3. 50.

³ *Codex Dipl.* 1. 49.

sign of the cross, so that upon him who is so bold as to break it contrary to the will of God will come in vengeance the cross of Christ, unless he make amends in due order.'

The method of signing was as follows: After the donor had pledged himself by a solemn vow, such as the one just quoted, he made the cross, and signed his name immediately after it. Then followed the witnesses, each with a cross and his name. The churchmen who stood as witnesses were generally not content with a simple cross and signature, but exercised the greatest ingenuity in devising honorific expressions for the phrase 'the sign of the cross.' The following are a few selected from scores of varieties: 'Signum mirabile beatæ crucis,' 'vexillum adorandæ crucis,' 'vexillum sacratissimæ crucis,' 'triumphale tropheum agyæ crucis,' 'signaculum almæ crucis,' and 'signum sanctæ semperque venerandæ crucis.'¹ These expressions of themselves suggest the commanding position held by the cross in the church of this period.

On the other hand, nobles who were witnesses were, as a rule, quite content to sign themselves simply by the cross. This served also as a convenient method of signature for kings and nobles who could not write; indeed, from this ancient custom the illiterate make their 'mark' to this day. In these signatures the clerk inserted the name after the cross was made, and often worked up the cross-mark afterward into a symmetrical figure. In many cases it is evident that the cross was drawn beforehand by the clerk, and the donor or witness took oath either by tracing his finger or pen over the cross already drawn, or by pressing his fingers upon it. There are many charters in which, apparently, not all the witnesses that were expected were present, as there stand a number of crosses with no signature attached.² In the following frank acknowledgment of King Wihtred's the same custom is seen. He says: "With my own hand I

¹ *Codex Dipl.* 2. 97, 176, 201.

² e. g. *Codex Dipl.* 1. 321.

press the sign of the holy cross, *because of my ignorance of letters.*'¹

In matters of exceptional pomp and circumstance the signing of the cross was elaborated into a ceremonial. According to Rock, 'They took the hand of that personage to whom they were about pledging their word for the fulfillment of each condition in the document, or, if he were away, his representative's hand, and upon its open palm they drew the sign of the cross with the thumb of their right hand. Thus did Offa and Archbishop Lambert with his brother bishops, as they all promised the Holy See through Pope Adrian's messenger to observe those decrees and canons which had been passed under the presidency of that same pontifical legate in the first canonical council held at Chalk Lythe, in 785.'²

This custom of signing documents with the cross, though practised throughout the entire Christian world before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, was given further authority by the decree of the Anglo-Saxon Church itself. In the third council of Chalk Lythe (A. D. 816) it was enacted that all documents 'confirmed by the sign of the sacred cross of Christ' were binding and must be fulfilled.³ This custom died out in England only with the Norman invasion. Under Norman kings the cross was superseded by a wax seal.

(c) Other Uses of the Cross-Sign in Documents

As already remarked, besides the use of the cross at the end of a legal document as an oath, the cross was generally placed at the beginning, where it served for the invocation,⁴ or sometimes accompanied the invocation.⁵ But the cross is found frequently where it is difficult to

¹ *ibid.*, p. 49.

² 3, pt. 2, p. 117. Wilkins, *Concil.* I. 170.

³ Wilkins, *Concil.* I. 151.

⁴ *Codex Dipl.* I. 49.

⁵ *Codex Dipl.* I. I.

find any reason for its being there. It comes sometimes in the middle of a charter, and it occurs frequently on the margin, especially on a line which contains the name of a king.¹ It appears sometimes in the middle of a word, especially 'cru+cis,'² and always in the middle of the word in the sacramentary where a sign of the cross is to be made, as, for example, 'bene+dicere,' 'sancti+ficare.'³ It appeared also in literary documents, a custom that long survived the Conquest, the manuscript of the *Morality Everyman*, for example, beginning with a cross. In the manuscript of the 'Nine Herbs Charm,' also, the cross is on the margin on a line with the word 'worm,' perhaps for the same reason that the writer would have crossed himself at the name of the devil.

Nor was it restricted to writings on parchment; it is found preceding inscriptions on stone slabs and crosses, and on inscribed rings and jewels.⁴ Apparently in all of these the use of the cross is a sort of invocation or 'saying grace,' a pious custom without rules or restrictions. Possibly it may have been used merely as a sign of good luck.

(d) *The Cross on Coins*

The cross had been stamped on the coins of Christian emperors of Rome from a very early time,⁵ and its use in Anglo-Saxon England was probably introduced with the establishment of the Faith. At all events, it appeared upon coins as early as the *sceata* of Egbert, King of Kent (665—674). These crosses were small and in relief, and therefore are evidently not applied for the purpose of dividing the coins into fragments, as was the case with the penny of later times. The significance of the cross on Anglo-Saxon coins

¹ *Codex Dipl.* 2. 296-7.

² e. g. Egbert, *Pontif.* 7.

³ e. g. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁴ e. g. Ruthwell Cross, Minster Lovel Jewel.

⁵ According to Martigny, from the fourth century.

was doubtless the same as when it was first applied to the coins of Roman emperors, namely, that, by its sanctity, it pledged the value of the coin. It is akin, therefore, to the use of the cross as an oath on legal documents.

In this connection may be mentioned a few miscellaneous forms of oath in which the cross plays a part, though in these cases it is not the *sign* of the cross. Wulfstan swears by the cross in a way that is not found elsewhere among Anglo-Saxon writers. He says: 'We swear by the great power of Almighty God, and by the Holy Rood on which Christ suffered for the salvation of men, that what we say is true.'¹

Among the laws for the taking of oaths, we find the following which mention the cross. Archbishop Egbert sets as a test of innocence of an accused person that he 'place above his head the cross of the Lord, and testify by the Eternal that he is free from guilt.'² Another form of oath, also, among Egbert's decrees, was to speak the vow with hands 'outstretched upon a rood.'³ If an oath not spoken upon a cross was broken, the penalty was one-third of the penalty if the oath had been sanctified by the cross. In the hot-water ordeal, also, the prisoner was required to 'kiss the Book and Christ's rood-token.'⁴

The idea of the sacredness of the emblem is brought out in another way by the making of the sign of the cross in posture. The ancient method of prayer, that of standing with outstretched arms 'in the likeness of a cross,' was transplanted into England, and was used as the most solemn form of invocation. Bede tells how Cuthbert, at the request of Hereberht, prayed that both might die at the same time; 'then the bishop extended himself in the form of a cross and prayed, and at once was informed in spirit that the Lord had granted the request.'⁵ It is related of St.

¹ *Hom.*, p. 214.

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³ *Eccles. Hist.*, p. 372. Plummet.

² Thorpe, *A. S. Laws*, p. 320.

⁴ Thorpe, *A. S. Laws*, p. 96.

Ecgburga that, when she wanted to show St. Guthlac how strongly she urged him to accept her gift of a leaden coffin and a winding sheet, having spoken her wish she stretched out her arms as if in prayer—'adjurans per nomen terribile superni Regis, seque ad patibulum Dominicæ crucis erigens'—as a sign of her earnest insistence. She instructed her messenger to deliver her message to Guthlac, and then place himself in the position of the cross, as he had seen her do.¹ This custom appears also in one of the charms, which directs the sufferer to 'chant *benedicite* with outstretched arms.'² Another method was, instead of standing, to kneel with the arms extended wide; and a third was to lie prostrate, with the arms extended as before.

But to stand or kneel *in cruce* was also a form of penance. Among the Canons of Edgar it is directed that the penitent 'cry to God and implore forgiveness, . . . and kneel frequently in the sign of the cross.'³ But it was not till the eleventh century that we find the custom of laying the dying man outstretched upon a cross of ashes, and it was not till the Norman invasion that we find this famous mediæval custom to have been generally practised.

Up to this point we have found little or nothing peculiarly national in the aspect of cross-worship among the Anglo-Saxons, but there yet remain two forms, the pictorial arts and literature, which afford a wider opportunity for originality than ritual or legend.

IV. THE CROSS IN ART

(a) *The Monogram*

Before passing to the cross, a word may be said in regard to the use of the monogram. The Chi Rho monogram, as we have seen, was gradually supplanted by the cross, as the need of symbolism, and the actual scenes of crucifixion, disappeared. But it was often met with as an accompani-

¹ AA. SS. *Aprilis* 2, 47, q. Rock.

² *Lchdm.* I. 400.

³ Thorpe, *A. S. Laws*, p. 415.

ment of the cross, and as one of the symbols of the faith, long after it had yielded to the cross.

In the England of the Anglo-Saxons, the monogram had but little meaning. It had already been outgrown by the church before Christianity was introduced among them. It was doubtless seen in Rome on old monuments, and it might easily have been transferred as a mark of the Faith upon Christian stones or documents in England. But these examples are comparatively rare. The church of Jarrow contained a tablet commemorating its original founding, in which the inscription is headed by the Chi Rho monogram. This event occurred in 686, and it is quite possible that Benedict Biscop may have imported the device along with the paraphernalia that he brought from Rome. But in the earliest documents it is not to be found, and the simple cross is used instead. It appears first in a charter dated 770,¹ taking the place of what might be termed the 'invocation' cross, at the very beginning of the document. It occurs only once again in a charter of the years 779,² where it is combined with the letters A and Ω. It occurs most frequently, however, in the charters of Edgar, in the tenth century. Just why it should have been fashionable in clerical circles at that particular time it would be difficult to say, unless it was a belated influence of the court of Charlemagne. In the time of Charlemagne the use of the monogram was revived, through the quickened interest in the early history of the Church, a result of that revival of letters of which his court was the centre. The Chi Rho, with the swastika and a few unimportant devices, occurs rarely on the coins of Anglo-Saxon kings.³ The swastika may have been adopted from Teutonic paganism, where, as some say, it stood for the hammer of Thor, the so-called *hamarsmark*. On the other hand, more probably it may have come from an early Christian use kept alive in

¹ *Codex Dipl.* 2. 145.

² *Ibid.* 164.

³ *Catalog Eng. Coins, A. S. Series*, Vol. 1, plate 47.

Ireland, as it is seen in some of the Irish illuminations. The same device is found also on some of the stone carvings of the Anglo-Saxon period, in the so-called 'Celtic ornament.'¹

But the use of the Chi Rho disappeared in Europe at the end of the fifth century,² and the remains in England—excepting, of course, the late revival of its use on manuscripts referred to above—belong as a rule to British rather than to Anglo-Saxon Christianity. The emblem to which the Anglo-Saxons devoted their art was the cross.

(b) Monumental Crosses

The most striking feature of the art of the cross—and, indeed, of all art among the Anglo-Saxons—is the monumental cross of stone.

— Monumental crosses had been set up in public places in Rome before the mission of Augustine. But for the origin of the ornamented stone crosses of the Anglo-Saxon we turn, not to Rome, but to the ancient customs of the pagan Celts.

The most exhaustive study of these stone crosses that I have found has been made by Mr. J. R. Allen in the pages of the *British Archæological Journal*, and I have followed his authority wherever I have been unable to verify his conclusions for myself.

According to him, the origin of stone crosses of the Anglo-Saxon era may be traced back to the gigantic monoliths of the preceding Celtic period. These rough, unhewn obelisks were erected to commemorate chieftains—probably such as were slain in battle—and the value of the tribute lay in the great size of the stone and the consequent difficulty in raising it.

At a later period, when writing became known, the rough pillar was inscribed, in oghams, or in debased Latin characters, on a smooth side of the stone. After the introduction of Christianity the symbol of the cross was, also, often en-

¹ e. g. Calverley, p. 128.

² Martigny s. v. *Monogram*.

closed in a circle, the emblem of eternity. From these rude Christian monuments developed the graceful and elaborately ornamented crosses of the later period. The tall shaft of these is all that remains of the obelisk, and, crowning this, the cross, generally coupled with the circle. 'Some of the oldest of these monuments,' says Allen, 'are still covered with interlaced work, but without the cross. A celebrated example is at Llantwit Major in Glamorganshire. . . . The Penrith crosses are a good instance of pillar-stones, differing very little in outline from the pagan monoliths.'¹

The remains of the stone monuments which bear the cross incised, or are cruciform, may be roughly divided into two classes. First, the Pillar-Stones just described, which are only removed from the pagan monolith by the incision of the cross, but which sometimes bear other Christian marks or inscriptions. Secondly, the *Interlaced Crosses*, which are stones carved into the shape of the cross, erected upon a base, with more or less elaborate ornament upon the sides. Sometimes there is also an inscription, but both the lettering of the inscriptions and the details of ornament vary according to the locality. Let us examine these two classes in detail.

1. *Pillar-Stones*. These rude pillar-stones belong to the period when paganism was being superseded by Christianity. They are most common in Ireland; in Wales there are a hundred and seven; in Scotland, five; in Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall, thirty. Their geographical distribution points to their Celtic origin, with Ireland for their home.

The characteristics of this class are as follows. The stone is in its natural state, without dressing and without ornament. The cross is incised, and of the simplest form, generally two lines crossing at right angles, often inclosed in a circle. The inscription is in debased Latin capitals, or

¹ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 34. 353.

in the Celtic language, in oghams. It is impossible to assign dates to these, as none of the names inscribed are known to history.

'That these rude pillar-stones belong to the transition period between paganism and Christianity is,' says Allen, 'almost certain, as they are only found either in connection with semi-pagan remains or upon the earliest Christian sites.' They bear still further evidence of Christianity: some have the Chi Rho monogram; some of the names mentioned are Scriptural or distinctly Christian; and some of these are specified as church-officers, as bishops, and as priests; and, finally, *Requiescat in Pace*, a formula that is purely Christian, is also found, besides the customary *Hic Jacet*.

These stones must be regarded as the oldest Christian monuments in the British Isles. They belong to a period antedating the Christian art of the Anglo-Saxons, and to a different race. They stand in an introductory position to the more important art of the cross-monument, introduced later among the Anglo-Saxons by Christian artists from Ireland. This is represented in our second division of Interlaced Crosses.

2. *Interlaced Crosses*. This term is applied by Allen, 'because,' he says, 'the leading feature in the ornament is a variety of patterns formed of interlacing hands or cords. The characteristics of this class are entirely different from those of the rude pillar-stones, and are as follows: 1. The stone is carefully dressed, and cut out into the shape of a cross, and often fixed into a stone socket. 2. There is a profusion of ornament of a kind described hereafter, generally arranged in panels enclosed in a bead or cable molding. 3. The formulas of these inscriptions are more varied, and generally to the effect that "A erected this cross to B; pray for his soul." 4. The language and lettering vary with the locality; the language being either Latin, Celtic, or Scandinavian, and the letters Irish minuscules and oghams (similar to the manuscripts of the same period) or

the runic letters of Northern Europe.' These crosses are found at over 180 different localities in Great Britain, varying anywhere from two or three to twenty-one feet in height.

The art of these stones is Christian; springing from Ireland, and spreading thence with the diffusion of the faith into Wales, Scotland, and England. It was considerably modified by the locality to which it was transplanted. For example, in the Isle of Man, and parts of Cumberland, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, the Celtic styles are mingled with Danish.¹ In the south of England the Saxon predominates.

'In purely Irish art,' says Allen,² 'the geometrical ornament consists of three separate kinds, namely, spiral-work, key-patterns, and interlaced work. Of these, the spiral-work is the most typically Celtic, and is copied from the British metal work of pre-Christian times, the spiral, with expanded trumpet-shaped ends, being unknown outside the stones in Ireland and Scotland, and in a few of the manuscripts executed in England and by Irish monks abroad. Key-patterns occur on stones in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and the north of England. Interlaced work is found on stones throughout the whole of Great Britain.

'In Wales and the south of England interlaced work predominates; in the north of England interlaced work and key-patterns are found in combination; and in Scotland interlaced work, key-patterns, and spiral are blended together in about equal proportions. The Northumbrian stones are characterized by scrolls of great beauty. On the Scandinavian stones are found scaly dragons and runic inscriptions, also patterns formed by interlaced rings. On the stones showing Saxon influence the interlaced work is badly executed, and in Wales this is also sometimes the case.'

Besides these styles of ornament, there are found also symbolical devices—the *triquetra*, the emblem of the Trin-

¹ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 41. 267.

² *Ibid.*

ity, and the five bosses, representing the five wounds of the Saviour; and pictorial representations of men, birds, trees and animals, many of which also probably bore a symbolical meaning.

3. Pictorial

Of the pictorial decorations the most common are the crucifixion, hunting scenes, and portraits of the Evangelists. In some instances of the crucifixion, as the Halton and Burton Crosses,¹ the Virgin and John are pictured standing on either side of a plain cross. As the custom of representing Christ's person on the cross became general, the crosses sometimes became crucifixes, with rude carvings of a body, generally clothed in a long tunic, and with arms outstretched at right angles to the body. This was almost without exception upon the western face of the crosses, in accordance with the traditions of the position of Christ on the cross. Sometimes, as on some of the Cornish crosses, these crucified figures were evidently added at a date later than that of the erection of the cross. Another method was to insert a picture of the crucifixion-scene in one of the panels of ornamentation upon the shaft of the cross. In all of these the figure-carving is of the simplest and crudest description.

The most curious feature of the pictorial ornament is the representation of warriors and huntsmen on horseback, together with stags and hounds. These are found most frequently on crosses in Scotland; they occur in Ireland, but there they are placed more frequently upon the base, rather than the shaft of the cross.

These pictures of the chase appear so often that it is believed that they do not refer to contemporary events, or the occupation of the person in whose memory the cross may have been erected, but that they have a mystic, Christian significance, as the chase is repeatedly referred to by the Fathers as a commonly accepted symbol of the conver-

¹ Calverley, pp. 89, 186.

sion of sinners.¹ But the meaning is still a matter of conjecture.

The Evangelists were held in high honor at this period, and on several of the crosses they are portrayed in their symbolical characters as part man and part animal. These symbolical beasts grow out of the descriptions in the visions of Ezekiel and of the Apocalypse, and first appear in Christian art in the fifth century.² It is a curious fact, by the way, that while these symbols of the Evangelists appear in almost all the Celtic manuscripts of the Gospels, they do not appear on any of the crosses of Ireland or Wales.

There is a figure upon the Halton Cross that is unique, and has apparently not the least mystical significance.* It is a blacksmith working at his forge, with the tools of his trade depicted all about him. On the crosses at Leeds, Dumfally in Perthshire, and Kirkholm in Wigtonshire, there are smith's tools introduced in the ornament. It is not unlikely that these served to show the trade of the deceased person to whom the memorial cross was erected. This custom of carving the tools of the trade upon the tomb or coffin-stone goes back to the vaults of the Catacombs, but in England it is not till the Norman period that the custom became at all general.

In addition to the types of picture already mentioned, there are figures of men and women, birds, trees, and animals, the significance of most of which it is difficult to conjecture; these are impossible to classify. Many of them seem to depict scenes of pagan myth intermixed with the Christian, a class which will be reserved for discussion later.

4. *The Date of the Interlaced Crosses*

Mr. J. R. Allen, from whom we have already quoted much, has, in his discussion of the age of the *Ilkley Crosses*, reviewed such evidence concerning the interlaced crosses

¹ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 42. 343.

² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

³ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 46. 341.

* Probably Weland the smith from Germanic legend

of Great Britain and Ireland as gives any clue to their age, and arranged them according to the centuries in which they belong.

According to this table, five crosses belong to the seventh century, three to the eighth, while to the ninth belong all the crosses of the Isle of Man, two English crosses, two Scotch, and several Irish. To the tenth century he ascribes most of the Irish crosses, and to the eleventh and twelfth a few unimportant Irish crosses and slabs.

But this geometrical interlaced ornament, as we have already seen, was Irish in its origin, or at least it was so developed in Ireland as to gain a thoroughly national character. Then it was communicated to the Anglo-Saxons by Irish artists. It was used at first for manuscript decoration, and reached its perfection about the end of the seventh century in such work as that of the Lindisfarne Gospels. But the earliest dated stone in Ireland that bears any ornament whatever of this sort, is the tombstone of an abbot of Clonmacnois, who died in 806.¹ This has a single Greek fret around the cross. In Celtic metal-work there is no trace of this ornament before the ninth century, and the famous high crosses of Ireland, the best specimens of this kind of art, belong, undoubtedly, to the tenth.²

It seems strange, therefore, since Ireland was the teacher of England in these arts of ornament, that England should possess ornate crosses in the seventh century, covered with highly elaborated Celtic ornament, when Ireland herself had no trace of anything of the sort, either in stone or metal-work, before the ninth century, while her best specimens belong to a period a full century later.

Upon examining the evidence for the dating of the seventh and eighth century crosses in this list, we find that it is based entirely upon the reading of a name upon the cross. Granted, first, that the reading is correct (which in con-

¹ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 41. 334.

² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

spicuous examples, as we shall see, it is not), the archæologist continues with two other assumptions: first, that this name refers to a person of the same, or more often, of a similar name known in history; and, secondly, that this cross must have been erected immediately after that person's death.

In dating these crosses, Allen follows respectfully, though doubtfully, the readings and conjectures of Stephens and Haigh. But unfortunately these placed two of the most elaborate and finished specimens in the seventh century, namely, the Bewcastle Cross and the Ruthwell Cross. Upon the latter, Stephens read the inscription in runes, *Caedmon me fawed*, which he interpreted 'Cædmon made me;' hence he assigned the cross to the time of Cædmon the poet. On the former he read, 'In the first year of the king of this realm Ecgfrith;' hence he set for it the date 670.¹

But Professor Cook, having made an investigation of the verses inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross from the standpoint of meaning, metre, diction, and phonology, reaches the conclusion that they must be a quotation from the eighth-century poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, and gives the entire matter of date its final word in his concluding paragraph:

On the basis of this phonological examination we have found that, while the general aspect of the inscription has led many persons to refer it to an early period, it lacks some of the marks of antiquity; every real mark of antiquity can be paralleled from the latest documents. . . . We shall not hesitate, I believe, to assume that the Ruthwell Inscription is at least as late as the tenth century. If now we seek the opinion of an expert, Sophus Müller, on the ornamentation, . . . we shall find it to this effect: "The Ruthwell Cross must be posterior to the year 800, and in fact to the Carolingian Renaissance, on account of its decorative features. The free foliage and flower-work, and the dragons or monsters with two forelegs, wings, and serpents' tails, induce him to believe that it could scarcely have been sculptured much before 1000 A. D." Vietor has at length

¹ It may be remarked that Haigh made out a very different reading. *Archæol. Æliana*, q. S. Bugge, p. 93, note.

proved that the *Caedmon me fawed* of Stephens' fantasy is non-existent, and we are free to accept a conclusion to which archæology, linguistics, and literary scholarship alike impel.¹

The Bewcastle Cross is beyond question a product of² the same period as the Ruthwell, so that this also may be removed from the seventh to the end of the tenth century. With these may be grouped the Gosforth Cross also,³ on account of its shape, size, and ornament. This, too, Stephens pronounced to be 'probably of seventh century date,' no doubt because it evidently belonged to the type of the Ruthwell Cross.

It is of the most importance that, instead of depending upon fancy and guesswork, we can determine with good reason the approximate date of an important cross like the Ruthwell. With this we can group others which have the same characteristics, and thus assign the close of the tenth century as an approximate date for the height of the development of the cross-monument in England. This tallies well with what we know of the cross-monument in Ireland.

There are two other guides.⁴ First, as stated above, the scroll-and-foilage-element was derived from Frankish artists, who developed this style in the 'Carolingian Renaissance.' Secondly, the pictorial element (with the characteristic interlaced dragons or serpents) is a product of Scandinavian influence, and dates from the settlement and conversion of the Danes. These will help a great deal in determining the probable age of stones which bear no inscriptions whatever.

We have already disposed of the two most notable crosses which have been assigned to the seventh century. Let us examine the evidence for assigning other interlaced crosses to a period preceding the ninth century, when, as already noted, the interlaced ornament makes its first appearance on stone in Ireland.

¹ 'Notes on the Ruthwell Cross,' *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America*, Vol. 17, No. 3.

² Bugge, p. 493.

³ Calverley, p. 138.

⁴ Westwood, *Introd.* v-ix; also *Arch. Journ.* 10. 278 ff.

The four remaining crosses which Mr. Allen assigns to the seventh century are these, denoted by the locality in which they are found. All four are in England: one at Collingham, dated circa 651; Beckermest, 664; Yarm, 681; Hawkeswell, 690.

Of the Collingham Cross, Allen says, it is 'inscribed in runes to the memory of King Oswini, who was ruler of the Deira in 651.' Here he follows Stephens,¹ who makes it out: ' . . . Aeftar Onswini, cu . . . ' and refers it to the King Oswini mentioned above. Anything deciphered by Stephens from a practically illegible inscription may be suspected after his reading of the Ruthwell Cross, to say nothing of the assumption of the king in question. But in this case the cross as depicted by Stephens has both the marks of a late date already mentioned, for the scroll-work and interlaced dragons are conspicuous in its ornament at the expense of the earlier, purely geometric design. It is certain, at all events, that this cross is not earlier than the ninth century.

At Beckermest are two shafts of crosses, 'one of which,' continues Mr. Allen, 'bears an inscription showing that it marks the grave of Bishop Tuda. Bede mentions that Tuda, Bishop of Northumbria, died of the plague in A. D. 664. . . . This cross is, therefore, probably one of the seventh century.' This reading was given by Rev. D. H. Haigh, whom Stephens calls the 'learned Mr. Haigh,'² an archæologist who could read on the Collingham Cross, for example, eight lines of inscription, where even Stephens himself could make out only the two words we have already quoted. According to Mr. Haigh, the inscription on the Beckermest cross reads as follows (translated):

Here enclosed
Tuda Bishop:
the plague destruction before,
the reward of Paradise after.³

¹ *Runic Monuments* I. 390.

² *Runic Monuments* I. 390, note.

³ Calverley, p. 27.

'This, in conjunction with the story of Bede,¹ makes it seem inevitable that the cross belongs to the seventh century, and that it is, in fact, the burial stone of Bishop Tuda.'

This 'celebrated reading' was made in 1857. Two years later, Rev. John Maughan announced another reading and translation:

Here beacons
two set up
queen Arlec
for her son Athfeshar
Pray for our
souls.²

Then, after various attempts by different hands, R. Carr Ellison announced his reading in 1866:

O, thou loved
offspring Edith,
little maid
in slumber waned.
Years XII. Pray ye for her soul.
Year MCIII.

Finally in Calverley³ is quoted the most recent version. Here the language is supposed to be 'Manx Gaelic,' and the author of this reading is a Mr. John Rogers:

'(This cross was)
made for
John mac Cair
he gone to
rest in the keeping
of Christ. Be gracious
to him, O Christ.'

At this point the plague-stricken bishop of the seventh century has vanished rather completely, together with our confidence in any testimony from Mr. Haigh.

The fragment of a cross at Yarm may be dismissed

¹ *Eccles. Hist.* Bk. 3, chap. 26-27.

² *Archæologia Æliana* 6, 61, quoted by Calverley, p. 29.

³ p. 31.

briefly. It is sufficient to quote the evidence in its favor. 'It bears an inscription showing that it was erected by " . . . berecht Bishop, in memory of his brother." Professor Earle, of Oxford, reads the name "Hireberecht"; but Professor Stephens makes it "Trumberecht" and identifies him with the Bishop of Hexham of that name, A. D. 681.' By similar 'identification' by the reading of 'St. Gacobus' on the shaft of a cross at Hawkeswell, it is supposed to commemorate a deacon of St. Paulinus mentioned by Bede. This concludes all the evidence for the existence of interlaced crosses before the eighth century.

Of the eighth century there are three, at Alnmouth, Harkness, and Thornhill. Of the Alnmouth fragment, Stephens gives a description on pages 461-2 of his *Runic Monuments*. All that he can make out is a few meaningless fragments of words, but Mr. Haigh (to quote Stephens) 'fills up the words thus,' and get an inscription which reads:

(This is King E)Adulf's th(ruh) (grave-kist)
 (bid) (= pray) (for—the) Soul.
 Myredah me wrought
 Hludwyg me fayed (inscribed).

We have already seen something of Mr. Haigh's work at deciphering and 'filling up.' But because the forms of the letters on this fragment 'resembles those on the Ruthwell Cross,' he feels sure that it can not be later than the beginning of the eighth century! The word *Adulf* that he reads and 'fills up,' he identifies, therefore, as the name of a King Aedulf of the early eighth century. This needs no comment.

The Harkness Cross fragments are on the site of an ancient monastery founded by St. Hilda of Whitby. Accordingly, on one, Mr. Haigh reads:

Huaethburga, thy houses always remember thee, most loving mother. Blessed Aethilburga! For ever may they remember thee, dutifully mourning! May they ask for thee verdant rest, in the name of Christ, venerable mother.

On another,

Trecea Bosa, Abbess Aethilburga pray for us.

These sound characteristic of Mr. Haigh. No. 3 is inscribed with the name 'Bugga.'

The persons named in this reading, who have been 'identified,' lived anywhere from the beginning to the end of the eighth century. Stephens himself gives these fragments the dates 700-800. If we accept Haigh's reading, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the stones were erected in the ninth century, after the death of the latest of the godly persons mentioned, who are asked to pray for the souls of their friends who remain on earth. However, there is no reason why we should accept a reading by Haigh until it has been confirmed by some one else.

For the two Thornhill fragments ascribed to the eighth century, we have to depend again upon the readings of Mr. Haigh.¹ Upon one he finds the name *Aethuini*; on another, the inscription: 'Eadred Isete aefte Eata Inne.' The word *inne* presents difficulty at first, but as it is derived probably from *innan*, 'to enter,' it must mean 'hermit,' i. e., a man who *enters* a cave. This is 'confirmed' by a passage in Simeon of Durham. It is an entry, dated in the middle of the eighth century, as follows: 'Eata obiit in Craic apud Eboracum.' Of a date some twenty or twenty-five years later, there is another entry: 'Etha anachoreta feliciter in Cric obiit.' Doubtless if Etha died in Cric or Craic, and was an anchorite, Eata, who died in the same locality, must have been a hermit too, and probably 'they were successive occupants of the same cell.' In the *Liber Vitae* about the middle of the eighth century are the names Aethelwini and Eadhelm. The former is undoubtedly the same as the Aethwini of one fragment, and Eadhelm 'there can be no difficulty in admitting as the full form of Eata.' Hence, these stones belong to the eighth century. Still,

¹ *Yorkshire Arch. Journ.* 4. 426 ff.

the runes about Eata and Aethwini, Mr. Haigh admits, are 'not very legible.'

If we turn from this style of reasoning to the reproduction of the stones themselves, we find the ornament on one side is a conventional foliage, and on the other an interlaced dragonesque design, both of which are accepted as the marks of the ornament which, at any rate, belong to a time after the Carolingian Renaissance and in the period of Scandinavian influence.

So far we have found no trustworthy evidence for the existence of the interlaced cross before the ninth century, and there is nothing in the way of what would, at first, seem the natural and reasonable supposition that the interlaced cross was a product of Irish influences, and that it did not appear in England before the ninth century.

In our classification of crosses, we have made two divisions: the Pillar-Stones, with a simple cross incised, and the Interlaced Crosses, with their cross-form and wealth of ornament. But between these two lies an intermediary class, where the monolith develops into the cruciform shape, and is sometimes adorned with simple ornament. The cross-fragment in Calverley, on page 81, another on page 6, and a third on page 96, are probably examples of this class, and there are a great many of them in Western Cornwall. But they are unimportant for our consideration here, as they simply bridge the step between the rude Pillar-Stones and the Interlaced Crosses.

To contrast the plain incised cross upon the original pillar-stone with the elaborate ornament which adorned the interlaced cross at the height of its development, I subjoin Calverley's description¹ of the cross-column at Bewcastle:

The details are: *west* face near the top, remains of runes over an oblong square-headed panel, containing the figure of S. John Baptist bearing the nimbed Agnus Dei. Beneath this panel and over a much larger central, oblong, circular-headed panel, are two lines of runes, the upper line beginning with the sign of the cross and reading

¹ p. 39.

Gessus (Jesus), the lower one reading Kristus (Christ). This central panel contains the glorified figure of the great Christ, robed as a priest, bearing in His left hand the sacred roll, His right hand uplifted to bless, treading upon the lion and adder, and His holy head leaning slightly to the right hand surrounded with the circling halo. Below this central figure comes the principal inscription in nine lines of runes. Beneath this, in a wide, circular-headed panel, standing a little sideways, and looking toward the spectator's right hand, is a man holding on his left wrist his hawk, which has flown up from its perch beneath . . . These three figures are the only human representations on the cross. . . .

The details of the *south face* are: at the bottom an intertwined knot-ornament; above this a line of runes beginning with the sign of the cross; above this a very beautiful piece of double-scroll work, consisting of two grape-bearing vines with foliage and clusters, filling an oblong panel. Another line of runes appear above, and a smaller panel of knot-work above this, surmounted again by a panel filled with a single vine-scroll, bearing near the center an early sundial, whose principal time divisions are marked by a cross, and having rich fruit above. Another line of runes separates this panel from a third carving of knot-work, which with some more runes brings us to the top of the cross shaft.

The *north face* has also five panels. The central and largest panel, filled with chequers only, has above and below it and separated by a line of runes, a smaller panel, containing very elegant knot-work presenting elaborate specimens of the sacred sign of the Holy Trinity, the triquetra so constantly used in the early manuscripts. In the lowest compartment on this side are two conventional flower and fruit-bearing vine-scrolls of perfect design and exquisite workmanship, more nobly conceived than perhaps anything of the kind which is known in the land. The uppermost compartment contains a single such scroll. The two divisions—at the top and bottom of this side—containing these three Paradise Trees are separated from the knot-work divisions each by a line of runes. At the very top, preceded by three crosses, is another line of runes—Gessus (Jesus). . . . It will thus be seen that the chief face of the stone bears three sculptured figures, the central one being the Christ; that each of the two parallel sides show three divisions of interlaced work or geometrical design, and three conventional flower and fruit-bearing vines; and that the knot-work displays in various ways the sign of the Trinity.

The *east face* of the cross is filled with one great vine-scroll rising bodily from below and bearing many fruits which are being eaten by beasts and birds. A hound or fox devours a cluster near

the ground, further up are two creatures of conventional character, and higher still two birds, hawk or eagle, and raven, while the two topmost fruits are nibbled by two squirrels.

During the eleventh century the interlaced cross declined, and perhaps in the profusion and mixture of all sorts of details in such a cross as described above may be seen the beginnings of the decline. The elaborate interlaced design of Ireland was never executed by Anglo-Saxon artists with the same skill as by the Irish. They were content to give the suggestion of interlacing, without the careful and conscientious carving of the Irish artists. It must be admitted that the Anglo-Saxons appear to have contributed nothing whatever to the development of artistic ornament upon the cross.

(c) *The Use of the Monumental Cross*

But the question of chief importance, perhaps, in connection with these stone crosses, is the part that they played in the life of the people.

I. *Memorial.* The ancient pagan monoliths that have been described were memorials erected in honor of some departed hero; and in the earliest Christian forms, the pillar-stone, with its cross and circle and simple inscription, served the same purpose. These stones, as already noted, belong to a Celtic area. With the retreat of the British disappeared the custom of erecting a tomb-cross over a grave. In Ireland, according to the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*,¹ it seems to have been the custom to raise the cross over the grave of every Christian; but in Anglo-Saxon England the horizontal slab was used instead, and it was not till the tenth century that the headstone cross was employed.²

But there were crosses erected to the memory of a saint, friend, or relative, which were not placed at the grave. The cross commemorative of Owen, the shaft of which is now in Ely Cathedral, is an example. It bears the simple inscription, '*Lucem tuam Ovino da Deus et requiem.*'

¹ p. 325.

² Cutts' *Manual for the Study of Sepulchral Slabs*, p. 48.

Of a rather different class of memorial crosses are the following examples. In the life of St. Columba it is related that Ernan, an aged priest, tried to see Columba before he died, but while on his way fell upon the ground, and expired before fulfilling his desire: 'Hence on that spot before the door of the kiln, a cross was raised, and another cross was in like manner put up where the saint resided at the time of his death, which remaineth to this day.'¹

In the story that Malmesbury tells of the burial of Aldhelm is a similar use. The saint had died at the distance of fifty miles from Glastonbury, and as the funeral procession set out for Glastonbury, where he was to be buried, at each stage of seven miles where the body rested, a cross was afterwards erected. At these crosses the sick were healed, and all seven of them, says the chronicler, were standing in his day, and were called 'bishop stones.'²

Simeon of Durham³ mentions a stone cross erected by Bishop Ethelwold at Lindisfarne in memory of Cuthbert. Its top was broken off by the Danes when they pillaged Lindisfarne, but afterwards the broken part was fastened on with lead, and thereafter the cross was always carried about with the body of Cuthbert whenever it was moved. It came to be venerated by the Northumbrians in memory of Ethelwold and Cuthbert together. The writer says of the cross that 'to this day, standing on high in the cemetery of Durham minster, it shows to all who gaze upon it a memorial of both these pontiffs.'

ⓐ Crosses were sometimes raised in memory of some great event. After Oswald's victory, the cross of wood remained upright upon the battle-field, and later a stone cross took its place. According to Lingard,⁴ after the burning of the Abbey of Medeshamstede (Peterborough) and the massacre of the monks by the Danes, the victims were buried

¹ Adamnan, p. 38.

² *Gesta Pontif.*, p. 383.

³ *Opera*, Rolls Series 1.

⁴ *Hist. and Antiq.* 2. 234.

in one wide grave; on the surface, a small pyramid of stone was placed, bearing a record of the disaster, and opposite the pyramid, to protect the spot from being profaned, a cross, on which was engraved the image of Christ.

It should be added, however, that many of the crosses which are described as marking the site of a battle, or of a church council, are so described through a local tradition, or more often on pure supposition. Still, while genuine remains are rare, there is no doubt that the custom was known and practised.

2. *Mortuary.* Although the Anglo-Saxons did not place the head-stone cross on the grave till the tenth century, they were accustomed from a much earlier time to erect a cross in the churchyard. This was a custom of Christian Rome,¹ and was doubtless introduced by the Roman missionaries. At the consecration of the cemetery, this cross was erected, together with smaller ones at each of the four corners of the plot, corresponding to the points of the compass, to mark the boundaries. In the consecration service, the bishop began by making the circuit of the grounds with his clergy, chanting the litany. Then he read a portion of the service at the eastern cross, did the same at the southern, western, and northern crosses, and concluded at the cross in the centre.²

Although in the earlier period no crosses stood over individual graves, the stone slabs or the stone coffins in which the richer were buried were marked with the emblem of the Christian's hope. There were also small square stones called 'pillow stones,' which lay under the head of the deceased, and bore carved upon their surface the same emblem.³ Some of these slabs show by their ornament that they are contemporary with the interlaced crosses. Others have no trace of it, and are probably earlier. Many of the interlaced crosses which remain to this day were probably graveyard crosses, as they are often found near the sites of Anglo-Saxon churches.

¹ Schaff-Herzog, 'Kreuz.'

² Lingard, *Hist. Antiq.* 2. 252, note.

³ *Archæologia* 26. 480.

Some miscellaneous crosses connected with burial may be included here. According to Rock,¹ a cross and a book of the Gospels were laid across the body to preserve it from the attack of demons. Frequently buried with the corpse was a cross which, according to the same authority, was "generally of wood, with a sheathing of gilt metal."² King Edward the Confessor was buried with a golden crucifix.³

I have met but one instance of the so-called 'cross of absolution;' this was found in the tomb of Saint Birinus.⁴

3. *Boundary.* In the crosses of the graveyard, we noted four small crosses marking the limits of the ground. These were 'boundary crosses.' There are references in the terms contained in charters to various boundary crosses, in which they are referred to as a 'gilded cross,' a 'wooden cross,' a 'stone cross,' a 'red cross,' and sometimes merely a 'Christ symbol.'⁵ These served to mark the limits of church property.

So the monks of Edmundsbury⁶ erected four crosses, one at each extremity of the town, to define the limits of their authority, and Bishop Losinga⁷ raised a cross at Norwich to serve as a boundary mark between the land of the church and the borough. St. Guthlac also set up a cross at Croyland as a boundary mark.

There is an Irish canon of the eighth century which directs that a cross should be set up on all consecrated grounds, not only to mark the bounds, but also to sanctify the spot. A few centuries later, in England, a law had to be passed forbidding men to set up a cross falsely upon their lands in order to pass them off as church property, and so evade taxation.⁸

To these boundary stones of the church land, the so-

¹ 2. 312.

² *Archæol.* 3, 390.

³ e. g. Earle, *Handbook*, p. 29; *Codex Dipl.* 2. 287.

⁴ Dugdale, *Monasticon* 3. 99.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lingard 2. 50.

⁷ Rock I. 173, note.

⁸ Seymour, p. 321.

called 'Rogations' were made. The Rogation Days were the seventh of the calends of May,¹ and the three days before Ascension Day. In these Rogations, the clergy and all the parish walked in procession with candles and crosses, laid earth and grass upon the boundary stones, and offered prayers to avert pestilence.

4. *Sanctuary.* In the Irish canon quoted above, the cross served not only to mark the boundary but also to consecrate the land. It was so sacred an emblem that none would dare remove it as a landmark, and it made the ground upon which it stood holy. Hence it became a mark of sanctuary. Some churches, out of special reverence for the saints whose bones they possessed, had a peculiar privilege of sanctuary. 'A chair of stone, called the Frid, or Frith stool, was sometimes set near the shrine of certain saints, or the high altar; the churches of York, Hexham, and Beverley enjoyed this privilege, and in the last two these stools are still preserved. The rights of the Frith stool overshadowed the region for the distance of a mile, and guarded to the refugee the widest privilege belonging by charter to this sanctuary, as long as he chose to remain within bounds. Crosses marked the limits of safety. . . . This custom is noticed in the dying wish of St. Cuthbert, who desired to be buried at Farne, lest if buried at Lindisfarne his grave might become a place of refuge for runaways.'²

The fugitive who got within the protection of these sanctuary crosses was given a black robe with a yellow cross on his shoulder, in token of the shelter the symbol had given him.³ The crosses themselves stood very high, so that the fugitive could see them from afar, and be guided to safety.

5. *The Standard Cross.* Probably the earliest use of the monumental cross in Anglo-Saxon England was that as a standard of the faith, and a centre for preaching the Gos-

¹ Canons of St. Cuthbert (747 A. D.) at Cloveshoe; q. *ibid.* p. 322.

² Rock 3, part I, p. 365.

³ Seymour, p. 220.

pel. The custom was practised in the conversion of the Britons, and continued many centuries. When St. Botulf went to found his monastery in the wilderness of Lincolnshire at about the middle of the seventh century, 'he and his companions, before they did anything else, planted the standard of the cross, and set up the ensign of heavenly peace in the cross of Christ.'¹ In the life of St. Willibald it is written that 'it was the ancient custom of the Saxon nation, on the estate of some of their nobles and great men to erect, not a church, but the sign of the Holy Cross, dedicated to God, beautifully and honorably adorned, and erected on high for the common use of daily prayer.'² Some of the crosses that remain to this day give evidence of serving as a place of general worship, with a bowl hollowed out of a stone upon the base for holding the sacred water, the remainder of the stone serving in all probability for an altar.³

This custom of raising the standard cross was doubtless introduced from Rome, and practised by missionaries of the faith generally. For example, Boniface complained of a Gallic bishop, Adalbert, who went about among the Franks, and 'seduced them with divers falsehoods, so that by setting up crosses in the fields and pulpits, he made all the people come together thither and forsake the public churches.'⁴ Naturally, in order to attract the most attention and draw the largest crowd, the missionary selected for planting the cross the places of resort and the most conspicuous situations. So crosses became frequently associated with wells and markets.

These first crosses set up by the missionaries were doubtless crude and frail, but later, especially where there was no church built and the cross had to serve for a place of worship, permanent and highly decorated stones were set up for the purpose. These early standard crosses served also to consecrate the ground for the site of the church

¹ *Ecclesiologist* 8, 228.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cutts, *Parish Priests*, p. 24.

⁴ Boniface, *Opera* I. 117; cf. p. 122.

(according to the custom in the early church of Rome), whenever a church was built beside it to take its place as a centre of worship.

6. *Oratory Crosses.* Nor was the cross merely for public worship and the preaching of the Word; it was also a shrine for private supplication. On the highways and at cross-roads, especially in Cornwall, crosses were erected for the benefit of travelers. Some, evidently, were for the purpose of getting the prayers of wayfarers for the soul of the deceased to whom the cross was erected as a memorial, or for the one who erected the cross himself. For example, one cross is inscribed,

Alcne prepared this cross for his soul.¹

Other stones served for an entire family; for example,

E. and G. wrought this family stone for Ælfric's soul and for themselves.²

These oratory crosses were erected, evidently, as a work of merit.

However, the divisions that we have followed are arbitrary at best. Almost any one of the crosses might have the functions of any or all of the rest, and there is no doubt that many of them served more purposes than one.³

The larger of these crosses were generally set up on three steps, symbolical of the Trinity, on which worshippers might kneel. The side of the cross which had the symbol of Christ incised, or bore the image carved, faced the west, with arms pointing north and south. Thus the worshiper turned his face to the east, and the ancient traditions of the position of Christ in the crucifixion were also preserved.

After the Norman conquest these stone crosses were

¹ *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 42. 313.

² *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 42. 313.

³ e. g. the memorial cross of Cuthbert became a graveyard cross at Durham. See above.

broken up and used for building material, whenever they were conveniently to hand. The survivors of this Norman ruthlessness had to suffer, beside the ordinary ravages of time, the iconoclastic zeal of the Puritans, so that it is a marvel that so many beautiful examples of the Anglo-Saxon cross-monument exist to-day.¹

(d) *The Cross in Other Arts*

Before concluding this discussion of the cross in Anglo-Saxon art, we should give at least a passing mention to the arts of illumination and of jewelry.

Naturally, the cross was constantly employed as a motive in the designs of the illuminated page. It appears constantly, now conspicuously, now in all sorts of disguises. Sometimes it is used merely in the border of a picture, and again it occupies the full space of the design. Of the latter, a most beautiful example is that given in a facsimile in Plate 12 of Westwood's *Irish and Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, a page taken from one of the most beautiful illuminations ever done in England, the Lindisfarne Gospels. It is wholly Celtic in character, and probably was done by Irish artists; at any rate, it came from an ancient seat of Irish culture.

According to the facsimiles which I have examined, the picture of the crucifixion on manuscripts belong to a late period, either the end of the tenth or the eleventh century. An Irish manuscript of the ninth century pictures the Crucified swathed in a conventional garment from head to foot, following the older style of the full tunic, with head erect and arms at right angles to the body.² Further, the wound is on the left side.

In the later Anglo-Saxon illuminations, however, a newer style is seen; the head inclines slightly to the right, the body is clothed only in a short tunic extending from the waist to the knee. The wound is on the right side, and the

¹ For a list of interlaced stone remains, compiled by J. R. Allen and G. F. Browne, see *Brit. Arch. Journ.* 41. 351.

² Westwood, *Irish and A.-S. MSS.*

arms are not stretched in a perfectly straight line from the shoulders. In all of these Christ is alive, though wounded; indeed, the early idea seems to have been that his wound was made before death, and, in fact, was the cause of death.¹ He does not wear a crown of thorns, but has always a halo, which is sometimes cruciform.

The custom of representing the Savior as dead was a later fashion, imported from the East. Kraus² cites, as a first example in Europe, a manuscript belonging to the year 1060. But in Westwood's collection³ is a facsimile of a dead Christ upon the cross in an Anglo-Saxon manuscript attributed by him to the end of the tenth century. However, this custom was not generally followed for some two or three hundred years afterwards, when the transition from symbolism to realism had become complete.

Of the cross in jewelry little need be said. The cross invariably appears on rings with inscriptions, as the cross always accompanied inscriptions. It occurs also on a talismanic ring with a runic charm, perhaps with an added usefulness for good luck. But it was also employed for decorative purposes, notably in the 'Minster Lovell Jewel.'⁴ It⁵ appeared also on the base of drinking bowls, and the like. The cruciform fibulæ that belong to the Anglo-Saxon period seem to me of no significance in this connection, because the fibulæ of pagan times were often of the same shape.

Although the remains of the Anglo-Saxon goldsmith's art are scanty at best, it is interesting for our purpose to see that, few as they are, they also reflect the veneration for the cross.

¹ Ælfric, *Hom.* i. 216; *Christ* 1447 ff.

² *Realencycl. der Christ. Alterth.* p. p. 240.

³ Plate 43.

⁴ For excellent facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon jewelry, see the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, Dec., 1900, p. 170; June, 1900, p. 755.

⁵ *Archæologia* 50, pt. 2, p. 406.

V. LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

(a) *Theological Mysticism*

The custom of searching for allegorical and prophetic types in Scripture was zealously practised by Anglo-Saxon scholars, especially by Bede. The birth of Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam symbolized the birth of the Bride—*i. e.*, the Church—from the pierced side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death.¹ Noah's drunkenness, curiously enough, was a prophecy of the crucifixion, and the laughter of Ham prefigured the taunts of the Jews.² Cain, leading Abel out to slay him, was a prophecy of the Jews' leading Christ outside the city, and all the details of the murder of Abel are made to correspond with the details of the crucifixion.³ Mount Tabor suggested the cross, because the name is interpreted as 'coming light,' and therefore 'by name and position is pleasing to the mysteries of the life-giving cross.'⁴

Of the direct references to the cross there are a great many; only a few characteristic ones need be quoted here. First, as to the wood of the cross. The association of the tree of life with the cross is found all through the Anglo-Saxon literature of the cross, and also in the sacramentaries. Bede, in his hymn on the passion of St. Andrew, says of his being raised upon the cross: 'Levatur in vitæ arborem.'⁵ In the Benedictional of Ethelwold it is written: 'Deus noster vos perducat ad arborem vitæ, qui eruit de lacu miseræ, ipse vobis aperiat ianuam paradysi qui congregit portas inferni, Amen.'

But the tree of knowledge of good and evil is also paralleled with the cross. Bede expounds the words, 'the cool of the day' (Genesis 3. 8) as follows: 'Doubtless in the same hour in which the first man touched the tree of pre-

¹ Bede I. 79.² *Ibid.* 7. 126.³ *Ibid.* 7. 75.⁴ *Ibid.* 8. 22.⁵ *Ibid.* I. 97.

varication, the second man ascended the tree of redemption, and that hour of the day which expelled the prevaricators from Paradise led the Confessor to Paradise.¹

The parallelism of the cross on the shoulders of Christ with the fagots borne by Isaac was brought out in the pictures brought by Benedict to adorn his church at Wearmouth.² The ark was a favorite type of the cross. The smiting of the rock in the Wilderness signified the Passion, for the rock represented Christ; the rod, the cross; and Moses and Aaron, the chief priests and the doctors of law. David's feigned madness signified the suffering on the cross; his harp was a prophetic type of the cross, and by virtue of that fact was able to drive the evil spirit from Saul. In the words of the Psalmist, 'Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel' (Ps. 81. 2); the timbrel typified the crucifixion because it was a skin stretched upon wood, so also the body of Christ was stretched upon the wood of the cross.³

The staff of David,⁴ the pomegranate tree under which Saul rested with his army,⁵ the pulpit on which Ezra stood to address the people,⁶ indeed, any erecting of a pillar or altar, the mention of a tree,⁷ or of anything made from a tree, led the exposition directly to the cross.

Secondly, the form of the cross. The marking of blood on the doorposts in the first Passover is frequently referred to as made in the sign of the cross.⁸ The four letters of the Hebrew word for God, written on the brow of the priests, signified the four parts of Christ's cross.⁹ Whenever the number three hundred appeared it was symbolical of the cross; for example, in the age of Enoch or in the length of the ark.¹⁰ For, according to Bede, following the traditions of the Fathers, 'This number is customarily represented among the Greeks by the letter T. The letter

¹ Bede 8. 37.

² *Ibid.* 4. 376 (*Lives of Holy Abbots*).

³ *Ibid.* 11. 278.

⁴ *Ibid.* 8. 100.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 9. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.* 9. 359, 372.

⁸ Ælfric, *Hom.* 2. 266.

⁹ *Ibid.* 7. 324.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 7. 89.

T holds the figure of the cross, lacking only the apex to be the very sign of the cross itself.’¹

So also all reference to the raising of the hands, and the like, were interpreted as types of the cross. Certainly in many, and probably all of these, Bede, Alcuin, and Ælfric simply followed the exposition of the Fathers.

Thirdly. The explanation of the cross itself. Here also in the explanation of the parts of the cross and the position of the Savior upon the cross the Anglo-Saxon scholar treads carefully in the path of his predecessors. Bede paraphrases the passage from Augustine² which interprets the words of the Apostle: ‘What is the breadth and length, and height, and depth,’ as referring to the dimensions of the cross; and Alcuin³ copies it word for word. Bede prefaces his discussion with lines from a poem of Sedulius,⁴ a fifth century poet,

Quatuor inde plagos quadrati colligit orbis,
Splendidus auctoris de vertice fulget eous
Occiduo sacræ lambuntur sidere plantæ
Arcton dextra tenet, medium læva erigit axem,
Cunctaque de membris vivet natura Creantis,
Et cruce complexum Christus regit undique mundum.

And Alcuin adds to his quotation from Augustine these words which paraphrase Sedulius: ‘Indeed as it lay, the cross stretched out toward the four quarters of the world, east and west, north and south, because even so Christ by his passion draws all people to him.’⁵ Ælfric, in his sermon on the Passion, repeats the same thought: ‘The Lord was fastened with four nails facing the west; his left held the shining south; his right, the north; his head, the east; and he redeemed all the regions of the world hanging thus.’⁶

But a passage attributed to Alcuin echoes Jerome’s commentary on Ephesians 3, 18.⁷ The writer says: ‘More-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 173.

² Hom. 118, in *S. John*, sec. 5.

³ 2. 478.

⁴ *Carmen Paschale*.

⁵ 2. 478.

⁶ 2. 254.

⁷ Zöckler calls him Pseudo-Alcuin.

over, the very cross contains within itself a great mystery, whose position is such that the upper part extends toward Heaven, and the lower part, fixed in the earth, touches the depths of Hell; its breadth stretches out to the regions of the earth.' This grandiose mystical conception of the cross became very popular with later writers, and, according to Bugge,¹ was the idea which gave the Northern mythology its picture of Yggdrasil, the world-tree, whose roots touched Hell, whose top touched Heaven, and whose branches stretched over the earth.

In all this mystical interpretation of the cross and its prophetic types, the work of the Anglo-Saxon theologians seems to have been to reproduce faithfully the conception of the Fathers, with no original contribution of any importance whatever.

(b) In Poetry

1. *Latin*.—In the account of the adoration of the cross on Good Friday, there were mentioned the anthems *Ecce lignum crucis*, *Crucem tuam adoramus*, *Dum fabricator mundi*, and the famous hymn by Fortunatus, *Pange lingua*. Of the others by Fortunatus, the *Vexilla Regis* is given in full in the Durham Ritual and in the eleventh century Hymnary with its Old English gloss. Alcuin gives the *Crux benedicta nitet*, with the *Pange lingua*, in his *Liturgica* for Good Friday.² Indeed, he appropriates the entire first line of the former for an altar-inscription which he composed, beginning 'Vexillum sublime crucis venerare fidelis.'³

In the Old English Hymnary mentioned above there is one other hymn on the cross, which is unglossed, the *Salve Crux, sancta salve mundi gloria*, a hymn by an unknown author—according to Chevalier,⁴ probably a Frankish poet of the tenth century.

¹ *Studien über die Entstehung*, etc., p. 468 ff.

² 2. 90-91. ³ 2. 223.

⁴ *Repertorium Hymnologicum*, p. 503.

Among the original productions of Anglo-Saxon writers we find that Bede has a Latin hymn on the birthday of St. Andrew, in which he puts into the mouth of the saint, as he sees his cross in the distance, the following salutation:

Salve, tropæum gloriæ,
 Salve, sacrum victoriæ
 Lignum, Deus quo perditum
 Mundum redemit mortuus.
 O gloriosa fulgidis
 Crux emicas virtutibus,
 Quam Christus ipse proprii
 Membris dicavit corporis.¹

However, he has written no single poem on the cross.

Alcuin, on the other hand, wrote much verse on the cross. The following is an inscription for an altar of the cross:

Ad aram sanctæ crucis.

Aspice, tu lector, nostræ pia signa salutis,
 Ecclesiæ in medio . . . mirabile donum;
 Pro mundi vita, mundi jam vita pendit:
 Pro servis moritur Dominus, quem sancta voluntas,
 Viveret ut servus, semper sit cum sanguine servum.
 Hoc memor esto crucem videasque in lumine stantem,
 Et nox ante Dei faciem feliciter ora.
 Corpore sterne solum, scande sed pectore caelum,
 Proque tuis culpis lacrymas effunde calentes;
 Sit tibi certa salus spei pietate perenni,
 Qui redemit mundum, immaculato sanguine, totum,
 Quique suis famulis clemens peccate remittit.
 Hic quoque sit nobis sacræ spes magna salutis,
 Agmine apostolis quoniam hæc ara refulsit,
 Et simul Helenæ mentis vivacibus almæ,
 Quæ invenisse crucis fertur mirabile lignum,
 In quo Christus honor mundi, laus, vita pendit
 Dum fuit altithronus pro nobis talia passus,
 Quid nos hunc famuli debemus ob ejus amorem
 Jam, nisi nunc illi nosmet quoque tradere totos?
 Sit Deus ille nobis charitas et tota voluntas
 Laus, honor, et virtus, potus, cibus, omnia Christus.²

¹ *Patrolog. Lat.* 94. 97.

² 2. 219.

One other to the cross is as follows:

Ad sanctam crucem.

Vexillum sublime crucis venerare fidelis,
 Qua qui se munit, tristia non metuit,
 Crux benedicta nitet, Dominus qua carne pependit,
 Atque suo clausit funere mentis (F., mortis) iter.
 Hic auctor vitæ mortem moriendo peremit,
 Vulneribus sanans vulnera nostra suis.¹

In this, as has been remarked, an entire line has been appropriated from Fortunatus, but in the other, also, are turns of phrase which are echoes of the immensely better work of the older poet. But Alcuin admired and imitated not only the hymns of Fortunatus, but his acrostic verse as well, and in these acrostic poems Alcuin gives a labored, though evidently sincere, tribute to the cross. Some of them are of sufficient importance to quote entire. In his poem *Crux decus es mundi*, he copies the very design of Fortunatus,² one which the latter used in his 'Extorquet hoc sorte,' as follows:



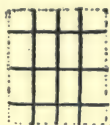
In Alcuin's poem the lines of the figure spell:

Crux pia vera salus partes in quattuor orbis,
 Surge lavanda tuæ sunt sæcula fonte fidei,
 Alma teneto tuam Christo dominante coronam.
 Salve sancta rubens fregisti vincula mundi;
 Signa valete novis reserate salutibus orbi;
 Rector in orbe tuis sanavit sæclas sigillis.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Patrolog. Lat.* 5. 88.

A second, which honors the cross only by its figures, is in praise of Charlemagne. The lines run as follows:



Here all the horizontal lines begin, 'Flavius amicus Carlus.'

But these performances of Alcuin fade into insignificance beside the work of his comrade, Josephus Scotus, an Irish scholar, who accompanied him to the court of Charlemagne. His work in this field is much larger in bulk and much more ingenious. An acrostic poem of his on the work of redemption has this design:



and reads:

Ille pater priscus elidet edendo nepotes.
 Mortis imago fuit mulier poma suasrix.
 Jessus item nobis ieiunans norma salutis.
 Mors fugit vitæ veniens ex virgine radix.

The small cross in the center reads: 'Lege feliciter Carle.'

Another, a sort of epistolary sermon addressed to Charlemagne, has this scheme:



A third, which is a flattering address to the royal patron, makes the cross thus :



And lastly, the most elaborate of all is a long one on the Holy Cross itself, where the cruciform design is as follows :



The lines of the figure read thus :

Crux mihi certa salus Christi sacrata cruore ;
 Crux decus æternum toto venerabile sæclo ;
 Crux vita salus credentis Crux mors poena negantis.
 Sancta cruci semper salvit inscriptio corda.

Thus the cruciform acrostic, originated by Fortunatus, was revived by Alcuin, and elaborated still further by his friend Scotus. The tradition was then passed on to Alcuin's pupil, Rabanus Maurus, the great German singer of the cross of the ninth century. His name is the one most commonly associated with this species of literature, and under his hand it far surpassed all preceding efforts in quantity and ingenuity. With him the art may be said to have reached its best, or its worst, according to the point of view.

2. *Old English*.—The Latin hymns and verses on the cross which belong to the Anglo-Saxon period are either the old hymns, especially those of Fortunatus, used in the service of the church, or imitations of his work. But in Old English poetry we find an element that, while founded upon the tradition and rites of the church, is fresh and distinctively

national. The three most important poems for this study are the *Elene*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and the *Christ*.

At the outset of this chapter we came upon a metrical homily of Ælfric's on the Exaltation of the Cross—a story told in verse without ever becoming poetry; and Cynewulf's *Elene*, in which the story of the finding of the holy relic is described with energy and spirit. But at the close of the *Elene*, in a little obscure passage of autobiography, Cynewulf says that he was 'guilty of misdeeds, fettered by sins, tormented with anxieties, bound with bitternesses.' Then 'the mighty King granted me his blameless grace, and shed it into my mind, . . . unlocked my heart and released the power of song.' After his conversion he turned to contemplate the cross, the means of his salvation. 'Not once alone, but many times, I reflected on the tree of glory, before I had the miracle disclosed concerning the glorious tree, as in the course of events I found related in books, in writings, concerning the sign of victory.' This 'miracle' he has related, evidently as a tribute of love, in the *Elene*.

The authorship of the *Dream of the Rood* is unknown, but it seems probable that this, too, was written by Cynewulf. It tells of a marvelous vision of the cross. The opening lines seem to echo the vision of Constantine.

Hark! of a matchless vision would I speak,
Which once I dreamed at midnight, when mankind
At rest were dwelling. Then methought I saw
A wondrous cross extending up on high,
With light encircled, tree of trees most bright.
That beacon all was overlaid with gold;
And near the earth stood precious stones ablaze,
While five more sparkled on the shoulder-beam.

No cross was that of wickedness and shame,
But holy spirits, men on earth, and all
The glorious creation on it gazed.
Sublime the tree victorious . . .

Fearful was I before that radiant sight.
There I beheld that beacon quick to change,

Alter in vesture and in coloring;
 Now dewed with moisture, soiled with streaming blood,
 And now with gold and glittering gems adorned.

A long time lying there I sadly looked
 Upon the Saviour's cross, until I heard
 Resounding there a voice. That wood divine
 Then spake. . . .

I beheld the Master of mankind
 Approach with lordly courage as if He
 Would mount upon me, and I dared not bow
 Nor break, opposing the command of God,
 Although I saw earth tremble; all my foes
 I might have beaten down, yet I stood fast.

Then the young Hero laid his garments by,
 He that was God Almighty, strong and brave;
 And boldly in the sight of all He mounted
 The lofty cross, for he would free mankind.
 Then, as the Man divine clasped me, I shook;
 Yet dared I not bow to the earth nor fall
 Upon the ground, but I must needs stand fast.
 A cross upraised I lifted a great King,
 Lifted the Lord of heaven; and dared not bow.
 They pierced me with dark nails, and visible
 Upon me still are scars, wide wounds of malice,
 Yet might I injure none among them all.
 They mocked us both together; then was I
 All wet with his blood, which streamed from this man's side
 When he at length had breathed the spirit out.

'Now mayest thou know, O hero mine, beloved!
 Unutterable sorrows I endured,
 Base felons' work. But now hath come the time
 When, far and wide, men on the earth, and all
 The glorious universe doth honor me,
 And to this beacon bow themselves in prayer.
 On me a while suffered the Son of God;
 Therefore now full of majesty I tower
 High under heaven; and I have power to heal
 All those who do me reverence.'

Happy in mind I prayed then to the rood
 With great devotion, where I was alone

Without companionship; my soul within
 Was quickened to depart, so many years
 Of utter weariness had I delayed.
 And now my life's great happiness is this,
 That to the cross victorious I may come
 Alone, above the wont of other men
 To worship worthily. . . .
 and all my help
 Must reach me from the rood.

Each day I longing ask:
 When will the cross of Christ, which formerly
 I here on earth beheld, call me away
 From this my transient life, and bring me home
 To all delight, the joyous harmonies
 Of heaven, where sit at feast the folk of God,
 And gladness knows no end.

This is an adoration of the cross that is not ceremonial or conventional, but evidently a genuine expression of personal devotion. It is of especial interest for our purpose, because it expresses and emphasizes ideas found in many stray passages elsewhere.

First, the idea of the brilliant appearance of the cross, shining brightly and adorned with gold and jewels. All through Anglo-Saxon literature the cross is constantly referred to as shining brightly, especially where it figures in visions;¹ this may be due to the famous vision of Constantine, or to the presence of gorgeously adorned crosses in the church, probably both. Then, too, at the last day, the 'red rood was to shine brightly over all the earth,' as we shall see in the *Christ*.

I do not see the necessity of affirming, with Ebert,² that the poet must have had in mind a *crux stationalis* or processional cross in writing this poem. The altar-cross was certainly as richly adorned as the processional cross, for that matter, although it seems unnecessary to refer the cross of this vision to any particular cross of the church service.

¹ Ueber das Angels. Gedicht, *Der Traum vom Heiligen Kreuz*.

² e. g. *Martyrology*, p. 206.

The reference to the cross being clothed, *wædum geweorðod* (v. 15), may be a recollection of the veiling of the rood on Good Friday in the ceremony already described.

Here, as everywhere else in references to the crucifixion, realism plays but little part. Whenever there do occur touches of realism, they seem evidences only of a keen sympathy on the part of the writer with the sufferings of his Lord; for example, the mention of the 'iron nails' with which Christ was fastened to the 'hard tree' in Ælfric,¹ or, in the *Christ*, 'the cruel crown of thorns' and the 'white hands' that were pierced.

But the crucifixion to the Anglo-Saxons was first of all an act of free will; Christ mounted the cross as a king would mount his throne, and there he ruled over all the world. The willingness of the sacrifice is repeatedly emphasized, and, further, the crucifixion is represented as an act of triumph, a deed of royal prowess. So in their crucifixes the figure was crowned, not with thorns, but with a diadem.²

In endowing the cross with personality, the poet of the *Dream of the Rood* outstrips any other writer. While the cross is never represented as sharing in the guilt of the crucifixion in this poem, it is not merely a helpless instrument but a conscious creature, recognizing its Lord, and suffering, together with him, grief and pain: In this poem the cross is not simply a personality, it is actually deified:

When will the Cross of Christ, which formerly
I here on earth beheld, call me away
From this my transient life, and bring me hence
To all delights, the joyous harmonies
Of heaven?

This deification we have already noticed in the charms, where prayers were made to the Holy Rood, and the Holy Rood was expected to bring back strayed or stolen cattle. So also in the conclusion to the charter of Wihtréd's that

¹ *Hom.* I. 144.

² See above, p. 18, note.

was quoted, the curse pronounced upon him who breaks his word is this, that 'the Cross of Christ shall come in vengeance.' Again, in the conclusion to the apostrophe to the Cross that Ælfric puts into the mouth of Heraclius, he says to the Cross, 'Be mindful of this assembly which is here gathered together for the honor of God!'

The *Christ* of Cynewulf we have already quoted from in the discussion of the legends of the Cross. But the chief importance of this poem for our purpose is the description it contains of the apparition of the Cross at the Day of Doom. This was not original with Cynewulf, but is in accordance with an ancient tradition of the church.

An Old English prose account of the various days, with their signs and wonders, leading up to the Great Day, describes the seventh day thus: 'Then shall the Lord reveal the cross on which he suffered, and there shall shine a light over all the world, and he shall show the wound in his side, the wounds of the nails both in his hands and feet, by which he was fastened to the cross, as bloody as they were on the first day.'¹ We find the same idea in liturgy: in the Response at the end of the Third Lesson for the service of the *Invention* is the following: 'Hoc signum crucis erit in caelo cum Dominus ad judicandum venerit.'²

In the *Christ* the 'red rood shines brightly,' and it 'blazes upon all peoples.' This idea of its brilliant appearance is also found in Chrysostom, who describes the cross on the last day as 'shining beyond the very sunbeam.'³

It is a striking picture that Cynewulf gives of the cross on the Day of Judgment; it is indeed, the poetical apotheosis of the cross, and with it we may conclude this discussion: 'There shall sinful man, sad at heart, behold the greatest affliction. Not for their behoof shall the cross of our Lord, brightest of beacons, stand before all nations, wet with the pure blood of heaven's King, stained with his gore, shining

¹ *Das Jüngste Gericht.*

² q. Cook, note on *Christ* 192.

³ *Hom.* 76, on Matt. 24, 16-8; cf. Cook, note on *Christ* 189.

brightly over the vast creation. Shadows shall be put to flight when the resplendent cross shall blaze upon all peoples, . . . when the red rood shall shine brightly over all in the sun's stead.'¹

Summary

Up to this point we have reviewed the various aspects of the cross in Anglo-Saxon life and literature, section by section. The arrangement into sections is arbitrary, but it serves as well as any other to suggest the diversity of forms in which this symbol appeared, and the many sides of life which it influenced.

The liturgical part of the subject I have not felt competent to discuss in detail, but have left it with references where such detail may be found. I have felt, too, that it had less intimate touch with life and literature than other aspects to which I have devoted more space. However, there has been sufficient material presented to show that the religion of the period was indeed the religion of the cross, from the ceremonial of adoration on Good Friday to the sign of benediction, or the crossing oneself which accompanied every rite of the church. And, as the church of the early Middle Ages touched life on all its sides, this devotion to the cross found expression in matters of every day—in curing sickness, in blessing the tools of trade, in restoring fertility to barren fields, as a charm against misfortune, a solemn form of oath, an inviolable boundary-mark and place of sanctuary, the favorite motive of decoration on manuscript, on jewels, bowls, and on the very coins of commerce. Finally, as a monument, it greeted the eye on every side, on field and highway, in churchyard and market-place. In brief, the old term of mockery, 'worshiper of the cross,' which Aldhelm² applied to himself as a synonym for 'Christian,' sums up the story in a word.

The significance of the cross which lay at the foundation

¹ ll. 1080-1100.

² *Patrolog. Lat.* 39. 105.

of all these differing aspects, and unites them all, is stated by a homilist thus :

There is much need for us to bear in mind how the Lord delivered us by his passion from the Devil's power when he ascended the rood-tree and shed his precious blood for our salvation. Wherefore we ought to honor the holy victory-sign of Christ's cross, and follow after it, and pray for the forgiveness of our sins all together, since he suffered for us all on the cross, and endured at the hands of the wicked Jewish people all those reproaches.¹

Because the True Cross was the instrument by which humanity was ransomed, it was the most precious of earthly possessions, it was wreathed in legends telling of its marvelous odor and life-giving properties, and splinters from it were shrined in precious metals. The representations of the cross standing in the church were adorned with gold, silver, and jewels, because it was the symbol of the Redeemer, and before them the Christian bowed in adoration. He conceived of it even as a divine personality, and invoked it as a saint or a God. And, at last, on the judgment scene of the Great Day, he looked to see it ablaze with ruddy light, towering over all the world.

In the greater part of all the forms of the cross-worship, we have found simply the ideas and practices of the mother church, persisting with little variation on English soil. The rites of the cross in liturgy, the use and significance of the sign of the cross, the vast body of legends of the miracle of the cross, the hymns, the theological literature of the cross—all were transferred from the church of Rome to the church of the Anglo-Saxons. While in these ideas and practices we find no strikingly original elements, they are significant in that they took such deep root in English soil, and overshadowed all classes of society. Even to the semi-pagan, to whom the literature of the Fathers meant nothing, and the ritual in the church little more, the cross was a potent talisman to add to his ancient heathen formulas, and he accepted and trusted it as a 'victory-token.'

¹ *Blickl. Hom.*, p. 96.

It would be difficult to define just the contribution of the Anglo-Saxons to the cult of the cross. Possibly that deification of the cross that we have noticed was first developed on English soil. As far as I can discover, it transcends any veneration of the cross that was known in Rome, and as it is expressed in the *Dream of the Rood* it appears earlier than in any other piece of literature in Europe.

The cross-poetry of the Anglo-Saxons was certainly a contribution to the literature of the cross. It must have been widely known in England, from the testimony of the Ruthwell and Brussels Cross inscriptions, and of its influence abroad we shall have to speak later.

The stone cross with interlaced ornament, while a product of Irish rather than Anglo-Saxon genius, became an important feature of Anglo-Saxon life, and far surpassed the plain monumental cross of the tradition of Rome.

In the sculpture of the cross and the poetry of the cross, the emblem of Christianity reached among the Anglo-Saxons its most devoted and most artistic expression. !

Beside the main points noted above, it is necessary to recapitulate two matters of date which were established by the investigation for this chapter, and are important for the discussion in the chapter which follows. First, the stone cross with Celtic ornament, which we have called the interlaced cross, was not known in England before the ninth century. Secondly, the crucifix also was unknown in England before the latter part of the same century, and did not come into general use till the late tenth and eleventh centuries.

CHAPTER II

THE ANGLO-SAXON CROSS IN ITS HISTORICAL SETTING

The great diversity of forms in which the cross manifested itself, and the evident warmth and sincerity of the veneration accorded to it, show how powerful an influence it exerted over the lives and thoughts of this people. We shall try to discover, in this concluding chapter, if there were any events or influences in the Anglo-Saxon period which could have tended to intensify a spirit of devotion to the cross.

The earliest recorded appearance of the cross is that which figured in the procession of Augustine and his monks as they went to meet King Ethelbert. After the king had granted them permission to settle in Canterbury, Bede says that they drew near to the city, also, 'with the holy cross.' The first impression of the cross upon the pagan mind was, therefore, that of a standard of the new Faith. So, too, when the missionaries penetrated farther into heathen territory, they erected crosses as standards and as places of worship and exhortation.

In the next event of importance in the history of the cross in Anglo-Saxon England, this idea of the cross as a standard is strikingly exemplified. It is the victory of Oswald over Cadwalla in 633. To get a picture of the situation of the Angles just before this event, we may turn to the rather florid account of Sharon Turner (I.242-3):

The Welsh king, Cadwallon, full of projects of revenge against the nations of the Angles, continued his war. Osric rashly ventured to besiege him in a strong town, but an unexpected sally of Cadwallon destroyed the king of Deira. For a year the victor desolated Northumbria: his success struck Eanrid with terror, and his panic hurried him to his fate. He went with twelve soldiers to sue for peace of the Welshman. Notwithstanding the sacred purpose of his visit, he was put to death.

The swords of Cadwallon and his army seemed the agents destined to fulfill their cherished prophecy. The fate of the Anglo-Saxons was now about to arrive; three of their kings had been already offered up to the shades of the injured Cymry; an Arthur had revived in Cadwallon. . . . Triumphant with the fame of fourteen great battles and sixty skirmishes, Cadwallon despised Oswald, the brother and successor of Eanfrid, who rallied the Bernician forces and attempted to become the deliverer of his country.

For the rest of the story, let us listen to Bede:

In the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, he tells how Cadwalla, the king of the Britons, 'for the space of a year reigned over the provinces of the Northumbrians, not like a victorious king, but like a rapacious and bloody tyrant,' and how he ended his series of bloody deeds by treacherously slaying Eanfrid, who came to him to a parley for terms of peace. 'To this day,' continues the historian, 'that year is looked upon as unhappy, and hateful to all good men. . . . Hence it has been agreed by all who have written about the reigns of the kings to abolish the memory of those perfidious monarchs, and to assign that year to the reign of the following king, Oswald, a man beloved by God. This last king, after the death of his brother Eanfrid, advanced with an army, small indeed in number, but strengthened with the faith of Christ; and the impious commander of the Britons was slain, though he had most numerous forces, which he boasted nothing could withstand, at a place in the English tongue called Denisesburn, that is, Denis' brook.

'The place is shown to this day, and held in much veneration where Oswald, being about to engage, erected the sign of the holy cross, and on his knees prayed to God that he would assist his worshipers in their great distress. It is further reported that the cross, being made in haste, and the hole dug in which it was to be fixed, the king himself, full of faith, laid hold of it and held it with both hands, till it was set fast by throwing in the earth, and this done, raising his voice, he cried to his army, "Let us all kneel, and jointly beseech the true and living God Almighty, in his mercy, to defend us from the haughty and fierce enemy; for He knows that we have undertaken a just war for the safety of our nation." All did as he had commanded, and accordingly, advancing toward the enemy with the first dawn of day, they obtained the victory as their faith deserved. In that place of prayer very many miraculous cures are known to have been performed, as a token and a memorial

¹ Chaps. 1 and 2.

of the king's faith; for even to this day, many are wont to cut off small chips from the wood of the holy cross, which being put into water, men and cattle drinking thereof, or sprinkled with that water, are immediately restored to health.

'The place in the English tongue is called Heavenfield, or the Heavenly Field, which name it formerly received as a presage of what was afterward to happen, denoting that there the heavenly trophy would be erected, the heavenly victory begun, and heavenly miracles be wrought to this day.'

A cruciform church was built on the site of the battle, and the wooden cross that performed so many miracles, and that was still standing in Bede's day, was replaced after its final decay by a cross of stone, to commemorate the event.

King Oswald became both a national hero and a saint, and, after his death in a battle against the Mercians, was regarded as a martyr. Ælfric, for example, devotes a metrical homily to 'St. Oswald, King and Martyr.'

After his death the very ground on which he fell became potent for the healing of the sick. Bede says,¹

How great his faith was towards God, and how remarkable his devotion, has been made evident by miracles since his death; for in the place where he was killed by the pagans, fighting for his country, infirm men and cattle are healed to this day. Whereupon many took up the very dust of the place where his body fell, and putting it into water, did much good with it to their friends who were sick. This custom came so much into use that, the earth being carried away by degrees, there remained a hole as deep as the height of a man.

Some of these miracles the historian narrates in detail, but he gives much more space to the wondrous miracles effected by the bones of the sainted king. A heavenly light shone all night over his relics, devils were cast out from a man whom the priests had exorcised in vain, a boy was cured of ague, and a man was healed at the point of death.

These tales of miracle show how strong a hold Oswald and his rood had upon the popular imagination. Indeed,

¹ *Eccles. Hist.*, chap. 9.

it is not likely that the influence of this victory upon the national feeling for the cross can be overestimated. The cross had delivered the Angles from their enemies in the hour of greatest need. It was the victory of Constantine repeated in England, and probably the obvious points of similarity in the two stories helped to make the legend of Constantine as popular as it evidently was. This victory of Oswald, as well as that of Constantine, formed the associations with the cross that made appropriate the familiar Old English epithet *sige-bēacn*, the 'banner of victory.'

Alcuin and Ælfric both give accounts of this victory of the rood, both, however, based upon the narrative of Bede. Alcuin's account is contained in his poem *De Pontificibus et Sanctis Ecclesiæ Eboracensis*. In this, the only variation worthy of note is that in the speech that he puts into the mouth of Oswald the army is bidden to bow to the cross:

Substernite vestros
Vultus ante crucem.

Accordingly, the entire army, on their knees before the cross, pray to God. Alcuin has inserted an Adoration ceremony into the story.

As we pass from the seventh to the eighth century we find no historical event of significance in connection with the cross, and in literature only the cross-symbolism of Bede. While he frequently repeats, as his life-motto, 'Mihi absit gloria, nisi in cruce Christi Domini nostri,' he gives no evidence of a special feeling of love for the cross; he merely repeats the traditions as he found them in the Fathers, without particular emphasis.

But in the latter part of the eighth century we come upon remarkable poetry of the cross in the work of Cynewulf—and whoever else may have been the poet of the *Dream of the Rood*—in which the adoration of the cross reaches its most ardent expression. Closely following this comes the Latin of Alcuin, who is decidedly a cross-worshiper, though

¹ e. g. *Opera*, ed. Giles, 4. 181; 7. 126.

he was unable to rise to the level of the Old English poetry. He expressed his devotion to the cross chiefly by developing mystical interpretations of its parts, and by reviving and imitating the work of Fortunatus, especially in the cruciform acrostic. In this his colleague, Josephus Scotus, followed his example and surpassed it.

According to the *Chronicle*, in the year 773 'a fiery Christ-sign appeared in the heavens after sunset,' and in the year 800, 'a cross appeared in the moon on a Wednesday at dawn.' These are the only apparitions of the cross recorded. The first cruciform church of which we have record, after the church of Oswald at Heavenfield, was built in 810.¹ At some time early in the ninth century began the custom of erecting crosses adorned with the famous interlaced ornament. This custom seems to have come from Ireland, but to have spread rapidly over England, Scotland, and Wales. The custom continued in England, at any rate, up to the time of the Norman invasion. Finally, at the battle of Hastings, the army that fought with Harold in the defense of their country shouted the battle-cry, 'The Holy Cross, the Cross of God!'

We find on looking over the course of events in Anglo-Saxon history that, while the cross became almost a national emblem, special interest seems to have been focused upon it during the latter part of the eighth and the first part of the ninth centuries. Of the events in Anglo-Saxon history which we have anything to do with the cross, the victory of Oswald is easily of the first importance. Let us see if the effect of this could have been reinforced by influences from outside of England.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF IRELAND

The art of the Anglo-Saxons was chiefly an imitation of Irish art. It was from Ireland that they learned the arts of illumination, of metal-work, and of carving in stone.

¹ See p. 9.

The types of ornament came also from the same source, notably the famous interlaced patterns that we have already discussed. There were also elements in decoration which came from Frankish artists, and others from Scandinavian, but the basis of all Anglo-Saxon art was the style that came from Ireland, and that reached there the most perfect development.

But this influence may not have been restricted to the style of ornamentation or the shape of the crosses. The monumental cross itself, as we have seen, developed in the British Isles, not from the cross as it was set up in Rome, but from the ancient monoliths of the pagan Celts. We have seen that the huge stone was consecrated to Christian use by the Chi-Rho, or a cross with a circle cut upon its surface; then the stones were roughly hewn into the shape of a cross; finally, a graceful shaft was surmounted by a cross and ring, the whole covered with a wealth of interlaced ornament.

It was natural that the Celtic convert would the more readily erect stone monuments which, as his artistic powers developed, would tend to take the shape of the emblems of his faith. If one may trust the story of the life of St. Patrick, this is strikingly confirmed. In this there is such frequent reference to monumental crosses as to lead one to believe that they must have fairly studded the country-side. The island of Iona, also, a missionary outpost of the Irish church, was famous for its three hundred and sixty crosses. And in the west of Cornwall, where Irish missionaries labored, are a great many remains of ancient stone crosses which precede the time of interlaced ornament.

As in Anglo-Saxon England there were evidently few crosses before the interlaced period, it seems probable that something in the latter eighth century produced a greater devotion toward the cross, which led the Irish artist to devote his painstaking efforts in interlaced design to the stone surface of the cross, and which caused the Anglo-

Saxons to adopt this species of cross for themselves, and to erect great numbers of them.

In the development of the monumental cross we noticed a trace of an ancient pagan custom of the Celts. This is worth inquiring into, to see if there were any elements in Teutonic paganism which contributed to the use of the cross among the Christian Anglo-Saxons.

II. TEUTONIC PAGANISM

According to Grimm,¹ the swastika was a holy sign among the Teutons, and was called by them the *hamars-mark*. This sign was held sacred; they cut it on trees as a boundary-mark, and in blessing the cup the sign of the hammer was made. The significance of blessing, or good luck, seems to have clung to this ancient symbol in all of its world-wide migrations.

According to other authorities, the swastika is not the hammer of Thor at all, and has no connection with the hammer of Thor. 'The best Scandinavian authors,' says Wilson,² 'report "Thor hammer" to be the same as the Greek Tau, the same form as the Roman and English capital T.'

If we accept this, we can only recognize an added cross symbol—the tau cross, or Thor's hammer—which had a sacred significance to the pagan. The swastika as the sign of blessing was certainly known and employed. It is found on sepulchral urns, ceintures, brooches, fibulæ, pins, spear-heads, swords, scabbards, etc., in Germany, Bavaria, and Scandinavia.³

In these uses—the marking of a boundary, the blessing of the cup, weapons, and utensils, and the sign upon the burial-urn—it is easy to see the likeness to certain Christian uses of the cross, or the sign of the cross. It seems not improbable that such uses, familiar to the pagan, would have made the

¹ *Teutonic Mythology*, Stallybrass, p. 1345.

² *The Swastika*, p. 770.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 862 ff.

same uses of a Christian figure, almost identical, readily accepted.

As a matter of fact, the swastika was known among the Anglo-Saxons,¹ and persisted, at any rate in the ornament of their crosses and coins, after the establishment of Christianity. The illuminations of the Christian Irish show the same device. Wilson² mentions the baptismal font of an ancient church in Denmark as decorated with swastikas, showing its use in early Christian times there.

It is evident, then, that the sign was not only not regarded as a device of heathenism, but was accepted by Christians, even, as a form of their cross.

Moreover, both Celtic and Teutonic paganism recognized sacred stones. In Ireland, St. Patrick purified certain of these sacred stones at Mag Selce by inscribing Christian symbols on them. In England, stone-worship had to be forbidden by a special law in King Edgar's time; and the words of Ælfric, 'no Christian man can gain for himself help at any tree or stone save from the holy rood-token,' show that as late as his time the worship of trees and stones still persisted. It is not improbable that the Christian priest was all the more ready to erect the stone cross in order to give the people a stone to which they might bow in worship with propriety.³

Of the ancient myths a great deal has been made in regard to their effect upon the ideas of Christian Europe, especially in connection with the conceptions of Christ and the cross. There are, indeed, striking similarities in the Christian and heathen notions. For example, as Christ hung upon the gallows—a common term for the cross—so

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 870.

² *Ibid.*, p. 867.

³ It might be added that the idea of bringing the cross into the field of battle, as Oswald did, is not unlike a custom of the pagan Saxons, if we may accept the testimony of Sharon Turner. 'The priests in the hour of battle,' he says, 'took their favorite image from its column and carried it to the field' (Turner, *Hist. A.-S.* 5. 1. 156).

Odin hung upon a tree,¹ which is called a gallows. As Christ, one with God yet the Son of God, offered himself a sacrifice to God in behalf of man, so Odin was a willing sacrifice unto himself.² Odin and Christ were both wounded with a spear as they hung, and both cried aloud with anguish.

The resemblance³ continues also between the mythical treatment of the cross and the myths of the holy tree of the pagans. Odin hung on this tree, and, like Christ, is represented as the fruit of this tree. This world-tree, Yggdrasil, corresponds in many points with the mystical rood-tree of the Christians. It is called the best of trees, the 'tree of life,' and it is described like the tree of life in Paradise—with which the cross was fused—as having a spring of living water at its foot, its top touching the sky, its branches spreading over all the world, and Hell lying beneath its roots.

The relations of Christian and pagan myth in the light of these correspondences has been the subject of much discussion and difference of opinion. Stephens regarded this parallelism as due to pagan influence upon Christians, or the persistence of old traditions among those who were only nominally Christianized. Sophus Bugge just reversed the order, and developed the theory that it was the Christian ideas which affected the neighboring heathen. Müllenhoff, in his *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, contradicts Bugge, and declares again for the native, Germanic origin of the pagan myths. This seems the most natural supposition, and nothing save the scholastic passion for sources need interfere with the opinion that Teutonic mythology and Christian tradition had independent origins. This, however, does not interfere with the possibility that the correspondence of pagan and Christian ideas—as in the swastika noted above

¹ *Hovamol*, stanzas 110 ff.

² *Ibid.*

³ For detailed study of correspondences, see Bugge's *Studien über die Entstehung der Nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen*.

—made easier the acceptance of the latter, or a persistence of the one alongside of the other.

The traces of pagan mythology that concern us are found in the pictorial ornament of some of the interlaced crosses. Here the difficulty is that many of the representations may be interpreted as easily in a Christian as a pagan sense. For example, upon some of the crosses (e. g., the Dearham Standing Cross),¹ 'is carved a conventionalized tree. It is customary to interpret this as the heathen world-ash Yggdrasil. It may readily be accounted for by Christian symbolism. The cross was constantly referred to as a tree, and most often as the tree of life. In Fortunatus,² the figure is carried out into details of branches, leaves, blossoms, fruit, and seed. What could be more appropriate for a Christian to carve upon the shaft of a cross than the figure of a tree?'

Upon the Gosforth Cross is a figure with arms outstretched, the blood gushing from a wound in the right side; a male figure stands at its right, holding a spear; and on its left, two female figures. Calverley interprets the central figure as Balder, the son of Odin, who was killed by an arrow of mistletoe shot by the evil god Loki. But since it was customary to carve representations of the crucifixion upon crosses of this later style, what more natural than to interpret this as one of them, with Longinus on one side, and Mary with Mary Magdalene on the other? Beneath the foot of one of the women is a serpent, evidently in memory of the prophecy, fulfilled in that scene, that the woman's seed should bruise the head of the serpent.

Again, on the Cross at Kirby Stephen is a rude carving of a male figure bound like a malefactor. The curious part of this is that it has conspicuous *horns*. Calverley and Stephens call it 'Loki bound,' in reference to a myth which we shall meet later. This may be its true explanation, but it is also possible to refer it to Satan, who was to be bound 'a thousand years' and cast into the 'bottomless pit.'³ I

¹ Calverley, p. 515.

² *Cruz benedicta* and *Pange lingua*.

³ Rev. 20. 2-3.

know of no tradition that gives Loki horns, though it was a familiar mediæval attribute of Satan.

On the other hand, there are carvings which are undoubtedly of pagan significance. These pictorial carvings on crosses belong to the period of Scandinavian influence, and were probably executed by Scandinavian artists. As the memories of pagan myth would be fresher among the Danes than among any other Christianized race of the British Isles, it would be surprising if there were no traces of pagan tradition in their art. As a fact, much of this pictorial ornament can be explained only in this way; these are myths, not only of pagan origin, but also bearing no resemblance to Christian doctrines or traditions.¹

Calverley has pointed out the representations of three heathen monsters in the carving of some of these crosses, and his explanation seems the most reasonable that can be found:

The three monsters whose fathers was Loki, and whose mother was the witch of Jötunheim (the land of giants), were the Fenris-wolf, Jörmungand, the monster of the universe, also called Midgard's Worm,—the huge snake that lay in the great sea coiled around the earth; and a daughter, Hel.

Now when the gods heard that this kindred was being bred up in Jötunheim, and knowing that from such a stock all evil was to be expected on both father's and mother's side, Alfadir bade the children be brought to him, and the worm or snake he cast into the deep sea that lay around all lands, where it grew so that it coiled itself around all the earth and bit its tail with its teeth.²

Any one who looks at the huge monster on the top of the Brigham cross-socket, coiled round the hollow, . . . and biting its tail with its teeth, must at once identify the Midgard worm.³

'In the Brigham cross-socket,' continues Calverley, 'we have a full representation of the incarnation of Loki, Fenris, the Midgard snake, Hel, and the horse [on which Hel rode'], all under bonds. And the cross-head, in similar symbolism, represents the victory over the powers of evil.'

¹ *Gylfaginning*, 34.

² Calverley, p. 141.

³ p. 141.

⁴ The brackets are mine.

One of these may serve as a type. On the shortest of the sculptured sides of the socket is a figure which Calverley describes as 'composed of a wide distended throat, over whose cavernous depths fang-like limbs appear to close with ominous strength.' This is probably Hel, the goddess of the dead, who lived under the root of the great world-tree, and devoured those who died of sickness or old age.¹ Grimm says of her that 'she has gaping yawning jaws ascribed to her like the wolf; pictures in the MS. of Cædmon represent her simply by a wide open mouth.' From this comes, of course, our word 'Hell,' and the mediæval representations of Hell-mouth in manuscripts, sculpture, and mystery-play.

'In the Danish popular belief,' says Grimm, 'Hel is a three-legged horse that goes around the country as a harbinger of plague and pestilence. . . . Originally it was no other than the steed on which the goddess posted over land, picking up the dead that were her due.'²

Curiously enough, three-legged, horse-headed monsters are not an uncommon feature of much of this late Scandinavian type of ornament.

Let us examine one more instance. It is the picture of Loki upon the Gosforth Cross. Loki is the Teutonic Prometheus, and the story of his imprisonment is as follows: 'Skadi took a venomous serpent, and fastened it upon Loki's face. The venom trickled down from it. Sigurn, Loki's wife, sat by and held a basin under the venom; and when the basin was full, carried the poison out. Meanwhile the venom dropped on Loki, who shrank from it so violently that the whole earth trembled. This causes what are now called earthquakes.'³ The carving on the cross appears to correspond with this story exactly, showing Loki bound, with a serpent above, and his wife holding out the cup to catch the venom.

¹ Cf. *Beowulf* 1698; *Teuton. Myth.* I. 312-314.

² *Ibid.*

³ Calverley, p. 142.

These instances are sufficient to show that pagan myths did persist, and appear even upon the ornament of some Christian crosses. We have seen, too, that there were striking correspondences between the mystical conceptions of Christ and the cross, and Odin and the tree. All this, with the use of the swastika, must have contributed a good deal to the reverence of the Anglo-Saxon Christian for the cross. Yet it seems too much to say that the heritage of Teutonic paganism could furnish enough of a spirit for special worship of the cross, or the impulse for erecting the famous stone crosses at any particular period.

It must be borne in mind that the pagan ornament just discussed was a later development in the art of the cross, long after the impulse for erecting the ornamental cross had begun, and, indeed, when the art of the stone cross had already reached its zenith. It belongs to crosses of the tenth or eleventh centuries, belonging to Danish-Saxon territory. We have yet to account for the phenomenon of the special interest in the cross, which, we have found, seemed to be centred in the latter part of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century.

III. THE ICONOCLASTIC CONTROVERSY

Let us turn to the history of the church. The great question that stirred the Christian church of this period was that of the use of images in worship.

In the history of the cross in art, we saw that the influences that transformed the symbolistic cross with the realistic crucifix came from the image-loving East. The Eastern Christian seems to have inherited from the Greeks a love for all that appealed to the eye; and images of Christ, of Mary, and the saints came to be so numerous, and so commonly worshiped, that the defenders of the Faith had great difficulty in answering the charges of idolatry brought against the Christians by their enemies, the Jews and Mohammedans. A reaction set in, and with Leo III,

Emperor of the East, the Iconoclastic crusade was begun. The history of the long struggle that followed is divided by Schaff¹ into three periods:

1. The war upon images and the abolition of image-worship by the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 726-754.
2. The reaction in favor of image-worship, and its solemn sanction by the second council of Nicea, A. D. 754-787.
3. The renewed conflict of the two parties and the final triumph of image-worship, A. D. 842.

The impulse that set the iconoclastic movement on foot was to destroy the force of the charge of idolatry brought against the Christians by their enemies. The image-worshippers, on the other hand, defended themselves by making a distinction between the quality of the worship accorded to God and that accorded to images, at the same time repudiating the charge of idolatry.

The first attack upon images was an edict issued by the Emperor in 726, which prohibited only the worship of images. In a second edict, four years later, he commanded that all images and pictures should be removed or destroyed. He took down the picture of Christ which stood over the gate of the palace and substituted for it a plain cross, accompanied by an inscription, a part of which is as follows:

‘The Emperor can not endure that Christ should be sculptured as a mute and lifeless image graven on earthly materials. But Leo, and his young son Constantine, have at their gates engraven the thrice blessed representation of the cross, the glory of believing monarchs.’²

These edicts aroused a storm of opposition, and the servants who took down the picture were killed by a mob. Rebellions burst out in the Greek Archipelago, and Pope Gregory of Rome openly defied the Emperor. However, in his own empire Leo was strong enough to enforce his decrees.

¹ *Hist. Christ. Church* 4. 454.

² Walch, *Essay on Ancient Coins*, p. 132.

His son, who succeeded him, was also an iconoclast; he summoned a council in 754 which 'condemned and forbade the public and private worship of sacred images on pain of deposition and excommunication. . . . It denounced all religious representations by painter or sculptor, as presumptuous, pagan, and idolatrous.'¹

Leo IV adhered to the same policy, but after his death his widow, Irene, labored to restore image-worship. She called a council in 787 at Nicæa, which nullified the decree of the previous council of the year 754, and pronounced anathemas upon iconoclasts. After the deposition of Irene, the controversy went on again for thirty-five or forty years. The emperor Theophilus was the last and the most bloody of the iconoclastic emperors, but his widow, like Irene, brought image-worship back again. A final synod in 842 restored to the churches images and the worship of images. It decreed that the event should evermore be celebrated 'by a procession and a renewal of the anathema on the iconoclastic heretics.'

Such, in outline, is the history of the great controversy. The iconoclasts failed of popular support—as all iconoclasts do—because they had nothing to substitute in the place of images. Leo and his followers tried to substitute the cross. Indeed, all those who opposed the worship of images made a notable exception in favor of the cross, attempting to turn the feeling of reverence toward the one visible symbol to which it might properly be offered. But to the Greeks, and to the Church of Rome which had felt much of Greek influence, the cross as a visible image was insufficient.

In the West, however, the feeling was different. The adoration of the cross and the veneration of saints' relics took the place that the worship of images held in the East. The Teutonic tribes did not have the artistic traditions of the Greeks, and apparently did not crave sculptured or painted representations of Christ and the saints as objects of worship.

¹ Schaff 4. 457-8.

For the attitude of the Frankish church in this iconoclastic controversy, I quote once more from Schaff (4. 467) :

Charlemagne, with the aid of his chaplains, especially Alcuin, prepared and published, three years after the Nicene Council, an important work on image-worship under the title *Quatuor Libri Carolini* (790). He dissents both from the iconoclastic synod of 754 and the anti-iconoclastic synod of 787, but more from the latter, which he treats very disrespectfully. He decidedly rejects image-worship, but allows the use of images for ornament and devotion, and supports his view with Scripture passages and patristic quotations. The spirit and aim of the book is almost Protestant. The chief thoughts are these: God alone is the object of worship and adoration (*colendus et adorandus*). Saints are only to be revered (*venerandi*). Images can in no sense be worshiped. To bow or kneel before them, to salute or kiss them, to strew incense and light candles before them, is idolatrous and superstitious. It is far better to search the Scriptures, which know nothing of such practices. The tales of miracles wrought by images are inventions of the imagination, or deceptions of the evil spirit. On the other hand, the iconoclasts, in their honest zeal against idolatry, went too far in rejecting images altogether. The legitimate and proper use of images is to adorn the churches and to perpetuate and popularize the memory of the persons and events which they represent. Yet even this is not necessary; for a Christian should be able to rise to the contemplation of the virtues of the saints and to ascend to the fountain of eternal light. . . . The Council of Nicea committed a great wrong in condemning those who do not worship images.

The author of the Caroline books, however, falls into the same inconsistency as the Eastern iconoclasts, by making an exception in favor of *the sign of the cross* and the relics of the saints. The cross is called a banner which puts the enemy to flight, and the honoring of relics is declared to be a great means of promoting piety.

A Synod in Frankfort, A. D. 794, the most important held during the reign of Charlemagne, and representing the churches of France and Germany, in the presence of two papal legates . . . endorsed the doctrine of the *Libri Carolini*, unanimously condemned the worship of images in any form, and rejected the seventh ecumenical council. According to an old tradition, the English church agreed with this decision.

Let us see if anything beside 'an old tradition' points to the agreement of the English Church. The Frankfort

Synod supported the Caroline Books, which we have seen the Emperor prepared and published 'with the aid of his chaplains, especially Alcuin.' Schaff says in his biography of Alcuin (4. 687): 'In 794 he took a prominent part, although simply a deacon, in the council of Frankfort.' Also, in a foot-note to the last sentence of our long quotation, he says: 'This [the agreement of the English Church] rests partly on the probable share which the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin had in the composition of the Caroline Books, partly on the testimony of Simeon of Durham.' Again, in his biography of Alcuin, he says: 'In 792 he sent, in the name of the English bishops, a refutation of image-worship.' This is the 'testimony of Simeon of Durham,' and here, evidently, the historian believes it may be accepted for truth.

But the testimony of the sort we have gained from the investigation of the previous chapter confirms what already seems probable. In all the Anglo-Saxon literature, whether in the vernacular or in Latin, there is not a hint that images were ever used for worship. Lingard, in his discussion of paintings in the Anglo-Saxon church,¹ says, 'Of any species of religious honor paid to the paintings themselves, I do not recollect any instance in the contemporary records. But with respect to the cross it was far otherwise.'

Augustine brought a picture of Christ upon landing in England, and Benedict Biscop in the seventh century brought paintings from Rome. But even such adornment was rare, and, as Lingard says, there is no evidence that these pictures received 'any species of religious honor.'

In the previous chapter we found that the crucifix was apparently unknown in England till the end of the ninth century. This is an important piece of evidence in determining the attitude of the English Church toward image-worship during the great controversy. If even the crucified image was unknown, to say nothing of being worshiped, it is not difficult to guess the position of the English clergy in this quarrel.

¹ *Hist. and Antiq.* 2. 108.

Indeed, all the evidence there is points toward the full sympathy of the English Church with the tenor of the Caroline Books and the Frankfort decrees. Nay, more, these were probably the expression of the English Church itself through Alcuin. Alcuin was not the kind of man to stand apart from the traditions in which he was bred—like Scotus Erigena, for example—but led his age only as the exponent of his age, never as a pioneer. He was just the kind of man to reflect faithfully the traditions of the church in which he was born and bred.

The value of establishing this point about the English Church is this, that it was characteristic of those who opposed image-worship—both the fiercest iconoclasts, like Leo III, for example, and those who took a more moderate position, like Charlemagne—to make a great exception in favor of the cross. The cross was the only image—if so it may be called—to which adoration could properly be paid; and in condemning images, they laid special emphasis upon the cross.

The latter part of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries we have recognized as the period in England when there seemed to be a special impulse toward the honoring of the cross. This period was in the very heart of the iconoclastic war. The theory that this impulse was largely due to the attitude of England in the controversy, the quickening of a regard for the emblem which was already dear to the national heart by the story of Oswald, and already received 'adoration,' to the exclusion of every other object in the church, appears, on the whole, to be the most satisfactory in explaining the facts.

Very likely, beneath the *Elene*, or the *Dream of the Rood*, there was a personal experience of some sort—a dream, for example—in which the cross figured. Yet it would be just this heightened interest in the cross which would account for its being the centre of this religious experience in the mind of the poet, rather than the person of Christ, for example, or Mary, or one of the saints.

We may regard, then, this poetry of the cross in England as perhaps the first fruit of this impetus, giving to it, at the same time, added force by its own warmth, beauty, and sincerity. And it may not be too much to regard the application of the elaborate and minute traceries of Celtic ornament upon stone crosses as the first fruit of this impetus in Ireland, for probably the Irish church was at one with the other churches of the North in regard to the use of images. At all events, as soon as the Irish had developed this style of the cross, the Anglo-Saxons appropriated it for their own, erected it everywhere, and it became the most conspicuous feature of their national art. This impulse found expression, then, in the Old English cross-poetry, the Latin prose and verse of Alcuin, and in the interlaced crosses which came from Ireland.

Finally, let us inquire if this feeling in Anglo-Saxon England had any influence upon the literature of her neighbors on the continent.

'In the ninth century,' says Didron, 'the praises of the cross were sung as men sing those of a god or a hero, and Rhaban Maur, who was archbishop of Mayenne in 847, wrote a poem in honor of the cross.'¹ Rabanus Maurus was undoubtedly the greatest singer of the cross in the ninth century. His effort in verse, *The Praises of the Cross*, finished in 815, has been characterized as 'a monument of misdirected zeal and patience.' In this he develops the cruciform acrostic to a point that is fairly appalling. However, his work became very popular, and was admired as a miracle of ingenuity. It seems to be this, especially, that Didron has in mind.

But the exaltation of the cross 'as a god or a hero' is precisely what we have noted among the Anglo-Saxons. The second book of Rabanus' praises of the cross is an explanation in prose of the figure in his acrostic. The last

¹ I, 371-2.

chapter deals with the last figure, representing a monk adoring a cross, and concludes thus:

O crux alma Dei, usque huc, quantum potui, laudem tuam cecini; sed quia triumphum perpetem expetis, quem in his mortalibus pleniter et perfecte non invenis, confer te ad caelestia angelorum agmina, ibique tibi laus perpetus per cuncta sonabit sæcula.¹

This is the tone of the *Dream of the Rood*. It would be interesting to trace a connection between these ideas of Rabanus and the cross-poetry of the Anglo-Saxons. Alcuin was called to the court of Charlemagne in the year 752, and from that time his career is chiefly bound up with the empire of Charlemagne. His best work, undoubtedly, was in education; and to his school at Tours were sent young men of promise from all parts of the realm. One of these was Rabanus Maurus, and between this brilliant student and his master there developed a warm and lasting friendship. Naturally in such relations of friend and pupil one would expect that Rabanus would become thoroughly imbued with the traditions of the Church of England. But further than this, we find that the very poem under discussion was written by Rabanus at the suggestion of Alcuin.²

With this the connection becomes complete. But, unfortunately, the love of the cross in Alcuin found its expression chiefly in the self-imposed penance of the acrostic. And this was the model that the master set before his pupil, rather than the *Elene* or the *Dream of the Rood*. So it was the love of the cross in its scholastic habit that affected Rabanus, and inspired his *De Laudibus Sanctæ Crucis*.

While Rabanus is by far the most important singer of the cross of this period in the Frankish empire, two others may be noticed: Johannes Scotus Erigena, and Otfrid, the author of the *Evangelienbuch*.

The former was an eccentric Irish scholar who went to France about the year 843. Among his writings is a poem to the cross of seventy lines. This has many traces of the

¹ I, 294.

² Schaff 4. 727.

mysticism of Alcuin, and has also a fine enthusiasm for the cross, which, if he did not get it from Alcuin, he had probably caught in his own country or in England.

The latter, Otfrid, made a rimed paraphrase of the Gospel narrative in the German tongue. In the fifth book of his work, the first three chapters have to do with the cross. These are full of the mystical interpretations of Alcuin, the meaning of the 'height and depth,' etc., and the significance of the parts of the cross embracing all the regions of the world. To trace the connection still more clearly to Alcuin, Otfrid was a pupil of Rabanus.

In Chapter 20 of the *Evangelienbuch*, Otfrid describes the Day of Judgment. It would be most interesting if we could discover in this any trace of the *Christ*. The speech of Christ in Otfrid reminds one of the speech of Christ in Cynewulf, but it must be admitted that they are no more similar than would be expected from the fact that both writers used the Gospel narrative. Further, Otfrid omits wholly the most striking feature of the description in the *Christ*, namely, the Apparition of the Rood, a fact that makes it seem clear that the *Christ* was not one of his sources.

We must conclude, then, that the ninth century cross-poetry of England and Germany was inspired largely by the reverence for the cross in Anglo-Saxon England, through the medium, not of the Old English poetry, but of the Latin scholasticism of Alcuin.

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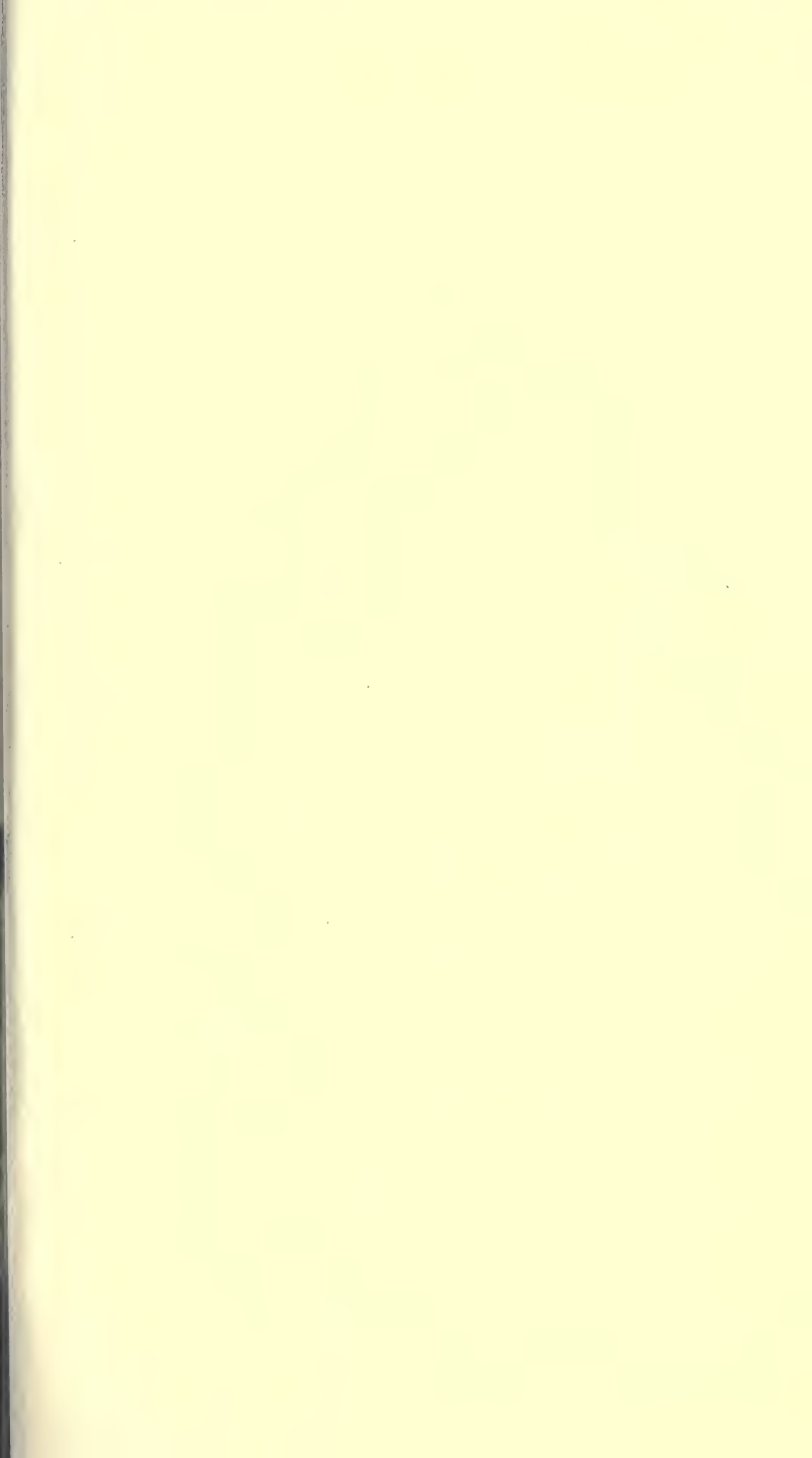
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