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**The Non-Crucifixion Iconography
of the Pre-Viking Sculpture
in the North of England:
Carvings at Hovingham, Masham,
Rothbury, Sandbach and Wirksworth**

**A Thesis Submitted for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
by
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**"What mean ye by these stones"
(Joshua IV.6)**

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PREFACE

The subject of this thesis is the non-crucifixion figural iconography of sculptures produced in Northumbria and Mercia during the pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon period. It concentrates on the six monuments which have survived from Rothbury (Nthbd.), Hovingham, Masham (Yks.), Sandbach (Ches.) and Wirksworth (Derbys.), but other sculptural remains relevant to these carvings are also discussed.

Each stone is examined individually and given (in some cases for the first time) a full description, based on observation and, where relevant, taking account of earlier discussions and illustrations. The scenes are then identified with a full discussion of the individual panels and total iconography. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for our understanding of the date of the sculpture, of the intellectual milieu in which, and for which the monuments were created, and of the cultural links which existed with the centres responsible for their production.

From these individual studies a number of general conclusions are drawn concerning the models on which the sculptured figural scenes were based: their medium, their range of subject-matter, their dates of origin and the routes of their transmission into England. A final section discusses the production of the sculptures and the relationship between the patron and artist.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

The stone sculpture produced in England during the Anglo-Saxon period has long been of interest to antiquarians. Its serious study within this century, however, owes much to the early work of Collingwood, whose regional examination of the sculpture of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria made the material accessible to later scholars.¹ So far, this modern scholarship, as noted by Zarnecki,² has tended to concentrate on the more well-preserved pieces of sculpture, and has focused on stylistic approaches to the subject. This study, by contrast, is concerned with the relatively neglected area of figural iconography.

For the purpose of the thesis the term "Iconography" defines those elements which make up an individual scene; the details (their absence or presence) and their spatial relationship to each other within the scene are what give it meaning. In addition, the relationship between scenes on the same monument also has significance; it is both the selection of scenes (their inclusion or omission), and their sequence (the spatial relationship) which comprise the complete iconographic programme. The following chapters therefore will be concerned both with the iconographic details of individual scenes, and with the contextual setting of those scenes within the overall organisation of the monument.

II

The principle underlying this selection and juxtaposition of the pictorial elements and scenes in early Christian art was the significance attributed to particular biblical (including apocryphal) and hagiographic events by the Church. This control determined not only which scenes gained prominence, but also the nature of their iconographic details;³ it involved a selective approach to the scriptures heavily dependent on exegesis - an approach which was reflected in, and reinforced by, the liturgy. Thus in theological terms it was held that the highlighting of certain events could lead Christians towards that fuller understanding of the scriptures necessary for their salvation. It was never sufficient to understand the mere narrative of the Bible, but rather it was vital to appreciate what it revealed of God's salvation for mankind.⁴ This approach to sacred texts was early established, and is indeed evidenced within the Bible itself. In his letters to the Church of Corinth, for instance, Paul explains the events of the Old Testament:

* Now all these things happened...for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition.⁵

* It is, of course, recognised that the text of the King James Bible which is referred to throughout this thesis differs from the Latin Vulgate versions which were used in early Medieval Europe. Apart from some verbal differences in translation from the Hebrew, the Vulgate differs from the King James most noticeably in its inclusion of Old Testament books not retained in the King James, and in the numbering of the Psalms. However, the passages cited here do not differ widely from the Vulgate version, and as close textual analysis is not the object of this thesis, the English translation of the King James Bible is used throughout as the most convenient reference (see Robert & Tricot 1960; Lampe 1969; N.C.E., II, 439-444. I am grateful to R. Kaske for advice on this issue).

It was thus assumed that certain events were significant because God, working in them, had thereby declared his power. Old Testament narrative made manifest the truth that "the salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord";⁶ the New Testament, including the Apocrypha, not only told a tale, but pointed to its moral.⁷ As Augustine stated in his treatise on The City of God:

Nec inaniter ista esse conscripta putare quisquam vel durus audebit, nec nihil significare cum gesta sint, nec sola dicta esse significativa non facta, nec aliena esse ab ecclesia significanda probabiliter dici potest; sed magis credendum est et sapienter esse memoriae litterisque mandata, et gesta esse, et significare aliquid, et ipsum aliquid ad praefigurandam ecclesiam pertinere.

(No one, however stubborn, will venture to imagine that this narrative [the Bible] was written without an ulterior purpose; and it could not plausibly be said that the events, though historical, have no symbolic meaning, or that the account is not factual, but merely symbolical, or that the symbolism has nothing to do with the Church. No; we must believe that the writing of this historical record had a wise purpose, that the events are historical, that they have a symbolic meaning, and that this meaning gives a prophetic picture of the Church.)⁸

When presented in visual terms, the iconographical disposition of a scene both reflected these symbolic meanings and re-inforced them. The symbolic content not only provided a *raison d'être* for early Christian art, but also one of its principal justifications in a world cautious of raising up "graven images".⁹

III

The sculptures discussed in the following pages must be seen against this background of caution which is revealed in the iconoclastic debates of the early Church; the sculptures reflect one response to these polemics.¹⁰ Clearly they do not spring from the type of attitude betrayed by early scholars such as Tertullian (160-245 A.D.) who argued that because pagan religions allowed a place for art it was suspect by association; for him art was an invention of demons and served the cult of false gods. Partly underpinning his argument was the notion that art is, by its very nature, material, and therefore not suited to the dignity and spirituality of God.¹¹ Rather, they reflect the notion that figural representation could be used to instruct - a view which found an influential exponent in Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century:

Aliud est enim picturam adorare, aliud per picturae historiam quid sit adorandum addiscere. Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus, quia in ipsa etiam ignorantes vident quid sequi debeant, in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt. Unde et praecipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est.

(A picture is to be revered in so far as that which is to be revered through the story which the picture tells, is to be learned. As scripture is to those who can read, so a picture stands before unlearned viewers, for in it the ignorant see what they ought to follow, and in it, those who do not know letters, can read. A picture is, first and foremost, that which serves in the place of reading for the heathen.)¹²

Gregory's pronouncement was to have a profound effect on the attitudes of later churchmen both in Western Europe, and in the East.¹³ In the early eighth century, for instance, and at the

time of the first official denunciations of figural church decoration in Byzantium, John of Damascus (676-754 A.D.) was to repeat and emphasise the appreciation of Christian art articulated by the earlier Western Pope:

Etiam loquuntur [imagines] nec mutae prorsus sunt omnisue sensus expertes, uti gentium idola. Omnis enim pictura, quam in ecclesia legimus, aut Christi ad nos demissionem, aut Dei genitricis miracula, aut sanctorum certamina et res gestas, velut imagine loquente, enarrat; sensumque ac mentem aperit, ut miris eos infandisque modis aemulemur.

(Images speak. They are neither mute nor lifeless blocks, like the idols of the pagans. Every painting that meets our gaze in a church, relates as if in words, the humiliation of Christ for his people, the miracles of the Mother of God, the deeds and conflicts of the saints. Images open the heart and awake the intellect, and in a marvellous and indescribable manner engage us to imitate the persons they represent.)¹⁴

While much of the protracted iconoclastic controversy was played out in the Eastern political arena, it did raise a wider awareness of the implications of figural representation and stimulated responses in Western Europe. Writing at the same time as John of Damascus, during the first years of Eastern iconoclasm, Bede (672-735 A.D.) addressed the subject directly, writing extensively to justify the use of figural art; his arguments followed those of Gregory the Great, seeing the use of images as a means of edifying and instructing the viewer in the salvation offered by God. Among his brief extracts (breviter adnotare) on the scriptures,¹⁵ Bede included a somewhat extended allegorical interpretation of Solomon's Temple:

Notandum sane hoc in loco quia sunt qui putant lege Dei prohibitum ne vel hominum vel quorumlibet animalium sive rerum similitudines sculpamus aut

depingamus in ecclesia vel alio quolibet loco eo quod in decalogo legis dixerit: 'Non facies tibi sculptile...' Qui nequaquam hoc putarent, si vel...certe ipsius Moysi opera considerassent qui iubente domino...serpentem fecit aeneum in heremo cuius intuitu populus a ferorum serpentium veneno salvaretur. Si enim licebat serpentem exaltari aeneum in ligno quem aspicientes filii Israhel viverent, cur non licet exaltationem domini salvatoris in cruce qua mortem vicit ad memoriam fidelibus depingendo reduci vel etiam alia eius miracula et sanationes quibus de eodem mortis auctore mirabiliter triumphavit cum horum aspectus multum saepe compunctionis soleat praestare contuentibus et eis quoque qui litteras ignorant quasi vivam dominicae historiae pandere lectionem?...Si licuit duodecim boves aeneos facere qui mare superpositum ferentes quattuor mundi plagas terni respicerent, quid prohibet duodecim apostolos pingere quomodo euntes docerent omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti viva ut ita dixerim prae oculis omnium designare scriptura? Si eidem legi contrarium non fuit in eodem mari sculpturas histriatas...quomodo legi contrarium putabatur si historias sanctorum ac martyrum Christi sculpamus sive pingamus in tabulis qui per custodiam divinae legis ad gloriam merverunt aeternae retributionis attingere.

(It should be noted that there are some who believe that God's law forbids us to sculpture or to paint, whether in a church or any other place, the figures of men or animals or the likeness of any other object, on the grounds that it is said in the Decalogue: 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself a graven image...' Now they would not think thus if they recalled to mind...the works of Moses, who, at the Lord's command made...the brazen serpent in the desert, at whose sight the people were saved from wild serpent's poison. Now if it was permissible to lift up a brazen serpent on a piece of wood so that the Israelites who beheld it might live, why should it not be allowable to recall to the memory of the faithful, by a painting that exaltation of our Lord Saviour on the cross through which he conquered death, and also his other miracles and healings through which he wonderfully triumphed over the same author of death, and especially since their sight is wont also to produce a feeling of great compunction in the beholder, and since they open up, as it were, a living reading of the Lord's story for those who cannot read?...If it was permissible to make twelve brazen oxen - arranged in groups of three to face the four corners of the earth - what is to forbid the painting of the twelve apostles who went out to teach all peoples baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and thus, as it were, to place a living writing before the eyes of all? And again, if it was not contrary to that same law to make historiated sculptures...why should it be considered contrary to the law to sculpture or to paint as panels the stories of the saints and martyrs of Christ,

who by their observance of the divine law, have earned the glory of an eternal reward?)¹⁶

Bede's arguments were based on the writings of other scholars, but they also reflected what was happening in the churches at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. Painted panels brought to Northumbria by Benedict Biscop to decorate these buildings were described by Bede in his History of the Abbots, and their use was defended in didactic terms:

Quatinus intrantes aecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque eius, quamuis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum; vel dominicae incarnationis gratiam vigilantiore mente recolerent; vel extremi discrimen examinis, quasi coram oculis habentes, districtius se ipsi examinare meminissent.

(Everyone who entered the church, even if they could not read, wherever they turned their eyes, might have before them the amiable countenance of Christ and his saints, though it were but a picture, and with watchful minds might revolve on the benefits of our Lord's incarnation, and having before their eyes the perils of the Last Judgement, might examine their hearts the more strictly on that account.)¹⁷

Elsewhere in Western Europe, the Roman and Frankish Churches generally endorsed the use of images within a religious context. The Libri Carolini provides an authoritative statement from the late eighth century in a work produced for Charlemagne under the guidance of Alcuin, the Anglo-Saxon monk educated at York in the school established by Bede's pupil Egbert. As the official response of the Frankish court to the iconoclastic controversy, it contained an attempt to define the Western position on the question of Christian art. The notion that images should be worshipped was rejected, but their didactic and

educative value was fully recognised; the saints were deemed to deserve veneration and their images were judged to be reminders of their good deeds. Pictures were the means by which the unlettered could "read" the scriptures.¹⁸

These were views reiterated throughout the ninth-century in the West. The Council of Paris, for instance, held under Louis the Pious in 825 A.D., responded to contemporary Eastern denunciations of image worship by reiterating the opinions expressed in the Libri Carolini: iconoclasm was insupportable, and while image-worship could be suspect, the function of art was deemed to be decorative and instructive of ignorance; later scholars such as Walafrið Strabo and Hincmar of Rheims were to repeat these sentiments.¹⁹ Thus, in different times and places the overriding significance of Christian art in the West remained constant; it existed to inspire the fuller understanding of the scriptures necessary for salvation through contemplation of the iconography of specific scenes.

This theory of Christian art needs constantly to be borne in mind. It may have represented only one way of looking at art, and clearly it does not allow for other types of less informed responses, but it is the only account which has survived, and that with some prominence. It is a view which emphasises the teaching and contemplative function of art (sometimes embracing an aesthetic response); the teaching function inevitably reflected the highlighting of events and the symbolic

interpretations of the Church Fathers and the liturgy. It must never be forgotten, in Henderson's words, that Christian art of the seventh to ninth centuries, including that produced in Anglo-Saxon England, "consciously aimed at [a] level of symbolism and allegory".²⁰

IV

The specific concern of this thesis is with the iconography of Anglo-Saxon sculpture. To date there has been no systematic study of this subject, only "a steady trickle of articles"²¹ on a limited number of monuments, of which those at Ruthwell (Dumfries.) and Bewcastle (Cu.) have excited the most attention. The modern study of their iconography began in the early 1940's with the work of Saxl and Schapiro emphasising the eremitic nature of the sculpture.²² Since then a series of scholars have examined both the overall programmes and the individual scenes of the monuments; this has culminated in the recent work of Ó Carragáin which stresses the multivalent nature of the iconography of the two cross-shafts.²³

Apart from these two related Northumbrian monuments, there has been little consideration of the iconography of other pieces of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture. In the south of the country, Kozodoy has written on the fragmented Reculver column (Kent), drawing together the disparate opinions on the monument which have been expressed in the past. However she is more concerned

with the columnar shape of the monument and the style of the carving, than with either the iconography of the individual scenes, or the overall programme which results from her reconstruction of the original pillar.²⁴

By contrast, work on the Northumbrian cross-shaft at St. Andrew Auckland (Co. Dur.),²⁵ and the Mercian sarcophagus cover at Wirksworth (Derbys; pl. 49) has concentrated on their Christian iconography, and the studies on this latter piece will be examined below.²⁶ Alongside these can be set an interest in (apparently) secular figural art at Repton (Derbys.),²⁷ but it remains true that apart from work on these specific monuments, iconographic works such as those by Wood on Otley (Yks.),²⁸ have been relatively rare.

It is in this rather haphazard and piecemeal fashion that the study of the iconography of pre-Viking Anglian sculpture has proceeded. Work has concentrated on one or two monuments, often from widely separated regions, to the virtual exclusion of others, and they have been treated almost as a-historical phenomena. In part of course, the explanation for this relative neglect lies in the comparative lack of figural sculpture and the further paucity of monuments where the total original programme could be analysed. This lack needs to be emphasised: of the 113 pieces of Anglian sculpture documented from thirty sites in Northumberland, only nine have figures carved on them. Of these one may be of Romano-British rather than Anglo-Saxon provenance, and three others were originally part of the same cross-shaft.²⁹

For other counties where full surveys have been completed, the picture is not much better; County Durham has yielded about 150 pieces of pre-Viking sculpture, but only six are figural and four of those represent the fragmented remains of the St. Andrew Auckland cross;³⁰ of the fifty-odd Anglian pieces in Cumbria, three have figural carving, and one of these is the Bewcastle cross.³¹

There may be many reasons for this relative lack of figural sculpture among the surviving material. Bailey has stressed how Anglo-Saxon sculpture was early re-cycled and much was obviously lost in this way.³² But figural sculpture which survived these early hazards would have been particularly vulnerable to the iconoclasm of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³³ The fragmentary condition of the cross-shafts at Sandbach, Cheshire (pl.26) is, for instance, the probable result of just such an attack in the seventeenth century; the cross at Ruthwell seems to have suffered a similar fate at the same period.³⁴ However, while the cultural vandalism of later centuries may explain the dearth of Anglo-Saxon figural sculpture to a certain extent, it may also be the case that figural carving never occupied a prominent place in the motif repertoire, or that it appealed to a narrower audience.

Whatever the explanation for the lack of Anglo-Saxon figural sculpture in England, the lack of a systematic study of its iconography is in marked contrast to the work which has been

undertaken in Ireland and Scotland.³⁵ The corpora of Scottish sculpture compiled during the nineteenth and early years of this century laid the foundation for the iconographic studies of Curle, Radford and Henderson, and for the work on the cross-shafts of Iona by MacLean.³⁶ In Ireland, the early works of Porter and Sexton were supplemented by the regional and iconographical studies of Flower, Roe and Henry which have lately been augmented by the work of Harbison and Hamlin.³⁷ Both the Irish and Scottish material is of course less fragmentary than the English, but the study of its figural iconography is certainly a great deal more advanced.

V

The relative lack of concern with Anglo-Saxon figural carving is also in marked contrast to the attention paid to other types of English sculptural ornament whose analysis has, in practise, provided the basis for our understanding of the chronology of the material. Brøndsted, for instance, initiated the modern study of the development of the vine-scroll motif - a subject which was further developed in the work of Kitzinger and more recently by Cramp.³⁸ While Kendrick also discussed the vine-scroll he, like Brøndsted, was concerned with the beast-forms decorating Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and this concern has been shared by others such as Clapham and Cramp.³⁹ The various types of plaitwork, and the other more geometric and abstract motifs which decorate the sculpture have also been examined,⁴⁰ but apart

from one extended study of the Crucifixion iconography of pre-Norman sculpture in England,⁴¹ the figural decoration has been considered largely as a supplement to the non-figural designs, and has been studied more from a stylistic point of view than for its iconographic content. Thus it is the style of the Mercian figures at Breedon (Leics.) and Fletton (Cambs.) on which attention has focused (an analysis which has drawn out possible Eastern and Carolingian influences), while their iconographic implications have been ignored.⁴² Similarly, it has been the "late antique" appearance of Easby and Otley (Yks.) which has preoccupied most writers, rather than their iconography.⁴³

Another reason for the relative lack of attention paid to figural sculpture has been the understandable obsession with establishing a chronology for the carvings through analysis of the stylistic development of the decorative motifs.⁴⁴ A study of this nature depends on motifs which occur frequently, and due to its comparative absence this has inevitably led to a neglect of the figural sculpture. In addition the more recent emphasis on the regional variation of specific motifs has had the effect of drawing attention away from the figural iconography which is best examined over as wide an area as possible.⁴⁵

Undoubtedly however, the greatest impediment to the systematic study, both of figural scenes generally, and of their iconography in particular, has been the absence of a corpus of the relevant material. Without this, those working in the field have been forced to dig very much in the dark. Fifty years ago

Kendrick found it "excessively embarrassing" that the principle problems facing the study of English sculpture were unlikely to be solved before "a complete survey of the material" had been accomplished.⁴⁶ Although a compilation of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture is now well under/way, and its benefit is already being felt, it will still be some time before it is completed.

Constraints on the study of iconography caused by the absence of an organised survey have not, of course, been such a problem for those working in other media of Anglo-Saxon art where there is a greater awareness of the full range of material available for study. Thus a recent survey of illuminated manuscripts in the British Isles has produced two volumes of material covering the whole Anglo-Saxon period.⁴⁷ These have greatly facilitated the study of manuscript iconography, which is now no longer limited to detailed examinations of a few seminal codices, and has led to Ohlgren's useful handlist of the figural scenes recognisable in manuscript art.⁴⁸ The study of Anglo-Saxon ivories and metalwork was likewise broadened by the corpus collections of Beckwith, Wilson and Hinton;⁴⁹ the collected studies focusing on the Cuthbert relics have also provided essential information on the less common media of decorated woodwork and textiles.⁵⁰ Not only have the various fields of study, and comparisons between them, been opened up by such groundwork, but the knowledge of Anglo-Saxon iconography in these areas has been greatly extended.⁵¹

In the absence of a systematic study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture therefore, it is clear that its figural iconography is an area which has been left relatively untouched, except for individual monuments such as Ruthwell, Bewcastle and St. Andrew Auckland, or the isolated study of the Crucifixion iconography of pre-Norman sculpture. This thesis therefore attempts to widen the scope of what has been previously examined, concentrating on other monuments with figural sculpture in Northern England and the West Midlands.⁵² It is however, restricted to the earlier (pre-Viking) material because a significant amount of work has already been carried out on the figural carving among Viking-age remains which, in any case, are less rich in Christian iconography.⁵³

VI

Within this earlier period there is a great variety in the subject-matter employed on the surviving figural ornament of both the sculpture and insular material in other media.⁵⁴ It is worth emphasising at the outset, however, that this extant non-sculptural material is far from representative of the total range of what once existed. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period there is documentary evidence indicating just how much has been lost to us, not only in the types of artefacts, but also, and more importantly in this context, in the figural schemes which once adorned them.

There are descriptions of a number of different types of media, decorated with figures, which are either absent from, or not well represented in the surviving corpus. For instance Bede, in his Historia Ecclesiastica describes Augustine entering Canterbury in 597 A.D. bearing a board painted with the image of Christ the Saviour.⁵⁵ Nearly a century later Benedict Biscop is described returning from Rome with similar painted boards depicting the Virgin Mary, the twelve apostles, scenes from the Apocalypse, and pictures from the Life of Christ and the Old Testament - boards moreover whose arrangement drew out meaningful juxtapositions:

...de concordia veteris et novi Testamenti summa ratione compositas exhibuit; verbi gratia, Isaac ligna, quibus immolaretur portantem, et Dominum crucem in qua pateretur aequae portantem,...Item serpenti in heremo a Moyse exaltato, Filium hominis in cruce exaltatum comparavit.

(...ably describing the connection between the Old and New Testament; as, for instance, Isaac bearing the wood for his own sacrifice, and Christ carrying the cross on which he was about to suffer,...again the serpent raised up by Moses in the desert was illustrated by the Son of Man exalted on the cross.)⁵⁶

It is salutary to recall that there is very little in the Anglo-Saxon art surviving from the late seventh-century which even comes close to reflecting the presence of such an extensive amount of figural work in England at the time, let alone in this medium which is known only from such written records. Similarly gold-glass work, imported from Rome by Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, is unknown from the existing material of the pre-Viking period, but in a late seventh-century poem, received by Aldhelm, just such an artefact, decorated with an image of the Virgin, is described

as being sent to England.⁵⁷

Insular metalwork decorated with figural ornament is also rare in the corpus of surviving material. Admittedly the fragments of a small portable wooden altar covered with silver embossed with the figure of St. Peter have survived among the relics of St. Cuthbert,⁵⁸ but Aedelwulf's early ninth-century account of a Lindisfarne cell describes more ambitious work; a full-size silver altar-frontal was engraved with scenes of the Apocalypse,⁵⁹ whilst to the left of this altar stood a painted effigy of the Virgin, possibly placed there in the early years of the eighth century - an art form which has not survived at all from the pre-Viking period.⁶⁰ The church itself is further described as being decorated with hangings embroidered with scenes depicting the Miracles of Christ.⁶¹ While some textiles with insular connections have survived, they are not many, and none are decorated with scenes such as those mentioned by Aedelwulf.⁶²

Given the documented examples of figural art which have failed to survive, and the variety of artefacts with their associated figural decoration which have also disappeared, a loss of iconographic types has to be assumed. However, this loss may not be as extensive as might first be thought, because to some extent the disappearance of figural work in one medium is mitigated by its survival in less perishable and less precious material; similarly, the loss of a documented iconographic type from a particular period is balanced by its survival in later

copies.

Thus, images of the Apocalypse, the Virgin and the Apostles, mentioned as decorating painted boards in Bede's written accounts, have survived from the period, if not in that medium. There are scenes of the Last Judgement in ivory and manuscript art dating from the eighth and ninth centuries,⁶³ and the seventh-century wooden coffin containing the relics of St. Cuthbert displays an early example of the Virgin and Child; the image is later repeated on one of the Dewsbury fragments and the *Book of Kells* and possibly on the smaller of the two Sandbach crosses.⁶⁴ The Cuthbert Coffin also provides physical evidence to support Bede's written references to the early existence in Anglo-Saxon England of images of the Apostles - a scheme which is found elsewhere on an eighth-century ivory plaque in Munich, and in later stone sculpture at Masham (Yks.) and Reculver (Kent) where they are associated with Christ in Majesty.⁶⁵ Scenes whose subject-matter was recorded early do therefore survive in other media, but we cannot, of course, be certain that their iconographic organisation was identical with the pictures described by Bede.

There are also curious archaic survivals which suggest that even when an original representation has failed to survive, echoes of its iconography can be identified in later copies in the same medium. Thus Bishop Cudwine of Dunwich is credited (on differing arguments) with importing from Italy in the early eighth century an illustrated copy of Sedulius' Carmen Paschale

and a manuscript decorated with pictures of the Life of St. Paul.⁶⁶ While the Labours and Passion of St. Paul are not found in extant Anglo-Saxon art, and are virtually unrepresented in early Christian art elsewhere, an illustrated *Sedulius* containing the name of Cuthwine has survived in a ninth-century Continental version, filled with pictures illustrating the life and ministry of Christ, its style a reflex of late antique art.⁶⁷

One note of caution ought possibly to be added to this argument (that although some iconographic material has disappeared its loss is mitigated by its survival elsewhere), because there is some indication that certain iconographic motifs are limited to certain media. An obvious example of this is the predominant use of the vine-scroll motif on Anglo-Saxon sculpture and its very rare appearance in manuscript art of the same period. Another instructive analogy is the common use of the Evangelist Portrait and Symbol in Anglo-Saxon manuscript art, and their comparative rarity among the ivory and stone carvings.⁶⁸ Thus, it should not be automatically assumed that, because a particular iconographic feature is referred to, or exists, in a medium outside stone, that this necessarily implies that it was, or would have been, employed in the sculpture.

Compared with the references to the decoration of other media, specific documentary references to the iconography of Anglo-Saxon sculpture are very few and most are of such a late date that their value is limited. William of Malmesbury

describes cross-shafts at Glastonbury, believed to have been of Anglo-Saxon date, as carved with a combination of ecclesiastics and a figure exhibiting "royal pomp", all set within individual panels and identified by carved inscriptions.⁶⁹ The identification of the figures and a panelled arrangement does suggest a possible pre-Viking date, but the Glastonbury crosses have not survived, and the extant sculpture from this period does not display a great deal of secular subject matter, either with or without accompanying inscriptions.

Another reference to sculptural iconography of the early Anglo-Saxon period is contained in Goscelin's late eleventh- or early twelfth-century account of the translation of the remains of St. Augustine. These had been buried inside the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in the early seventh century, and remained undisturbed by subsequent building activity until the late eleventh century. Goscelin describes the stone tomb as being decorated with carved images of Christ in Majesty and his angels. However, as Dodwell has argued, if this tomb was that of St. Augustine, it was possibly a reused Roman sarcophagus (either from England itself, or imported from Gaul) rather than an example of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship.⁷⁰ The uncertain provenance of the sarcophagus, and the possibly mistaken identification of its iconography undermines the usefulness of this reference.

Much more valuable in this context are Bede's arguments in favour of Christian art which contain some references to sculpture, and indicate a greater familiarity with figural

carving than might otherwise be suggested by the sculptural remains found at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. In his description of Solomon's Temple he refers to carvings of "hominum vel quorumlibet animalium sive rerum similitudines" (the figures of men, or animals, or the likeness of any other object), and concludes with a question:

Quomodo legi contrarium putabatur si historias sanctorum ac martyrum Christi sculpamus...in tabulis qui per custodiam divinae legis ad gloriam merverunt aeternae retributionis attingere.

(Why should it be considered contrary to the law to sculpture...as panels, the stories of the saints and martyrs of Christ, who by their observance of the divine law, have earned the glory of an eternal reward?)⁷¹

Unfortunately, as will be examined further below, Anglo-Saxon sculpture carved with identifiable narrative scenes of the lives of Christian saints and martyrs has not survived in any great abundance.⁷²

VII

A study of the iconography can, and it is argued during the course of this thesis does, have implications for the dating of the pieces under examination. As already noted, the existing chronology of Anglo-Saxon sculpture depends largely on the study of its non-figural decoration. The most recent model is that proposed by Cramp which sees the carved Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft as a secondary monument, developed after the apparently recorded introduction into Northumbria of architectural sculpture at

Jarrow and Wearmouth in the later years of the seventh century.⁷³ This implies that any non-architectural sculpture must post-date the foundation of these two churches in the 670's and 680's. Study of the non-figural ornament of Anglo-Saxon sculpture has therefore taken the last two decades of the seventh century as the starting point for the development of English stone carving and of its decorative motifs. The datings given to the non-figural ornament on this basis will be borne in mind when the Christian iconography of the monuments is examined in the course of this thesis. However the dates arrived at from the study of the iconography itself, will not be constrained *a priori* by an acceptance of this *terminus a quo*. In many cases the resulting dates which emerge from study of the figural carvings may not be markedly different from those posited by Cramp's approach, but they are sometimes focused more precisely. For instance, where an examination of the vine-scroll or beast forms has indicated a ninth-century date, a study of the iconography can suggest a date within the first half of that century.⁷⁴

As already mentioned, the following study of non-Crucifixion iconography is based on six sculptured monuments from the modern counties of Northumberland, Yorkshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire (see fig.1).⁷⁵ The choice of the material was determined primarily by the availability of sufficiently large pieces of figural sculpture; thus the relatively complete condition of the two cross-shafts at Sandbach (Ches; pl.26), the sarcophagus cover at Wirksworth (Derbys; pl.49), the panel at Hovingham and the

column at Masham (Yks; pls.1,68) make them reasonable objects of study. Although the sixth carving, the Rothbury cross-shaft (Nthbd.), is incomplete and exists only in three pieces, these fragments are sufficiently large, and the condition of their carving is well enough preserved to provide a good basis for consideration of their figural iconography.

The choice of monuments is also based, to a certain extent, on their geographical location. As already noted, the proper study of figural iconography will be facilitated by the examination of material whose overall distribution covers a sufficiently wide area. Within that larger area, however, there needs to be a number of monuments that can be viewed in a closer geographic relation to each other. In this respect the Rothbury cross, frequently discussed in relation to the crosses at Bewcastle and Ruthwell and the sculptural remains at Jarrow, can be studied against a nexus of activity covering the northern part of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. In the same way the Masham column and the Hovingham panel are also linked geographically and have many stylistic features in common, indicating that they emerged from a closely related or perhaps even a single centre in southern Northumbria. By contrast, the crosses at Sandbach and the sarcophagus cover at Wirksworth are not geographically or stylistically linked, and yet both are the products of Anglo-Saxon Mercia, arguably within the same diocese of Lichfield.⁷⁶ Although they are not physically related to each other, they do bear features which are common to more fragmentary remains within the same area, and so provide an indication of the variety of

cultural influences circulating at that time, in that region of Anglo-Saxon England.

For the sake of convenience each monument will be discussed in alphabetical order, beginning with the Hovingham panel and ending with the Wirksworth slab. Because adequate physical descriptions are lacking for most of the pieces under discussion, these will be provided in each chapter, based on close observation of the monument in question, but where severe weathering and deterioration of the carving has occurred, earlier descriptions will be taken into account. In each chapter the description will be followed by sections identifying the scenes giving a full discussion of the individual panels and total iconography, and of the implications for our understanding of the date of the sculpture, of the intellectual milieu in which, and for which the monuments were created, and of the cultural links which existed with the centres responsible for their production.

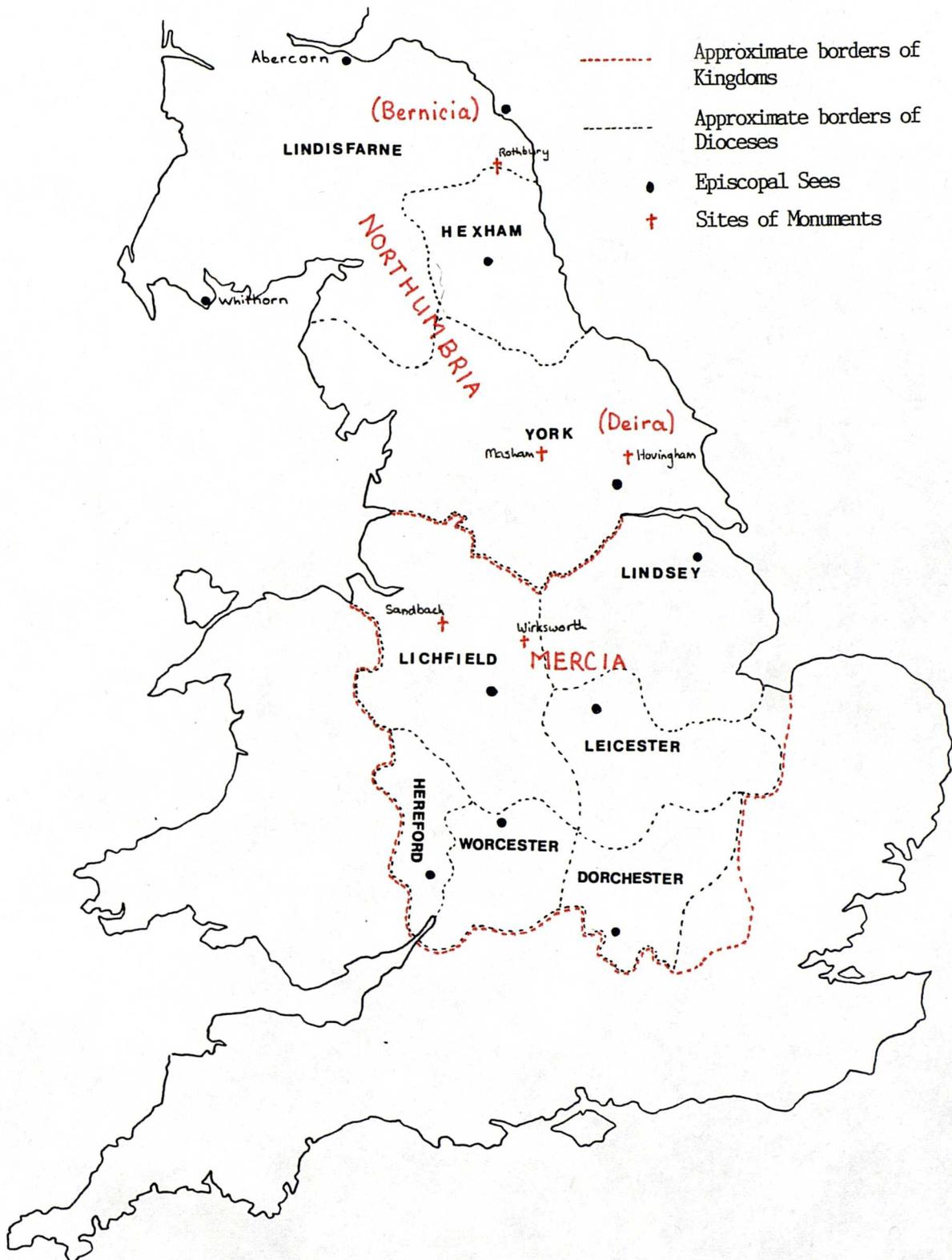


Fig. 1 Northumbria and Mercia (c.650-850 A.D.)

(after Hill 1981, see fn.52)

CHAPTER II

THE HOVINGHAM PANEL

INTRODUCTION:

I

The Hovingham panel (pl.1), which now rests behind the altar in the south aisle of the village church of All Saints, was first recorded in 1849 as being built into the south exterior wall of the church tower, which is probably of eleventh century date. It remained there until 1924 when it was removed and placed inside the church.¹ The many years it spent in the open unfortunately caused considerable damage to the carving, as a result of which the iconographic details of the figural ornament are difficult to identify; consequently much of the interpretation which follows can only be speculative.

The panel is carved from a white sandstone probably quarried from a nearby source.² Its decoration is divided into two horizontal registers which are bounded by a broad flat border; the presence of the lateral borders indicate that the full length of the stone has survived. The figural ornament in the upper register is divided from the narrow strip of inhabited vine-scroll below by a thin rounded moulding, and consists of eight full-length figures, each set within an arch forming a continuous arcade; the figures, although worn, are still deeply cut away from the background. The spandrels of the arches are

filled with an angular foliate motif which descends from the uppermost border. The back of the panel seems never to have been decorated, but at the top two slots have been cut into it at each end.³

Given that the slab was probably only ever decorated on one side, and assuming the slots on the reverse to be contemporaneous with the carving, it is likely that the piece was once part of a composite structure;⁴ it has been identified variously as an altar or a shrine. From a survey of early medieval altars the height of the Hovingham piece would make the first alternative doubtful, while comparison with similar material from Scotland, and the position of the slots, suggest that the stone was once the side panel of a shrine, such as exists at St. Andrews (Scotland).⁵

II

Hitherto the decoration of the Hovingham panel has been discussed primarily in relation to other pieces of Anglo-Saxon sculpture; this has highlighted a variety of possible stylistic links. For instance, the tendency to set full-length figures in round-headed niches has been seen as indicative of Mercian influence by reference to such works as occur at Breedon (Leics.), Peterborough and Fletton (Cambs.). Similarly the use of a vine-scroll border has been compared to the horizontally disposed scrolls at Breedon and Wolverhampton (W. Midlands).⁶

Set against such Mercian links must be placed the differences in both the figural style and the foliate decoration of the arcade, for which the best parallels lie locally at Masham. Similarly the large halo is best compared with those found at Easby, Otley and Collingham (Yks.).⁷ By comparison, Mercian tastes are more mannered and heavy in appearance, and the architectural surrounds are set with bulbous capitals and do not feature the foliate motif.

A variety of dates have been proposed for the Hovingham panel as a result of such comparisons with Mercian and Northumbrian pieces, but it has, for the most part, been dated between c.750 and c.850; more closely, Cramp has suggested the early ninth century.⁸

It is hoped that the following detailed discussion of the figural register will be able to focus the date of the Hovingham panel more firmly, and provide some information about the sources which influenced it.

DESCRIPTION:

This section will describe the figures sequentially from left to right, each figure being described by the letters A to H (see fig.2). References to left and right will be from the spectator's point of view, unless otherwise indicated.

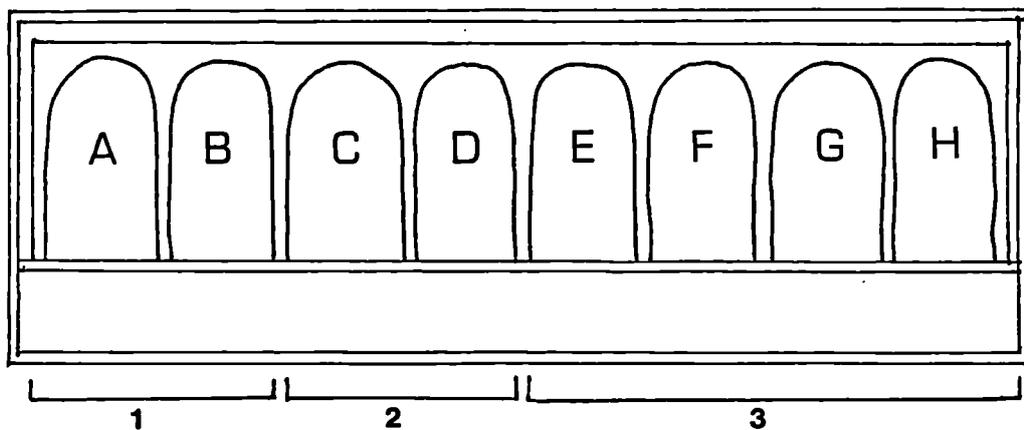


Fig. 2

A. (pl.3) Despite the extremely worn condition of the slab this first figure can still be clearly identified as an angel. He stands, half-turned to the right, wearing a full-length robe which hangs in folds and clings to the legs, giving a good impression of the body underneath. One wing rises up from his shoulder and sweeps down over the arcade column behind him. His head is tilted sharply towards the right and is surrounded by a very large halo; he appears to have had short hair but no other facial features remain. His arms are crossed over his chest so that his right hand is extended towards the next figure (B); his left hand holds a long rod which passes under his right arm and

extends over the wing and the column into the outer frame. The rod has a slight thickening at its tip, but the lower end has been broken off; clearly it originally passed over the drapery which hangs from the angel's left side because a small fragment of it remains by the column which separates this figure from the next (B). The angel's feet are both turned to the right and rest firmly on the thin strip of plain moulding which divides this register from the vinescroll below.

B. (pl.3) This figure sits, half-turned towards the angel (A), on a cushioned cross-legged stool. The facial features have been lost but there are the remains of long hair or a veil hanging down to the shoulder on one side of the face; the head is surrounded by a large halo which fills the curved space of the niche. A large round bolster lies on the ground serving as a footrest for the feet which are both turned to the left. Above this bolster, and beside the column separating this figure from the angel (A), is a cylinder from which emerges a long thin object that thickens at the end. Both the arms are broken but the remains of the right hand are extended towards the object in the container. Behind the figure, alongside the shoulders, is a feature whose identity is unclear; on the right it best resembles a piece of hanging drapery, but to the left only the upper horizontal edge remains.

C. (pl.4) This third figure stands, with its back towards B, facing the next figure (D). The remains of a large halo can still be discerned, and the outline of the head slightly bowed to the right, but the details of the face have been completely worn away. The outline of the right arm indicates that the elbow was bent sharply with the hand held at chest-height. As with the angel (A) a long fold of drapery hangs from the figure's left side. The robe is full-length so that only the feet can be seen below the hem; they are fully turned to the right and rest firmly on the lower moulding.

D. (pl.4) This figure stands, half-turned to the left, facing towards C. The outline of the head, surrounded by a large halo, shows that the head was held upright, but all facial details have been lost. Both arms are bent sharply at the elbows so that the hands are raised, almost to chest-level; they are not clasped together, but are separated. Below the hem of the full-length robe the feet are seen in profile turned to the left, facing the previous figure (C).

E. (pl.2) Only the barest outline of this figure remains; it may have been nimbed. It stood, half-turned to the right, with one arm hanging down its side and the other arm bent at the elbow so that the hand was raised to the face. One knee was slightly flexed, and both feet rested on the plain moulding, facing to the right.

F. (pl.2) This figure has also been worn to a bare outline but in certain lights the remains of a large halo can be seen behind the head. It stands, in full profile, with its back towards E. The head is bowed to the right and at least one arm was raised so that the hand touched the forehead; a fold of drapery may have hung from this hand. Both knees are slightly flexed, and both feet, seen in profile and resting on the plain moulding, are turned to the right.

G. (pl.2) This figure is half-turned to the right in what appears to be a seated position. The head is slightly tilted back towards the column which separates this figure from F, and is surrounded by a large halo. The area of the torso is rather confused but the left arm appears to be bent at the elbow and crosses the body at waist-height so that the hand passes under the right elbow; the right arm is raised so that the hand supports the head. While the shoulders are squared to suggest that the torso faces the spectator, the legs are carved so that the lower half of the body is seated in profile on a small triangular shape resembling the cross-legged stool of B; this emerges, at an angle, from the column on the left. Both feet are seen in profile facing the right, but the heel of one foot rests on a small object at the base of a vertical strip supporting the triangular seat.

H. (pl.2) This standing figure is half-turned to face G; both feet, turned to the left, are seen in profile below the hem of the full-length robe. The left arm, bent at the elbow, crosses the body at waist-height; the other arm is extended to pass behind the column separating H from G, and touch the seated figure (G) on the forehead. The head (and halo) are very worn, but the remains of two wings identify this figure as an angel. One wing hangs down the angel's back to the right of the niche in a manner which mirrors that of the first angel (A). The other wing is open and extends from the right shoulder, behind the dividing column and spandrel, so that its tip touches the inner curve of the arch over G.

IDENTIFICATION:

I

Previous commentaries on the iconography of of the figures on the Hovingham panel have all recognised that the first two figures (A and B) constitute a single scene: The Annunciation to The Virgin Mary,⁹ an identification which, it is argued below, is fairly certain. This interpretation has the important corollary that the other figures should not necessarily be regarded individually, and that the columns separating the figures are not strictly relevant to their grouping. Indeed, one approach to grouping the figures is their disposition; as noted in the preceding description the feet of the figures are clearly turned

in specific directions so that the eight figures form three distinct groups. Thus the first two figures on the left face each other as one group, figures C and D face each other as a second group, while E, F and G are all turned towards the last figure (H) to form a third group.

The following discussion will therefore treat the figures according to these divisions. The iconography of figures A and B will be discussed as one scene, C and D as the second scene, and that of E, F, G and H as the third scene (see fig.2). Possible alternatives however, will be examined within this framework.

II

1. (pl.3) As mentioned above, figures A and B have always been identified as forming an Annunciation scene. Despite their worn condition there is still sufficient detail to identify figure A as the angel Gabriel and the seated figure (B) as the Virgin of The Annunciation.

By the fifth century the iconography of The Annunciation had developed to show Mary seated by a basket of wool and a spindle, with one hand upraised to express submission or astonishment at the entrance and message of the angel who extended one hand to indicate conversation with her.¹⁰ During the fifth century Mary was usually shown on the left of the scene but by the sixth century (initially on monuments of Eastern origin), the scene's

arrangement was reversed to show her on the right while the angel approached from the left.¹¹

While the iconographic type most commonly adopted by Carolingian artists favoured the earlier arrangement,¹² all surviving pre-Viking Annunciations are of the second compositional type: witness the scenes on the ^{Northumbrian} eighth-century Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69), those on the carved monuments at Sandbach (Ches; pl.34) and Wirksworth (Derbys; pl.57), and in a different form, at Ruthwell (Dumfries; pl.70).¹³ Thus, an ultimately Eastern type which had found its way into Western art by (at latest) the eighth century, can be suggested as the source of the Hovingham composition.

Whilst the general arrangement is comparable with other early Anglo-Saxon Annunciations, there are a number of specific details in the Hovingham scene which differentiate it from others of its type in pre-Viking England. These include Mary's seat and cushions, and the container beside the column which separates her from Gabriel, while the stance of the angel and his rod are also of note (see pl.3).

The cross-legged stool with a bolster is unparalleled in Annunciation iconography, and together they provide us with a potentially contradictory image. Pictures of Mary seated on a stool originally indicated the status of the Virgin as "the handmaiden of the Lord".¹⁴ As such the stool was part of the symbolism of the Annunciation which took much of its inspiration

from the apocryphal accounts of the event. These described Mary as a virgin, dedicated to God, who was employed in spinning wool to make a curtain for the temple when visited by the angel.¹⁵ The cross-legged appearance of the stool was originally an Eastern detail and, it would seem, was indicative of servile status.¹⁶ Its use in the iconography of the Annunciation can be seen at an early date in a fifth- or sixth-century ivory pyxis of Eastern workmanship, where Mary is shown seated on a small cross-legged stool facing the angel on the right.¹⁷

As a piece of furniture in Christian art generally, the cross-legged stool passed directly into Carolingian art from Eastern centres of influence, not being found in early Western art.¹⁸ However, by this ninth-century period in the West, the cross-legged stool had lost its earlier symbolism of servility, and was featured most commonly in portraits of the Evangelists and sometimes as the seat of a monarch.¹⁹ Similarly, in Annunciation scenes, the traditional servile attributes of the Virgin had lost much of their original significance; the stool of the Annunciation had given way to the throne which emphasised the role of the Virgin as the Mother of God.²⁰ For instance, the early ninth-century Harrach Diptych (pl.71) shows Mary seated on a throne. Thus, if Mary is seated on a cross-legged stool at Hovingham, it is probable that an ultimately Eastern model of pre-iconoclastic date had some influence on the iconography of the scene, and that there may have been some attempt to indicate Mary's status as the handmaiden of the Lord.

Against this symbolism of servility, however, must be set the cushion depicted in the Hovingham scene; such bolsters are more usually found on the thrones of the Mother of God. They were common regal furnishings in both East and West in both Christian and secular art, but were not found on stools in the art of the early period. In Annunciation scenes they appear in the fifth-century mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore (Rome) and the eighth-century Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69), where Mary is seated on a large bolster placed on an ornate bench-throne, while the Harrach Diptych (pl.71) and an early ninth-century silk of Eastern provenance show her seated on a similar cushion on high-backed thrones.²¹ In all these instances a hierarchical symbolism is expressed. The presence of the bolster at Hovingham, therefore suggests that an attempt was being made to capture Mary's more elevated status as the Mother of God.

This is further supported by the depiction of the footrest at Hovingham; the bolster on which Mary rests her feet is unique in Christian art, but the use of a footrest for Mary in Annunciation scenes is not without precedent, especially when she is enthroned. The Roman mosaic at Sta. Maria Maggiore, the Eastern silk and the ivory diptychs referred to above, all show the Virgin with her feet resting on a small footstool, as does the sixth-century episcopal throne of Maximian at Ravenna and the contemporary mosaic at Poreč (pls.158,72).²² Thus the notion of placing a footrest under Mary's feet in Annunciation scenes is widely attested in Christian art. Its shape at Hovingham indicates that it was copied from the cushion on which she is

seated giving an example of the repetition of shapes which is common to the panel as a whole.²³ It suggests further that the model on which the scene was based did not feature a throne, forcing the sculptor to add elements commonly associated with the enthroned Virgin in order to elevate her symbolically.²⁴

The probable deduction from this ambivalent set of attributes is that the model for the scene did not feature a throne, but a cross-legged stool, and the sculptor adapted it to create a more hierarchical image by adding a cushion and repeating that shape for the footrest. Given this, the identity of the carving behind Mary must now be considered. Its position and general outlines indicate that it was either a curtain or the back of the seat. The latter alternative is not likely, though if the carving is the remains of a back-rest, then its awkward position in relation to the stool, cushion and seated figure would mean that it, like the bolster and footrest, was added by the Hovingham sculptor to elevate the image of the Virgin.

The feature in question, however, is more likely to represent the remains of a curtain, or screen. Such details are not common in Annunciation scenes, but the Harrach Diptych (pl.71) does feature a corrugated screen which acts as a backdrop to the angel and the Virgin. Other possible parallels can be seen in the Porec mosaic and the Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pls.72,69) which both show a female servant pulling back a curtain to the right of the scene, while below the Genoels-

Elderens Annunciation is a Visitation scene which shows a series of curtains hanging from a rail behind Mary and her cousin Elizabeth. Both this ivory and the Harrach Diptych are believed to be modelled on fifth- or sixth-century Italo-Byzantine work; the Genoels-Elderens Diptych being an eighth-century Northumbrian copy, and the Harrach Diptych an early ninth-century Carolingian piece.²⁵

The cylinder at Mary's feet in the Hovingham scene also needs to be examined. It has been noted that both the Genoels-Elderens and Harrach Diptychs display the same compositional type as the Hovingham Annunciation (with the Virgin on the right) and both depict Mary seated on a cushion with her feet supported on a footrest. However, neither depict a feature resembling the cylinder at Hovingham, although the Northumbrian ivory does show Mary clasping a ball of thread and a spindle in one of her hands. At Hovingham Mary's right hand is extended towards an object which, although damaged, can be identified as a strand of wool being drawn up from the spindle in a tall basket. While these items were originally part of the iconography identifying Mary as the handmaiden of the Lord, they had, like the stool, lost most of their symbolism in Western art of the eighth and ninth centuries; they had become traditional attributes of Mary at the Annunciation, being indicative only of feminine occupations,²⁶ hence their reduced position in the Genoels-Elderens scene, and their absence from the Harrach Diptych.

Their presence at Hovingham suggests, as does the use of the cross-legged stool, the use of an early Christian model for the scene. The long thin shape of the basket, while being suited to the space between Mary and the column, is unusual, appearing only in early Italo-Byzantine work such as the fifth-century Sta. Maria Maggiore mosaics and the sixth-century episcopal throne of Maximian at Ravenna (pl.158). Generally the basket is smaller and basin-shaped.²⁷

Thus, it is fairly clear from the cross-legged stool and basket, and possibly the curtain behind Mary, that ultimately, a fifth- or sixth-century Italo-Byzantine model lies behind the Hovingham depiction of Mary, and that this image was adapted, probably by the Hovingham sculptor, to include the cushion and bolster footrest, in order to elevate Mary from the handmaiden seated on her stool with her spinning, to the Mother of God receiving the Messenger of the Lord.

The angel himself also shows the influence of an ultimately Eastern iconographic type; like the angel found in the Northumbrian Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69), that at Hovingham holds a long staff in his left hand. Such an attribute, often floriated, was featured in early Christian art of the East where it was derived from the court art of Byzantium. By the sixth century it had come to signify the divine authority invested in angels in their capacity as heavenly messengers, and as such it is frequently found as an angelic attribute in Annunciation scenes in both Eastern and Western art.²⁸ It is featured, not

only on the Genoels-Elderen Diptych, but also in the sixth-century *Rabula Gospels*, the throne of Maximian and the Poreč mosaics, the ninth-century Eastern silk mentioned above, and the Carolingian Harrach Diptych.²⁹

The position of the Hovingham angel's crossed arms is a feature less well attested in Christian art generally, but it is found in other Anglo-Saxon Annunciations; it is the stance adopted on both the Northumbrian Diptych (pl.69) and the Wirksworth sarcophagus cover (Derbys; pl.57) in scenes which depend on sixth-century Eastern or Italo-Byzantine models. One of the few examples of the Annunciation angel with his arms crossed which survives outside Anglo-Saxon art, is a fifth-century Egyptian textile now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), where the angel on the right confronts Mary who reclines on a couch to the left.³⁰

The angel of the Hovingham Annunciation, however, does differ from the other Anglo-Saxon examples (except that at Ruthwell), in that he is shown standing firmly on the lower moulding with his knees barely flexed (see pl.3); his attitude is not one of movement, but rather one of stasis. The Genoels-Elderen angel, for instance is shown in full stride, while others, such as appear on the Maximian throne and in the Poreč mosaics are depicted alighting on their toes. The difference in attitude at Hovingham is not due to the incompetence of the sculptor or the limitations of the frame, as the angel at the

other end of the panel (H) is shown with his knees flexed and one foot slightly raised as if walking towards the seated figure on the left (G; see pl.2). Thus the attitude of the Annunciation angel was deliberate and is in keeping with an interpretation which emphasises the conversation between the angel and Mary, as against those forms which appear on the Northumbrian Diptych and the Ravennate throne, which stress the angel's greeting and Mary's initial reaction of bewilderment. At Hovingham the two figures face each other quietly as the subsequent conversation between them is given more emphasis than the initial greeting. The position of Mary's hands may underline the conversational relationship between her and the angel; her right hand is extended towards the basket, and it is probable that her left hand was slightly extended across her body towards the angel as it is in other Annunciation scenes where she is shown conversing with Gabriel.³¹

Although this type of conversational Annunciation is not found elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon work it is found in later Continental art. On a late ninth- or early tenth-century ivory casket from Metz (pl.73), Mary is shown seated on a cross-legged chair under an arched canopy; her right hand is held outstretched. The angel, separated from Mary by the column supporting the canopy, stands on the left with his feet firmly on the ground. The rod which he holds in his left hand, and his wings, intrude into the borders above and behind him. The iconography of this scene, as for much of the art produced at Metz during the ninth and early tenth century, is

believed to be closely based on early Christian models which could equally lie behind the Hovingham scene.³² The significant differences between the image depicted on this ivory and the Hovingham Annunciation serve to emphasise the nobility of Mary on the Carolingian version by introducing a maid-servant to the right of the scene, and placing Mary in a chair without the attributes of the wool-basket and spindle. However, at Hovingham the introduction of the cushion, footrest and curtain serve equally to elevate Mary's status iconographically as the Mother of God who receives the angel's message.

2. (pl.4) Having seen that the first two figures (A & B) constitute a single scene it seems reasonable, as stated above, to consider the next two figures (C & D) as a group; despite their worn condition it is clear that they face each other as did Mary and Gabriel.³³

Initially the two figures were identified by Goldie as Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection.³⁴ However, the iconography of this scene always shows Christ with one hand stretched out towards Mary, who is normally shown kneeling or crouching at his feet, as is the case in a seventh-century icon from Mt.Sinai.³⁵ Sometimes Mary is found standing; but in these cases she is shown deeply bowed, as in the ninth-century Carolingian *Drogo Sacramentary*.³⁶ At Hovingham the head of the figure on the left (C) is only slightly inclined, and the

figure on the right (D) has both hands raised in front of the chest, not outstretched, which suggests that Goldie's interpretation is unlikely.

The iconography of a scene closely associated with the Annunciation, which does depict two figures in just the positions found at Hovingham, is The Visitation, known in Christian art from the fifth century onwards.³⁷ Iconographically there were two traditions, both adopted from Eastern art by the West at an early date. The first is the "Embrace" type which signified Mary's greeting of Elizabeth and the subsequent movement of the unborn child John in recognition of Christ. This tradition is identified by the physical contact between the two women, either by a close embrace, such as is depicted on the Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69), or by the laying of their hands on each other's shoulders; this latter type is found on a late sixth-century gold medallion of Eastern workmanship now in Istanbul, and a tenth-century ivory in Berlin.³⁸

The iconographic tradition more relevant to the figures at Hovingham, however, is the "Conversing" type, identified by the fact that the two women stand at a distance from each other. Here the emphasis is placed on Elizabeth, who, filled with the Holy Ghost, extolls Mary. Generally, both women are portrayed with their hands slightly extended from their bodies, signifying conversation, and Mary has her head inclined to receive Elizabeth's praise. This is the type found on a

ninth-century enamel cross from the East now in the Vatican (pl.74). There are also more animated depictions, which parallel the Hovingham figures even more closely, where Elizabeth is shown holding her hands open and raised in awe, and only Mary has her hands slightly extended. The fifth-century Werden casket and a sixth-century Eastern ivory diptych (now in Paris), for instance, both show Elizabeth with her hands raised to shoulder-height and Mary with her right hand extended across her body.³⁹

It is likely therefore, that as the Genoels-Elderen Diptych and the Berlin ivory indicate eighth- and ninth-century copyings of earlier versions of the "Embrace" type of Visitation⁴⁰, so the two figures at Hovingham represent the reproduction of the earlier "Conversing" iconography; Elizabeth stands on the right (D) with both hands raised, and Mary faces her on the left (C) with her head slightly bowed and her hand extended to receive and acknowledge Elizabeth's praise. The model for the scene would have been ultimately influenced by fifth- or sixth-century Eastern art, as was the iconography of the preceding Annunciation scene.

3.(pl.2) Given the considerable wearing of the last four figures, and the lack of any clear details, certain identification is impossible, but it seems reasonable to suggest that an interpretation should take into account the two standing

figures (E & F) and the seated figure (G). The position of their feet indicates that all three, as a group, face the flanking angel; indeed the flexed knees of figures E and F suggest, in comparison with the more static poses of the preceding standing figures (A, C & D), that these two figures actually approach the angel (H). Thus, any explanation of the group must consider scenes in early Christian art composed of four figures, of whom three face a single angel who possibly reaches out towards the first figure. Relevant also is the apparent seated position of at least one of the figures and the gestures expressed by the raised hands of the other two (E & F).

Previous interpretations of these last four figures have varied; Collingwood suggested that figures E and F were two of the four Evangelists and G and H were Mary and Elizabeth of The Visitation. However, given the iconography of The Visitation described above, this explanation does not seem very probable.⁴¹ Following Collingwood, Radford suggested that the seated figure (G) was St. Matthew inspired by the angel, but, as argued by Brown, this is unlikely given the lack of evangelist symbol.⁴²

The most recent explanation separates E and F from G and H into a separate scene of The Circumcision of John the Baptist, or The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, with the last two figures (G & H) identified as The Angel and the Dreaming Joseph.⁴³ However, this identification is doubtful on iconographical grounds; The Circumcision of John the Baptist is unknown in Christian art and does not feature in the written

apocryphal or hagiographic material associated with John the Baptist; neither does the iconography of The Circumcision of Christ (rarely found) easily explain the two figures in question. It normally consists of a group of one or two centred on the Christ Child, as does the iconography of The Presentation.⁴⁴ Furthermore, The Dream of Joseph generally features the angel half-hidden behind Joseph who lies asleep on a mattress;⁴⁵ this does not provide a satisfactory parallel for figures G and H at Hovingham, while analysis of the positions of the figures' feet still suggests that G and H should be viewed as part of a single group of four with E and F.

Parenthetically it might be admitted that scenes such as Joseph's Dream and The Presentation may be expected to follow The Annunciation and The Visitation in either a Nativity or Infancy of Christ cycle. There is no compelling reason, however, to assume that the scenes at Hovingham do depict such a narrative sequence. Pictorial cycles are rare in early medieval art outside the manuscripts and monumental decoration of the early churches,⁴⁶ and most early Christian art in the West shows that controls other than narrative cycles were dominant. For instance, Old Testament events could be set against New Testament ones in an arrangement stressing "The Help of God";⁴⁷ this was the organisational theme which is found in the British Isles on many Pictish and Irish sculptures.⁴⁸ Alternatively, figural decoration, particularly that found in Anglo-Saxon England, could be arranged according to thematic concerns as seems to have been

the case on the Cuthbert Coffin, for example, or the cross-shafts at Ruthwell and Bewcastle.⁴⁹

It thus seems unlikely that the scenes at Hovingham formed a narrative cycle, which means that scenes such as Joseph's Dream or The Presentation need not necessarily have been depicted. This cannot, of course be proved beyond doubt, particularly as the panel formed only one side of a composite structure which may, or may not, have featured figural scenes on the other sides. However, if the scenes at Hovingham do not form part of a narrative cycle, but are linked thematically, as seems probable, the relationship between the last four figures (E-G) and the first four (A-D) must be reconsidered. While The Annunciation and Visitation do form a natural pair of scenes in a Nativity or Infancy cycle, they are also linked by the common theme of Salvation which began with Christ's Incarnation and was confirmed at The Visitation. This point will be examined more fully in the next section,⁵⁰ but such a link does suggest that the last four figures may well form a scene which proved the Salvation latent in The Annunciation; just as the image of Christ Trampling the Beasts celebrates the fulfilment of Christ's promised victory on the Genoels-Elderen Diptych, where this symbolic and hierarchic scene is set against The Annunciation and Visitation (pls.91,69).

A scene which offers such a possibility was suggested by Goldie who identified the last four figures as The Women at the Sepulchre on Easter Morning.⁵¹ In Christian art, particularly in the West, this symbolised Christ's Resurrection (the guarantee

of Salvation), from a very early date.⁵² It was characterised by the women approaching the angel who extended his hand in a gesture of speech. The iconography could vary (in at least one instance the angel is absent from the scene),⁵³ but generally the figures were arranged round the sepulchre and the women, who varied in number between two and three, approached the angel from one side of the scene. The Eastern arrangement favoured an iconographic type which featured only two women, while in Western art three women were the norm.⁵⁴ In both East and West they were often shown in attitudes of grief, bowing their heads and raising their hands to their faces. According to this interpretation figures E, F, and G on the Hovingham panel (see pl.2) would thus be identified as the three women meeting the angel (H) on the morning of The Resurrection.

Although very worn, figure E appears to have had one hand raised to its face, and figure F had a mantle raised towards its bowed head. The posture of the seated figure (G) is very contorted but its head appears to have been supported by one hand while the elbow was held in the other. All of these are attitudes which were commonly used to express grief and mourning; they were originally adopted by early Christian and Byzantine art from classical portrayals of women weeping beside a tomb in funerary art. The use of a seated figure with the head resting on the hand and the elbow held on the knee was a standard pose for the brooding sorrow of bereavement and the standing figure with the hand raised to the head was used as a variation of it.

The mantle raised to the face was used to demonstrate extreme sorrow and became common in scenes of The Crucifixion. The hand raised to the mouth or cheek, as seems to have been the case with figure E, was used less frequently, but originally conveyed the stifled weeping of the mourner.⁵⁵

In scenes of The Resurrection these attitudes were adopted by the women at the sepulchre at an early date. A fifth-century Roman ivory, now in the British Museum, for example, shows two women seated by the tomb, one with her head resting on her hand and her elbow held on her knee, and the other with one hand raised to her cheek. Another Roman ivory, now in Munich, shows two of the three women standing at the sepulchre with their hands raised to their mouths. A sixth-century ampulla and a sixth- or seventh-century painted reliquary box from Palestine, also show the women with hands raised to their faces.⁵⁶

Having been established at an early date, these attitudes continued to be used in Resurrection scenes in later Carolingian art. For instance, a ninth-century book cover, now in Paris, shows the first woman seated at the angel's feet with her hand outstretched,⁵⁷ but on the near contemporary Quedlingburg Casket (pl.75) she is shown in an attitude very similar to that of the seated figure at Hovingham; she sits with one hand raised to her face while the angel, on the right, extends his hand towards her forehead. Behind this seated woman her companions stand with their hands and mantles raised to their faces.⁵⁸ Thus the attitudes adopted by the three figures (E-G) who face the angel

(H) on the Hovingham panel are comparable with those commonly adopted by the women at the sepulchre in the iconography of The Resurrection in Western art from a very early date.

The compositional type of The Resurrection which appears to have been used at Hovingham (with the angel on the right) has a Biblical basis, and was given significance in exegetical commentaries,⁵⁹ but it was less commonly depicted than that which showed the angel on the left. It is found nevertheless in pre-Iconoclastic art of the East; it appears, for example, in the sixth-century Syriac *Rabula Gospels*, on the Palestinian ampulla and the painted reliquary box mentioned above,⁶⁰ and on the fifth-century wooden doors of Sta. Sabina in Rome (pl. 76) which, it has been suggested, were executed by Syrian workmen. In the West this arrangement is more commonly featured in later Carolingian and Ottonian works based on Eastern models. The early ninth-century Carolingian *Utrecht Psalter*, for instance, which is believed to have been influenced by an early Greek manuscript, shows the three women standing to the left of the angel, as do a tenth-century Trier manuscript and two Pericopes produced at Reichenau.⁶¹ Thus although the various poses adopted by the women at Hovingham were widespread in both Eastern and Western art, the compositional type was predominantly Eastern and found in Western art only in works strongly influenced by the East.

However, at Hovingham, it must be remembered that the overall arrangement of the panel may have been controlled by the need to balance the sequence between flanking angels, and may not therefore, necessarily be the result of a particular iconographic influence; the use of two scenes which feature angels provides a natural opportunity to balance the whole presentation resulting in the Annunciation angel being placed on the left of that scene, and the angel of The Resurrection appearing on the right.

This need for overall balance would explain the standing position of the latter angel (H) as well as the seated position of the figure next to it; in The Annunciation (pl.3), Gabriel is never found seated, and so, to mirror this first angel, that of the Resurrection had also to be depicted standing. In most examples of the Resurrection scene which have survived, the angel is shown seated either on a stone before or beside the tomb, or on an open sarcophagus which, by the tenth century, often replaced the sepulchre. However, the angel at the sepulchre is sometimes found standing; the fifth-century wooden relief on the doors of Sta.Sabina (pl.76), and the sixth-century Palestinian ampulla for instance, show him standing on the right of the scene. Thus, if the upright position of the angel, and the arrangement of the figures at Hovingham were influenced by a model, it probably reflected a pre-iconoclastic Eastern type which had found its way into the West at an early date, but which was not very popular.

Although the women's gestures, the arrangement, and the upright stance of the angel are found elsewhere in depictions of The Women at the Sepulchre, there is a major problem with this interpretation of the Hovingham scene: the apparent lack of a tomb behind or between the figures. This would be an extremely unusual feature in the iconography of The Resurrection, but while it is not without precedent, it may, like other iconographic features of the scene, be explained by the nature of the Hovingham monument itself.

There are various possibilities which could explain the absence of the tomb at Hovingham. On the one hand, the sepulchre may have been omitted at Hovingham due to the lack of space between the figures, particularly if the scene was based on a model which showed the tomb above, below or behind the angel, rather than between him and the women. A ninth-century Carolingian ivory, now in Florence, shows just such an arrangement;⁶² the angel addresses the mourning women, but the sepulchre is not featured. It is found below in a separate scene depicting The Guards by the Tomb, an iconographic type which shows the soldiers asleep on either side of the sepulchre.⁶³ Tenth- and eleventh-century manuscripts from Reichenau also show the angel seated, on the right, holding a rod and extending his hand towards the women, with no sign of a tomb.⁶⁴ Indeed, in the later manuscript the angel is placed under an architectural surround facing the women who are placed under a similar arch.

Although it is late depictions such as these which most commonly omit the sepulchre, they are based on earlier Eastern works which also lack this feature. The fifth-century carvings which decorate two of the columns at St.Marks in Venice show the angel seated under one arch with the two women grouped under the next; the arches themselves seem to have taken the place of the sepulchre.⁶⁵ This is also the case on the fifth-century wooden relief at Sta.Sabina (pl.76) where the angel stands under a round-headed arch on the right and two women approach from the left, one being placed under a triangular-head arch. This last example indicates that if the arrangement at Hovingham was copied from a model, this was probably influenced by an early Eastern prototype which could have shown an angel standing under an arch on the right of the scene, with the women approaching from the left, also within an architectural framework. The fact that there are three women at Hovingham, and that one of these is seated suggests that the Eastern prototype had entered the West at an early date where these latter details were more common than in the East.

If, however, the Hovingham scene was not based so closely on a model, but composed under the requirements of a balanced layout of the stone as a whole, other possibilities may explain the absence of a tomb.⁶⁶ If the panel represents one side of a composite stone shrine, as is likely, then there is a sense in which the entire shrine was symbolic of the tomb. The Cuthbert Coffin, for instance, contained the remains of the saint's body but also served as a shrine; the object of veneration for

pilgrims to Holy Island.⁶⁷ It also seems likely, as will be argued below, that the iconography of the Wirksworth slab reflects the dual function of the sarcophagus as a coffin and as a shrine.⁶⁸ It is not impossible therefore, that for The Resurrection scene on the Hovingham panel, the monument itself functioned as the tomb which was omitted from the scene because of the lack of space between the angel and the seated figure.

The other two scenes on the Hovingham panel (The Annunciation and The Visitation - pls.3,4) have been shown to depend on iconographic versions which were based on pre-iconoclastic Eastern types. These same influences can also explain the iconography of The Resurrection scene, and so it is more likely that the last four figures of the Hovingham panel were based on a scene depicting The Women at the Sepulchre which, although of Western provenance, was dependent on an early Eastern prototype which may have omitted the sepulchre. The fact that the scene appears on a shrine which may have replaced the tomb of The Resurrection, would thus have been a secondary consideration, if it was intended at all.

DISCUSSION:

The previous sections have argued that the figures on the Hovingham panel constitute three scenes, and that these scenes can be identified as The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, The Visitation, and The Women at the Sepulchre which symbolises Christ's Resurrection. The significance of the iconography of these scenes will now be examined, both individually, and as they relate to each other.

1. The Annunciation:

The iconography of the scene at Hovingham may retain some notions of Mary's humility in the depiction of the cross-legged stool and the basket of wool at her side, but it is her elevated status which has been most clearly highlighted; the cushioned seat, the footrest, and the curtain behind her, place her in surroundings more appropriate to the Mother of God than the lowly handmaiden of the Lord. The conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel has also been emphasised; at Wirksworth in Derbyshire the initial reaction of the Virgin is depicted to stress her humble acceptance of the duty imposed on her by God⁶⁹ whereas at Hovingham, the emphasis on the conversation stresses the fact the The Annunciation was the moment of Christ's Incarnation when Man's future salvation was promised and made possible through the Virgin:

And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favour with God, And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt

call his name Jesus. And he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.⁷⁰

Thus The Annunciation was seen by later writers as the moment of the Incarnation, but it was also an event which established both the Virgin's humility and the honour to be accorded her as the Mother of God. Through her The Annunciation marked the beginning of Christ's redemptive life and sufferings; the fact that Christ was conceived within a virgin by the Holy Ghost meant that he could be born a man but one untainted by original sin.⁷¹ In his work on The Trinity, Augustine explained that:

Oportebat itaque ut ista carnalis concupiscentia nulla ibi esset omnino quando concipiebatur virginis partus in quo nihil morte dignum fuerat inventurus, et eum tamen occisurus auctor mortis auctoris vitae morte vincendus. Victor primi Adam et tenens genus humanum victus a secundo Adam et amittens genus christianum liberatum ex humano genere ab humano crimine per eum qui non erat in crimine, quamvis esset ex genere, ut deceptor ille ab eo vinceretur genere quod vicerat crimine.

([Christ] was born of a virgin without intercourse so that what was born from the root of the first man might derive only the origin of the race, but not also the guilt. In this way was born only the remedy of corruption, not a nature corrupted by the contagion of transgression. Thus Death, the conqueror of the first Adam was conquered by the second Adam so that the Christian race whom the deceiver had conquered by guilt, could conquer Death)⁷²

The idea that The Annunciation marked the beginning of Christ's salvation was followed widely by later ecclesiastics in the Churches of both East and West,⁷³ and appeared in the writings of the Anglo-Saxons. Bede's account of The Annunciation in his commentary on Luke, and his Homily on The Annunciation follow Augustine's ideas closely, emphasising the event as central in the progress towards redemption.⁷⁴ Later, Aelfric was to describe The Annunciation from a similar point of view:

Swiþe þæslic anginn menniscra alysednysse waes þæt
þa se engel weard asend fram Gode to ðam maedene, to
cyðenne Godes acnednysse þurh hi.

(A very fitting beginning of human redemption was when the angel was sent from God to the maiden to announce God's incarnation through her)⁷⁵

Thus, by emphasising the conversation between Mary and the angel the sculptor of the Hovingham panel was communicating the notion of man's future salvation, initiated at Christ's Incarnation.

However, the iconography expresses not only the conversation but also Mary's importance in the event; her humility is expressed, but her status has been deliberately elevated by the iconographic details which surround her. Because of its central position in Man's salvation, The Annunciation, and all that pertained to it, were deemed worthy of adoration; not only were Mary and her virginity to be celebrated, but everything about her was to be venerated. The notion of Mary's humility at The Annunciation was always present, and provided the example of chaste servility most favoured by the Christian Church, but the corollary, that such humility was laudable and praiseworthy, was

also highlighted. Hence even writers such as Jerome, balanced their exhortations to Virginity with praise of this most blessed of conditions,⁷⁶ and as The Virgin, Mary, The Mother of God, received much of the honour.

For early writers such as Ambrose, Mary was to be seen as enthroned with a footstool at The Annunciation; she was in effect the throne and footstool of Christ.

...qua ratione ad incarnationis Dominicae sacramentum spectare videatur...scabellum pedum eius consideremus; non enim ex usu hominum aestimare debemus scabellum... Legimus enim alibi: "Coelum mihi thronus, terra autem scabellum pedum meorum"...terram illam adorandam... quam Dominus Jesus in carnis assumptione suscepit. Itaque per scabellum terra intelligitur: per terram autem caro Christi, quam hodieque in mysteriis adoramus...incarnationis adorandum sit sacramentum, incarnatio autem opus Spiritus, sicut scriptum est: "Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi; et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei".

(The footstool appears to refer to the mystery of the divine Incarnation, for we must not estimate the footstool from the customs of men...For we read elsewhere: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth the footstool of my feet"...that earth is to be worshipped which the Lord Jesus took upon Him in assuming flesh. And so, by footstool is understood earth, but by the earth the flesh of Christ, which we this day also adore in the mysteries...the mystery of the Incarnation is be adored, and the Incarnation is the work of the Spirit, as it is written, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God")⁷⁷

Such ideas of adoration centering on The Annunciation were developed by subsequent church writers; hymns in Mary's honour survive from an early date,⁷⁸ and from the seventh century they appear in Anglo-Saxon works. Aldhelm, for example, wrote a verse

form of his prose treatise on virgins, which included a section on the Virgin Mary; he also wrote a hymn on the dedication of a church to Mary the Perpetual Virgin.⁷⁹ An eighth-century hymn to the Virgin survives in the *Book of Cerne*⁸⁰ and in the late eighth century, Cynewulf was to extoll Mary in his poem Christ as:

cynestola cyst, Cristes burglond, engla eþelstol...
 burga betlicast...his temple...butan facne.

(the best of royal thrones, the city and realm of Christ, the angels' patrimonial seat...the most excellent of cities...[and] his immaculate temple)⁸¹

Acknowledging The Virgin as the means by which man's future salvation would transpire, the tenth-century Blickling Homilist elaborates Gabriel's words to Mary:

In geara heofonrices duru, þe ic waes þurh hider
 onsended, belocen standeþ þurh þa aerestan men, nu heo
 sceal þonne þurh þe onteneþ beon. Eala þu eadig
 Maria, eall þeos gehæft-world bideþ þinre gefaunga;
 forþon þe God þe hafað to gisle her on middangearde
 geseted...þurh þe sceal beon se ingang eft geopenod,
 and þu gehelpest þysses menniscan cynnes; forþon se
 heofonlica cyning gearwaþ þinne innoð his suna to
 brydbure, and on þam brydlocan mycelne gefean...He þa
 Drihten on þære faemnan brydbure, and on þæm
 gerisnlican hehsetle onfeng lichoman gegyrelan to his
 godcundnesse.

(For a long time now heaven's door, through which I was sent hither, have stood locked through the first men, now they shall be opened through you. O thou blessed Mary, all this captive world awaits your consent; because God has appointed you as surety here in the world...through you shall the entrance again be opened, and you shall succour mankind. Wherefore the heavenly king shall prepare thy womb as a bridal chamber for his son, and also great joy in the bridal chamber...Then the Lord in the Virgin's chamber, and in that seemly throne, took a bodily garment for his divinity)⁸²

As the mother of God she is described as the "betstan bosme", "aepelan innoþe", "gecorenan hordfaete", and "þa ealra faemnena

cwen" (the best of bosoms, the noble womb, the chosen treasury and the queen of all virgins).⁸³

These writings on The Annunciation indicate that the event was important primarily as the initial event of Christ's redemptive life and death. Closely related to this was the honour invested in Mary as the virgin through whom Christ's salvation of mankind was made possible. As will be discussed further below,⁸⁴ it is apparent that by the mid eighth century, The Feast of The Annunciation, originally introduced into the Western church as a Christological feast at the end of the seventh century, had, in Anglo-Saxon England, taken on a more Marian character, encouraging an attitude of praise and honour due to Mary for her exemplary behaviour. Both these notions are present in the iconography of the scene found at Hovingham; the angel conversing with Mary conveys the interpretation that the event was the beginning of Christ's salvation, while Mary's surroundings elevate her from the lowly handmaiden to the Mother of God, worthy of the praise she receives in church writings from an early date, and which are found in England throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

2. The Visitation:

The iconography of this scene at Hovingham has, like that of the preceding Annunciation, an apparently double significance. The Visitation was predominantly regarded as the moment of the

first recognition or acknowledgement of Christ's Incarnation, both by the unborn child John, and by his mother Elizabeth; it was a confirmation of The Annunciation and of the coming redemption. The "Embrace" type of Visitation expresses only these ideas, but the "Conversing" type, depicted at Hovingham, conveys a further notion: the praise of Mary, the Mother of God, articulated initially by Elizabeth:

And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.⁸⁵

Subsequently, Mary was to repeat Elizabeth's praises when singing The Magnificat:

My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; For behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.⁸⁶

Both aspects (John's recognition and Elizabeth's adulation) were commonly referred to by ecclesiastical writers, from Irenaeus^(d.201A.D.) onwards, although the event as such did not receive extended treatment. It was primarily invoked as proof of Christ's conception in the womb of a virgin, and hence proof of the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding The Messiah.⁸⁷ Thus references to The Visitation do not abound in writings of the Anglo-Saxon church, but it is explained by Bede in his commentary on Luke, and in his homily on The Visitation,⁸⁸ in keeping with the earlier descriptions of it as the moment

when:

Cito quoque adventus Mariae, et praesentiae Dominicae
beneficia declarantur.

(the blessings of Mary's advent and of the Lord's presence were
at once made known.)⁸⁹

Later writers, such as Aelfric, give a similar account of the
event:

...þaet cild on his modor innoðe oncneow Marian
stemne, Godes cynnestran; and on innoðe ða-gyt
beclysed, mid witigendlicre faegnunge getacnode þone
halwendan to-cyme ures Alysendes...and seo moder weard
afylled mid þam Halgan Gaste, and heo clypode to
Marian mid micelre stemne, and cwaed, þu eart
gebletsod betwux wifum.

(...the child, in his mother's womb, knew the voice of Mary,
God's parent; and in the womb yet enclosed, with prophetic joy
betokened the salutary coming of our Redeemer...[and] the mother
was filled with the Holy Ghost and called to Mary with a loud
voice and said, thou art blessed among women.)⁹⁰

As with all Visitation scenes, that at Hovingham expresses
the confirmation of Christ's Incarnation at The Annunciation, but
it has the added reference, through the use of the "Conversing"
type, to Elizabeth's praise of Mary and her subsequent singing of
The Magnificat. Both these themes are present in the biblical
account of The Visitation, and both are referred to by later
church writers, including those in Anglo-Saxon England. The
scene thus forms a clear companion piece to the Hovingham
Annunciation; it confirms the Incarnation and the promised
redemption,⁹¹ and maintains the secondary theme of praise due
Mary for her part in Man's salvation.

3. The Resurrection:

Christ's Resurrection is described in all four gospels, but with slight differences which, to a certain extent, explain the iconographic variations found in the pictorial versions of the event; particularly the variation in the number of women shown at the sepulchre. For instance Matthew describes two women seated at the tomb when Joseph of Arimathea buried the body:

...and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.⁹²

After the Pharisees had set soldiers to guard the tomb, the discovery of the Resurrection is recounted:

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre...and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven...and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen as he said.⁹³

According to Mark however, three women came to the sepulchre to annoint the body ("Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome"),⁹⁴ but, like the women described by Matthew, they also meet the angel who tells them of the Resurrection.⁹⁵ The accounts of Luke and John differ from the other two in describing the presence of two angels at the sepulchre, and while John mentions only Mary Magdalene at the tomb, Luke refers to three women by name (Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James) as well as "other women that were with them".⁹⁶

The iconography was also affected by Mark's account of the angel discovered by the women to the right of the tomb,⁹⁷ and the significance drawn from this by later commentators. For writers such as Gregory the Great the arrangement was significant:

Notandum vero nobis est quidnam sit quod in dextris angelus cernitur. Quid namque per sinistram nisi vita praesens, quid vero per dextram nisi perpetua vita designatur?...Quia ergo Redemptor noster iam praesentis vitae corruptionem transierat, recte angelus qui nuntiare perennem eius vitam venerat in dextera.

(And let us also take note of what it means that the angel is seen on the right side. For what does the left side mean, but this present life; and the right hand side, if not the eternal life?...and so, since our Redeemer has now passed over beyond the mortality of this present life, rightly does the angel, on the right, come to announce his entry into eternal life.)⁹⁸

The importance of this point was later repeated by Aelfric, who described "þa halgan wif, þe Drihtne on lif filigdon" (the holy women who had followed the lord in life) meeting with the angel at the sepulchre:

Se engel awylte þæt hlid of ðære ðryh...he geswutelode mannum þæt he arisen waes...se engel [waes] on ða swiðran healfe ðære byrgene. Seo swiðre hand getacnað þæt ece lif, and seo wynstre ðis andwearde life. Richtlice [waes] se engel on ða swiðran hand, forðan þe he cydde þæt se Haelend haefde ða oferfaren ða brosnunga ðises andweardan lifes, and waes ða wunigende on ecum ðingum undeaðlice.

(The angel rolled the lid from the tomb...he manifested to men that he was risen;...the angel [was] on the right side of the tomb: the right side betokens the eternal life, and the left this present life...Rightly [was] the angel on the right side, because he made known that the Saviour had then surmounted the corruptions of this present life, and was then dwelling immortal in eternity.)⁹⁹

However, it was the Resurrection itself, witnessed by the words and actions of the angel, the empty tomb, and the women, that was most important to all church commentators.¹⁰⁰ The meeting at the sepulchre confirmed Christ's Resurrection as it had been foretold by the prophets and promised by Christ himself; it proved man's future resurrection and the life everlasting. In his sermon On the Holy Day of the Resurrection Gregory the Great describes the women's arrival at the empty tomb and their encounter with the angel. In summarising the gospel story he declares that:

Illa quippe Redemptoris nostri resurrectio et nostra festivitas fuit, quia nos ad immortalitatem reduxit... Iam quippe Redemptor noster a passione ad resurrectionem, a morte ad vitam, a poena ad gloriam, a corruptione ad incorruptionem transmigraverat. Et prius post resurrectionem . . . videtur, quia resurrectionis eius gloriam post laeti videbimus, si modo a vitiis ad virtutum celsitudinem transmigramus.

(This day of our Redeemer's Resurrection is also our day of great joy; for it has restored us to immortality...Our Redeemer has passed over from his suffering to his Resurrection, from death to life, from punishment to glory, from mortality to immortality, and after his resurrection...we also shall see the glory of the resurrection if we now pass from the ways of sin to the heights of holy living.)¹⁰¹

These notions, central to Christian doctrine, and commonplace in the writings of the Church Fathers, were also expressed by the Anglo-Saxons; they are found in Bede's homilies and Aelfric's sermon on Easter,¹⁰² and in the later Old English Creed:

þæs þy ƿriððan daege þeoda wealdend aras, rices frea,
recen of moldan, and he...cwæð þæt he nolde naenne
forlaetan þe him forð ofer þæt fylían wolde and mid
faestum sefan freode gelaestan.

(On the third day the ruler of people arose, the Lord of power came forth^{ready} from the grave, and he said that he would not forsake any who would go forth over death and follow him with steadfast thoughts of goodwill)¹⁰³

Thus the iconography of The Resurrection, illustrated by The Women at the Sepulchre, depended on the various gospel accounts of the event itself, and on the details examined by later church writers. The number of women at the tomb and their positions varied according to the different versions given by Matthew, who describes two women seated and then meeting the angel by the tomb, and by Mark and Luke who describe three women at the sepulchre. The arrangement, with the women on the left and the angel on the right, depends on Mark's description of the scene which was expounded by later writers.

It seems that the iconography of the scene at Hovingham, as any scene of the Women at the Sepulchre, is, to a certain extent, affected by these varying accounts and explanations of the event. On the Anglo-Saxon stone it appears to be a conflation of the gospel stories, showing three women, one of whom is seated; it is a conflation which appears elsewhere in Christian art, as does the compositional type based on Mark, which places the angel on the right.

However, the iconography of the Hovingham scene also points to a close relationship with the preceding scenes. Like any scene of the Resurrection that at Hovingham certainly expresses confirmation of Man's Salvation through Christ. It also conveys

a link between that event and the Annunciation through the person of the Virgin. Man's immortality regained after the Resurrection of Christ, had been lost through the first woman but was now restored through Mary. Indeed the link, made by Augustine in his work on The Trinity, and by the Old English homilists,¹⁰⁴ was also expressed metaphorically. Writing On Faith and the Creed Augustine described the Resurrection:

Sepultura vero illa cum creditur, fit recordatio novi monumenti, quod resurrecturo ad vitae novitatem praeberet testimonium, sicut nascituro uterus virginalis. Nam sicut in illo monumento nullus alius mortuus sepultus est, nec ante, nec postea; sic in illo utero nec ante, nec postea, quidquam mortale conceptum est.

(Moreover, when that burial is made an object of belief there enters also the recollection of the new tomb, which was meant to present a testimony to him in his destiny to rise again to newness of life, even as the Virgin's womb did the same to him in his appointment to be born. For just as in that sepulchre no other dead person was buried, whether before or after him, so neither in that womb, whether before or after, was anything mortal conceived.)¹⁰⁵

Such analogies were extended even to the risen Christ. After the Resurrection:

Moli autem corporis ubi divinitas erat, ostia clausa non obstiterunt. Ille quippe non eis apertis intrare potuit, quo nascente virginitas matris inviolata permansit.

(...the shutting of doors presented no obstacle to the matter of His body, wherein Godhead resided. He indeed could enter without their being opened, by whose birth the virginity of His mother remained inviolate.)¹⁰⁶

It was an image repeated by Augustine's contemporaries¹⁰⁷ and which found its way into Old English homilies, such as those by Aelfric:

Se ðe com deaðlice to ðisum middangearde, acenned þurh
beclysedne innoð þæs maedenes, se ylca, buton tweon,
ðaða he aras undeaðlic, mihte belocenre ðrih faran of
middangearde...Rihtlice waes seo byrgen swa niwe
gefunden, and naenne oðerne naefre ne underfeng, swa
swa Maria waes, moder Cristes, maeden and modor and
oðerne ne gebaer.

(He who came mortal to this world, born of the closed womb of the
maiden, he, the same, without doubt, when he arose immortal,
could from a closed tomb go forth from the world...Rightly was
the grave found so new and which had never received any other,
just as Mary was, mother of Christ, maiden and mother, and bore
no other.)¹⁰⁸

The metaphorical link between the Incarnation and the
Resurrection (through the images of the virginal womb and the
pristine sepulchre), was also given more physical expression in
church writings which placed the Virgin at the tomb by
identifying her as "the other Mary" of Matthew's account of the
Resurrection. The sixth-century liturgy of the Eastern Church
contained an Easter canticle which referred to the Virgin
remaining seated by the tomb throughout the Sabbath.¹⁰⁹ The
Western Church, showing a similar concern for the Virgin Mary's
presence at the tomb on Easter morning, tended to follow the
writings of Ambrose, who held that her presence at the tomb
on the day of the Resurrection was a logical necessity
despite the apparent lack of Scriptural confirmation.¹¹⁰ The
notion was widespread, being reflected in art,¹¹¹ and in the
writings of the Anglo-Saxons, where confusion over the identities
of the women at the sepulchre seems, in some cases, to have been
extreme. Aelfric's homily on the birth of Jesus, based on the
works of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great and Bede, describes
the three women at the sepulchre as the Virgin Mary and her two

sisters, all daughters of Anna; a notion which he seems to have derived from a reading of the homilies and commentaries of the ninth-century scholar Haymo of Auxerre:

Maria mater domini, et Maria mater Iacobi, fratris domini, et Maria (mater Iacobi) fratris Ioannis evangelistae, sorores fuerent de diversis patribus genitae, sed de eodem matre, scilicet Anna...

(Mary the mother of the Lord, and Mary the mother of James, the Lord's brother, and Mary (the mother of James) brother of John the evangelist, who were sisters with different fathers, but the same mother, named Anna...)¹¹²

Thus it can be seen that the association of the Incarnation and Resurrection, both metaphorically and physically through the presence of the Virgin, believed to be common to both events, was widespread in church writings.

The two events were also specifically linked in works explaining the significance of Baptism which, in the early Church, was celebrated on Easter Sunday - the Day of the Resurrection. Central to the doctrine of Baptism were the notions of death and rebirth, based on Paul's letter to the Romans:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.¹¹³

For Leo the Great baptism, which was a descent into death, was also a rebirth, prefigured by Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection:

Omni homini renascenti aqua baptismatis instar est uteri virginalis, eodem Spiritu sancto replente fontem, qui replevit et virginem; ut peccatum quod ibi vacuavit sacra conceptio, hic mystica tollat ablutio...Ipse est qui de Spiritu sancto ex matre editus Virgine incontaminatam Ecclesiam suam eadem inspiratione fecundat, ut per baptismatis partum innumerabilis filiorum Dei multitudo gignatur.

(For every man coming to rebirth, the water of baptism is an image of the virginal womb whereby the same Holy Spirit who also impregnated the Virgin, impregnates the font; just as the sacred conception casts out sin in that place, so here mystic ablution takes it away...It is [Christ] himself who, born of the Holy Spirit from a virgin, impregnates the ^{pure} church with the same breath, so that through baptismal birth countless multitudes of children of God are born.)¹¹⁴

The Incarnation and the Resurrection were also closely related in other writings on Baptism, and were central to the Christian doctrine expounded by the early Church of the West;¹¹⁵ as Ó Carragáin has shown, they informed the liturgies and exegesis of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and may well have influenced the iconographic programme of the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfries.).¹¹⁶

As far as Hovingham is concerned there is nothing to indicate a specifically baptismal reference in the iconography of the figural scenes. What the iconography does demonstrate is an attempt to link The Annunciation with The Resurrection. The angels mirror each other at either end of the panel (see pl.1), as do the Virgin of The Annunciation and the woman at the other end of the panel, who can probably be identified as the Virgin Mary, both being seated on similarly shaped stools. The repetition of the drapery hanging from the Annunciation angel, Mary of the Visitation and the second woman at the sepulchre serve to emphasise the inter-relatedness of the scenes. There is

every indication that the repetition of detail and the poses adopted by the flanking figures, which creates such a balanced arrangement, may have been inspired by, or at least underlines, a consideration of the commonly held belief that the Virgin Mary was present, not only at the Incarnation but also at the sepulchre on the day of the Resurrection; that it was to her, in whose virginal womb Christ had been conceived, the angel gave the news of the resurrection, and hence the news that man's salvation was guaranteed.

Thus the iconography of the Hovingham Resurrection scene primarily expresses the fulfilment of Man's redemption, but it also refers to Mary's part in that salvation; these themes are a continuation from those found in the iconography of The Annunciation and Visitation. In the scene of The Women at the Sepulchre the promised salvation is fulfilled by Christ's Resurrection, and Mary, present at the beginning of Christ's redemptive life, is probably depicted as present at its culmination. The two themes expressed by the iconography are consistent within each scene, are closely inter-related in the overall presentation of the panel, and are commonplace in church writings throughout the early Medieval period. Overall the iconography expresses the link between the beginning of Christ's life as a man, and his resurrection in the flesh; between the inception and fulfilment of Man's salvation.

CONCLUSIONS:

I

The preceding sections have discussed the identity of the scenes, their iconographical background, and the significance of that iconography. As already stated, the extreme weathering of the panel, and the fact that it represents only one side of a shrine, means that we cannot be certain about many of the details. Accepting these limitations however, the figures have been identified as forming three scenes: The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, The Visitation, and The Resurrection, depicted by The Women at the Sepulchre.

The iconography of all three scenes indicates that they were based on models which depended on fifth- or sixth-century Italo-Byzantine prototypes. In The Annunciation (pl.3) the cross-legged stool and wool-basket, the angel's staff and cross-armed pose, the background drapery, and the arrangement of the figures with the Virgin on the right, all indicate just such an influence. Similarly the use of the "Conversing" Type of The Visitation (pl.4), rare in Western art before the later Medieval period, points to the influence of fifth- or sixth-century Eastern iconography. Likewise the arrangement of the Resurrection scene (pl.2) with the angel on the right, and the lack of the tomb also suggest the influence of early Italo-Byzantine art.

However, the cushion and footrest in The Annunciation scene imply that the sculptor adapted the scene in keeping with another iconographic tradition which elevated the Virgin as the Mother of God; he was aware of this tradition which was circulating in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth century, as evidenced by the Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69). Further indications of Western influence are seen in the Resurrection scene which shows three women, one of whom is seated; these are iconographical elements which are more common in Resurrection scenes from the West than the East and appear more frequently in art of the Carolingian period than earlier. Thus the figural iconography of the Hovingham panel, suggests that the decoration was based on eighth-century Western models which were dependent on earlier Italo-Byzantine work.

In attempting to date the sculpture, however, it is necessary to consider the figural iconography in conjunction with other factors such as its style and the carving of the other ornament on the stone. The style of the figural carving is light and delicate, but deeply cut away from the background; lengths of drapery tend to hang from the body in loose curling folds, but beneath the clothing the body is well modelled in a naturalistic manner (see eg.pl.3). This figural style indicates that the sculptor had before him a high-quality model which reproduced the classical style of an early prototype, still visible in such details as the first angel's short hair, and the well-modelled figures whose poses are varied between a full-profile and the three-quarter view. However, the model, or the Hovingham

sculptor, also demonstrates a relatively fussy attention to detail in the pieces of drapery and the comparatively cluttered presentation of the Virgin of the Annunciation. This mixed figural style is closer to that of Continental and Anglo-Saxon art produced during the Carolingian period than the earlier art of the Merovingian period which tends towards simpler and heavier tastes.¹¹⁷ The figural style at Hovingham therefore indicates that a date in the ninth rather than eighth century would be most appropriate.

As already stated, a date, more closely identified in the early part of the ninth century has been proposed through arguments based on the vine-scroll border and the architectural surround with its angular foliate motif.¹¹⁸ The iconographic details, such as they remain, would seem to support this dating. For instance, the use of the cross-legged stool in The Annunciation scene, not found in Western art prior to the Carolingian period, suggests that the Hovingham panel is more likely to post-date, or be contemporary with such developments.

II

Other than allowing the corroboration of an early ninth-century date for the Hovingham panel, the figural carving also provides some indication of the milieu in which the sculptor was working. The quality of the sculpture, although worn, still implies that he was technically accomplished; the figures and the

surrounding decoration were light and delicate, and carved in high relief; they have retained much of the naturalistic mobility of the early prototype, and the subtle repetition of shape and form across the panel points to a craftsman of great sophistication. These abilities, and the materials necessary for the fostering of such achievements, indicate a centre which was flourishing economically and intellectually.

The figural iconography substantiates this conclusion; it presents themes which are orthodox and coherent: namely the promise and fulfilment of Man's salvation through Christ, and the role played by Mary in that redemption. Each scene, individually, conveys the same Christian message, with the same Marian sub-text, but the fact that all three repeat the themes and comment on each other with references back and forth, indicates a fairly high level of doctrinal understanding on the part of the person(s) responsible for the production of the Hovingham panel.

III

The fact that there is a consistent and clear reference to the two themes across the scenes may also have some bearing on the nature of the centre within which, or for which, the shrine was produced. The primary reference made through the iconography is to Christ's redemptive life; it is expressed through the Annunciation where it began, through the Visitation where it was

confirmed, and through the Resurrection where the redemption was completed and the promise of salvation fulfilled. The fact that these three scenes have been chosen is significant; the same message could, for instance, have been expressed by the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Crucifixion or Ascension, all of which are found elsewhere in pre-Viking sculpture.¹¹⁹ Although the Virgin is iconographically present in these latter scenes, their emphasis is more exclusively directed towards a Christological emphasis placed on Man's salvation made available through Christ.

At Hovingham the scenes chosen have the same reference, but they also have the potential, which has been exploited by the sculptor, to refer to Mary's role in the process of redemption. She is honoured and praised at the Annunciation and the Visitation, and is witness to her son's resurrection, receiving the news of his rebirth from the angel as she received the news of his conception at the Annunciation. The scenes and their iconography have been deliberately chosen and adapted to highlight this secondary theme.

This manipulation of the figural iconography of the Hovingham panel may be thought to indicate that it was produced within a nunnery or double monastery, as seems to have been the case with the Wirksworth sarcophagus.¹²⁰ However, there is no compelling reason to assume such a setting for the Yorkshire panel. Reverence of the Virgin Mary was widespread in Anglo-

Saxon England from an early date and she was honoured in male monastic centres, such as the dependency of Lindisfarne, described in Aed̅elwulf's De Abbatibus where a painted effigy of the Virgin was erected by the altar in the eighth century:

Talibus exornata bonis, in vestibus albis, inclita,
sed vario com̅ptim permixta colore, a dextris virgo et
genetrix astare videri rectoris, caelos, terras qui et
numine portat.

(Honored by such good deeds, glorious in white robes, but with beautiful touches of various colors, the Virgin mother of the ruler, who by his divinity carries heaven and earth, was seen to stand upon the right)¹²¹

Furthermore, Churches dedicated to the Virgin were commonplace in England from the first years of the conversion; she was second only to Peter in this respect,¹²² and many such dedications existed within the confines of male monasteries, such as those at Hexham, Wearmouth and Lichfield, founded by Wilfrid, Biscop and Chad.¹²³ It should also be remembered that before the late eighth century when the earliest specifically Marian cycles were produced in the West, drawing their subject matter from the apocryphal accounts, reverence for the Virgin was expressed iconographically in "Marianised" Christ cycles such as those produced under Pope John VII in Rome at Sta.Maria Antiqua and St.Peters in the early eighth century.¹²⁴

It is most likely therefore that the carving at Hovingham reflects this established approach, and while its figural iconography refers to Christ's redemption of Man, a message which is applicable to all Christians, whether male or female, the Marian sub-text may indicate the presence of a special interest

in the Mother of God at the centre for which it was produced.

However it must be remembered that the figural iconography of the panel forms the decoration of one side of a shrine. Thus the manipulation of the scenes and their iconography may indicate that the shrine was made to contain the remains of a female saint, or person thought worthy of veneration. The honour invested in the Virgin Mary iconographically would refer to the honour of the person inside the shrine, while the primary iconographic theme of salvation, which has a wider application to all Christians, would be appropriate to those worshipping at the shrine. Shrines, as mentioned earlier, were not simply monuments to the dead, but were "gateways" to the heavenly world for those who came to venerate them.¹²⁵ The iconography fulfils this function in a clear and positive way, referring to the accepted orthodox interpretations of the events depicted, and so leading the mind to the promise of the everlasting life available to those who are reborn into the Church and "passing over from death" into life with Christ.¹²⁶

CHAPTER III

THE MASHAM COLUMN

INTRODUCTION:

The Masham column (pl.68), carved from a coarse yellow sandstone, stands in the village churchyard to the south of the church. From its modern socket it measures approximately 2.06m. in height, with a circumference near the base of 2.02m. tapering to 1.9m. at the top.¹ The uppermost part of the column has been broken, destroying part of the carving, but there was, until recently, a square hole in the top of the drum, suggesting that originally it was a composite monument. This would imply that the broken part formed either a continuation of the round column, such as is found at Wolverhampton (W.Midlands), a rectangular shaft as was postulated by Collingwood, or a cruciform head.² The hole in the top of the column has recently been filled with cement, and the whole has been capped by a metal sheet, causing an accelerated deterioration of the carving which is already much worn by weathering.³

The surviving carved decoration of the column is composed of four horizontal registers divided by plain, deeply set bands with border mouldings which may originally have carried inscriptions (see fig.3a).⁴ The registers themselves are each composed of an arcade consisting of seven arches arranged so that no one arch is placed directly above or beneath another (see fig.3b). On some of the columns the thickened remains of

capitals survive, and the spandrels are filled with two motifs: a foliate decoration, and small triangular ornaments which may once have been human faces. The uppermost register contains figures within its arcade; the second and third have figures interspersed with animal and foliate decoration, while the lowest register is filled with zoomorphic ornament.⁵

Discussion of the Masham column has hitherto centred on its dating, and on its stylistic analogies with sculpture elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon England. Collingwood, noting the repetition of motifs at Cundal and Aldborough (Yks.), placed the column in the second half of the eighth century. His conclusions were accepted by such scholars as Brøndsted, who studied the zoomorphic ornament of the lowest register, comparing it with the shaft at Ilkley (Yks.), and Smith, who compared the arcaded arrangement with similar compositions in Mercia and Northumbria.⁶ Clapham, in re-assessing the zoomorphic ornament, placed the carving within an early eighth-century Northumbrian context, but this dating was contested by Kendrick who viewed the arcaded arrangement as a direct response to Mercian art of the mid ninth century.⁷ Current opinion has tended to favour an early ninth-century date, highlighting similarities with other Northumbrian sculpture, such as the panel at Hovingham (Yks.) where, as already described, the figures are also arranged in a series of arches, and the spandrels filled with a trefoil motif.⁸

The following sections describe the layout of the figural ornament, and such details as have survived; the identity and significance of the iconography will then be discussed. As with Hovingham, it is hoped that a firmer dating will emerge from this study, and an indication of the sources which may have inspired the decoration.

DESCRIPTION:

For the sake of convenience, given the round nature of the monument and the staggered niches, the decoration of the column will be described in the following way: the registers will be described from the top and numbered 1-4 accordingly (see fig.3a); the arched niches of each register will be referred to by the letters A-G (see fig.3b). The description will begin on what is now the north side, with the niche (1A) in the top register which contains only a single seated figure, so differentiating it from the other six niches of this band which contain two standing figures each. In the second register, niche 2A will be the one found below and slightly to the right of 1A; 3A will be the niche found directly below 1A, and 4A will be the one below 2A (see fig.3b). All references to right and left will be from the spectator's point of view unless otherwise stated.

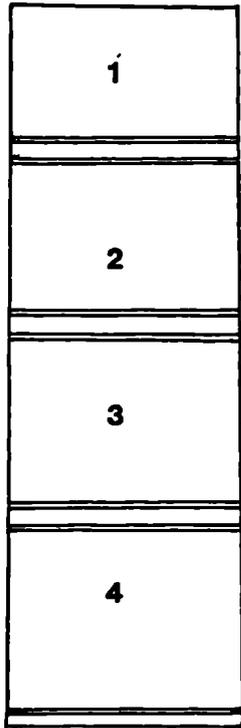


Fig. 3a.

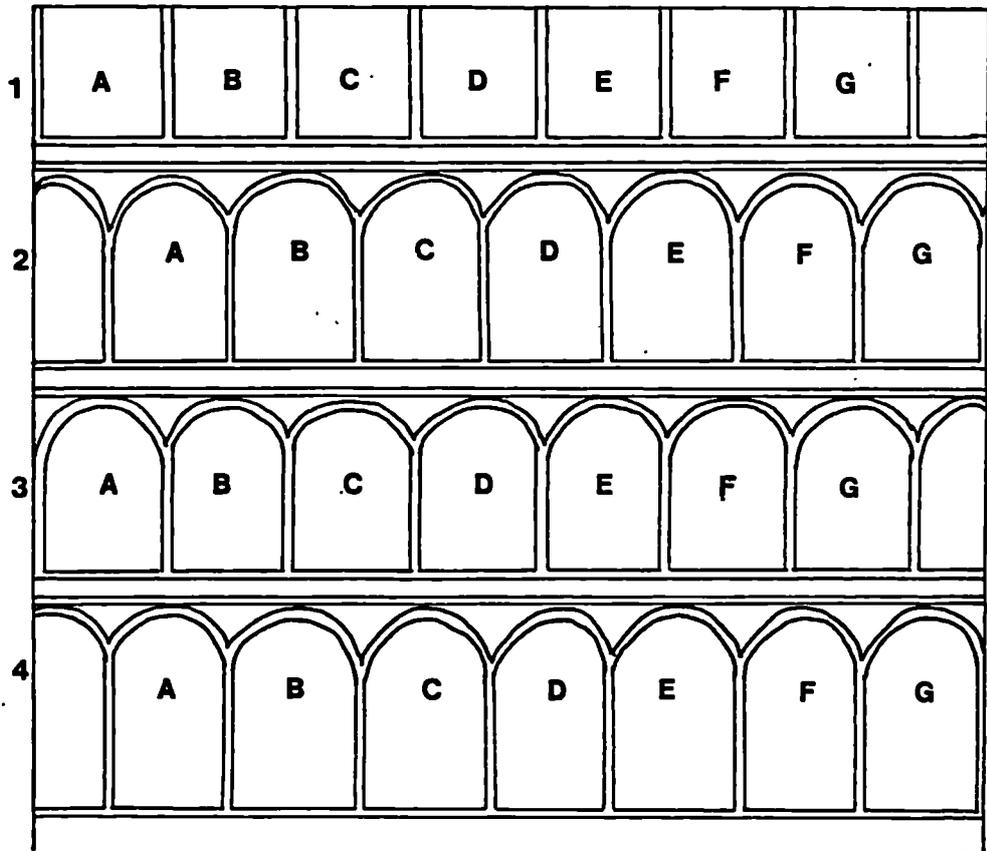


Fig. 3b.

1. Top Register:

1A: As noted above this arch contains the much worn remains of a single enthroned figure who faces forwards and wears a long robe. As the top of the column has been broken, the top of the arch and the head of the figure no longer exists; the position of the arms is unclear but there is no indication that the figure held any attributes. The outline of the back of the throne can be seen on both sides of the figure, terminating at the level of its chest.

1B-G: The other six arches each contain two standing figures. The broken condition of the column means that the tops of the arches and the heads of the figures no longer exist. Only the outline of the figures remains indicating that they faced forwards and wore calf-length robes. On some of the figures the bottom half of a halo can be discerned.

2. Second Register:

2A:(pl.5) The carving is very badly worn and all that remains is the barest outline of two figures. The one on the left appears to have been standing facing the right with one arm extended and the head slightly bowed. The other figure, who may have been seated in a high-backed chair, is also seen in profile and leans towards the first figure.

2B:(pl.6) The worn outlines of a human figure and an animal are contained within this arch. The body of the animal is seen from the side with its head to the left of the scene; it is possible that the head is turned, or pulled backwards. The body is of extremely slender proportions and only the near-side back leg can be seen with any clarity; the tail is raised and twists back above the body. By the front leg is a worn piece of carving which in certain lighting conditions appears to be another, smaller, animal seen in profile and facing left. The human figure stands behind the larger animal; his legs are visible between its front and back legs, and his head is apparently turned to the left. Both his arms are extended to the left, holding the animal's head; a piece of drapery, probably a cloak, is thrown out from the right shoulder.⁹

2C:(pl.7) The arch to the right contains the weathered outlines of two birds facing each other. They are seen in profile, their beaks almost meeting under the center of the arch; above the beaks is a small circular boss. The tails of the birds hang down and curl inwards to form a sweeping U-shape which mirrors that of the arch above. Their legs extend towards the centre, crossing each other above a worn piece of carving of uncertain shape within the bowl of the "U" formed by the birds' tails. On the left the outline indicates this feature may have been an urn with a large conical base narrowing at the neck and then flaring out at the top. Thin lines extend from the top of this object to the birds' legs.

2D:(pl.8) The next group of figures is less weathered, and has been described by Lawson¹⁰ as composed of four figures seated or crouched on the left and right of the scene, all facing the centre (see fig.4). On the left one figure (a), with short hair, dominates the scene; he is seated in a high, curved-back chair with a stretcher between the legs. He leans slightly forward and holds out, at an angle, a round-topped lyre.¹¹ On the right, and situated below the lyre, is another figure (b) who is also seated on a high-backed chair; he sits upright and holds a small triangular object before him. In the lower left corner of the scene, but carved on a plane in front of figure 'a', is a smaller figure (c) who sits, leaning forwards over a pedestal-like feature. The fourth figure (d) crouches on the right of the scene, and is also placed in the foreground. He appears to have his back turned to the spectator so that he faces the two figures (a & b) seated on the high-backed chairs.

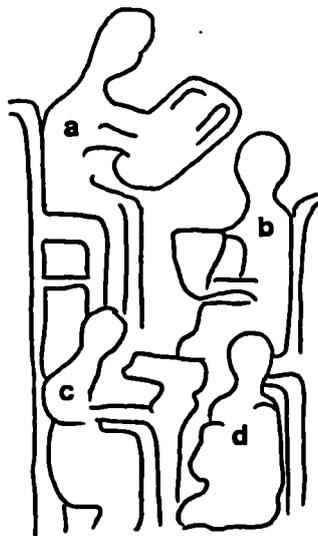


Fig. 4

2E:(pl.9) This arch contains a single figure standing in a half-turned position with his feet facing the left. He wears a calf-length robe, similar to the figures in the first register (1B-G), and a long piece of drapery hangs over his right shoulder in tight and heavy folds. His left arm is awkwardly positioned, crossing his body and reaching up to touch an arch which passes behind him. This arch rises out of capitals which are similar to those featured in the arcade. At the base of the columns are two large round bosses.

2F:(pl.10) Although the figures of this scene are extremely worn they seem to have been close copies of elements in 2D; there are two figures seated facing each other in high-backed chairs above at least one other diminutive figure, but they lack the attributes held by the figures of 2D. The figure seated on the left, in a curved-backed chair with long legs, leans slightly forward and extends one arm up towards the head of the second figure who sits on the right. This figure is also seated in profile and leans slightly towards the first figure. Unlike the figures (a & b) of 2D these are seated almost on an equal level. It appears as though there was once a small figure seated in profile in the lower left-hand corner of the scene. He leans forward, much like the comparable figure (c) in 2D. However there is no indication of a pedestal-like object before him. There are the remains of some features in the right-hand corner, but these are now unidentifiable.

2G:(pl.11) The last arch contains two figures who face each other in profile, but the carving is too worn to decipher anything clearly. The figure on the left is smaller than that on the right who may have worn a full-length robe. There may have been a small boss above them under the curve of the arch, and there appears to have been a long thin object between them.

3. Third Register:

3A: This scene is too worn to be identified with any certainty. It may have had one figure standing under the arch.

3B: This scene is also too worn to be identified. It may have been composed of two standing figures.

3C: This third arch contains the remains of some foliate decoration; a series of fronds with thick terminal growths grow out of a central stem, filling the niche.

3D:(pl.13) The scene to the right is composed of three figures; the head of one can be clearly deciphered below the arch. He appears to be standing, wearing a full-length robe, facing forwards. He is closely flanked on either side by two other figures, also wearing full-length robes.

3E: This scene is very worn, but once contained at least one figure standing upright in the centre of the arch.

3F:(pl.14) The foliate decoration of 3C appears to have been repeated in this arch.

3G: This scene is too worn to be identified at all. It may have contained two figures.

4. Fourth Register:

This register, as stated above, consists of zoomorphic ornament; a series of paired beasts are superimposed on a broken foliate scroll.

4A: Contains a single beast who faces left.

4B: Contains a single beast who faces right.

4C:(pl.12) Contains a single beast who faces left, towards the previous beast (4B).

4D:(pl.12) Contains two beasts confronting each other.

4E: Contains a single beast who faces right, towards the next beast (4F).

4F: Contains a single beast who faces left, repeating the pattern of 4A and 4C.

4G: Contains a single beast who faces right, repeating the pattern of 4B and 4E.

IDENTIFICATION:

There are a number of problems involved in identifying and discussing the figural iconography of the Masham column. The greatest is that of its poor condition which means that the majority of the scenes in the third register (3), and at least two of the scenes in the second register (2A & 2G; see pls.5,11), are now virtually indecipherable. Added to this is the worn and broken condition of the top register (1), and the loss of whatever scenes and structure once surmounted the surviving column. The lack of detail in what remains of the scenes of the top two registers (1 & 2) makes any certain identification (and therefore interpretation) difficult, if not, on occasion, impossible.

Another problem lies in the fact that the column is in a secondary position which means that we cannot be certain which scene of any one register, or which face of the column as a whole, is of primary importance. The circular nature of the monument, of course, makes this question even more problematic. At Bewcastle (Cu.), by contrast, where the cross-shaft is in its original position, the figural scenes, assumed to be of primary reference, face West,¹² while at Masham the enthroned figure of the upper-most register (1A) now faces North.¹³

Associated with this is the problem of identifying the relationship which may have existed between the registers. The staggered arrangement of the arcades (see fig.3b) may argue

against any inter-relatedness, but the iconography of the top register, as will be seen below, may suggest that there was originally some iconographical cross-referencing between the registers. However, given the fragmentary and weathered condition of the figural carving, such conclusions concerning the overall iconographic programme, must remain speculative.

1. Top Register:

The identification of the figures in this register will be considered as one group. The columns of the arcade will not be regarded as enclosing individual figural scenes as they do in the other two registers (2 & 3), because in this uppermost register the figures face outwards, towards the spectator; they do not face each other as pairs independent and separate from the other pairs. They are thus regarded as twelve figures flanking a centrally enthroned figure, being grouped in pairs by the arches. This arrangement interrupts the potential monotony of a single line of repeated standing figures, and is in keeping with the overall arrangement of the Masham column into arcaded bands of figural and zoomorphic ornament organised in pairs.

awkward
phr.

The grouping of twelve standing nimbed figures flanking a centrally enthroned figure suggests the combination of Christ with his apostles; this was an identification proposed by Collingwood, although he saw the central figure as standing on a hill rather than seated on a throne.¹⁴

The combination of Christ and his apostles is found in Christian art from the fourth century onwards in conjunction with processions of heavenly saints and martyrs, and it has long been recognised that the image represents Christ exercising his divine authority.¹⁵ However, the exact significance of the scene is often unclear. There seem originally to have been two distinct iconographic types: one was a Teaching scene which showed Christ seated with a book in the midst of his apostles, who varied in number and were seated round him, often empty handed, in a semicircle.¹⁶ The other depicted The Mission: Christ sending the apostles out to spread the Word to all nations before the Ascension; this showed Christ standing with his hands raised in blessing flanked by standing apostles led by Peter and Paul. In this scene the apostles were more likely to be shown carrying attributes.¹⁷

From an early date, however, these two types also appeared in mixed and abbreviated forms.¹⁸ For instance the fifth-century mosaics at S. Agata dei Goti, near Rome, and those at Poreč Cathedral show Christ enthroned with a book, but flanked by twelve standing apostles who hold attributes.¹⁹ Other fifth-century mosaics at Naples, Rome and Ravenna show Christ seated between Peter and Paul who hold various attributes and are accompanied by only a few other standing figures.²⁰

At Masham the arrangement would seem to have been inspired by the iconographic image which represented a conflation of the Teaching and Mission scenes: Christ, enthroned and empty-handed,

is flanked by twelve standing apostles who, unusually, do not hold any attributes. This type of conflated image is most common in large scale decoration, such as the fourth-century decoration of S.Lorenzo (Milan), and the fifth- and sixth-century mosaics of the Orthodox and Arian Baptistries at Ravenna where the figures are set in elaborate architectural arcades, and the apostles hold crowns, books or palms.²¹ However, the conflated form is also found on sarcophagi and smaller ivory and metal objects;²² a bronze situla of fourth-century date now in the Vatican, for example, shows Christ enthroned amid the twelve apostles who stand between palm trees holding books and scrolls.²³

After the sixth century the image of Christ with his apostles does not appear in Christian art very frequently in the surviving material. General depictions of apostles, sometimes set in an architectural framework, are found, but these do not include the central figure of Christ. A small reliquary shrine at Fleury, dating from the early eighth century, for instance, shows six apostles standing under an arcade,²⁴ and a later Irish cross-shaft at Moone Abbey shows the twelve apostles in a panelled arrangement.²⁵

In the late eighth century however, the mosaics in the Triclinium (Rome), produced under Leo III (798-9) do show a conscious revival of the earlier iconographic programmes; Christ is shown flanked by the apostles in a scene which has been taken to allude to the contemporary Papal policy of spreading the faith

and strengthening the position of the Roman Church in Europe.²⁶ This was continued in the ninth century in the decoration of S.Prassede (Rome) and the church of Sta.Maria (Navicella) where the iconography was a copy of the sixth-century mosaics at SS.Cosmas and Damian.²⁷

Despite this apparent gap in the iconography of Christ and the Apostles in the art surviving from the sixth to eighth centuries, there are some suggestions that the programme was known, and may have continued into the seventh century. In Anglo-Saxon England, for instance, Bede describes images of the Virgin, Christ and the saints, and the twelve apostles as being among the paintings brought by Biscop to decorate the church at Monkwearmouth in the late seventh century.²⁸ At the same time, Arculf, describing the holy sites of Palestine to Adamnan of Iona, mentions a linen cloth, reputedly woven by the Virgin, which was decorated with:

...duodecim apostolorum formulae...et ipsius Domini
imago

(the forms of the twelve apostles...and the likeness of the Lord himself)²⁹

Although this textile may have been an ancient relic, even in the seventh century, Arculf's description does suggest that the iconography of Christ and the Apostles was at least known of in England, and possibly Gaul, at that time.

There is also some indication that analagous programmes existed elsewhere in the pre-Viking sculpture of England; at

Reculver (Kent) the lowest register of the column may have contained the standing figures of Christ and four of his apostles, while another band of figures further up the pillar, may have contained the figures of Mary and the apostles, separated by columns.³⁰ On a late eighth- or early ninth-century sarcophagus at Bakewell (Derbys.) there are the remains of six figures standing in a row on one side of the cover,³¹ and at Peterborough Christ and the Virgin were flanked by ten apostles (pl.89).³²

Thus, although the top register of the Masham column is extremely worn and broken, it is probable that the figures represent Christ enthroned between his apostles in a general scene (rather than a specific Teaching or Mission scene) which demonstrates his divine authority, and expresses the foundation of the Christian faith and Church on earth through Christ and his apostles. The fact that the figures are nimbed while others on the column are not, suggests that this elevated and hierarchical symbolism is deliberately intended. Moreover, whether the programme was inspired by the fifth- and sixth-century types, the material known in England in the seventh century, or by Pope Leo's eighth-century revival in Rome, the repetition, at Masham, of the standing apostles without attributes, is almost without precedent in Christian art.

2. Second Register:

The extremely worn condition of 2A and 2G, and the arrangement of 2F (pls.5,11,10), makes it difficult to identify their subject matter and iconography. Discussion of this register will therefore concentrate on the remaining scenes (2B-2E).

2B:(pl.6) This scene has been identified as portraying either David or Samson and the Lion.³³ There are three distinct pictorial versions of these events in early Christian art, but David is commonly invoked by the presence of a lamb, harp or shepherd's crook.³⁴ At Masham the presence of the diagnostic crook, harp or sheep which would clearly identify the scene as representing David and the Lion is not absolutely certain, thanks to the severe weathering of the sculpture. However the small animal, visible in certain lights to the left of the scene, could reasonably be identified with a lamb.³⁵ Since Samson's encounter with the lion did not involve a second animal the presence of this beast points to a Davidic interpretation.

One pictorial version of David and the Lion, which does not seem to have been popular in insular art, shows David, often half-kneeling on the lion, while holding its mane with one hand as he prepares to strike it with a club raised in his other hand. It may have been featured on a piece of sculpture, now lost, from Tannadice (Scot.).³⁶ The second version, often referred to as

the "Gilgamesh" type, shows David standing upright wrestling with the lion which rears up on its hind legs to confront David on equal terms. This type appears most commonly in Pictish art, but it is also found in Ireland on a cross-shaft at Donaghmore; it does not occur in English art of the Anglo-Saxon period.³⁷ The third, "Mithraic", version is the type apparently featured at Masham. It shows David standing by, or kneeling on, the lion while pulling back its head and rending its jaws with both hands; the lion does not leap up as in the "Gilgamesh" version.³⁸ Elsewhere in insular art it appears in the early eighth-century *Vespasian Psalter*, and in Scotland it is found on a cross-slab at Aberlemno. This iconographic type, however, is most common in Irish art where it occurs in both manuscript art and sculpture where David is usually shown kneeling on the lion.³⁹

In the iconography of the "Mithraic" version of the scene, and indeed in any picture of David's fight with the lion, the lamb is not given a fixed position in relation to the other elements of the scene, although it is most commonly found above the lion or in one of the upper corners of the picture.⁴⁰ However, in scenes of David brandishing a club, and a few examples of David standing behind the lion and rending its jaws, the lamb is sometimes placed at the lion's feet.⁴¹ The ninth-century *Khludov Psalter* (pl.77), for example, shows one lamb above the lion and another beneath its front legs, while the earlier, eighth-century *Vespasian Psalter* (pl.78), shows a lamb by David's shoulder, but also shows two goats at the lion's feet. Both manuscripts are thought to depend on sixth-century Greek or

Italo-Byzantine models for their iconography.⁴²

The *Khiludov Psalter* and the earlier English manuscript are also among the few surviving examples which show David standing behind the lion and breaking its jaws, rather than kneeling on its back as is common in Irish art. It is possible that the scenes at Aberlemno and on the St. Andrews sarcophagus⁴³ represent "refashioned" versions of the "Mithraic" scene depicted in the *Vespasian Psalter*. But in all three of these insular examples David is shown on the left of the scene and both he and the lion are turned to the right.⁴⁴ This arrangement is a mirror-image of the Masham scene where David and the lion face towards the left, a composition found only in the early ninth-century *Khiludov Psalter* (pl.77); this manuscript miniature also shows the lion's tail flicked upwards as it is at Masham. Other scenes, whether they show David with his club, or are of the "Mithraic" or "Gilgamesh" types, depict the lion's tail tucked between his hind legs.⁴⁵

Also to be considered is the cloak which is flung out behind David at Masham. The *Khiludov Psalter* does not depict this detail, but the sixth-century Cyprus dish which shows David with his club upraised, does show his cloak fluttering behind him. The *Vespasian Psalter* (pl.78) and the St. Andrews sarcophagus both show David with a robe thrown over his shoulder but in these scenes it hangs down his back in heavy folds; in the manuscript this may be due to the confining frame of the initial in which

the scene is set, but the overall heaviness of the scene does suggest that the image was inherently static.

In summary, therefore, a scene depicting a man fighting with a lion in Christian art, can be interpreted as either David or Samson, but the presence of a lamb (or harp and shepherd's crook) identifies the human protagonist as David; the presence of the second animal at Masham suggests that the scene is that of David with the Lion. There were three iconographic types of this event, all of which are found within insular art; of these, the "Mithraic" type is the most relevant to the Masham scene. Here, the position of the lamb beneath the lion's feet, David standing behind the lion, and the arrangement of the figures facing left, have their closest parallels in the ninth-century *Khudov Psalter*, and with the insular examples which may derive from prototypes similar to that which lies behind the Eastern Psalter, prototypes thought to be of sixth-century Eastern or Italo-Byzantine date and provenance. Differences between the other insular examples of David and the Lion and that at Masham, serve to highlight the unique iconography and style of the carved Northumbrian scene, and its similarity to earlier Eastern work. The heavy and stolid appearance of the *Vespasian Psalter* and the closely related St. Andrews scene, for instance, does not compare with the light and delicate rendition at Masham which is closer to the more energetic portrayal of the *Khudov* scene. The implication is that the Masham sculptor had access to an Eastern or Italo-Byzantine model, not too far removed from a sixth-century prototype, which was nearer to that used by the *Khudov*

artist than the Ravennate model thought to lie behind the *Vespasian Psalter*.

2C:(pl.7) This scene consists of two confronting birds, possibly perched on an urn. The outline of the birds' heads, beaks, bodies and tails is clear, but that of the urn is less certain. The length and shape of the birds' tails, hanging down the sides of the scene and curving inwards, strongly suggest that the birds are to be identified as peacocks.

Peacocks are found in Christian art from the fourth century onwards where they function as symbols of the Resurrection, a role assigned to them in patristic texts.⁴⁶ They are found initially in the frescoes of the catacombs, but remain popular in various media throughout the Medieval period. Confronting peacocks are found, for instance, on the fourth-century wooden doors of Sta.Sabina (Rome) and on Ravennate sarcophagi from the end of the same century.⁴⁷ In the fifth century peacocks were shown flanking an urn as part of the mosaic decoration at La Daurade, Toulouse, where they were placed in the spandrels of the arches above and between the standing figures of Christ, Mary, Peter and Paul.⁴⁸ In the sixth century, confronting pairs of peacocks are found on the episcopal throne of Maximianus, on architectural reliefs, and as part of the mosaic decoration of Italian churches.⁴⁹ They also appear on holy water vessels found in a Merovingian cemetery at Miannay, near Abbéville, and in a

Saxon grave at Long Whittenham (Berks.).⁵⁰ During the seventh and eighth centuries pairs of peacocks are still predominant features on marble sarcophagi both in Italy and elsewhere in North Western Europe; in Gaul they also begin to feature in manuscript art.⁵¹ By the ninth century they are fairly widespread in Carolingian and Lombardic art.⁵²

In some instances it is unclear whether the confronting peacocks have a purely decorative function; for instance, the two peacocks which flank the personal monogram of Maximianus on the sixth-century episcopal throne inhabit a vinescroll with other smaller birds, deer, oxen and sheep. Similarly the early ninth-century fragment of a marble ambo from Brescia (N. Italy) shows one of the large birds against a background of small leafy scrolls.⁵³ In both cases the extent of any symbolism referring to the resurrection is not at all clear. However, in other instances, the context or the associated iconography does indicate that the symbolic significance associated with the peacocks continued well into the Carolingian period. Confronting peacocks are found engraved, for instance on a sixth- to seventh-century marble sarcophagus at Vienne (pl.79) where they cover one side of the tomb; here the resurrection symbolism is implied by the fact that the peacocks decorate a sarcophagus, as well as by the associated motifs of a vine-scroll emerging from an urn standing between the two birds. In the frontispiece of the mid eighth-century *Gelasian Sacramentary* (pl.149) peacocks are shown hanging from the Alpha and Omega suspended from the arms of a cross so that the associated ornament indicates the peacocks were

still regarded as symbols of immortality and resurrection. This symbolism is repeated in the late eighth-century *Godescalc Gospels* and the early ninth-century *Gospel Book of S. Medard of Soissons* where confronting peacocks crown the Fountain of Life.⁵⁴

At Masham it would appear that the birds face each other above an object which may be an urn. In Christian art, confronting peacocks were often shown flanking either an urn or a chalice; for instance, a mid sixth-century marble relief at S. Apollinare in Classe (Ravenna) shows two peacocks standing on a vine issuing from a large urn or amphora.⁵⁵ The sixth- to seventh-century Merovingian sarcophagus at Vienne (pl. 79) mentioned above, shows a similar arrangement where the two birds flank a large central vase-like urn. The early eighth-century Lombardic sarcophagus of the Abbess Theodora at Pavia depicts a simpler composition in which the peacocks drink directly from a central chalice from which emerges a small cross.⁵⁶ The overall arrangement is varied in the early ninth-century Lombardic relief at Sta. Maria in Cosmedin where the two peacocks, standing on the lateral arms of a cross each drink from odd shaped containers.⁵⁷ In insular art the *Book of Kells* (conventionally assigned to the ninth century) shows two peacocks standing above chalices (pl. 81). What is clear is that the shape of the container between the peacocks could vary immensely, but its function as an integral part of the resurrection symbolism remained constant. Thus, although the identity of the object between the Masham peacocks is not clear, its position at the centre of the scene

between a pair of flanking peacocks is in keeping with the urn or chalice placed between the birds in Christian art from the sixth to ninth centuries.

Another element in the Masham scene which, although unclear, may also be identified in the light of the iconography commonly associated with confronting peacocks; these are the thin lines discernable between the urn and the birds' feet. As already noted, the urn or chalice is sometimes filled with a vine-scroll. When the vine, originally a symbol of Christ "the true vine", emerges from a chalice, the reference to the Resurrection is linked specifically to the Eucharist.⁵⁸ This is the case in the insular *Book of Kells* where the vine grows from the chalice to encircle the feet of the peacocks (pl.81). The scenes found on the sixth-century Ravennate sarcophagus⁵⁹ and the later Merovingian sarcophagus at Vienne (pl.79) show the vine emerging from the central urn; the Merovingian one is less naturalistically conveyed but the peacocks feed off grapes which grow from its branches. In both instances the birds rest their feet on the scroll. It is likely, therefore that the peacocks depicted at Masham face each other over an urn from which a fine scroll emerged.

What is less clear is the identity of the circular element above the heads of the birds. Depictions of the confronting peacocks did sometimes show them flanking a chi-rho or cross contained within a circular frame, rather than an urn or chalice. The sixth-century sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore in

S. Apollinare in Classe (Ravenna) for instance, shows the peacocks standing before a vine-scroll on either side of a circle containing an Alpha, Omega and chi-rho.⁶⁰ A similar, but less ornate arrangement is found on the lid of another Ravennate sarcophagus of the seventh century.⁶¹ Here the birds face a wreath containing a cross hung with the Alpha and Omega. Another sixth-century sarcophagus from Ravenna which shows the peacocks on either side of the amphora, also depicts a cross between the birds, although here it is not contained within a circular frame;⁶² the eighth-century sarcophagus of the Abbess Theodora also shows a small cross emerging from the central chalice.⁶³ It is possible therefore that the worn boss above the peacocks at Masham may once have been a small circular ornament engraved or painted with a cross or chi-rho.⁶⁴

The most noticeable difference between the Masham scene and other versions of the confronting peacocks lies in the overall arrangement; at Masham the peacocks are the dominant element and are raised well above the urn while the vine-scroll, if present, must have been relatively insignificant given the extent to which it has worn away. Most examples of the scheme show the birds as of equal importance with the vine-scroll and the central urn or chi-rho, and their tails are shown spread out behind them, not hanging down. However, on the sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore the peacocks are placed in the foreground with the vine-scroll forming a backdrop,⁶⁵ and in some instances it is clear that the position of the birds' tails is dictated by the shape of the

space to be filled. In the early ninth-century Lombardic relief at Sta. Maria in Cosmedin for example, the birds' tails hang down on either side of the large central cross on which they perch,⁶⁶ and in the *Book of Kells* where they flank a portrait of Christ (pl.81), their tails follow the downward curve of the arch which frames them. At Masham it would seem that the arch which encloses the scene has dictated the arrangement of the peacocks' tails to the extent that they actually mirror its shape.

Thus the scene at Masham can be identified as two peacocks facing each other over an urn, from which a vine may emerge. It is a scene which is common in Christian art from the sixth-century onwards, and is widespread throughout Europe in many media. Initially the scene is found in Eastern art and in areas of Italy and Gaul directly influenced by the East. Its appearance in insular art may show a similar, direct, dependence on Eastern sources, or the influence of later North West European developments. The scene is one which retained a general reference to "immortality, resurrection, incorruptibility or eternal beatitude" well into the ninth century,⁶⁷ and at Masham only this general symbolism can be inferred given the lack of detail and the extreme weathering.

2D:(pl.8; fig.4) This scene has long been recognised as David Dictating the Psalms,⁶⁸ with the elevated figure (a) holding the lyre being identified as David. Figure 'b' facing him is described by Lawson as a musician with a triangular harp, while

'c' is seen as a scribe sitting at a lectern. The fourth figure (d) is identified as a dancer or juggler due to his apparently crouched position and the lack of any attributes comparable with the lyre, harp or lectern.⁶⁹ Thus the scene as a whole represents David the Psalmist with his accompanying musician, the scribe who records the divine words of the Psalms, and the dancer who indicates the spontaneous and inspired nature of those words.⁷⁰

Other surviving examples of David Dictating the Psalms found in English and Continental art differ from this scene at Masham. Elsewhere David is generally depicted within an "aulic" arrangement; he faces the spectator at the centre of the scene while his scribes, musicians and dancers are gathered round him in a semi-circle. This pictorial tradition was derived from imperial Byzantine art of the early sixth century and passed into Italian art before appearing in Carolingian and English work of the eighth and ninth centuries.⁷¹ The early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon *Vespasian Psalter*, for instance (pl.80), shows David with a lyre enthroned at the centre of the page between two scribes and surrounded by musicians and dancers.⁷²

The only way in which the Masham scene could be considered similar to these "aulic" arrangements lies in the fact that it is composed on the same general principle. The "aulic" scenes show David at the back of the scene, but larger than the other figures and elevated above the group of attendants who surround him in a

circle; the attendants diminish in size so that those at the front are smallest. Although this defies the rules of perspective it has the effect of emphasising David. At Masham this same organising principle can be seen; David is elevated at the back of the scene while the other three figures are placed in separate planes towards the front of the picture, diminishing in size so that those in the foreground are the smallest. Thus the only sense in which the Masham scene can be interpreted as "aulic" is in the emphasis placed on David. That it is only a distant reflex is clear from the fact that David is neither centrally placed nor facing forwards.

Apart from the "aulic" tradition of David Dictating the Psalms, there were at least two other potential iconographic types in Christian art, both of which occur in insular art, and both of which bear more resemblance to the Masham scene than the "aulic" image. One of these was a pastoral image which showed a harpist seated sideways, sometimes on a chair and sometimes on the ground; the other was a regal image which showed a king enthroned in profile, but without any attributes.

Most relevant to Masham would appear to be those examples in insular art of the eighth to tenth centuries, where David the Psalmist is seated in profile on a chair with his harp. However, in these instances he is generally depicted alone, without accompanying musicians, scribes or dancers.⁷³ Thus, on a late eighth- or early ninth-century fragment at St. Andrews (pl.82), and on cross-slabs at Dupplin and Monifieth (Scot.) David is

shown enthroned in profile without attendant figures,⁷⁴ while in Irish art he appears, again in profile and unaccompanied, on ninth- and tenth-century crosses at Kells and Castledermot, on a slab at Carndonagh, and in an early tenth-century Psalter.⁷⁵

For these insular parallels of David on his own, seated sideways, Roe saw a "classical" pastoral origin, but her associated arguments for the zoomorphic chair on which David is sometimes seated in Irish art, are not convincing,⁷⁶ and Henderson has recently argued that the pastoral image may have inspired the Pictish scenes of harpists seated in profile on the ground.⁷⁷ For Masham, it is also important to note that depictions of David seated in a plain, high-backed chair are more common in insular art than those which show him on the ground or seated in a "zoomorphic throne"; at Monasterboice, Durrrow, Castledermot (North and South Crosses) and Kells (West Cross) in Ireland, and at St. Andrews (Scot; pl.82), the harpist sits in an unadorned chair, much like those found at Masham.⁷⁸ The animal-head terminals adorning the high-backed chairs at Dupplin and Monifieth are more likely to be side-view versions of the similarly decorated thrones found in the eighth-century *Durham Cassiodorus* and on the ninth-century cross-slab at Kirriemuir.⁷⁹

Thus, while some Irish versions of David seated on a beast may well derive ultimately from classical pastoral images, it does not follow that all insular versions of David, seated in profile in a high-backed chair (whether plain or with terminals),

also derive from the same ultimate source. Henderson, for instance, has argued that two harping scenes may have been available to Pictish sculptors, one courtly, which depicted David enthroned in profile, and one pastoral which showed him seated on the ground and playing to animals; the courtly version is seen to be largely dependent on earlier English developments such as are found at Masham.⁸⁰ In this context it should be noted that a ninth-century Western, possibly Anglo-Saxon, silk at Maaseik, Belgium, decorated with repeated images of King David (without his harp, but holding a sceptre) shows him unaccompanied and enthroned in profile on a high-backed throne (pl.83).⁸¹

It would seem, therefore, that there may in fact have been a number of pictorial versions of the Psalmist shown seated in profile circulating in the British Isles during the eighth and ninth centuries. One pastoral image may well have been derived from depictions in which David was seated on a beast, while another showed him seated on the ground. A third image, which Henderson describes as courtly, showed the harpist seated in a plain chair. All three types generally depicted David on his own, without the scribes, musicians or dancers who accompany him in the "aulic" scenes.

At Masham therefore, there are at least two possible explanations for the arrangement of the scene. The sculptor may have taken the isolated image of David, seated in profile and playing his harp, and placed it within an "aulic" context which was re-arranged to fit both the confines of the niche and the

sideways position of David, a position which would not allow for the Psalmist to be situated at the centre of the scene. Alternatively, the regal image of the unaccompanied king enthroned sideways could have been given a harp and placed within a re-arranged "aulic" composition. It is also possible that there was an insular variant of the "aulic" composition, which used a profile David, and from which the individual figures found elsewhere in Pictish and Irish art were taken. However, whichever of the iconographic types were used at Masham, the paired arrangement of the four figures must be taken into consideration. There is a strong emphasis placed on the pairing of figures, whether human or animal, found on the column as a whole,⁸² and this may have been a primary concern for the sculptor in adapting his model(s) to the monument before him.

It is thus more likely that the scene at Masham demonstrates the use of an image of David the Psalmist seated in profile and unaccompanied by attendants; this seems to have been a largely insular phenomenon. The attendant figures, commonly associated with the "aulic" versions, and present in Anglo-Saxon art of the eighth century, were arranged around the individual and profile figure of David according to the same principles guiding their disposition in the centrally focused "aulic" scenes, but also to fit the confines of the space, and to complement the emphasis on paired images found in the overall decoration of the Masham column. Despite these manipulations the scene still represents the composition of the psalms with the accompanying figures

suggesting the spontaneous composition of the psalms by the divinely inspired singer who is King of Israel and the prophet of Christ.

2E:(pl.9) Although this scene is one of the best preserved of the carvings on the Masham column, it has received little attention. Collingwood described it as a figure standing before an arch reading a book, but as there is no indication of a book having ever existed in the figure's hand, either here, or at Cundall (Yks.) where the scene is repeated, this interpretation would seem to be doubtful.⁸³ Kendrick, followed by Cramp, identified the figure as Samson Carrying the Gates of Gaza.⁸⁴

The scene at Cundall is so similar to that at Masham, that a common origin within the same workshop is indicated, and so an identification of the one might provide a solution for the other. Unfortunately, there is nothing helpful in the context of the Cundall scene which sheds much light on its identity; most of the shaft is decorated with geometric, foliate and zoomorphic designs. The lower part of the shaft, now at Aldborough, is decorated with one panel of carved figures, but they are too worn to be identified.⁸⁵ Thus any discussion of the Cundall scene is dependent on an interpretation of the same figure at Masham, rather than *vice versa*.

Scenes depicting Samson in Christian art are rare before the twelfth century, but are found in Pictish art and a ninth-century

Byzantine manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus; both have been claimed as deriving from early Greek originals.⁸⁶ But even in these instances, images of Samson carrying the Gates of Gaza are not to be found; thus if the scene at Masham (and Cundall) has been correctly identified the arrangement cannot be paralleled within the period and thus would constitute the earliest surviving example of the scene. If this is so it could explain why the Masham scene is so different from later, twelfth-century images of Samson with the Gates of Gaza. These show Samson, in profile, carrying the long posts of the gates either over his shoulders (as on the twelfth-century door frame at Malmesbury), or tucked under his arm, as shown in a late fourteenth-century manuscript, now at Oxford.⁸⁷

In the ninth-century Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus there is, however, an illustration of Samson Destroying the Temple (pl.84); it shows him facing forwards, with his arms stretched out on both sides towards the columns of an arch which surrounds him. Except for the position of the arms it is very similar to the scene at Masham. The source for the illustrations of the Byzantine Homilies has been shown by Henderson to have much in common with the Pictish scenes of Samson with Delilah and Slaying the Philistine; both these scenes are shown in the manuscript, on the same page as Samson Destroying the Temple.⁸⁸ It would thus seem possible that a similar source inspired the scene at Masham.

It could therefore, be argued that a "Destruction" scene, analagous to that appearing in the Byzantine Homilies, was available to insular artists, and that this is what lies behind the Masham scene. Such an argument does not necessarily imply that the Masham scene depicts the Destruction of the Temple, rather than the Gates of Gaza, because although the manuscript scene shows Samson under an arch, the position of his arms is very different to that of the figure at Masham. Here the man's left arm is awkwardly crossed over his body and upraised to the arch which rests on his shoulder and passes behind his head; the figure is not placed under the arch as Samson is in the manuscript. It should also be noted that the Byzantine miniature shows Samson facing forwards under the arch; the figure at Masham has his body facing forward but his feet are turned to the left and the upper half of his body is twisted so that the arm can reach up to the arch. The awkwardness of the Masham figure's pose is notable, not only in comparison with the Byzantine manuscript, but also with the other figures on the column which are competently positioned in full- and semi-profile.

This suggests that the sculptor may well have been using a scene of Samson Destroying the Temple that was much like the sixth-century Greek original on which the ninth-century Byzantine Homilies were based; he, or his model, adapted it to create a new scene by half-turning the figure to the left and moving the arch down behind the man's head. The fact that the figure appears to steady the arch with his left hand, and that the arch is clearly placed on his shoulders, supports the view that the scene is

correctly identified as Samson Carrying the Gates of Gaza.

2A, 2F, 2G: (pls.5,10-11) We are now left with three scenes on this register of the Masham column which, as mentioned above, are difficult, if not impossible, to identify. Initially, it would appear that 2F could be interpreted in the light of 2D as it is composed in an almost identical manner; in both scenes two figures sit facing each other in high-backed chairs, while a smaller figure sits in the right-hand corner. However, in 2F the two upper figures face each other on an equal basis; neither is elevated above the other, and none of the figures seem to hold anything as 'a', 'b' and 'c' do in 2D.

This lack of detail makes it difficult, therefore, to identify the scene. The similarity with the image of David Dictating the Psalms may suggest that it, and 2A and 2G, should be considered within a Davidic cycle. However, the presence of scenes, other than those depicting David, within this register mean that events from the life of David do not necessarily provide the subject-matter for these three.

By the eighth century the David cycle in Christian art was fairly extensive, being composed of a large number of scenes, both narrative and symbolic. The sequence seems to have been developed in the East at an early date, probably from Jewish art;⁸⁹ the fourth-century carved doors at S.Ambrogio (Milan) and

a collection of sixth-century Byzantine dishes provide some evidence of its early existence in Christian art.⁹⁰ Smaller collections of scenes from the cycle appear in insular and Continental art of the eighth and tenth centuries in manuscripts, Carolingian ivories, and Pictish and Irish sculpture, as well as the two scenes already identified at Masham.⁹¹ The fullest collection of Davidic material, however, is preserved in the frescoes of c.800 at St.Johns, Müstair (Switz.) where a full David cycle is accompanied by a further narrative sequence portraying the story of David and Absalom.⁹²

Nevertheless, even in the extensive pictorial material which has survived, there is no scene from the David cycle which features two seated, confronting figures accompanied by at least one other figure, which could explain the scene (2F) at Masham. There are scenes, however, which sometimes show one of two confronting figures with his hand outstretched towards the other's head: Samuel Anointing David, and David Rebuked by Nathan. In the first of these, found in sixth-century Coptic sculpture, on one of the Byzantine dishes, in the ninth-century *Paris Psalter*, and in Irish sculpture, Samuel tips the oil from a horn held over David's head;⁹³ they are sometimes accompanied by David's father and brothers.⁹⁴ However, Samuel and David are never shown seated and neither are the accompanying figures, so this interpretation is unlikely to be the identity of 2F.

The scene of David Rebuked by Nathan was also fairly common, but does not occur in surviving insular art. It features Nathan,

who sometimes has his hand extended towards David, standing in front of the king, who is sometimes shown seated on his throne. The ninth-century *Paris Psalter* illustrates just such an arrangement;⁹⁵ it also shows, in the same scene, David kneeling in penitence at the priest's feet. However, no version of the scene shows both David and Nathan seated, and the king is never shown seated at the priest's feet, as he would have to be if the diminutive figure in the right-hand corner of 2F is to be explained in this way. It is unlikely, therefore (although admittedly, not impossible), that the Masham sculptor would have composed his own version of the scene, using the arrangement of figures already used in 2D, to produce a scene so far removed from the recognisable iconography of Nathan Rebuking David.

It is however, possible that this event may have been depicted in 2A where a figure, seated on the right, seems to lean towards a figure standing before him on the left. But, given the extremely worn condition of this latter scene, this interpretation can only be a suggestion at best.

The cycle also contained scenes of David and Jonathan which survive on one of the sixth-century dishes, and in the eighth-century *Vespasian Psalter*.⁹⁶ The manuscript miniature shows the two men standing alone, shaking hands, while David holds a spear between them. While this Davidic scene is unlikely to explain the figures of 2F, it may provide a possible interpretation of 2G, which appears to show two standing figures confronting each

other across the centre of the scene with a long thin object separating them.

Despite the similarities with certain scenes from the Davidic cycles it must be remembered that the two identifiable David scenes on this register of the Masham column (2B and 2D) are interspersed with scenes not taken from such a cycle (2C and 2E). This may well imply that 2A, 2F and 2G do not actually depict events from the life of David at all; it is only the use of the composition in 2F, similar to that of 2D which suggests that it may be such.

Scenes with two confronting seated figures are common elsewhere in insular art in other contexts; Pictish and Irish sculpture, for instance, show the desert saints, Paul and Anthony, seated and breaking bread together.⁹⁷ However, it must be noted that although these scenes provide a possible parallel for the two seated figures in the upper half of the 2F, none of the Irish or Pictish versions of Paul and Anthony offers an explanation for the smaller figure seated in the right-hand corner of this scene at Masham.

These scenes do however, offer an indication of how widespread the motif of confronting figures seated in high-backed chairs was in insular art; the tall chair with a high back, no arm-rests and a stretcher separating the front and back legs is very distinctive at Masham. Versions of it are found not only in

the scenes of Paul and Anthony, and David the Harpist in Irish and Pictish sculpture; it also appears in unidentified scenes of single seated figures on cross-shafts at Kells, Clonmacnoise and Durrow.⁹⁸ The closest parallels, however, are found in eighth-century Anglo-Saxon and ninth-century Continental art strongly influenced by earlier insular material. The early eighth-century *Maaseik Gospel*, attributed to a Northumbrian scriptorium, possibly York (or to a Continental scriptorium closely related to such a Northumbrian centre), shows an Evangelist seated in a tall-backed chair with no arm-rests; a stretcher separates the front and back legs and the back of the chair terminates in a circular ornament.⁹⁹ The silk which backs the Anglo-Saxon embroideries at Maaseik is similarly decorated (pl.83); as noted above, it is woven with the repeated image of David enthroned in a high-backed chair, the legs of which are strengthened by a stretcher. This silk is dated by Budny to the eighth or early ninth century and given a Western provenance.¹⁰⁰ Another analogy is found in the early ninth-century *Corbie Psalter* where a small portrait of Doeg the Edomite is depicted within an historiated initial "Q"; the figure is seen in profile seated in a tall, curved-back chair which also has a stretcher between the legs.¹⁰¹

Although it is not possible to identify 2F or its iconographic significance from such examples, the arrangement of figures seated in profile in high-backed chairs, can be seen within an insular and Continental tradition of the eighth and early ninth centuries. The seats and general positions of the

figures clearly repeat those of 2D, and give added emphasis to the exploitation of repeated shapes and figures found throughout the column, and implies that the sculptor may have been creating his own scene; but the identity of that scene, and those of 2A and 2G, has to remain uncertain.

3. Third Register:

Given the extremely poor condition of this register very little can be said about it, and nothing of its figural iconography can be gleaned. Some of the scenes give more indication of the predilection for repetition already noted. 3A and 3E seem to have contained a single standing figure, while 3B and 3G had two; 3C and 3F each seem to have been filled with a tree-scroll.

The outline of the foliate motif in 3F (pl.14) can be seen with a greater clarity, but the shape is still only very generalised. The dominant central stem, and a number of loosely curling offshoots with thicker terminals do seem to have been characteristics of foliate ornament favored in Carolingian art of the eighth and ninth centuries, particularly in manuscripts of the so-called Franco-Insular school.¹⁰² But it is also possible that the motif could represent a development of the type of the vine-scroll featured on sculpture at Jarrow and Jedburgh in the eighth century.¹⁰³ Because there were at least two such motifs on the Masham column,¹⁰⁴ it is not likely that they were intended

to have any symbolic significance, such as would associate them with the Tree of Life;¹⁰⁵ they were probably both purely decorative.

The figures in 3D (pl.13) are the best preserved of the register, but they lack any identifying details which could enable an interpretation of their significance. Groups of standing figures are a common feature of Christian art and could represent no more than three exemplary figures. Alternatively a specific scene such as the Traditio Legis (where Christ is flanked by Peter and Paul),¹⁰⁶ or the Arrest of Christ, which is common in Irish sculpture, could have been intended.¹⁰⁷ If a Davidic theme is presumed to be predominant in the iconography of the column, the three figures could perhaps be identified as the Exaltation of David, such as appears in the ninth-century *Paris Psalter* where David is flanked by personifications of Sophia and Prophetia.¹⁰⁸ Alternatively, one could invoke the scene of the Marriage of David; this image is found on one of the sixth-century Byzantine dishes, where Saul is flanked by Mich^ael and David.¹⁰⁹ However, given the lack of detail and the lack of any other identifiable scenes on this register, such suggestions concerning the identity of 3D can never be proved; an interpretation of this scene, like that of the others, remains a virtual impossibility.

4. Fourth Register:

The carvings of the lowest register of the Masham column (pl.12) are beyond the scope of this discussion in that they seem to be purely decorative and do not have any strict iconographical function. Sometimes animals within a vine-scroll could be taken to symbolise the Christian within the protection of the Church founded on the true vine of Christ,¹¹⁰ but such an interpretation does not seem to be valid for the Masham beasts. They do not inhabit the vine but are superimposed on a very general vegetal scroll decoration which may or may not have been a vine. The importance of these animals lies in the similarity they bear to beasts found on other pieces of sculpture,¹¹¹ and in the contribution they make to the general effect of balance achieved through pairing and repetition, a compositional theme which is found throughout the column.

DISCUSSION:

The condition of the column means that a detailed discussion of the total significance of its figural iconography is not possible. Even with some of the scenes which have been identified, a symbolism which is primarily general and hierarchical in its reference is implied, which further limits discussion. For instance, the image of Christ enthroned between his apostles is not a narrative event from the life of Christ explained by ecclesiastical writers. It is rather a scene, presumably designed to comment on, or relate to, wider thematic

concerns whose full significance would only have been more apparent within the overall context of the monument; only a general expression of faith and strength found in the Church based on Christ through his apostles is now apparent.¹¹² The following discussion will therefore look only briefly at the scenes identified in the second register (2B-2E), which appear to have had more specific references to Christ and his Salvation, and which in turn, may bear upon the more triumphal image in the top register.

2B. David and the Lion:

David's roles as the watchful shepherd, the psalmist, and the forefather of the Messiah who was born of the House of David, made him a potent image for early Christian writers. Because he was David's descendant, Christ could be described as "the son of Jesse", and events from David's life could be interpreted as paradigms of faith and salvation.¹¹³ For instance, David's encounter with the lion became a common reference point in discussions on the power of God to overcome the evil which assails all Christians. Indeed, in the Old Testament account this application of the event is implied in David's description of the dangers inherent in guarding his father's flock. Before going into battle with the Philistine, Goliath, David spoke to Saul:

Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

and I went after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear...David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.¹¹⁴

Augustine's Commentary on the Psalms illustrates the way that the killing of the lion, symbolic of evil, became a general expression of God's redeeming power. Writing on Psalm 7, he invokes the words of Peter:

Dicit Apostolus: "Adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit, quaerens quem devoret". Itaque cum diceret..."Salvum me fac ex omnibus persequentibus me...nequando rapiat ut leo animam meam"...sciens quis restiterit inimicus, et perfectae animae vehementer adversus "dum non est qui redimat, neque qui salvum faciat"...si enim Deus non redimat neque salvum faciat, ille rapit.

(The Apostle says 'Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' Therefore, when the Psalmist said...'Save me from all them that persecute me...Lest at any time he tear my soul as a lion'...he knew what enemy and violent adversary of the perfect soul remained 'whilst there be none to redeem or save'...For if God redeem not, nor save, he tears.)¹¹⁵

The theme was echoed by other writers in both the Eastern and Western Churches; it reached Anglo-Saxon England, not only in Augustine's works, which are referred to by Aldhelm, Bede and Aelfric, but also in Cassiodorus' work on the Psalms which was copied in Northumberland in the eighth century.¹¹⁶ As a result, the idea that Christians were delivered from the power of evil (both generally and specifically) through the power of God and Christ's redeeming death, was commonly invoked by a description of David killing the lion. This significance of the event for the

Anglo-Saxons, is perhaps most fully expressed by Aelfric in his treatise on the Old and New Testament:

David is gecweden "fortis manum"; on andgitte þæt ys "stranghynde" on Englisc, for þan þe he gewylde þone wildan beran and his ceafas totaer buton aelcum waepen, and þa wildan leo he gewylde eal swa; tobraec hire ceafas mid his barum handum...He haefde getacnunge þæs Haelendes Cristes, þe ys stanghynde, þe þone hetolan deofol eadelice gewilde, and him of gewann ealle þe geleafullan on his gelaðunge, swa swa David gelahte þæt scep of þam deorum.

(David is called "fortis manum"; in translation that is the "stronghanded one" in English, because he overcame the wild bear, tearing his jaws apart without any *weapen*. The wild lion he overcame also; he tore apart his jaws with his bare hands...He represents the Saviour Christ, who is stronghanded, who easily vanquished the cruel devil, taking from him all the faithful into his fellowship, just as David took the sheep from the wild beasts.)¹¹⁷

It is most probably this message which is (or could be) expressed by the iconography of the scene at Masham.

2C. The Peacocks:

The image of confronting peacocks found on the Masham column, as elsewhere in Christian art, was not subjected to sustained comment; as is noted by Underwood, there is a surprising lack of early Christian texts on the meaning of this bird.¹¹⁸ Augustine spoke of the incorruptible nature of its flesh in De Civitate Dei,¹¹⁹ and his interpretation was regarded as commonplace by other writers; it is echoed, for instance, in seventh-century England by Aldhelm in his prose treatise on virginity:

Siquidem beatus Augustinus in libro civitatis Dei,
quod pulpa pavonis imputribilis naturae sit,
experimentis se comprobasse testatur.

(St. Augustine in his 'De Civitate Dei', testifies that he has found it to be empirically true that the flesh of the peacock is of an incorruptible nature.)¹²⁰

So commonplace was the idea that it was used further by Aldhelm as the subject of one of his riddles:

Sum namque excellens specie, mirandus in orbe,
Ossibus ac nervis ac rubro sanguine cretus.
Cum mihi vita comes fuerit, nihil aurea forma
Plus rubet et moriens mea numquam pulpa putrescit.

(I am outstandingly beautiful, acknowledged as a wonder throughout the world; I am created from bones and sinews and red blood. As long as I live the sheen of burnished gold does not show more brightly; and when I die, my flesh never decays.)¹²¹

Although there is an absence of sustained examination of the significance of the peacock in Christian exegesis until the later Middle Ages,¹²² the influence of Augustine's interpretation seems to have been widespread and present in Anglo-Saxon England from an early date. It is probable, therefore, that the image at Masham expresses the theme of the resurrection and immortality afforded all who put their faith in Christ and his Church.

2D. David Dictating the Psalms:

The image of David the Psalmist was even more abstruse than those of the peacocks and David with the Lion. In the Old Testament Nathan describes the House of David as an institution given by God, predicting its continued existence.¹²³ This was important in that it was divine words such as these which meant

that messages of salvation, proclaimed by prophets (such as David) concerning the future salvation of mankind became, and remained, connected with the House of David; as already mentioned, it was from this House that the future king of salvation was expected to descend.¹²⁴ Thus scenes of David Dictating the Psalms illustrated not only the spontaneous and divine inspiration of the psalms, but also the early king of Israel who was the forefather, prophet and embodiment of the future King of Israel, the Son of God.¹²⁵

This association of ideas is widespread in the writings of the Christian Church; it is found in Augustine's De Civitate Dei and his Commentary on the Psalms; it appears in Eusebius' Church History, Jerome's letters, and the Homilies of Hilary of Poitiers.¹²⁶ Through these and other works the ideas were familiar to writers of the Anglo-Saxon Church such as Bede, Alcuin and Aelfric.¹²⁷ Aelfric for instance, explains them in his treatise on the Old and New Testaments in a passage containing his explanation of David's victory over the lion:

David, Iessan sunu, se deorwurða sealmwirhta...weard þurh God gecoren to cininge sibban on Israhela þeode hig to bewerienne, and he stranglice rixode, and bewerode þæt folc wið þa haedenan leoda ðe him on [wunnon], and...his hlysa is fulcuð on geleafullum bocum...He haefde getacnunge þæs Haelendes Cristes... He ys halig witega, and he witegode fela ymbe urne Haelend Crist, swa swa us kypað þa sealmas, þe he þurh Godes gast Gode to lofe gesang, and se Saltere ys an boc, þe he gesette þurh God betwux oðrum bocum on þære bibliothecan.

(David, the son of Jesse, the beloved psalmist...was chosen by God for king in Israel afterwards to protect them. He reigned with a strong hand and he maintained that people against the

heathen people who fought them. He ever had the victory, and...his memory is famous in holy books...He represents the Saviour Christ...and he is a holy prophet; he prophesied many things about our Saviour Christ, as we learn from the psalms that he sang to the praise of God through the spirit of God. The Psalter is one book that he placed among other books in the Bible through God.)¹²⁸

In his sermon for the second Sunday after Epiphany, Aelfric states the equation more succinctly:

Aefter gastlican andgite we magon undergytan on Davide Cristes getacnung...Cristes rice and his gelaðunge stent on ecnyse ofer eallum ðeodum.

(In a spiritual sense we can understand David as a sign of Christ...The kingdom of Christ and of his Church stands forever over all people.)¹²⁹

Thus the image of David Dictating the Psalms is a complex symbolic, rather than a narrative, scene. As Bailey has said, David, the author of the psalms:

...was not only the ancestor of Christ; his kingdom on earth foreshadowed that of Christ in heaven; his anointment by Samuel foreshadowed Christ's baptism by John; his struggle with the lion was a type of Christ's struggle with the Devil. His psalms were directly inspired by God, and whilst his words may have been applicable to a historical Old Testament situation, they were also, as every thoughtful Christian realised, the words of Christ and his Church living under the New Covenant.¹³⁰

2E. Samson with the Gates of Gaza:

Compared with the relatively general significance of the scenes so far discussed, the image of Samson carrying the Gates of Gaza had a more specific meaning. The Old Testament account relates the event as one of the Jewish hero's many escapades with

the Philistines:

And Samson went to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, Let be till morning light, then we will kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron.¹³¹

The event is not one which figures very frequently in church writings of the early Middle Ages; the account of Samson's fight with the lion is more often referred to, being a supplement to David's encounter with the lion.¹³² However, in his sermon on the Day of the Resurrection (Easter Sunday), Gregory the Great interpreted the story as a foreshadowing of Christ's death, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension:

Quod bene in libro Judicum Samson illius facta significant, qui cum Gazam civitatem Philisthinorum fuisset ingressus, Philisthaei, ingressum eius protinus cognoscentes, civitatem repente obsidionibus circumdederunt, custodes deputaverunt, et Samson fortissimum se iam comprehendisse gravisi sunt. Sed quid Samson fecit agnovimus. Media nocte portas civitatis abstulit, et montis verticem ascendit. Quem...hoc in facto, quem nisi Redemptorem nostrum Samson ille significat? Quid Gaza civitas nisi infernum designat? Quid per Philisthaeos nisi Judaeorum perfidia demonstratur? Qui cum mortuum Dominum viderent, eiusque corpus in sepulcro iam positum, custodes illico deputaverunt, et eum qui auctor vitae claruerat, in inferni claustris retentum, quasi Samsonem in Gaza se deprehendisse laetati sunt. Samson vero media nocte non solum exiit, sed etiam portas tulit, quia videlicet Redemptor noster ante lucem resurgens, non solum liber de inferno exiit, sed et ipsa etiam inferni claustra destruxit. Portas tulit, et montis verticem subiit, quia resurgendo claustra inferni abstulit, et ascendendo coelorum regna penetravit.

(The deeds of Samson, related in the Book of Judges, forshadowed this day. For when Samson went into Gaza, the city of the Philistines, they, learning he had come in, immediately surrounded the city and placed guards before the gates; and they rejoiced because they had Samson in their power. What Samson did we know. At midnight he took the gates of the city and carried them to the top of a hill outside. Whom does Samson symbolise... in this, if not our Redeemer? What does Gaza symbolise, if not the gates of hell? And what the Philistines, if not the perfidy of the Jews, who seeing the Lord dead, and His Body in the sepulchre, placed guards before it, rejoicing that they had Him in their power, and that He Whom the Author of life had glorified was now enclosed by the gates of hell: as they had rejoiced when they thought they had captured Samson in Gaza. But in the middle of the night Samson, not only went forth from the city, but also bore off its gates, as our Redeemer, rising before day, not only went forth free from hell, but also destroyed the very gates of hell. He took away the gates, and mounted with them to the top of a hill; for by His Resurrection He bore off the gates of hell, and by His Ascension He mounted to the kingdom of heaven.)¹³³

Here a clear analogy is made by Gregory between the Old Testament story and those actions of Christ which provided the basis of the Christian doctrines of Redemption and Resurrection.¹³⁴ Although this parallel was not common, it does feature in the later Anglo-Saxon writings of Aelfric, both in his commentary on the Heptateuch, and in his sermon for Easter Sunday, where reference is made to Gregory.¹³⁵

The link between Samson physically breaking down and carrying off the gates of Gaza, and Christ's destruction of the gates of hell during his descent, is further referred to, by inference, in the apocalyptic account of the Harrowing described in the Gospel of Nicodemus; a text which was known in Anglo-Saxon England by the eighth century, and is of particular relevance to the scenes at Masham.¹³⁶ In this account, Christ is described

approaching hell saying in "the voice of a great thundering":

Lift up, O princes, your gates and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.¹³⁷

Hearing this, David admonishes Satan to "Open thy gates, that the King of Glory may come in". The words are taken from Psalm 23/4, one of those attributed to David. In the apocryphal version of the Harrowing the connection is made explicit:

And David cried out saying: Did I not when I was alive upon earth foretell unto you...who hath broken the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron in sunder...the words of this cry do I know, for by his spirit I prophesied the same; and now I say unto thee that which I said before: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, he is the king of Glory.¹³⁸

The scene at Masham shows Samson carrying the Gates of Gaza, a scene which can be understood to depict, not just the Old Testament story, but Samson as a Type of Christ the Redeemer. His actions at Gaza foreshadow those of Christ in Hell, an event foretold by David in the psalms. The significance of the scene is more specific than that of the other scenes which have survived on the second register, but the symbolic connections with Christ's Descent and Resurrection do mean that the scene also has a general significance; it too refers to the immortality and salvation achieved through the resurrection.

CONCLUSIONS:

I

The preceding discussion, although limited, has provided some indication of the extent to which a coherent iconographic sequence may have been present at Masham. As already stated however, it must be stressed that the worn and incomplete nature of the column, taken in conjunction with the uncertain identification of the majority of the scenes, and the loss of possible identifying inscriptions which may once have been present between the registers, mean that conclusions concerning the central issue of iconographic coherence will not be certain.

Of all the registers, only the upper two are in a condition which allows some interpretation. In the uppermost register the centrally enthroned Christ, flanked by his apostles is clearly identifiable, and has a significance coherent in itself. From the second register four of the seven original figural scenes have now been identified: David Killing the Lion, The Peacocks of Immortality, David Dictating the Psalms, and Samson with the Gates of Gaza.

There are therefore, two possibilities concerning the likelihood of an iconographic sequence controlling the scenes within, and across the registers. The images may, on the one hand, be no more than an assemblage of Old Testament scenes interspersed with the symbolically meaningful image of the

peacocks. However, the general themes associated with the iconography of the three figural scenes of the second register suggest that this is not the case. They point to a once coherent symbolism attached to most, if not all of the figural scenes; but because the column and its decoration is so incomplete, there can, of course be no certainty over this.

There is no single surviving work of exegesis which relates to all four identifiable scenes of the second register, and that of the upper register, but certain themes are repeated in writings on the individual scenes concerned; commentaries on the Davidic scenes do, of course, sometimes link the two episodes. The image of Samson can be considered as a foreshadowing of Christ's Harrowing of Hell and therefore refers to Christ's redemptive death and resurrection. The Descent was an event, not only foreshadowed by Samson, but foretold by David in the psalms which he is shown dictating in the scene next to that depicting Samson.¹³⁹ Taking the connection one step further, David is shown killing the lion; as David "took the sheep from the lion", so Christ in his death, descent and resurrection, took "all the faithful into his fellowship" having "easily vanquished the cruel devil".¹⁴⁰ The result for mankind is entry into immortality as expressed by the peacocks. It is achieved through faith in Christ and his salvation on which the Church is founded; this is the general theme expressed by the image of Christ and his apostles in the first register.¹⁴¹

Thus, even in the few scenes which have survived from the uppermost registers, the figural iconography of the column potentially expresses a complex series of inter-related messages concerning the central Christian doctrines of salvation, redemption and resurrection. The relationship is not merely thematic, but seems to work through a series of Old Testament references which foreshadow and foretell the salvation fulfilled in Christ and his Church.

Whether the remainder of the scenes were also from the Old Testament, or were interspersed with related events from the New Testament, can only be surmised. However, they do not necessarily have to have been concerned with David; neither does there seem to have been at Masham an expression of kingly authority vested in secular rulers through analogy with David, as is often the case in Carolingian depictions of the Old Testament king;¹⁴² the emphasis is clearly on standard Christian themes expressing the establishment of the faith and the Church in Christ and his salvation.

II

The preceding discussion has also given some indication of the style and date of the model(s) on which the figural scenes were based. On the one hand there is a close relationship with other pieces of insular art of the eighth and ninth centuries, but there is also a certain dependence on art strongly influenced by sixth-century Byzantine work.

The proportions of the figures, even in their present condition, indicate that they were once slight and delicate; reminiscent of the style most commonly associated with the early ninth-century *Utrecht Psalter*, and which became characteristic of later English art.¹⁴³ It is marked by a delicacy which is common to the sculpted panel from Hovingham where a similar arrangement of arcaded figures, vine-scroll frieze, and trefoil motifs within the spandrels of the arches are found. The repetition of the arcades on all four registers at Masham is indicative of the predilection for a repetition of shapes and figures which runs throughout the column, and is also one of the distinctive features of the Hovingham panel.¹⁴⁴

It has been argued that the figural style of this Northumbrian panel is probably based on model(s) not too far removed from late classical prototypes; the same can be said of the figural style of the Masham column although here there seems to be a slightly closer relationship with works ultimately from the Eastern Mediterranean than from Rome.¹⁴⁵ This does not mean that the model(s) were not transmitted to England through Italy and Western European centres, but that they reflect less reworking by Western artists; the lightness and delicacy is common to late eighth- and early ninth-century works closely based on earlier models, such as the *Utrecht Psalter* is believed to be.

The iconographic details point to similar sources of

influence. The scene of David and the lion indicates a strong dependence on work based ultimately on sixth-century Eastern or Italo-Byzantine work, as does the scene of Samson and the rearranged "aulic" composition of David Dictating the Psalms. The images of Christ with his apostles and the confronting peacocks could have been inspired by similar sources, or by later, eighth-century art from Italy or Northern Europe.

Separate from these early and Mediterranean sources of influence is the use of David the Psalmist seated in profile in a high-backed chair; this figure, and others similar to it (2F) seem to have their origin in an insular tradition of the eighth- or early ninth-century. The overall impression is of an eclectic use of sources; art imported directly, or indirectly from the Mediterranean, not too far removed from sixth-century Eastern work, was employed for the majority of the scenes, but was mixed with more insular motifs that were widespread in Anglo-Saxon and Pictish art, and which became standard in later Irish art.

While most of the iconographic details identifiable in the figural scenes of the Masham column are found in early Christian Mediterranean art, the re-emergence of them in Continental, and to a certain extent, in insular art of the latter half of the eighth century suggests that the column is to be dated to the early ninth century, rather than the late eighth. This is in keeping with other assessments of the column based on identifying the type of harp used by David in 2D, on the arcaded arrangement,

and on the non-figural ornamental motifs.¹⁴⁶

III

There are also some indications of the nature of the centre responsible for the production of the column. The quality of the sculpture, which must originally have been of a high standard, being delicately but deeply carved, indicates that it supported craftsmen of some technical ability. The potential complexity of the iconographic themes expressed throughout the figural scenes also suggests that it fostered a high standard of theological understanding. By extension, it must have had access to a widespread cultural milieu; it had access to Continental materials, in common with other southern Northumbrian sites such as Dewsbury, Collingham and Hovingham, while the figural style, ornamental motifs, scenes and overall arrangement appear elsewhere at Hovingham and Cundall/Aldborough, indicating that the centre also had close contacts throughout Anglo-Saxon Deira.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROTHBURY CROSS

INTRODUCTION:

I

As it survives today, the Rothbury cross is in three fragments. Two of these, a portion of the cross-head and the top of the cross-shaft, are in the Newcastle Joint Museum of Antiquities; the third, the base of the cross-shaft, forms the pedestal of the seventeenth-century font in the village church of All Saints, Rothbury (Northumberland). There is no record of where this last portion had been until its amalgamation with the font in 1664, but the other two pieces were discovered in the walls of the church during restoration work to the tower in the winter of 1849-50; they were donated to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle in 1850.¹

The carving of the cross-head and the top of the cross-shaft, cut from a coarse-grained yellow sandstone, is in remarkably good condition, suggesting that the cross originally stood inside the church before it was broken up and later re-used in the fabric of the Norman tower. The more weathered condition of the third fragment, carved from coarse grained, reddish-yellow sandstone, indicates that it had spent some time outside the church prior to its incorporation with the font.²

Despite its fragmentary condition a restoration drawing of the complete monument has been attempted and indicates that it may originally have stood to a height of 4.5m. (see fig.5).³ There are circular holes in the top of the upper and lateral arms and the fragment from the top of the shaft has a round dowel-hole. This, and the variation in stone type, implies that the cross was originally a composite monument.⁴

II

The three fragments of the Rothbury cross have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Their figural style, the vine-scroll and the cross-head shape have frequently been discussed in relation to the major monuments of the pre-Viking period. Opinions concerning the dating have varied, but the most recent studies have tended to focus on the ninth century. Only in recent years has the iconography been invoked in these studies, but the preliminary work in this area has also suggested the late eighth and early ninth century as the most likely context.⁵

It is hoped that the following detailed discussion of the identity and iconography of the figural scenes of the Rothbury cross will allow for more chronological precision, and also reveal the nature of the models used by the sculptor and the intellectual milieu within which the cross-shaft was conceived.

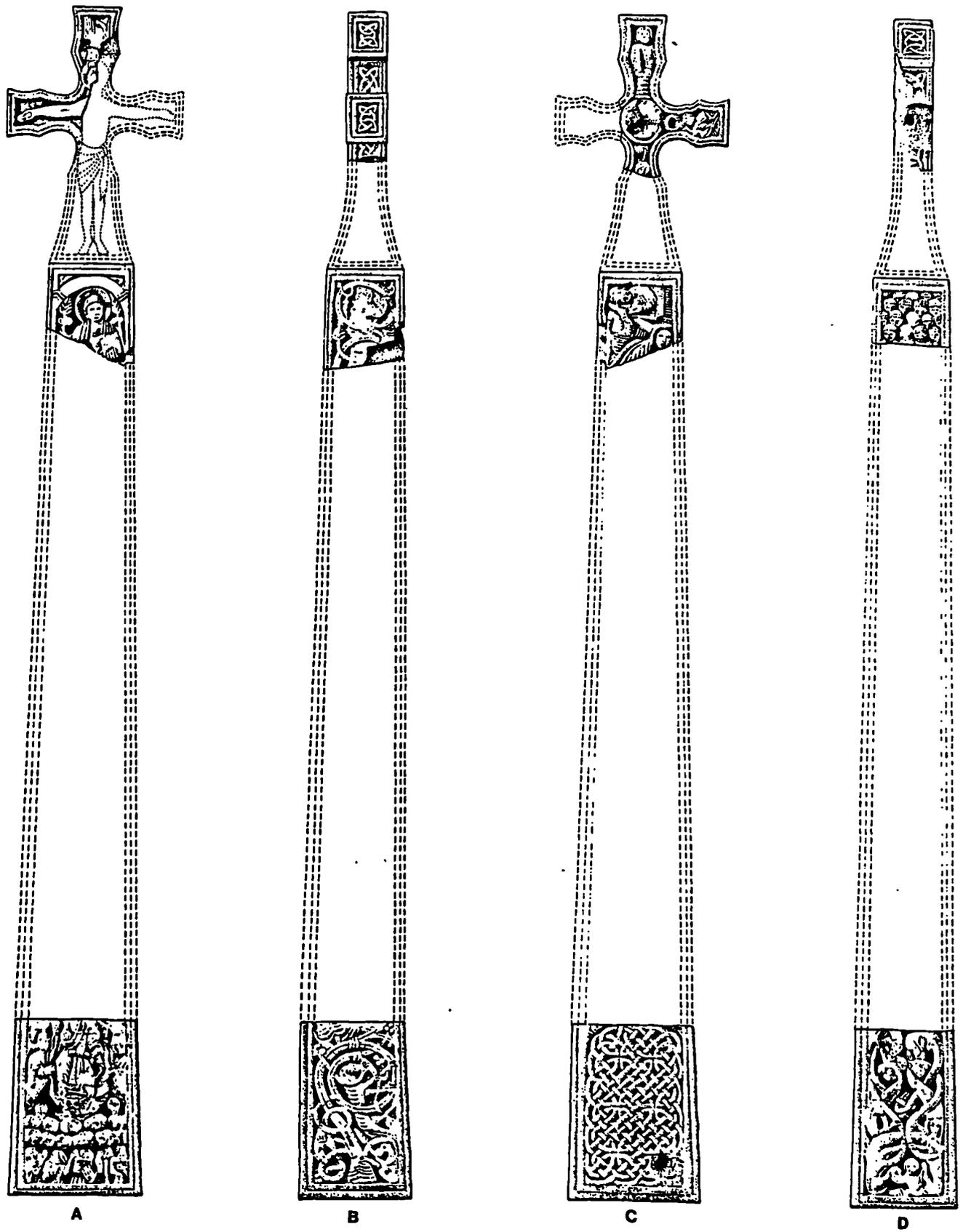


Fig. 5

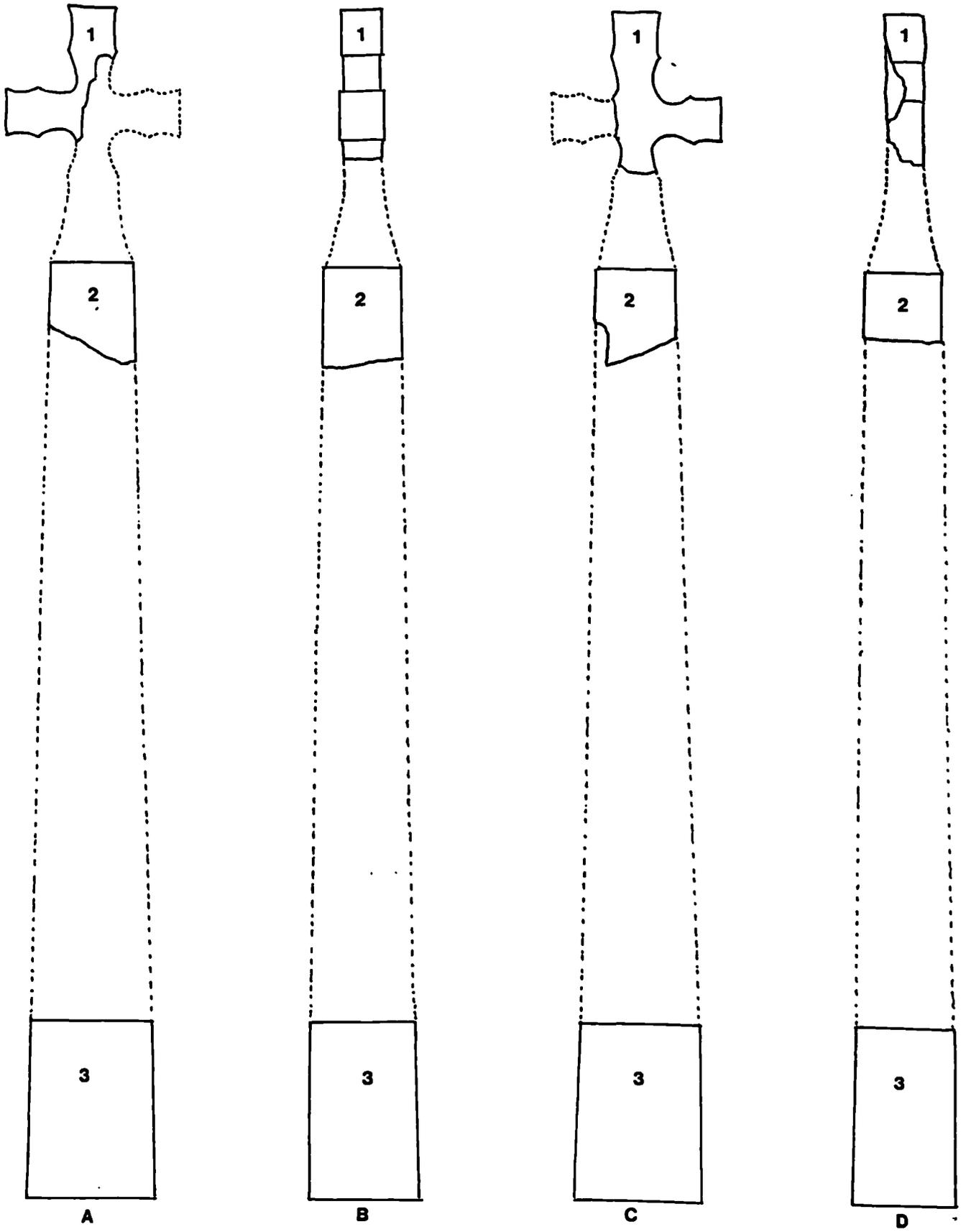


Fig. 6

DESCRIPTION:

This description of the scenes will, for the most part, follow Cramp,⁶ except where further observation has resulted in additional information, and the fragments (numbered 1-3) will be considered in the light of her reconstruction (see figs.5-6); only the figural scenes will be discussed. All references to the right and left will be from the spectator's point of view unless otherwise specified.

A.1:(pl.15) In the remains of what must have been a Crucifixion scene⁷ there are some features which are of particular iconographic interest: the naked arm and drooping hand in the left lateral cross-arm, the figure of the angel in the upper arm of the cross-head, and the nimbus which survives at the bottom of this arm. The deeply dished halo passes in front of the surrounding inner roll moulding and is marked with a cruciform motif, indicated by three incisions. The hand droops slightly from the outstretched arm; its fingers and thumb are stiffly extended and held together, transixed to the cross-arm by a large-headed nail.

The angel, seen in profile, grasps the upper edge of the halo. His head is half-turned towards the spectator, and framed by short ribbed hair which is parted in the middle. The eyes are modelled and the pupils deeply drilled. The lips are slightly parted and the upper lip carries a long drooping moustache. The

distinctive features of the round shaped head, the ribbed, parted hair, modelled and drilled eyes, and the slightly parted lips, constitute a standard figure-type used throughout the cross (hereafter referred to as "The Rothbury Type"). Drapery behind the angel is carved in regular V-shaped folds which are decorated with a thin plain border at the hem. One wing, depicted by parallel ribbing lies above the body.

A.2:(pl.17) The scene consists of the remains of a haloed figure within an arch that grows out of the inner roll moulding; the junction of the arch and moulding is marked by V-shaped bindings, similar to those found on the vinescroll of B.2 and B.3 (pl.24), giving the architectural surround a plant-like appearance. Of note are the plants which emerge from behind the roll moulding to flank the figure inside the arch. The halo is identical to the deeply dished, triple cruciform nimbus found in A.1 above, while the general shape of the figure's head and the facial features are those of the "Rothbury Type". However, this figure is varied by being completely clean-shaven, and his hair, although centrally parted and carved in clear ribbed grooves, is shoulder-length and bound at cheek-level with a small knot. His face is slightly turned to the right.

The figure wears a plain, round-necked undergarment covered by a *pallium* which hangs in heavy tubular folds over his shoulders; he holds a book in his left hand. Along the top of this book are the remains of what Cramp describes as "a concave

fold" of clothing passing "over his breast and over the book".⁸ Close examination shows that this "concave fold" is actually convex. In addition, between the broken edge of the fragment and the left side of the book are the remains of three or four short horizontal incisions. These, and the convex feature would appear to be the remains of the figure's right hand pointing at the book; the three clenched fingers of the hand have been snapped off, but the index finger remains, pointing to the book on which it still rests. Both hands are rather large in relation to the book. A small fragment of a plain horizontal moulding remains above the break on the right of the scene, under the book and the hand.

A.3:(pl.20) This scene at the base of the shaft needs to be considered in detail. The upper half (pl.21), which has been broken off at the very top, consists of a central figure flanked by the remains of two angels. Below these are the heads and torsos of eleven other figures (pl.22).

The upper central figure (pl.21) is clothed in a plain, full-length, long-sleeved robe, the lower hem of which is lightly scored with a series of light horizontal incisions; these may be the result of later work or damage. A scarf-like feature was looped from the left shoulder across the body in tightly gathered irregular folds; the end hangs from the shoulder in soft folds which cascade down the left side of the body. The hem of this

scarf is decorated with a thin plain border like that which edges the angel's clothing in A.1 above. The figure's right knee is slightly flexed, and although both feet are now broken the right foot appears to have extended slightly lower than the left. The left leg is drawn up so that the large left hand, which holds a rolled-up scroll, rests on the knee; the left foot, now damaged, rested on top of two plain horizontal mouldings, while the right hung in front of them. The effect produced is of a seated figure, although there is nothing within the central surround to indicate a seat. The figure's right hand is missing and the broken carving in the area of the right elbow is confused. The figure is placed within a deeply cut, three-dimensional wavy surround, described by Cramp as "a cloud(?) or mantle(?)".⁹

On either side of this surround are the remains of two angels; that on the left of the scene is not as badly damaged as the other. They are both of three-quarter length and face the centre grasping the wavy surround with both hands; one hand is placed at the level of the central figure's knees, and the other is held near their faces. The angel on the left wears a plain long-sleeved robe and an over-garment which falls in sweeping folds over his arm and down towards the lower group of figures; the hem is decorated with a thin plain border. Only the outlines of similar folds can be seen covering the angel on the right. Two wings emerge from the back of the angel on the left and frame his body; one hangs down behind him and the other rises up over his head which is tilted sharply upwards and half hidden behind the wavy surround. The outlines of a similar wing passing over

the head of the angel on the right can also be discerned.

The lower group (pl.22) consists of eleven figures divided into two rows: six in the front and five in the back. Those in front are of three-quarter length and emerge rather stolidly from the inner roll moulding. Those which are less badly damaged and worn have the standard "Rothbury Type" faces. They wear plain long-sleeved robes covered by an over-garment which hangs in the same heavy, parallel tubular folds found on the figure in A.2.

Although these features appear to be repeated without variation, the figures are in fact individualised. The two on the extreme right and left at the back each point upwards with large, over-emphasised hands. The central figure in the back row has his head tilted at such an angle that a hollowed-out ear shows. Some of the heads of the figures in the front row are half-hidden behind others, and one or two grip the shoulders of the figures next to them; four of them hold closed books in large hands. Three of these books are seen from the front, indeed the cover of one (at the centre) appears to have been decorated with lightly incised lines, but the fourth book is held by the spine so that it disappears between the two figures at the centre of the front row.

C.1:(pl.16) Each cross-arm on this side of the cross-head contains a figure; at the centre of the cross-head was a round medallion. This has been badly damaged but the outline of a human bust can still be discerned in certain lights, and in the area of the right shoulder a small length of plaited cord still survives.

The three-quarter length figure in the upper cross-arm emerges from a series of five slightly curved plain mouldings which fill the bottom of the cross-arm. He faces forward and has the standard "Rothbury Type" facial features, with the additional detail of the moustache worn by the angel in A.1. No details of his clothing are discernible. In front of his chest he clasps two rods which terminate just below his shoulders, and which are joined together below the hands in a U-shape that is half-hidden by the curved plain mouldings.

The figure in the right cross-arm faces the central medallion, but his head, like that of the angel in A.1 is half-turned towards the spectator; his facial features conform to the "Rothbury Type", but his upper lip also carries a large moustache. His body bends, almost at a right angle, up out of the lower band of roll moulding. He leans forward holding one circlet in his large outstretched right hand, and another, half-hidden behind the roll moulding, in his left hand which is slightly withdrawn behind his over-mantle. Drapery flies out from his back, to fill the widest part of the cross-arm in large V-shaped folds resembling the tightly concertinaed folds of

the angel in A.1. However, unlike the plain robes of the Crucifixion angel (and those of the angels and enthroned figure in A.3) the drapery of this figure is decorated with regular, deeply incised, horizontal lines as well as the thin border round the edge.

In the lower cross-arm only the head and one hand of a figure remain. The head, similar to those of the other moustachioed figures in C.1, is half-turned, and looks up towards the central medallion. In his large, outstretched left hand he carries an object carved as a series of small parallel mouldings, resembling four oblong tubes, which are gathered tightly at the right, and splay out to the left in the palm of the hand.

C.2:(pl.18) This scene consists of three figures set sideways-on to the shaft. At the top is the three-quarter length figure of a man whose body is half-turned towards the others. His features are those of the "Rothbury Type", but his eyes, although well modelled, do not have drilled pupils; they have a slight indentation across the centre, suggesting that the lids are closed. The effect produced, in comparison with the eyes of the other figures on the cross-shaft, is of a man sleeping or dead. The upper half of his torso is tightly swathed in a strip of heavily pleated cloth which binds his left arm across his chest; his hand is seen emerging from the folds. Below the left arm

the body is enveloped in what appears to be an outer layer of material. This outer drapery, carved in regular parallel vertical ribs, is wrapped round the body and joined at the right side of the figure. It falls away from him in front, but behind, it sweeps up round the back of his head.

The remains of the other two figures are placed side by side below this figure. On the right are the head and shoulders of a woman whose face turns towards the roll moulding. She has the same facial features as the other figures on the cross-shaft, but like the figure of A.2, lacks a moustache. Her head is covered by a plain veil (*maphorion*) and a coif. Underneath, her hair can be seen framing her face; it is carved in the ribbed style and resembles the small length of plaited cord found in the central medallion of the cross-head above (C.1; pl.16). The *maphorion* falls in regular tubular folds over her hunched right shoulder.

Only the arm and shoulder of the third figure remains on the left. The head no longer exists, but it must have been carved as if half-hidden behind the roll moulding framing the scene; there is no sign of it having been thrust well forward. The arm, clothed in a long sleeve decorated with cross-hatched incisions, emerges from a piece of cloth draped in heavy tubular folds over the shoulder. The hand points towards the uppermost figure so that the extended index finger touches his right eyebrow. Under the elbow, the left hand holds back the robes behind the woman's head. A thin moulding runs from under this hand down to the left-hand corner of the fragment, following the line of the

woman's shoulder.

D.2:(pl.19) This scene, consisting of eighteen people arranged in four rows, has been fully described by Cramp.¹⁰ Of particular interest is the repetition of the "Rothbury Type" face in its non-moustachioed form; the short hair has been dressed with a thin plain fillet. Despite the identical formula used for these heads their sizes and positions have been varied. At the back only the tops of the heads can be seen, while at the front the complete head, as well as the shoulders are visible. Some of the faces are half-hidden behind those next to them, while others emerge from behind the roll moulding. In the front row one figure leans forward to peer over a plain piece of carving on which he rests his hand; the figure on the left has his fingers raised to his mouth.

D.3:(pl.23) This scene of small animals and humans struggling in the coils of intertwined reptiles,¹¹ is, like that of A.3, incomplete at the top; the tail of a further, missing reptile cuts across the body of the uppermost creature on the left. Of particular interest is the arrangement of the reptiles in confronting pairs coiled symmetrically up the sides of the shaft. Like the animals in the vinescroll of B.2-3 (pl.24) each reptile has a canine-type head and round laid-back hollow ears, modelled eyebrows and drilled eyes viewed from above rather than the side. All have three-toed front paws but while the lowest pair have

hind quarters and a short tail, the upper two pairs have only long tails. The backs of these animals have been incised with fine lines which radiate out from the central spine, giving a scale-like effect.

Hanging upside-down from the jaws and front paws of the two upper beasts are two anthropomorphic creatures. Their heads, peering from behind the looping tails of the second pair of beasts, are worn, but they seem to have conformed to the "Rothbury Type"; the one on the right still has a hair-line. They have three-toed claws which grip the tails of the reptiles, and long legs ending in similar claws braced on the necks of the upper pair of beasts. The testicles of the creature on the left are still clearly discernible.

Between them a third humanoid head emerges, his four-fingered hands pushing aside the reptiles' tails; the remains of the Rothbury moustache and the hair-line can still be seen. At the bottom of the scene, the torso of a diminutive naked figure emerges from behind the hind-quarters of the beast on the right. He had short hair and the shape of his head conforms to the "Rothbury Type"; he pushes back the hind legs of the beasts with both hands.

IDENTIFICATION:

As in the preceding description, this section will concentrate only on the figural scenes, identifying them and determining, where possible, the source material which may have inspired them.

A.1:(pl.15) As indicated above, the remains of this face of the cross-head are clearly those of the Crucifixion of Christ.¹² The nimbed head filled the lower portion of the upper cross-arm, while the body presumably occupied the lower arm, without extending into the cross-shaft.

The cruciferous nature of the halo should be noted as an attribute reserved for Christ which developed in Christian art of the fifth and sixth centuries and which identified him as the risen and ascended Christ; the tripling of the rays of the cross are thought to symbolise the three persons of the Trinity.¹³ Though present in Carolingian art, Coatsworth rightly notes that this triple motif is a detail which originated in the East and continued in use there into the post-iconoclastic period; it is found, for example, in such works as the ninth-century Byzantine *Khludov Psalter*, now in Moscow.¹⁴

From early Eastern art the triple cruciferous halo found its way into the iconographical repertoire of the West; it is used in the sixth-century *Gospels of St. Augustine* in the Passion Cycle miniatures, but not in the pictures illustrating Christ's ministry.¹⁵ In the late eighth century the detail is found in

Carolingian works, such as the *Gospel Book of S. Croix* from Amiens (now at Poitiers), which shows Christ enthroned in Majesty with a triple cruciferous halo, flanked by the four evangelist symbols (pl.150). Yet in England the detail is found at an earlier date; as noted, it is there in the *St. Augustine Gospels*, believed to have been imported during the early years of the conversion period.¹⁶ In Anglo-Saxon art itself the motif appears in an early eighth-century context adorning the figures of Christ in the Mary Magdelene scene on the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfries.) and Standing over the Beasts at Ruthwell (pl.59) and Bewcastle (Cu.).¹⁷

These northern monuments also have in common with Rothbury the deeply dished shape of the halo which is found, without the cruciferous detail, elsewhere in the Anglian sculpture of Northumbria at Hoddum (Dumfries; pl.91), Otley, Easby and Collingham (Yks.); all these works are conventionally dated to the early ninth century. Its appearance on the tenth-century Newgate shaft at York indicates that the feature was still being used in the Viking period.¹⁸ The suggestion is that while the deeply dished halo was a sculptural motif found throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, the combination of the deep dish and the triple cruciform motif was well established in Northumbrian sculpture of the early eighth century.¹⁹ Thus the appearance of the deeply dished triple cruciferous halo on the cross-head and at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft (A.2), suggests that the combination should be viewed as a regional motif.

Turning to the figure of the crucified Christ, there are, unfortunately, insufficient distinguishing iconographic features remaining which might have helped determine the nature of the model on which this image was based; whether, for instance Christ was bearded or clean-shaven, or had his feet resting on a *suppedaneum*. However, the naked arm does suggest that he wore a loincloth or a long sleeveless robe (the *colobium*). Coatsworth favoured the loincloth on the grounds that the sleeveless *colobium* was not a common feature of the crucified Christ in Western art; when Christ was not depicted in a loincloth, he wore a long-sleeved, full-length tunic. She also argued for a ninth-century date because of the rarity of loincloth-type Crucifixions in England before that date, while she saw the closed drooping hand with the prominent nail in the palm as characteristic of the iconography of the crucified Christ in Carolingian art of the ninth century.²⁰

Coatsworth's argument is not entirely convincing however, because, as she notes, there is evidence for the continual use of the loincloth-type of Crucifixion up to the seventh century in Western Europe before a rise in its popularity in the eighth century.²¹ In Anglo-Saxon sculpture, for instance, it seems to be depicted in a Crucifixion scene on the base of a cross-shaft at Hexham (pl.61) which, although dated to the mid eighth century, was probably based on an earlier model.²² Here Christ is shown standing erect between the spear- and sponge-bearers; he has a deeply cut dished halo which passes over the edges of the upper cross-arm. There is no mark on his body to indicate

whether he wore a loincloth or a robe, but the short length of the garment (it ends well above his knees) means it is more likely to have been a loincloth; the robe was normally full-length. That the carver knew how to depict the longer garment is seen in the length of the robes worn by the accompanying figures. Elsewhere, at Sandbach in Cheshire (pl.28) the crucified Christ is clearly shown wearing a loincloth, and although the cross-shaft is dated to the early ninth century, the scene depends on a late antique type which could have been available in England at an earlier date; the Crucifixion iconography shows very little sign of having been influenced by Carolingian developments.²³

Thus it is not clear that the Rothbury Christ, presumed to have worn a loincloth, had to depend on Carolingian developments of the late eighth and ninth centuries for this detail. There is some evidence that the motif was circulating in the north of England, independently of Continental art, during this period, and so the loincloth-type of Crucifixion at Rothbury may either be indicative of a local iconographic type, or depend on a late antique model such as provided the inspiration for the Sandbach Crucifixion scene.

Coatsworth was also attracted to a ninth-century date by her analysis of the drooping hand combined with the closed thumb.²⁴ However this combination is a feature of later rather than earlier Continental art; it flourished in Carolingian and

Ottoman art of the later ninth and tenth centuries.²⁵ The closed thumb (without the drooping hand) is admittedly found in Carolingian art based on early Christian works such as a fifth-century ivory from North Italy, now in the British Museum (pl.86); this shows Christ with his thumb closed and his hands straight, pierced by very large nails. The Crucifixion panel of the wooden doors of Sta.Sabina, Rome, dated to 432 A.D. (pl.87), provides another example. These were the iconographic types which inspired such early ninth-century Carolingian works as an ivory relief produced at the court school of Charlemagne now at Narbonne²⁶ where Christ is shown crucified with prominent nails through his hands which have closed thumbs and are pinned straight on the cross, not drooping. This is also the attitude of the hands of the crucified Christ at Sandbach in Cheshire (pl.28), although there the nail-head is not visible. As noted above, dependence on a late antique model seems likely at Sandbach in the early ninth century, and such models could well have been available in Northumbria at an earlier date.²⁷ The stiff position of the hand with the large nail, and the rigidly extended fingers and thumb, found in the late antique examples, are very similar to the hand of the crucified Christ at Rothbury, although they do not droop as the English example does.

In Continental art of the eighth and early ninth centuries the drooping hand of the Crucified is not a common feature. There are one or two instances which show Christ's hands hanging limply from the nails, but the hands are relaxed and not really comparable to the carving of Christ's hand at Rothbury.²⁸ The

limp, relaxed hand became more common later in the ninth century but the drooping hand with the closed thumb, such as is found at Rothbury, does not appear with any frequency until the tenth century. The more usual position of Christ's hands at the Crucifixion up to the ninth century, was with the thumb open and the hand pinned straight to the cross, such as is found in the West Frankish *Gellone Sacramentary*, dated between 755 and 787 A.D.²⁹ After the turn of the ninth century the Carolingian iconography of the Crucifixion usually featured the arms more upraised and the thumb held open.³⁰

Thus, the iconography of the Crucifixion in Continental art of the early ninth century did not feature Christ's hand closed, drooping and transfixed by a large nail, with any great regularity. As far as Rothbury is concerned, the details of the closed thumb and the prominent nail may have been influenced either by a late antique model, such as the fifth century ivory and wooden reliefs from Italy, or by a copy of such a work. Since the drooping feature is unusual in Christian art before the end of the ninth century, this implies that the drooping hand of the Rothbury Christ either depends on the same sort of models used by the Continental artists of the later ninth and tenth centuries, or demonstrates the independent re-working, by the Rothbury sculptor, of a model which showed Christ with a rigidly extended hand. We have seen the probable use of a late antique model for the loincloth-type of Christ at Rothbury; this suggests that the same model may have inspired the position of the

crucified hand; it provided the hand with the closed thumb and large nail, and may or may not have shown that hand drooping.

Compared with the few remaining features of the crucified figure of Christ which do have parallels elsewhere in Christian art, the single attendant angel grasping Christ's halo is a unique feature. Generally two or more such figures are found in Crucifixion scenes, and they do not touch the halo. The appearance of only one angel can presumably be explained by the confines of the cross-head; placing the Crucifixion in this position imposed certain limitations on the sculptor.

The introduction of angels into the iconography of the Crucifixion occurred early in insular art, probably drawing upon Continental types such as those seen in Sta. Maria Antiqua (pl.103), although the ultimate origin lay further East.³¹ They are found, for instance, in a late seventh- or early eighth-century Northumbrian Gospel Book now at Durham, in the Irish Gospels produced at St. Gall in the mid eighth century, and on a ninth-century bronze plaque now in Dublin.³² Crucifixion angels were also a feature of Merovingian and Carolingian iconography where they were the result of either insular or Italo-Byzantine influences.³³ There is, however, no need to assume the presence of the Crucifixion angel at Rothbury is indicative of dependence on Carolingian art.

In all the examples mentioned, both in insular and Continental art, the angels were introduced into the Crucifixion

scene from the iconography of the *Majestas Domini* where they served as attendants of the Throne of God.³⁴ Several features betray this origin: the angels in the *St.Gall Gospels* carry Gospel books instead of their usual rods of authority, and the wings of the angels in the *Gellone Sacramentary* (and possibly those of the Dublin plaque) are studded with eyes, normally associated with the Cherubim and Seraphim. When such angels appear in the Crucifixion they indicate that the cross in the scene should be regarded as the Throne of Christ.³⁵

Generally the Crucifixion angels perform only this function (attendants of the Throne), regardless of their position in the scene,³⁶ and in later Carolingian art of the ninth century it is the adoration of the angels attending the Crucifixion which was emphasised; an ivory relief of the mid ninth-century from Reichenau (pl.88), for instance, shows three angels hovering over the cross with their hands extended and veiled, and carrying small sceptres, while one holds the top of the cross as though presenting it.

Given that there are no other surviving examples of angels at the Crucifixion holding Christ's halo, as is featured at Rothbury, it has to be determined whether this Northumbrian Crucifixion angel is within the tradition of the attendant angels, well established in insular art of the eighth century, or whether, as claimed by Coatsworth, it was derived from the later Carolingian development which emphasised the veneration of these

angels.³⁷ Because angels at the Crucifixion were an iconographic feature known in the British Isles generally, and in Northumbria in particular, at an early date, and because it was the function of these angels to glorify the cross of the Crucifixion (an aspect which was only emphasised in Carolingian art), it does not seem necessary for the presence of the angel at Rothbury to be dependent on ninth-century Carolingian developments. It may well have been inspired by iconographic traditions already present in the area. It should be remembered that among the images brought from Rome to Wearmouth by Biscop, was a Crucifixion scene produced in Italy at a time when Italian art, such as that produced at Sta. Maria Antiqua, was under strong Eastern influences.³⁸

The fact that the angel grasps Christ's halo suggests that the sculptor (perhaps being forced to reduce the number of attendant figures to one) wished to emphasise the figure of Christ, adorned with the triple cruciferous halo which symbolises his identity as part of the Trinity. As will be seen below, there is some indication that the use of the three incisions to mark the cross of the halo in Anglo-Saxon and Continental art of the eighth century was reserved for images of Christ enthroned in Majesty.³⁹ The overall effect of the angel, placed in the upper arm of the cross-head, grasping and so exhibiting the halo of the crucified Christ, is one which glorifies both Christ and his cross. Christ the Son of God is crucified on a cross which is, at the same time, "the visible throne of Christ's invisible kingdom".⁴⁰

Despite the uniqueness of the Rothbury Crucifixion angel, it is perhaps the angel's moustache which is the most puzzling feature of the scene. There seems to be only one other example of an angel similarly adorned: a Viking-age cross-shaft at Shelford in Nottinghamshire which depicts an angel with a long drooping moustache, but he is also bearded.⁴¹ In Christian art moustachioed figures who are otherwise clean-shaven, are found only in the British Isles where it seems that the feature could be used to individualise or highlight the figure in question.⁴² In Irish sculpture of the late ninth and tenth centuries figures with moustaches are found on the cross-shafts at Durrow and Monasterboice. Here, in the *Traditio Legis* and the *Arrest of Christ*, the flanking figures of Peter, Paul and the two soldiers are moustachioed while Christ is clean-shaven. Here the moustache seems to have been used to distinguish Christ from the male figures around him.⁴³ At Ruthwell (Dumfries.) the figures of Christ over the Beasts (pl.59) and Healing the Blindman are carved with a large moustache comparable to that found at Rothbury.⁴⁴ Here the rationale seems to be directly opposed to that exhibited in the Irish scheme; on the Ruthwell cross Christ is the only figure adorned with a moustache. However he is not systematically depicted in this manner; in the *Mary Magdalene* scene he is clean shaven.⁴⁵

At Rothbury there seems to have been a similar attempt to highlight certain figures with the use of the moustache, but the evidence is not totally clear. The figure of Christ in A.2

(pl.17)⁴⁶ is clean-shaven but elsewhere his face has been lost (ie. A.3, C.1-2; see pls.20,16,18). The faces of the crowd at the top of the shaft (D.2; pl.19), and possibly those of the angels in A.3 (pls.20-1), are also clean-shaven. This implies that the moustache at Rothbury was used to differentiate between heavenly figures, who are largely clean-shaven, and the other biblical (moustachioed) characters on the cross-shaft. If this was the case the moustachioed angel of A.1 may indicate an inconsistency on the part of the sculptor. Alternatively the use of the moustache may have been completely random; it serves only as a stylistic characteristic common to Rothbury and Ruthwell.

Whether or not there was a deliberate intention behind the use of this facial feature at Rothbury, its ultimate inspiration probably lies in the imperial iconography of late antiquity, and it provides another instance of "Northumbrian" iconographic motifs which were derived from earlier Eastern types. Brown compared Christ's moustache at Ruthwell to the moustache found on beardless faces which were common to sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine coinage.⁴⁷ The coins of Justin II (565-78 A.D.), Heraclius in 610 A.D., and Constans II (641-68 A.D.), for instance, depict the emperors with large moustaches.⁴⁸

To summarise, therefore: the surviving iconographic details of the Crucifixion on the head of the Rothbury Cross suggest that the scene was largely dependent on details associated with Christ and the Crucifixion in late antique art, some of which were circulating in Northern England in the eighth-century. The deep

dished, triple cruciferous halo is found in Anglo-Saxon art of the eighth-century, while the loincloth worn by the crucified Christ, favoured in late antique and Carolingian art, was also present in pre-Carolingian art in England dependent on late antique material. The same is true of the drooping hand with the closed thumb transfixed to the cross-arm with a very large nail which was either reproduced or adapted from a late antique model. The notion of adapting a given iconographic feature is found in the depiction of the single angel grasping the halo in order to emphasise the glory of Christ on the cross overcoming death. Both the angel of the Crucifixion and the moustache adorning his upper lip have their ultimate inspiration in Italo-Byzantine art of the sixth and seventh centuries, but by the eighth century these features were part of the Northumbrian repertoire.

A.2:(pl.17) The figure set under the arch is identified as Christ by the cruciferous halo.⁴⁹ The scene has usually been described as Christ in Majesty, an iconographic scheme used to complement the Crucifixion, particularly in later Irish sculpture, and which expresses the power and authority of Christ.⁵⁰ The interpretation of the scene as the *Majestas Christi* is supported by the use of the three incisions marking the cross of the halo. As already noted, this detail elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian art is specifically reserved for Christ in scenes adapted from portrayals of Christ in Majesty.

At Bewcastle and Ruthwell, for example, it is employed in scenes adapted from such images (eg. pl.59), but not employed in the Ruthwell Miracle Scene, while the eighth-century Mortain casket from Northumbria (pl.85) shows Christ in Majesty with a halo embossed with the triple cruciform.⁵¹ In Continental art a similar iconography is present in the late eighth-century *Gospel Book of S.Croix* (pl.150). We have already seen that notions of Christ's majesty are being expressed in the Crucifixion scene on the head of the Rothbury Cross immediately above this figure.⁵²

As with the figure of the crucified Christ, the remains of this panel are insufficient to determine the exact nature of the model which inspired the image; whether, for instance, Christ was originally full-length (seated or standing) or half-length. However, the small fragment of horizontal moulding which remains above the break does suggest that he may well have been half-length. The iconographical development of Christ in Majesty had a long history; portraits originally showed him seated holding a book or scroll in his left hand, while raising his right in speech or blessing, or gesturing towards the book or scroll. The blessing in Western art was generally depicted by the extension of the two first fingers of the hand, while speech was indicated by three extended digits or the open hand.⁵³ Assimilation of the iconography of Christ in Majesty with Christ the Judge, due to their common derivation from the iconography of the apocalyptic Vision of Christ, resulted in the seated *Majestas* being varied by a standing type.⁵⁴ When Christ in Majesty was depicted on objects other than the large scale wall-paintings and

mosaics the confines of the object sometimes resulted in the reduction of the image to a half-length portrait.⁵⁵ The *Majestas* on the eighth-century Mortain casket, for instance (pl.85), shows a half-length Christ holding a closed book in his left hand, while blessing it with his right, and a late seventh-century Byzantine ivory shows a half-length Christ with a scroll.⁵⁶ It is, however, important to emphasise that although half-length portraits of ecclesiastical and biblical figures are a common decorative motif in Christian art, the half-length figure of Christ in Majesty is comparatively rare. This holds true of insular images of the *Majestas Christi* which are generally full-length.⁵⁷ In the corpus of surviving Anglo-Saxon art, only the eighth-century *Trier Gospels* and the Hoddom cross-head (Dumfries; pl.91), and the ninth-century manuscript *Royal I.E.vi* show Christ in Majesty as a half-length figure.⁵⁸

While these half-length depictions of the *Majestas* are rare in Christian art in general, and in insular art in particular, and although they vary in detail, most of them conform to the iconography which identifies them as Christ in Majesty. Jesus is seen from the front, he holds a book or scroll in his left hand and his right is raised either in benediction or speech, or it gestures towards the book in blessing. Whether or not the figure at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft was originally half-length (as seems most likely) he is clearly to be identified as Christ in Majesty.

The most unusual iconographic feature of the Rothbury Christ of A.2 is the position of his right hand. The gesture (pointing to the book with an extended index finger) and the laying of the finger upon the book are extremely rare, although there are frequent depictions of the *Majestas* blessing the book with two fingers extended in the Latin blessing; the late seventh-century Cuthbert Coffin (pl.96) and the *Codex Amiatinus*, the late eighth- or early ninth-century Hedda Stone (pl.89), the *Book of Kells* (pl.81), and the ninth-century Sedulius manuscript, all demonstrate that this gesture was prevalent in the insular iconography of the *Majestas* during the seventh to ninth centuries.⁵⁹

In some instances however, Christ is depicted with his right hand in front of the book while blessing it; the *Book of Kells'* full-length portrait of Christ and the eighth-century Mortain casket (pls.81,85) show Christ in just this position, while on the casket Christ's hand is actually positioned so that the two extended fingers seem to rest above the book. The same arrangement is depicted in the early ninth-century manuscript *Royal I.E.vi*, for which a sixth-century Italo-Byzantine model has been proposed.⁶⁰ However, the depiction of Christ with only his index finger extended so as to rest across the top of the book, as at Rothbury, is without precedent.⁶¹

In all, it seems that the emphatic gesture of the Rothbury Christ represents an attempt to emphasise the importance of the book as more than the mere attribute it is in other

representations of the Majestas.⁶² It is probable that at Rothbury the sculptor adapted a model which showed Christ with two fingers, possibly in close contact with the book, extended in blessing. That such a model was circulating in Northumbria is indicated by the Cuthbert Coffin and the Mortain casket (pls.96,85). The action is common in images of the Majestas and where the two extended fingers are found in close contact with the top of a book, a sixth-century model is thought to have been the ultimate source of influence.⁶³

The clean-shaven appearance of Christ and his long hair are also features suggestive of a late antique or early Christian model.⁶⁴ The young beardless Christ with long hair (as opposed to the youthful figure with short hair) was a specific pictorial type found in Western Christian art from the fourth century onwards. By the eighth century it had become universal in the West,⁶⁵ and in insular art the long-haired youthful Christ was commonly reproduced in manuscripts and carving between the seventh and ninth centuries; the figure of Christ trampling the beasts on the late eighth-century Northumbrian Genoels-Elderen Diptych, for instance, is clean-shaven with long hair (pl.90).

However the motif of the long hair tied with a knot is less common in Christian art. It is found in insular manuscript art where it is generally limited to images of Christ until the ninth century, but outside the British Isles it is not found so frequently. The Majestas Christi on the lid of the late seventh-

century Cuthbert Coffin (pl.96) shows Christ facing forwards with his hair falling on both shoulders, tied with a knot by the ears; the other figures on the coffin have locks of hair which only fall over one shoulder.⁶⁶ The figure of Christ in the centre of the mid eighth-century cross-head from Hoddum (pl.91) also had hair which was tied with a knot just below the ears, and the late eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory of the Last Judgement depicts Christ the Judge with long hair which is knotted just above the ears (pl.92).⁶⁷ Elsewhere the detail is found adorning the Majestas carved on the Lombardic altar of Ratchis in Cividale, dated between 737-44 A.D., and on the full-length figure of Christ in Majesty found in a Psalter from Mondsee, dated to 775 A.D., now at Montpellier.⁶⁸ Thus the distinctive knot of hair, associated with portraits of Christ in Anglo-Saxon art from the late seventh century onwards, seems to have been limited specifically to images of the Majestas until the ninth century; it should possibly be regarded as a regional, provincial variation of the long-haired beardless Christ found in Western Christian art after the fourth century. Its appearance at Rothbury is in keeping with the use both of local motifs found elsewhere on the cross-shaft, and of iconographic details specifically associated with images of Christ in Majesty.

Thus the iconography of the Majestas Christi at Rothbury again points to a mixture of local and late antique models. The facial features are reminiscent of early Christian art common to the cross-shaft as a whole and the triple cruciferous halo, its deeply dished shape, and the long knotted hair of Christ all

point to locally popular artistic motifs, rather than a source imported specifically for use at Rothbury. The book held by Christ is a normal iconographic feature of the Majestas Christ; only the position of Christ's right hand pointing to the book with his index finger resting upon it is unusual, indeed unique, and may well have been adapted by the sculptor from a sixth-century Italo-Byzantine model showing Christ blessing with his right hand, in order to emphasise the book. This technique, used to highlight the book, is comparable to the use of the plants within the frame which foreground the figure of Christ himself.⁶⁹ Although the overall image is iconographically unremarkable, unusual features have been introduced to emphasise Christ's majesty and the book he carries in his hand.

A.3:(pl.20-22) Despite its broken and comparatively worn condition the scene at the base of the shaft has, with one exception, been identified as the Ascension of Christ.⁷⁰ As an Ascension scene the panel has much in common with other depictions of the event but also has many distinctive discrepancies. These suggest that the scene was compiled not only from a model which supplied the portrayal of Christ ascending with the angels, but also from other models used elsewhere on the shaft which supplied the lower group of assembled figures. It is not disputed that the scene does depict the Ascension of Christ, but stylistically and iconographically there are problems which make it doubtful that the scene was

copied straight from another Ascension scene; as will be argued, it may well have been inspired by a more general apocalyptic scheme.

The two groups of figures from which the scene is composed have been carved in very different ways. The eleven figures who gaze up at the ascending Christ (pl.22) are carved in the same stylised manner as other figures on the cross-shaft, but Christ and the two angels (pl.21) are demonstrably dissimilar; their clothing falls from their shoulders in gently cascading folds, very different to the regular V-shaped folds which fly out behind the angel and the figure on the cross-head (A.1 and C.1; pls.15-16)). Their arms are relaxed, compared with those of the figures in A.2 and C.1-2 (pls.16-18), and the position of Christ's legs is very natural. One leg is drawn up so that the foot rests on the upper plain moulding and the other knee is slightly flexed so that the leg hangs in front of the foot-rest; the long robe hangs loosely round his legs giving a good impression of a body underneath. Elsewhere on the shaft the clothing of the figures is carved in regular stylised pleats which detract from any sense of a body underneath.

It is not as if these differences in style indicate the work of two sculptors; the quality of carving is the same across the whole panel and both elements share the same attention to detail. The hands of Christ and the angels are the same as those of the other more stylised figures below; the fingers are regular and well formed and the hand itself is somewhat large. The

decoration of the garments which fall from Christ's shoulder and the angel on the left is the same as that found on the clothing of the Crucifixion angel; the garments are plain with a thin border round the edge. The overall effect indicates that the sculptor drew on one source for the ascending Christ and angels, and used another additional model for the lower group of figures; the dual source remains visible in the stylistic disparities even though an attempt has been made to introduce a sense of unity through the repetition of certain details.

Iconographically the scene at Rothbury differs from other Ascension scenes in that there are only eleven figures witnessing the event; usually the ascending Christ is watched by twelve apostles as well as Mary. This not only makes the portrayal of the witnesses more canonical than is normal, but the group has been further varied to include the four books held by the figures (presumably evangelists) in the front row; usually the apostles gaze up at Christ empty handed. The other major difference between the iconography of the Rothbury scene and that normally associated with the Ascension is the depiction of the wavy surround in which Christ is enthroned. This is usually portrayed as a simple oval mandorla, much as it is at Wirksworth in Derbyshire (pl.49).⁷¹ When combined with the evidence of the stylistic dichotomy, these iconographic divergences suggest that no single model of the Ascension was used by the sculptor, and that the scene at Rothbury may have been adapted to convey specific theological points.

It is generally accepted that there are two separate pictorial types of the Ascension in early Christian art.⁷² However there are so many variations from these norms that the distinction between the two is becoming increasingly unclear; rather than viewing many of the surviving Ascension scenes as variations of the two main categories, it would perhaps be more useful to recognise that there may have been many more types in circulation. One iconographic tradition, which is believed to be of Palestinian origin and which is the closest to the Rothbury scene, showed Christ enthroned within a mandorla, surrounded by angels, and raised above the Virgin and twelve apostles. The scheme is found on one of the early sixth-century ampullae at Monza (pl.97), a sixth-century icon from Mt.Sinai, and a painted reliquary box from Palestine dated c.600.⁷³ In all these artefacts Christ is shown holding a book, enthroned within a mandorla surrounded by two or four angels. Below, the central *orans* Virgin is flanked by the twelve apostles who gaze upwards and point animatedly towards the ascending Christ. The scheme is varied in a sixth-century Coptic fresco at Bawit (Egypt) where the apostles stand stiffly facing forwards.⁷⁴ In Syrian art the iconography was slightly altered to depict Christ standing within the mandorla, and to introduce two more angels who address the apostles; this scheme was used by the Wirksworth sculptor in the eighth century.⁷⁵

Because the ascending Christ adopted by Syro-Palestinian pictorial traditions was closely associated with the apocalyptic visions of Christ, the 'Eastern image of the enthroned and

ascending Christ was often varied further to show him seated on a rainbow or hill.⁷⁶ The reduction of the seat to a few lines indicating the hill or rainbow also led to images where the seat of the enthroned Christ was omitted altogether.⁷⁷ Whether standing or seated, the Eastern iconography of the Ascension showed Christ within a mandorla, surrounded by angels, and raised above the twelve apostles flanking the virgin. The number of angels around the mandorla could vary and sometimes others were introduced into the lower group of apostles, but Christ within the mandorla, the number of apostles and the presence of the Virgin remained constant. Also unvaried was the arrangement of the apostles in serried rows grouped on either side of the Virgin.

The other pictorial type of Ascension, which originated in the early Christian art of the West, developed, not from the apocalyptic visions of Christ, but from the iconography of the imperial apotheosis. It showed Christ in profile striding along the top of a hill carrying a scroll in his left hand, and reaching towards heaven with his right. In the lower portion of the scene, a small group of apostles looked on in awe.⁷⁸ In this iconographic tradition the angels accompanying Christ are often omitted, the number of witnessing apostles was much reduced, the Virgin was not present and Christ was not surrounded by the mandorla. It is found in its earliest surviving form on a fourth-century diptych from Milan, now at Munich, where a youthful short-haired Christ strides up the Mount of Olives

carrying a scroll in one hand and reaching up towards the heavens with the other. The Hand of God emerges from the clouds while two apostles look on in awe. The early fifth-century wooden doors of Sta.Sabina, Rome, show the same type; four apostles witness the Ascension while Christ, his arm upraised, is drawn into heaven by two angels and watched by another.⁷⁹

There are no surviving instances of this latter type of Ascension dating from the sixth to eighth centuries, although it is found on the Reculver cross-shaft in Kent, the date of which has not yet been established with any certainty.⁸⁰ In fact depictions of any form of the Ascension are not found outside insular or insular-influenced contexts, ^{in the West} between the fifth century (the doors of Sta.Sabina) and the ninth century, when it appears, for instance, in a fresco at S.Clemente, Rome.⁸¹ Here it is the Eastern pictorial type which is depicted, with Christ in a mandorla flanked by angels, above the twelve apostles and Virgin Mary.

When the Ascension does reappear in the art of the West with any certainty and regularity it is in the art of Carolingian Gaul in the ninth century. The iconography adopted at this time was predominantly that of the earlier Western pictorial type but it also showed an awareness of the Eastern tradition. The striding Christ reaching up towards heaven became universal, but the scroll was replaced by a staff-cross held over the shoulder, and angels addressing the apostles were introduced. The number of apostles was increased, but not systematically set at twelve, and

the Virgin was included among their number. This crowd was not arranged as in the Eastern types, but was divided into two groups (one containing the Virgin) that were shown in profile gazing upwards. The early ninth-century *Sacramentary of Drogo* from Metz, for instance, shows Christ on the hill-top with a cross-staff over his shoulder being taken into heaven by the Hand of God, while two angels address the Virgin and ten apostles who stand in two groups gazing up at Christ.⁸²

In the art of Anglo-Saxon England the iconography of the Ascension seems to have been very varied; it is perhaps in this context that it would be most useful to consider that more than two main iconographic types of the Ascension were circulating in early Medieval Europe. As already mentioned, the scene at Wirksworth (pl.55) shows the influence of the Syrian type while Reculver shows the early Western variety, both of which differ from the scene at Rothbury. Further diversity is found in an early ninth-century Irish Gospel Book, now at Turin (pl.93), which shows a half-length Christ holding a book in a circular mandorla with two angels. Four other angels surround the mandorla above twelve half-length apostles in small rectangular frames arranged around a seventh angel within a circular frame; the apostles face strictly forwards. This version seems to be without precedent in Ascension iconography; the figures are organised differently and given labels, Christ is only half-length and surrounded by six angels in all, while a seventh stands among the apostles. The twelve apostles from the Eastern

pictorial tradition are present, but the Virgin is absent.⁸³

Two eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivories in the Musée de Cluny (Paris) and the Victoria & Albert Museum feature yet another type of insular Ascension scene (pls.94-95). They show the Virgin in profile to one side of the apostles, who vary in number between ten and twelve, and who, in the London ivory (pl.95), are reduced to a series of heads and half-length figures gazing upwards with their heads tipped awkwardly backwards. Above this group, in the Paris diptych (pl.94), Christ is seated in a mandorla surrounded by four angels. These ivories seem to demonstrate an amalgamation of the Eastern scheme (Christ is enthroned within a mandorla and surrounded by angels), with features from the early Western type that later became characteristic of the Carolingian Ascension; the profile Virgin stands to one side with a varying number of apostles.⁸⁴

The arrangement of the Ascension scene at Rothbury is not strictly comparable to any of the Ascension scenes so far examined. Although there are some similarities with the Paris diptych the stylistic dichotomy of the Rothbury scene means it is unlikely to have derived from a source similar to that lying behind the ivory. Admittedly the arrangement of the entire scene at Rothbury is derived ultimately from the Syro-Palestinian arrangement, but there is the fact that the number of apostles has been reduced to eleven which may imply the use of a Western model. Set against this is the arrangement of the apostles (unlike that found in the earlier Western type) in serried rows

of figures, and while this is common to the later Carolingian Ascensions these scenes also include the Virgin among the apostles. Thus the lower group of apostles at Rothbury is not really comparable to either Western or Eastern pictorial types.

As already noted, the influence of Eastern iconography is indicated by the overall composition of Christ within the mandorla flanked by two angels above the apostles; it is further suggested by other iconographic details. The number of angels, for instance, is limited to two, probably by the confines of the cross-shaft, and although four angels supporting the glory are more usual in Ascension scenes, the presence of only two is not without precedent in the East. The way these angels hold the surrounding mandorla and the position of their wings are also distinctive. The angels accompanying the ascending Christ usually support the mandorla, balancing it in the palms of their hands.⁸⁵ Instances of the angels gripping the mandorla and so distorting its outline are not common. The action is found only on an embossed silver plate of sixth or seventh-century date from Syria, now in Leningrad (pl.98), and on a sixth-century ampulla at Monza (pl.97); on the late eighth-century sarcophagus cover at Wirksworth (Derbys; pl.55) the angels grasp the mandorla but do not distort its outline. The detail seems to have been an early feature of Syro-Palestinian Ascension scenes, although at Rothbury it must be borne in mind that this distinctive action of the angels may be portrayed to express a specific theological point; the surround is not merely distorted, rather it is pulled

back to reveal the figure inside.⁸⁶

The distinctive position of the angels' wings was possibly dictated by the width of the cross-shaft; there was no room to depict them with wings flying out behind, as is found, for instance, at Wirksworth where the angels also grip the mandorla surrounding Christ. However, the positioning of the wings so that one falls down behind the angel and the other rises up and over his head is an Eastern iconographic feature. It is found on the angels supporting the mandorla of the ascending Christ in the upper arm of a metal cross-reliquary from Syria of eighth-century date, now in Leningrad (pl.128), and is believed to indicate an Eastern (Coptic) inspiration when it occurs in the Virgin and Child miniature in the ninth-century *Book of Kells*.⁸⁷

At Rothbury it is clear therefore, that certain motifs show the influence of an iconography which is ultimately Eastern. The implication is either that the whole Ascension scene was derived from an Eastern prototype, and the lower group changed to omit the Virgin and one apostle, or that only the upper group was based on an Eastern model, while the lower was derived from a different source (or sources). It is unlikely that the lower group was based on an Eastern Ascension scene and changed to omit the Virgin and one apostle because the styles of the two groups are so different. If the apostles had been based on the same model as the upper group there would have been no need to carve them in such a different manner. It is also unlikely that the apostles were derived from either Western pictorial types (the

late antique and Carolingian) because the number of changes needed to arrive at the Rothbury scene from such iconographic types would be too many to make this alternative feasible. What is clear is that the lower group of figures was composed of the standard figure type used elsewhere on the cross shaft. They have the same shaped heads and facial features, including the moustache, the same stylised clothing and large hands as do the Crucifixion angel, the Majestas Christi and the figures of C.1-2 and D.2 (pls.15-19). Their heads are tilted at an angle comparable to that of the Crucifixion angel and the figure in the lower cross-arm of C.1. If the group of apostles in the Ascension scene had been based on a model which showed the disciples below the ascending Christ, there would have been no need to compile them from the standard Rothbury figure type.

Although the apostles have been compiled from this standard type, there have been certain stylistic and iconographic changes imposed on them. They form a tightly knit group of eleven figures whose heads are tilted back at an awkward angle and four of the figures in the front row grasp large books. The angle of their heads is distinctive, and is a detail found in insular Ascension scenes of the eighth century. The eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivories in Paris and London (pls.94-5), referred to above, both feature apostles with their heads tipped backwards, although the arrangement is less regular than it is at Rothbury. The regimentation of Rothbury is found in the Last Judgement scene in the late eight-century Irish Gospel Book at St. Gall

(pl.99) where the twelve apostles, holding books and arranged in two regimented rows, gaze up at Christ flanked by two angels blowing the last trump. It is also found among the figures flanking the Assumption of the Virgin in the late eighth-century ivory now at Munich (pl.101).⁸⁸ The feature therefore indicates that while the apostles were composed from the standard figure type used at Rothbury, their posture echoes insular art during the eighth-century and used elsewhere on the cross.

The four apostles in the front row holding large books are not a common feature of Ascension iconography. The sixth-century Coptic fresco at Bawit⁸⁹ shows all twelve holding books, as do the eighth-century cross reliquary and the early ninth-century *Turin Gospels* (pls.128,93), but usually the apostles are empty-handed; they are generally shown gesticulating in awe and amazement, or pointing up towards the ascending Christ.⁹⁰ Sometimes Peter is identified with a staff-cross or a key, and in the ninth-century *S.Paolo Bible* from Corbie, now in Rome, two of the apostles are shown holding rolled-up scrolls.⁹¹ The implication is that at Rothbury the four apostles with the books are intended to represent the four evangelists with their gospels. The presence of four evangelists holding books in a group of only eleven apostles is without precedent in the surviving iconography of the Ascension in both Eastern and Western art.

Given the use of the two sources and the iconographic peculiarities, it is worth considering whether the source of the

upper group might not have been an Ascension scene at all, but a more general apocalyptic scene with the iconographic details deliberately incorporated to evoke an allusion to the Last Judgement.⁹² Apocalyptic scenes of Christ's Second Coming are found in the earliest church mosaics and initially featured the Lamb adored by the apostles, flanked by angels, and surrounded by the four evangelist symbols holding the four gospels. In the sixth century, particularly in Ravennate art, the full-length figure of Christ enthroned was introduced into the scheme, often with the Lamb or Cross below him.⁹³ In the eighth century the scheme was given a further variation at Sta. Maria Antiqua where the frescoes produced under Pope John VII (705-7) included a full programme which replaced the usual Lamb or Christ with the Crucifixion (pl. 103);⁹⁴ angels and crowds of the blessed, usually associated with the image of Christ enthroned surround the central Crucifixion.⁹⁵ The suggestion is that at Rothbury the central image of Christ in the mandorla flanked by angels, common in apocalyptic scenes, was used for the upper group of figures in the Ascension. Such general images were found in Christian art from an early date, but scenes with Christ enthroned predominate in the Byzantine influenced art of sixth-century Ravenna, and the art of eighth- and ninth-century Rome.

There are three details in the Rothbury depiction of the ascending Christ which support the speculation that the Ascension scene was based on a general apocalyptic image of the Second Coming; Christ is shown seated, within a very unusual

three-dimensional wavy surround, and he holds a rolled-up scroll.⁹⁶ The seated position is common to images of the Judge, the Majestas and the Ascending Christ but, as will be seen later, written commentaries on the Ascension emphasise the seated position as a reference to the Judge.⁹⁷

Normally, the ascending Christ is shown holding a book in his left hand while his right is raised in blessing. This iconography associates him with Christ in Glory, a theme commonly related to the Ascension, but in the apocalyptic scenes he is often shown with a scroll, the symbol of the New Law and also of the Scroll with the seven seals.⁹⁸ The presence of a scroll parallels its use in certain Eastern Ascensions, and carries the same allusion to The Second Coming. Thus in the sixth-century *Rabula Gospels* (pl.102) Christ is shown with an unrolled scroll hanging from his left hand while his right is raised in blessing. This detail indicates that the scene refers, not only to the Ascension, but also to the Last Judgement when Christ the Judge was shown holding out an open scroll.⁹⁹ At Rothbury the scroll that Christ holds (pl.21) is closed rather than open so a Judgement reference is not absolutely clear. However the sculptor could have depicted Christ holding a book here; he does so in the *Majestas Christi* above (A.2; pl.17)), and four of the figures below hold large books (pl.22). This suggests that although it is not specific, the scroll may be a potential reference to the apocalypse in the Ascension scene at Rothbury.

The surround is a unique object not found elsewhere in extant Christian art. On the sixth-century Syrian plate (pl.98) the mandorla, a thin oval outline, is firmly grasped by the four angels so that the shape is distorted, and the late seventh-century *Codex Amiatinus* shows Christ enthroned in Majesty in a circular frame which contains an unravelled ribbon.¹⁰⁰ However neither of these examples is really comparable with the way the surround at Rothbury is pulled back, like a curtain, to reveal Christ. The lack of close comparative material in Ascension and apocalyptic scenes for this Rothbury feature implies very strongly that the surround was created by the sculptor to express a theological point. The feature which comes nearest to the surround at Rothbury is found in carved depictions of clouds; a tenth-century ivory from Metz for example (pl.100), shows two angels standing above the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of the Dead in slightly curved, wavy oblong clouds and a similar detail is found on an eighth-century sculpture from Lindisfarne, Northumberland (pl.60), where Christ in a Last Judgement scene appears from behind a curved oblong moulding set within a circular frame.¹⁰¹

The suggestion is that the sculptor at Rothbury adapted the usual mandorla containing the ascending Christ to resemble clouds pulled back by the angels to reveal Christ enthroned and holding a scroll. Admittedly there are no surviving examples of the Ascension, or the Second Coming, which depict Christ enthroned within the clouds as is suggested for Rothbury, but the scroll and the wavy surround at Rothbury do imply that the scene was

adapted either from an apocalyptic scene of the Second Coming to produce an Ascension scene, or from an Ascension scene, to convey notions of the Last Judgement. The fact that the apostles are not derived from the same model as the ascending Christ, suggests that the model used for the upper figures at Rothbury did not depict the assembled apostles, and is therefore unlikely to have been an Ascension scene. Apocalyptic scenes, however do contain figures of angels flanking Christ, figures emerging from clouds (including the evangelist symbols with their gospels), and serried ranks of adoring crowds; these last may have provided the inspiration, if not the model, for the arrangement of the lower group of apostles and evangelists at Rothbury.¹⁰²

Thus the iconography of the Ascension scene at Rothbury demonstrates the presence of a model based on an ultimately Eastern prototype. From this was taken the arrangement of the ascending Christ flanked by the two angels, and possibly the positions of the angels' wings and their hands which grasp the central surround. However, the distinctive, and differing treatment of the upper and lower groups indicates that the lower group was composed for the scene, being compiled from local motifs and other material at the sculptor's disposal. The unusual treatment of certain iconographic details in the scene, such as the central surround, indicate that he wished to invoke the concept of the Last Judgement at the moment of the Ascension. The implication is that the scene at Rothbury was in fact based, not on an Eastern-type Ascension but on the closely associated

apocalyptic iconography of the Second Coming.¹⁰³ Using this as a model for an Ascension scene forced the sculptor to compile his own group of witnessing apostles, which he did from the standard figure-type he uses throughout the shaft.

C.1:(pl.16) The figures in the cross-arms on this face of the cross-head have been variously described, but they have been generally identified as carrying the Instruments of the Passion.¹⁰⁴ The central surround is usually assumed to have contained a bust of Christ, rather than the Agnus Victor; certainly the remains of the carving within the medallion do not conform with the outlines of a lamb.

Cramp feels that the plaited fragment on the left of the mutilated medallion was a piece of drapery, and she was also able to discern the outline of a book on the right. This led her to conclude that the central motif was a bust of Christ, which is the most likely interpretation.¹⁰⁵ However, the position suggested by Cramp for the book is extremely high in relation to the outline of the head and given that a book was usually held at chest-height, and never above the shoulder, it seems unlikely that the figure was holding a book, at least in the position claimed by Cramp.

The identification of the plaited fragment is also uncertain; it does not resemble any of the drapery found elsewhere on the cross-shaft, which is either plain or depicted

in regular tube-like folds. The closest comparable detail is found in C.2 below (pl.18). Here, as already noted, the small fringe of hair under the woman's coif has the same plaited appearance as the fragment in the central roundel of the cross-head. This suggests that the medallion contained a long-haired figure which could have been Christ (who is depicted with long hair in the *Majestas Christi* of A.2 where his hair falls behind his back). On the cross-head it is possible that the hair followed the line of the figure's shoulders as it does in the eighth-century *Genoels-Elderen Diptych* (pl.90).¹⁰⁶

According to the orthodox identification of the remaining figures in the cross-head (carrying the Instruments of the Passion), the man in the upper cross-arm has been identified as holding a cloth, a pair of pincers, or a whip; the figure in the right lateral arm is believed to bear two crowns of thorns, while that in the lower is described as carrying the nails or a flail.¹⁰⁷ There are, however, problems with this interpretation: notably the fact that pictures of individual, non-angelic, figures holding these instruments in this manner are unparalleled, and until the thirteenth century the only figures depicted holding the tools were soldiers at work on the crucifixion.¹⁰⁸ This context is not really comparable with the depiction of the figures in the cross-arms of the Rothbury cross.

As isolated objects of reverence, the Instruments of the Passion are found in Christian art, but are rare until the twelfth century,¹⁰⁹ and are limited to the lance and sponge. For instance, ninth-century illustrations of the Agnus Dei include the lance and sponge with a chalice, but never the nails or a crown of thorns.¹¹⁰ Admittedly there is the early ninth-century *Utrecht Psalter*, produced at Rheims (and claimed to be based, at least in part, on an early Greek prototype), which shows the Instruments of the Passion draped over the cross (pl.104).¹¹¹ However, this is a depiction of the Arma Christi, which is unique before the twelfth century. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate an interest in the symbols of the Passion on the Continent in the Carolingian period; the image is a positive one, depicting the spoils of the victor after the battle. This attitude was also prevalent in Anglo-Saxon England between the eighth and tenth centuries where there is some literary evidence for an increased interest in the Crucifixion, although not for the tools of the Passion. The predominant attitude was one which celebrated the victory of the event by emphasising the cross rather than the other instruments of torture.¹¹² The over-riding image of the cross in The Dream of the Rood, for example, is of a shining beacon bedecked with jewels and *waedum*; a similar image is presented in Cynewulf's poem Elene where the cross is covered with gems and silver.¹¹³

Thus the only clear pictorial evidence for the Instruments of the Passion before the twelfth century, other than the lance and sponge, emphasises the victory of Christ's Passion.¹¹⁴ In

Anglo-Saxon art therefore, one might expect images which glorify the Crucifixion; such indeed seems to be the symbolism of the Crucifixion scene depicted on the other side of the Rothbury cross-head. In this context it must be admitted that the figures in the arms on this face of the cross-head do seem to venerate the figure in the centre; thus the right-hand and lower figures clearly present their attributes towards this figure (probably Christ) in gestures of adoration, while the stance of the uppermost figure still expresses a certain awe-inspiring power. However, the fact that these figures venerate Christ does not mean that they hold symbols of his Passion,¹¹⁵ and it must be noted that the iconography of the Arma Christi in the *Utrecht Psalter* is very different to that claimed for the Rothbury cross-head. The cross depicted in the manuscript is draped with easily identifiable items; the Rothbury cross-head is carved with figures holding objects which are not as easily identified, and do not bear much resemblance to the lash, crown of thorns, nails, lance, or sponge found in the *Utrecht Psalter*.

If the figure at the centre of the cross-head was Christ, as seems likely, and the figures in the cross-arms present attributes to him, as they do, it is possible to argue that these are symbols emphasising his power and kingship. According to this interpretation the upper figure would be holding rods or sceptres of power and the right-hand figure, crowns of victory. The iconography of the sceptres symbolising authority is established in insular art of the eighth and ninth centuries, but

also has a history in the secular art of imperial Rome. The crown of victory and immortality was similarly established in imperial iconography where the figure of authority was also depicted holding a *mappa circensis*, the possible identity of the object held by the third (lower) figure on the Rothbury cross-head.

Turning first to the two joined rods held firmly in front of the chest of the uppermost figure, it is clear that there is a similarity with the double sceptres of power and authority held by the figure on the Alfred Jewel,¹¹⁶ and those held by the central figure on the Fuller Brooch (pl.107); both of these are ninth-century pieces from the south of England. However, these latter symbols are foliated and pass over the shoulders of the figures holding them, while the rods on the Rothbury cross-head are not foliated and they end below the figure's shoulders. Linder has shown that the motif found on the metalwork probably originated in the Near East, but found its way into Southern English art through European work of the eighth or ninth centuries.¹¹⁷

A closely related motif is that of separate rods and sceptres held across the shoulders so that they cross each other below the figure's hands. This device also found its way into insular art, but probably directly from the East and not through European work. It is found in manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries which have a close link with Ireland; a possible source of archaic Eastern motifs during the eighth century.¹¹⁸

The *Lichfield Gospel* portrait of Luke, for instance (pl.105), shows the Evangelist with two crossed rods, and the *Book of Kells* (pl.106) depicts Christ the Judge holding a floriated rod over each shoulder in the Osiris pose. The eighth-century *Trier Gospel Book*, possibly from the Echternach scriptorium, shows a Tetramorph clasping a knife and a floriated wand (or *flabellum*) in the same way, but in this miniature the attributes do not pass over the figure's shoulder.¹¹⁹ It is possible therefore, that the joined rods held by the uppermost figure at Rothbury represent a confusion between the less ornate, and sometimes smaller separate rods held in the Osiris pose featured in eighth- and ninth-century insular art, and the larger, joined, floriated rods found in the ninth-century metalwork of Southern England.

Alternatively the sculptor may have been familiar with the single short plain sceptre found in the early Christian art of the West before it was replaced by the short cross-sceptre in the sixth century.¹²⁰ This plain sceptre as a symbol of divine authority was inherited from imperial art where it was shown held at an angle across the chest.¹²¹ The motif continued to be used in the secular art of the Christian period; late imperial coins show the enthroned emperor holding a short plain sceptre (the *parazonium*) while the later consular diptyches show the consul enthroned with a single short sceptre, sometimes topped by an ornamental boss (see eg. pl.110).¹²²

In other words, the short plain rods, joined at the base, which are featured on the Rothbury cross-head may represent an amalgamation of the decorative double or crossed sceptres familiar in insular art of the eighth and ninth centuries, and the less ornate sceptres held by state officials in late imperial art where the stance of the enthroned figure is very similar to that adopted by the insular Osiris-pose figures; it was this imperial art which had provided early Christian art with the short staff of divine authority in the fourth to sixth centuries. Whatever their origin, the identity of the rods held by the uppermost figure at Rothbury seems to be closer to the double sceptre of authority than a flail or a pair of pincers.

The identity of the five plain mouldings below the figure is less certain. It was these which led Coatsworth to identify the rods as a twist of cloth.¹²³ From the way the figure emerges from these curves, and the way the joined rods are slightly hidden behind them, it is possible that they represent rather solid clouds, similar to, but an adapted version of, the clouds surrounding the ascending Christ of A.3. It may be that a half-length figure emerging from the clouds in an apocalyptic scene of the Last Judgement or the Resurrection, provided the model for this uppermost figure of the cross-head, as well as the inspiration for the cloud formation surrounding the ascending Christ. The eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Last Judgement scenes (Pls.60,92) and the Metz ivory (pl.100) referred to above, show the clouds as solid, slightly curved mouldings.¹²⁴ Half-length figures carrying a variety of attributes, emerging from rather

solid but curved clouds also became a feature of Carolingian art.¹²⁵ Thus a Gospel Book from Tours in the British Museum, dated to the early years of the ninth century, shows the Matthew evangelist symbol half-hidden behind clouds represented as serried rows of curves; the miniature is believed to be a close imitation of late antique art such as inspired the illustrations of the late seventh-century Anglo-Saxon *Codex Amiatinus*.¹²⁶

Thus, although the curves on the Rothbury cross-head are more solid than the manuscript depictions of clouds, it is possible, with a carved model, and the Rothbury sculptor's tendency to stylise his carving with repeated regular shapes, that the five plain mouldings at the base of the cross-arm were intended to represent clouds from which the figure emerges carrying the double rods of power and authority.¹²⁷ This identification implies that the figure with the rods was probably inspired by two iconographic traditions; one provided the half-length figure, half-hidden behind clouds, possibly carrying an attribute. The double sceptre, on the other hand, was the result of a separate tradition more closely associated with the developing insular iconography of the crossed and double sceptres, or with imperial iconography where the single short plain staff was common. It is possible that the two iconographic traditions were combined before reaching Rothbury, but the relative incoherence of the uppermost figure and his attribute suggests that the sculptor created his own iconography, retaining the half-length figure emerging from the clouds from an

apocalyptic scene,¹²⁸ and converting the rod of state, or the crossed sceptres, into the double-sceptre of authority which became more familiar in later, ninth-century Anglo-Saxon art.

The figure in the right-hand cross-arm is generally identified as carrying two crowns of thorns, one held out towards the central roundel and the other half-hidden in the roll moulding surrounding the cross-arm. However, there are no other depictions of this phenomenon in Christian iconography because the point of this particular instrument of torture was that it was unique; it was fashioned specifically to torment the "King of the Jews".¹²⁹ Because of its uniqueness, it is unlikely that the sculptor would have produced two crowns of thorns. If this really were the case then it is extraordinary, given the limitations of the cross-arm, which in itself would have restricted the presentation to the one crown, that the sculptor has retained the two circlets, one of which is presented towards the figure of Christ. It must therefore be assumed that he intended to depict both, and as it is unlikely that the circlets represent two crowns of thorns, their identity must be sought elsewhere.

It has been noted that the double sceptre held by the uppermost figure bears a resemblance to other wands signifying a notion of kingly or imperial authority. The two crowns held by the figure on the right, may therefore be compared with the crowns of victory or kingship depicted in imperial and early Christian art. On the coins of the late

Roman Empire, for instance, the emperor was often shown flanked by a figure who presented him with a crown of eternal victory.¹³⁰ In this context the wreath symbolised a crown of life reserved for those whose virtues had won them "the privilege of being elevated to the abode of the Immortals".¹³¹ On later imperial coins, after the separation of the empire into its Eastern and Western spheres, the coins continued to be produced, showing the two emperors on either side of a single Victory holding out a crown in each hand over the heads of the emperors, as a symbol of unity between the two rulers.¹³² It was a motif which continued well into the Christian period in both secular and religious art; witness the Roman *fondi d'oro* of the third and fourth centuries which are decorated with portraits of Peter and Paul flanking the unifying figure (who is not winged) who holds crowns over their heads (pl.108).¹³³ Here the symbolism, adopted from imperial iconography, refers to the apostles as worthy recipients of the martyr's crown of immortality, exalting them to heaven.¹³⁴

In secular art of the Christian period the motif of a figure presenting a crown continued to be reproduced on consular diptychs, as well as on imperial coinage. The diptych of Anastasius (c.517) for instance (pl.109), shows the consul with a short staff symbolising his magisterial authority, flanked by two small cloaked figures holding up wreathed crowns.¹³⁵ The later coins of Justin II (566 A.D.) and Heraclius (610-41 A.D.) show the emperors flanked by winged victories with crowns, while the earlier gold solidus of Theodoric (493-553 A.D.) shows the

Ostrogothic king with a small figure at his side carrying both the crown and palm of victory.¹³⁶ The motif also found its way onto the coinage of later Germanic rulers; a Frankish third of a gold solidus and an Anglo-Saxon thrymsa of the seventh century both carry a figure who presents a crown to the king.¹³⁷

Thus the figure carrying two crowns on the Rothbury cross-head can be easily identified within the long iconographic tradition of figures (originally Victories) who presented wreathed crowns of immortality to a figure whose virtues made him worthy of such honour. In the early Christian period this motif was found in both secular and religious art and sometimes featured a figure with two crowns; in the context of regal iconography the motif continued in use in Anglo-Saxon England and Frankish Gaul. The figures were generally shown wearing wind-swept clothes and holding the crowns in outstretched arms. In Christian art the symbolism of the crown associated the figure who received it with notions of exaltation and immortality, victory over death. When the wreath was associated with Christ it demonstrated his share in the divine nature and power of God.¹³⁸ The appearance on the Rothbury cross-head of the figure holding the two crowns with his clothing flying out behind him suggests a familiarity with this iconographic tradition; the inspiration could have come from the coinage, which had been reproduced in England in the seventh century and which sometimes showed a figure with two crowns, or from a model such as a consular diptych, which featured the sceptre as an attribute of authority, as well as two figures presenting wreathed crowns.¹³⁹

The moustachioed man in the lower arm has usually been identified as carrying the nails used to transfix Christ to the cross. However the series of slightly tapering tubes held in the figure's hand bears little resemblance to nails with well-defined heads as we know them today. It is clear that such items existed in Anglo-Saxon England; the remains of the seventh-century ship buried at Sutton Hoo include a large number of iron rivets, bolts and spikes, all of which resemble modern nails, having a straight length of iron terminating in a flat head.¹⁴⁰ The reference to the *wira gespon* nails of the Crucifixion in Elene indicates that the same metal implements were known in the late eighth century and were thought of in connection with the Crucifixion itself.¹⁴¹ It is not doubted that wooden stakes or pegs were known in Anglo-Saxon England, but these tools were not associated with the Crucifixion as the iron nails were; indeed the Crucifixion on the other side of the Rothbury cross-head shows Christ transfixed with a large-headed nail, not a peg (pl.15). If the sculptor had intended to depict the nails of the Crucifixion it is unlikely that he would have carved objects that were not easily recognisable as such. The slightly tapering tubes seen at Rothbury lack the distinctive shape of iron nails, even as they are depicted in the ninth-century *Utrecht Psalter* (pl.104), and bear more resemblance to the tubular folds of the clothing worn by the majority of the figures on the cross-shaft. Rather than interpret the object held by the third figure as nails (or wooden pegs) it is more easily explained as a piece of cloth

clutched, and therefore slightly tapered, in the hand of the lower figure.

On the ivory consular diptychs of the fifth and sixth centuries which show the crowning motif, the consuls are depicted clasping the short single sceptre in their left hand, and holding a *mappa circensis* upraised in the other. This was a napkin lowered to start the games which marked the inauguration of the consul, and was a symbol of his official authority.¹⁴² During the fifth century the *mappa* was depicted in a recognisable fashion, but after the first fifteen years of the sixth century it tended to be represented by a small cushion-like object.¹⁴³ Thus the *mappas* held by the consuls Anastasius (517 A.D.; pl.109), Philoxenus (525 A.D.) and Justinus (540 A.D.) are not well defined, while those held by Basilus (430 A.D.), Boethius (487 A.D.; pl.110) and Arēbindus (506 A.D.), with their clearly incised lines and rounded folds, could easily have inspired the object held by the third figure on the Rothbury cross-head.¹⁴⁴

It could be argued that the secular and imperial iconography of the early diptychs would not be likely to inspire the Christian iconography of an Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft. However, during the fifth and sixth centuries the form of the consular diptychs (based on the earlier imperial diptychs) was adopted for Christian purposes and decorated with religious subject matter,¹⁴⁵ while the earlier consular diptychs were themselves reused in religious contexts. In the seventh century for example,

the late fifth-century diptych of the consul Boethius (pl.100) was painted on the inside with pictures of the Church Fathers and the Raising of Lazarus, above a list of names to be read out during mass.¹⁴⁶ The early sixth-century Clementinus diptych also had a prayer written on the back of it in the mid eighth century, and the Kyrie Eleison and Gloria were added to the Philoxenus diptych in the ninth-century.¹⁴⁷ From the seventh century these diptychs began to play an important part in the liturgy of the Western mass. They were displayed on the altar and inscribed with the names of church members (living and dead) that were read out during the service. It was a practise that is thought to have begun with the early English missions in the seventh century and spread through the West during the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁴⁸ During this time also, in the Western Mass established at the turn of the eighth-century, it became customary for the priest to hold a ceremonial napkin (the *mappula*) in his right hand while officiating at the altar;¹⁴⁹ the iconography of the consular diptyches was thus clearly a living part of the Western church service during the eighth century.

There is additional evidence for the later influence of the fifth- and sixth-century diptychs, not only in their re-use in a liturgical context, but also in their influence on the iconography of the art of the Christian West. Scenes from a consular diptych were reproduced on a stone column in Visigothic Spain,¹⁵⁰ and at a later date, on the North face of the West Cross at Monasterboice in Ireland.¹⁵¹ Here David is found

enthroned like a consul holding what may be a *mappa* in one hand, and a large shield in the other.

Thus there would seem to be ample evidence for familiarity with the iconography of the consular diptych within a Christian context in Western Europe between the sixth and ninth centuries. The iconography of these ivories was fairly standardised by the sixth century, and included an enthroned figure holding the sceptre in one hand and a *mappa circensis* upraised in the other: symbols of his official authority. He was flanked by figures holding out wreathed crowns symbolising his stately virtues which entitled him to immortality. They were known in the Western Church of the seventh and eighth centuries so it is likely that the rods, crowns and particularly the *mappa* were familiar objects, and that the symbolism which associated them with the panoply and authority of power was recognised in Anglo-Saxon England.

At Rothbury therefore, it would seem that these objects, rather than the Instruments of the Passion, were chosen for the cross-head as symbols which could be, and were, adapted to a religious context. On the cross-head they are presented to the figure of Christ in the central roundel as attributes of his divine authority, proper to the Son of God, who overcame death on the cross and ascended into heaven to reign at the side of God the Father. The fact that the upper figure holds a double sceptre, and the figure on the right holds two crowns, may have some reference to the double nature of Christ (as the Son of Man

and the Son of God) and to his role as the second person of the Trinity.

C.2:(pl.18)¹⁵² The three figures on this fragment are currently interpreted as representing two separate events due to their incomplete state and unusual positioning on the cross-shaft. The left-hand and upper figures are supposed to show Christ Healing the Blind Man who is seated in a chair (the two characters involved being turned through ninety degrees from the vertical), while the woman on the right is identified as the Woman with the Issue of Blood.¹⁵³ There are however, various objections to these suggestions.

Crucial to the usual interpretation is the notion that the two scenes have been presented without any panelled division between them. Yet from what remains of the other scenes on the Rothbury cross it would seem that all the other individual events were separated from each other by border mouldings as they are on other Anglo-Saxon cross-shafts.¹⁵⁴ Thus the Majestas, the crowd scene and this scene (A.2, D.2, C.2; pls.17-19) are clearly separated by an inner roll moulding from the carving in the lower arm of the cross-head above. Similarly the scenes at the base of the shaft are set within an inner moulding, just as the plaitwork of C.3 (pl.25) is contained in a round topped frame. Only the vine-scroll of B.2 and B.3 (pl.24) seems to have been designed as a continuous panel, but even this was

separated from the decoration of the cross-head.¹⁵⁵

Given the fragmentary condition of the cross, a totally panelled arrangement cannot be proved without doubt, but it does seem unlikely that two scenes, whatever their identity, would be placed together in the manner proposed for the figures under discussion. It seems probable therefore, on organisational grounds, that the three figures are all part of a single scene, and that all three have been turned through ninety degrees in order to accommodate them within the restrictions of the shaft. The possible identity of this scene however, is still in question, although it must be noted that the arrangement of the Rothbury figures does not fit easily with the iconography of either the episode of the Blind man, or with that of the Woman with the Issue of Blood.

In the Bible Christ is credited with the healing of six or seven different blind men, none of whom, however, is described as being both seated on his own, and healed by the touch of Christ's hand.¹⁵⁶ Generally the blind are described in pairs, following Christ, or seated together by the road-side, and healed by the power of his words.¹⁵⁷ The iconography of the Healing of the Blind, as it eventually emerged, did not follow the biblical accounts very closely; as seen at Ruthwell, it presented a general scene characterised by Christ touching a single figure, or holding up his hand in speech.¹⁵⁸ However, there was no pictorial or biblical tradition which featured the blind man, heavily swathed, and seated in a chair as Cramp's interpretation

of the Rothbury scene demands.¹⁵⁹

Indeed the very identification of the chair, claimed as a seat for the blind man, is doubtful. There do not seem to be any examples in early Christian art of high-backed chairs which have a plain arm and a seat decorated with vertical ribbing, or which enclose the figure in the way depicted at Rothbury. When compared with other scenes on the cross-shaft it seems more likely that the "chair" is in fact a cloth wrapped round the uppermost figure which passes behind his head and falls away in front; the "arm of the chair" is in fact a fold of cloth. Its heavy ribbing in particular is characteristic of the drapery worn by other figures on the cross; the Majestas, the figures in the arms of the cross-head, and indeed the other two figures in this scene, all wear clothing which is marked by heavy tubular parallel ribbing.

Compared with the Healing of the Blind, which was one of the most commonly depicted of Christ's miracles, the Healing of the Woman with the Issue of Blood was rare in Christian art. The scene generally showed the woman crouched or kneeling behind Christ and grasping his robes in her hands while he sometimes turned back to look at, or touch her.¹⁶⁰ What identifies the scene iconographically is the woman clutching Christ's robes. The event is admittedly sometimes featured in the same context as the Healing of the Blind man; they are found, for example, on the early Italo-Gallic sarcophagi which have a continuous and

undivided layout of the scenes.¹⁶¹ However, the two events are never combined into a single scene as is called for by the orthodox interpretation at Rothbury.¹⁶²

It seems therefore, that what is depicted here at the top of the cross-shaft, is a single scene (probably a miracle involving Christ's touch) which includes Christ, a swathed male figure and a woman who appears to be crouched. The only single scene in Christian art which combines three such figures is the Raising of Lazarus.

Next to the Healing of the Blind this event was one of the most commonly depicted in Christian art from the third century onwards, being featured on early Christian sarcophagi, ivories and manuscripts. It is usually characterised by Lazarus standing, covered by a shroud, beside Christ, who summons him from the tomb with either a short sceptre or an outstretched hand. Martha, sometimes joined by her sister, is frequently shown kneeling at Christ's feet.¹⁶³ This scene at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft, thus has all the basic elements which make up the iconography of the Lazarus scene; Christ, on the left, with Martha kneeling at his feet, commands Lazarus, at the top of the shaft, to rise from the dead.

Only the lack of a tomb would seem to tell against this interpretation, yet this detail is also absent from other Lazarus scenes depicted both in early Christian art of the Continent, and elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon sculpture. A fourth-century Roman *fondi*

d'oro, now in the Ashmolean in Oxford, for instance, shows Lazarus swathed and standing before Christ who touches him on the head with a staff; there is no sign of the sepulchre.¹⁶⁴ This may well have been the iconographic type which lay behind the small ninth-century fragment from Gt.Glen (Leics; pl.62) where Christ touches Lazarus with a staff in a scene where there is no sign of the sepulchre having once framed the body of the dead man.¹⁶⁵

There are, however, three other features which need closer examination in the context of this interpretation: namely the awkward arrangement with overlapping figures in differing planes, the fact that Christ touches Lazarus' eyebrow, and the arrangement of the grave-clothes.

The first of these, the disposition of the figures sideways-on to the panel, probably results from an attempt to depict the scene (which normally requires a broad panel), within the rather narrow confines of the top of the shaft. The solution chosen was to turn the scene through ninety degrees and show it on its side, disposed up the length, rather than across the width of, the shaft. One of the side-effects of this rather radical arrangement was the depiction of Christ with his head half-hidden behind the roll moulding. Although unusual, this is but one example of the "window-frame" technique used consistently by the sculptor throughout the cross-shaft. It is employed, as already mentioned, for the heads of the angels and some of the apostles

in the Ascension scene (pl.20), for one of the crowns held by the figure in the right-hand arm of the cross-head above (pl.16), and it is also used for the crowd of heads at the top of the shaft (pl.19).¹⁶⁶

None of this rearrangement, of course, would have arisen if it had not been felt necessary to include the figure of Martha. It follows that her presence at Rothbury was thought to be important, and this is further supported by the way in which she is depicted crouched alongside Christ instead of before or beside him, as was usual. The thin plain moulding which runs from Martha's head round the line of her shoulder has the effect of placing her in the foreground; she appears to be carved on a plane somewhat in front of, and beside Christ. The manipulation of the scene to highlight her in this way suggests that Martha's presence was deliberately invoked; a point which will be examined in more detail below.¹⁶⁷

In the Raising of Lazarus Martha, when she was present,¹⁶⁸ was normally shown crouched between Christ and Lazarus, and from the sixth century onwards she was also shown kneeling upright and in profile (eg. pl.111).¹⁶⁹ However, the particular arrangement here at Rothbury suggests that it was based on a fourth- or fifth-century Western type which showed Martha crouching behind, and partially obscured by, Christ, with her shoulder hunched and her head turned up towards him. This distinctive position is found, for example, on the early Christian sarcophagi of Rome where Martha is also featured almost reduced to a grossly

emphasised shoulder and a head seen in semi-profile (eg. pl.112).¹⁷⁰ It would seem that at Rothbury, Martha has been moved from behind Christ, where she is found in these early scenes, so that she crouches beside him still with her face half-turned and her shoulder hunched (see fig.7a).

It is theoretically possible that Martha was moved beside Christ from the more common iconographic position which showed her kneeling in front of Jesus while he stood to the right of Lazarus, but in this case the figure of Christ would have needed to be completely turned around and placed on the other side of Lazarus (see fig.7b).¹⁷¹ This solution requires too many adaptations to arrive at the arrangement which exists at Rothbury, and does not account for the way the figure of Lazarus is slightly turned so as to face Christ. Although examples of Martha crouching behind Jesus are less common, they do exist in the early Christian art, and such a composition provides the most simple explanation for the positioning of the figures at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft; the Rothbury sculptor, or his model, attempting to highlight Martha, has set her against Christ, but preserved the half-turned face and pronounced shoulder of the early Christian model.

Also unusual is the way Christ touches Lazarus' eyebrow with his index finger.¹⁷² Generally in such scenes his right hand is held out towards the dead man in a gesture of speech or blessing, and sometimes the hand is positioned so that it appears

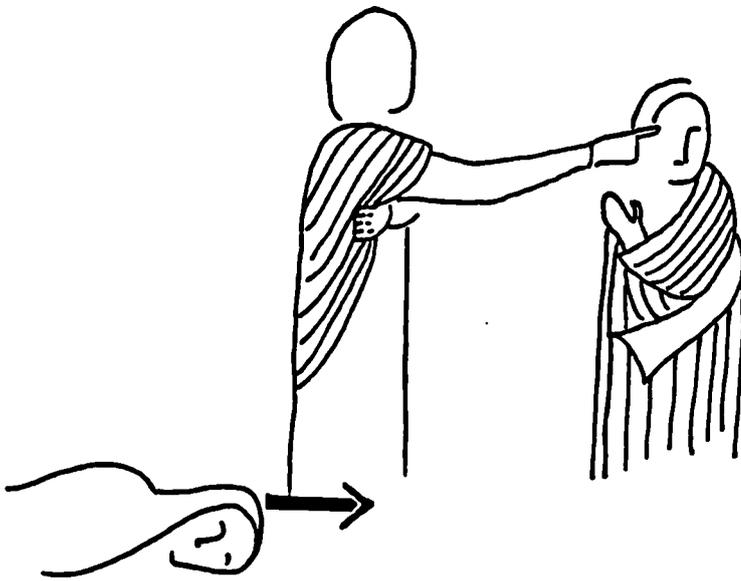


Fig. 7a.

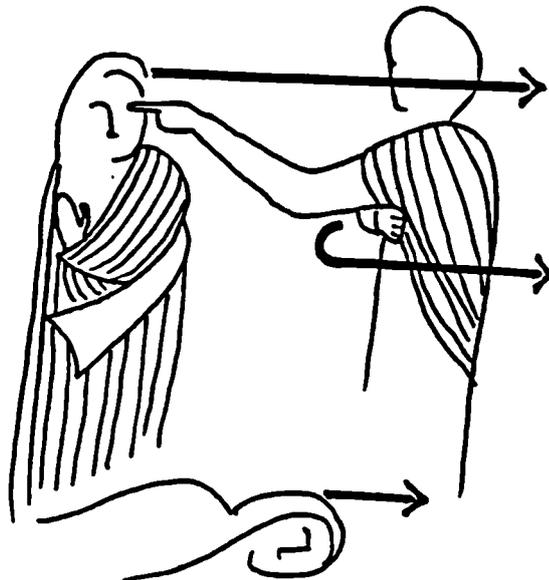


Fig. 7b.

to touch Lazarus' face. An early Roman sarcophagus, for instance, shows Christ with his hand over Lazarus' face, while the Byzantine Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus, copied in the ninth century from a pre-Iconoclastic prototype, shows him touching Lazarus on the forehead with his first two fingers extended in blessing.¹⁷³ Despite these variations, however, Christ is never shown touching the dead man's eyebrow with his index finger in the manner of the Rothbury scene.¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere on this cross-shaft however, the long index finger is deliberately used to emphasise a particular detail. Thus the Majestas figure (A.2; pl.17) uses his finger to highlight the importance of the book he holds.¹⁷⁵ This suggests that while the position of Christ's hand touching Lazarus may have resulted either from bringing the figures into such close contact within the confines of the shaft, or from the influence of an early iconographic type, the use of the extended index finger was in fact being deliberately employed to emphasise Lazarus' closed eyes.

Normally Lazarus' eyes are shown open, but on two early fourth-century sarcophagi from Rome he is found with his eyes apparently closed (see eg. pl.112).¹⁷⁶ Thus if this detail at Rothbury was the result of copying from a model, the iconography of this source was probably of the same date and origin as that which provided the positioning of the figures and Martha's posture (and possibly Christ touching Lazarus with his hand). However, it must be noted that the depiction of Lazarus' eyes at Rothbury is in marked contrast to other eyes on the shaft, which like Martha's, are well modelled and drilled with a deep hole for

the pupil. As with the highlighting of Martha, this deviation from the expected iconography suggests manipulation for a specific purpose.¹⁷⁷

This may also have been the principle which guided the depiction of Lazarus' shroud. Although the dead man was usually shown swathed in grave-clothes, they are not elsewhere shown falling away from him as depicted at Rothbury.¹⁷⁸ Even in later medieval art of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where Lazarus is sometimes shown with a bandage trailing from his body, there is nothing which compares with the depiction of the grave-clothes in the Rothbury scene.¹⁷⁹ It would appear therefore, that the sculptor adapted a swathed figure of Lazarus to emphasise the fact that he was literally rising from the dead as the trappings of the grave fell away from him.¹⁸⁰

Three details in this scene (the deliberate inclusion of Martha, the emphasis placed on Lazarus' eyes, and the literal arrangement of the grave-clothes) are therefore unusual, but at least two of them are not unknown in Christian art. Martha is found crouched behind Christ instead of before him in the early Christian art of the Italian West in the fourth and fifth centuries (where she is also depicted with her face half-turned towards Christ, and her shoulder hunched), while Lazarus is found in a similar context with his eyes closed (and sometimes without a sepulchre behind him). However, the Rothbury arrangement of the grave-clothes, Christ's extended index finger touching

Lazarus' eyebrow, and the movement of Martha beside Christ all seem to have been details produced specifically for the scene at Rothbury. There has thus been a deliberate attempt to emphasise Lazarus' eyes and to include Martha in the scene which results in the awkward arrangement of the scene on the cross-shaft.

In summary therefore, the iconography of this scene at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft indicates that it represented the Raising of Lazarus rather than the Healing of the Blind and the Woman with the Issue of Blood. The model for this scene was probably of fourth- or fifth-century date and of Italian origin as the scene shows no sign of the iconographic features which characterised later versions of the Raising of Lazarus. The overall effect of the iconography stresses the importance of Martha in the scene, and the fact that Lazarus is literally rising from the dead; his eyes are still those of a dead man and his grave clothes are in the process of falling away from him.

D.2:(pl.19) The scene which once contained the crowded heads at the top of the shaft cannot be identified because the lower part has been lost.¹⁸¹ Cramp has argued that the arrangement of the heads which creates a sense of perspective, and the fillets which adorn the hair of the figures, are features indicative of the iconographic and stylistic dependence of the cross-shaft on Carolingian work, and therefore help to date the monument to the ninth century.¹⁸²

However, the arrangement of the heads of a crowd creating a sense of perspective is found both in Anglo-Saxon and Italian art of the early eighth-century. The Sedulius manuscript now at Antwerp shows just such a crowd of nine to ten short-haired figures welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem. The scene is copied from an Anglo-Saxon manuscript dated to the turn of the eighth-century, which itself was probably copied from a sixth-century Italian exemplar.¹⁸³ In a different context, and possibly more relevant to the scene at Rothbury, the early eighth-century frescoes at Sta. Maria Antiqua, Rome (pl.103), depict similar crowds in an apocalyptic scene adoring the cross of the Crucifixion. Here seventeen angels are arranged in three superimposed rows so that those at the back are only partially seen. The angels all had short hair adorned with narrow fillets. Below them a large crowd of the Blessed was arranged in a similar way; those at the back were reduced to semi-circular heads while those at the front were of full-length proportions. These figures were also individualised; the ones in the front row are all men, while further back there is a woman wearing a veil and another with a knot of hair on the crown of her head. The men in the front row are varied in age, and some are bearded while others are clean shaven.¹⁸⁴

This method of depicting crowds became common in Roman art of the late eighth and early ninth century but the source of its inspiration is believed to have been, not only earlier Roman work, but also the Christian art of North Western Europe which had looked back to early Christian Rome and late antiquity.¹⁸⁵

Thus the arrangement of the crowd of heads at the top of the Rothbury cross-shaft need not necessarily depend on ninth-century Carolingian developments. There is evidence of the technique being used in early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon art, and in Roman work of the same period.

The fillets that run through the hair of the figures in this crowd are the other feature believed by Cramp to depend on Carolingian work. Fillets are found for instance on the heads of angels in the early ninth-century *Corbie Psalter* and the late eighth- or early ninth-century *Psalter of Charlemagne* from S.Riquier. The art of both these manuscripts is believed to be closely based on the art of the Eastern Mediterranean and Lombard Italy.¹⁸⁶ However the influence of the Eastern Mediterranean which was the original source of the thin fillet,¹⁸⁷ was found not only in early ninth-century Gaulish art, but also in the art of early eighth-century Rome and Anglo-Saxon England. As already mentioned, the angels of the Sta.Maria Antiqua frescoes wear fillets in their hair, and the angel of the Northumbrian Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69) has a thin fillet round his head. As the sculptor of the Rothbury cross-shaft clearly had access to late antique and early Christian work (see A.3, C.1-2) and the motif was found in Anglo-Saxon art of the eighth-century, the use of the fillet in the crowd scene need not have depended on Carolingian developments, any more than did the arrangement of the figures.

Besides suggesting a possible date for the model(s) used by the sculptor for this crowd, the fillet may also give some indication of the nature of the crowd, if not the identity of the scene of which they were originally a part. Elsewhere the ornament was used for angelic figures; the figures at Rothbury do not have wings, but they are clean-shaven as is the figure of Christ in the *Majestas* (A.2; pl.17). It has already been noted that most of the other male figures on the cross-shaft who do not have a heavenly identity (Lazarus and the apostles of the Ascension scene; pls.18,20) are shown beardless but moustachioed. Thus the clean-shaven appearance of these figures, and the fillets in their hair, may imply that the crowd was part of the blessed community of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is this community who adore the cross of the Crucifixion at *Sta.Maria Antiqua* (pl.103) where they are individualised as are the figures at Rothbury, and in a Carolingian context the Blessed are found, with fillets, adoring the Lamb in the early ninth-century *Gospel Book of S.Medard of Soissons*.¹⁸⁸ This suggests, although it does not prove, that the figures at the top of the cross-shaft may have been a crowd of the Blessed gazing out of heaven.¹⁸⁹

D.3:(pl.23) The figures entangled in the reptiles at the base of the cross have usually been identified as comprising a scene of hell.¹⁹⁰ If this is so it is one of the earliest portrayals of hell composed of the damned struggling with monsters. Usually this is depicted as a pit or a monstrous mouth such as occurs in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory of the Last Judgement

(pl.92) and the early ninth-century *Utrecht Psalter*.¹⁹¹ The illustration of Psalm 102 in this Psalter, however, does include an image of the damned dispatched to hell depicted as a pit filled with a seething mass of serpents and naked humans. The later English copyist of this Psalter turned the serpents and devils into zoomorphic creatures, often emphasising their genitalia.¹⁹² Nakedness and the portrayal of male genitalia was a fairly common feature of the late iconography of the damned. It is found, for example, in the eleventh-century manuscript, *Junius 11* (pl.115), emphasising the contrast between the heavenly and fallen states of the rebellious angels. In heaven they are dressed in long white robes; in hell they are naked black figures who fall upside-down, with their testicles openly displayed.¹⁹³ Thus the elements of which the scene at Rothbury is composed (naked deformed humanoid creatures and reptilian monsters), are featured in later Anglo-Saxon depictions of the damned in hell, even though the arrangement of the scene at Rothbury is not paralleled elsewhere and the figures themselves are unique, even in the later scenes of hell.

The composition and the depiction of the monsters, however, is featured in insular art of the eighth and ninth centuries in other contexts. The symmetrical arrangement of the reptiles, intertwined in confronting pairs up the length of the panel is found, for instance, on the eighth-century cross-shafts at Kilkieran in Ireland, and Aberlady (E.Loathian); it appears in a flatter and more linear form in the border decoration of insular

manuscripts such as the eighth-century *Durham Cassiodorus* and the slightly later eighth-century *Barberini Gospel Book* in Rome (pl.116).¹⁹⁴

The unusual view of the reptilian monsters, their bodies seen partially from the side and the heads from above, is also a distinctive feature of late eighth-century Anglo-Saxon art. A boar decorating the Northumbrian hanging bowl deposited with the St.Ninian Isle Treasure in the late eighth or early ninth century is seen from above and decorated with incisions similar to those on the backs of the Rothbury monsters. The interlaced creatures arranged in pairs on the Gandersheim Casket are also seen from above; they have long necks and forepaws which end in three claws, and their hindquarters have been replaced by long tails. Their backs are marked with ribbing on either side of a central line. This ivory carving is a piece of Southern English work datable to the second half of the eighth century. A closely related fragment of bone from Larling (Norfolk), dated to the late eighth century, is carved with a scene of Romulus and Remus fed by the she-wolf; her body is seen from the side but her head and fore-quarters are seen from above, and even more relevant to the beasts at Rothbury, her pelt is indicated by incised lines, while her eyes are deeply drilled and her ears laid back.¹⁹⁵

Closer geographically, a similar view is presented of the beasts below Christ on the eighth-century Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses (see pl.59). These are half-length creatures, seen from above, whose heads are set between their extended front paws.

They have the same rounded muzzles, deeply drilled eyes, and hollow, laid-back ears that characterise the monsters at Rothbury. At Rothbury itself the creatures in the inhabited vine-scroll of B.2 and B.3 have also been carved in this way. Their bodies are seen from the sides and their heads from above. Two of the creatures on B.3 (pl.24) have rounded muzzles, deeply drilled eyes with modelled eyebrows, and laid back, round, hollow ears, but their bodies differ. One on the left has a wing folded baack from its front shoulder and its hind quarters are replaced by a tail, while the larger animal above has short curved convex ribs running the length of its back. The creature in B.2 has a similar body and the head is seen from above, but its muzzle is more pointed and the round hollow ears are placed on the sides of the head.¹⁹⁶ Thus the composition of the animals, the animals themselves, and the details of their carving are clearly paralleled and widespread in the art of eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England and specifically Northumbria.

The four humanoid creatures who struggle in between the bodies of the monsters are not so easily paralleled, but their heads do seem to conform to the standard "Rothbury type". Their naked bodies are mostly hidden behind the tails of the monsters, but their legs are longer versions of the lower monsters' front legs, while their three-toed claws also repeat those of the monsters. The figure on the upper left is positioned so that his testicles can be clearly seen, while those of the figure on the right are being eaten by the uppermost monster.

A possible parallel is found in the eighth-century *Barberini Gospels*, (pl.116) where a small naked figure with a large bearded head and drooping moustache, squats among the symmetrically confronting pairs of interlaced beasts that fill the central column of the canon tables. His legs are caught up in the bodies of the beasts, and he touches his genitalia which two of the beasts threaten to bite. Two similar beasts are positioned on either side of his head. This compositional type has been linked by Biddle to the iconography of a carved stone fragment from Repton (Derbys.) which has been dated to the eighth century (pl.114). Here the scene, composed of a serpent with a human head flanked by two deformed human figures, is in fact an attempt to portray the damned devoured by a hell mouth at a time when the iconography of such a scene was either undeveloped, or not widely known; the hell mouth of the serpent has been adapted from the head of a figure similar to that found in the *Barberini Gospels*.¹⁹⁷

It is evident that a similar process was being followed on the base of the Rothbury cross-shaft. Elements of non-figural ornament, common in the art of eighth-century England, both in Mercia and Northumberland, have been combined, in an arrangement also prevalent at that time, with small figures based on the standard type used throughout the cross-shaft. It is not unlikely, as will be argued further below,¹⁹⁸ that the scene does represent the damned in hell, in a composition which is unique to the Northumbrian monument, despite the similarities of the individual details to other Anglo-Saxon motifs.

DISCUSSION:

It is evident from the fragmentary condition of the Rothbury cross that a complete discussion of the iconography of the monument is not possible. On the one hand, as was the case with Masham,¹⁹⁹ the preceding description of the scenes which have survived, has identified some which are clearly designed to do more than depict the biblical narrative. They carry within them their own comment on wider thematic concerns whose full significance and meaning would only become apparent in the overall context of the whole monument.²⁰⁰ A further limitation arising from the incomplete state of the cross is seen in the crowd of figures at the top of the shaft where any certain identification is impossible, and the possible identity of the crowd as the Blessed Community of Heaven is too general to allow much comment; their positions indicate that they were not a group of exemplary figures, but rather witnesses to an event which is unknown.

For these reasons the following section will concentrate on the more specific non-Crucifixion figural scenes:²⁰¹ The Ascension, The Raising of Lazarus, and The Damned in Hell. This last scene is included because it is clear that an attempt has been made to create the scene from decorative motifs not elsewhere associated with hell;²⁰² the implication is that its various elements were inspired by written accounts of hell and damnation.

A.3: The Ascension:

From the earliest date the Ascension was closely associated in art and literature with the Day of Judgement and with the investment of the apostles as preachers of the word of God.²⁰³ At Rothbury the iconography emphasises both these themes.²⁰⁴ As we have seen, the role of the apostles as witnesses is expressed by their posture and the two large pointing hands; the four gospel books held by the evangelists highlight their role as preachers of the salvation and eternal life available through Christ which would be reinstated at the Day of Judgement. The angels and the way they pull back the central surround to reveal Christ with the scroll seated in the clouds, express the close relationship between the ascending Christ and the Judge; the Rothbury Christ is both.²⁰⁵

These themes are based ultimately on the biblical account of the Ascension when the eleven remaining disciples were addressed by Christ on the Mount of Olives:

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth...And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he was taken up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said...This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.²⁰⁶

It is the salient points of this account which have been highlighted in the scene at Rothbury. The apostles "look

steadfastly towards heaven" and point out the ascending Christ. The fulfilment of his command to them to "be witnesses...unto the uttermost part of the earth" lies in the four gospels, while the references to the Second Coming made by Jesus and the angels, are expressed in the iconography of the ascending Christ.

The close relationship between the Ascension and the Day of Judgement, introduced in the Bible, became commonplace in the writings of the early Church Fathers; it was the presence of the angels and the clouds, found on both occasions, which underlined the connection. Thus Leo the Great in his sermon on the event saw the Ascension, the angels, and the Last Judgement as integral to each other:

...omnes Ecclesiae filii docebantur ut Jesus Christus in eadem qua ascenderat carne venturus visibilis crederetur, et...sic ad iudicandum mundum in ipsa carne venturum, angelorum officia praedicaerunt: ut intelligeremus quantaes potestates sint adfuturac cum iudicatuero, cui tantaes ministraverunt etiam iudicando.

(...all the sons of the church were taught to believe that Jesus Christ will come visibly in the same Flesh wherewith He ascended, and...so too the service of angels was employed to foretell His coming in very Flesh to judge the world, that we might understand what great powers will come with Him as Judge, when such great ones ministered to Him)²⁰⁷

The biblical link between the Ascension and the Day of Judgement, elaborated by the early Church Fathers through common elements such as the angels, was also found in the Old English writings on the subject. The late eighth-century poem Christ attributed to Cynewulf, for instance, is divided thematically into sections on the Ascension of Christ and Domesday. Based on

the writings of Gregory the Great, the poem expounds various details including the words of the angels. To the gathered apostles, the angels promised that Christ would return to judge the living and the dead:

Wile eft swa-beah eorðan maegðe sylfa gesecan side
herge, ond þonne gedeman daeda gehwylce þara ðe
gefremedon folc under roderum.

(He will again, on a later day, himself seek out the tribes of the earth, with a countless train. And then he will judge all deeds which people have performed under the heavens)²⁰⁸

Also central to such connections were the clouds which received Christ at the Ascension, and which would part to reveal him on Domesday. The angels had said that Christ would return "in like manner" as he had been seen ascending, and the Book of Revelation referred to Christ as coming "with the clouds".²⁰⁹ Writing within this tradition to the Thessalonians, Paul described the Day of Judgement when the dead would rise at the sound of the last trump:

We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.²¹⁰

For later ecclesiastics the clouds indicated the truth of the ascension of Christ, the Son of God:

Jesus autem in caelum, quia Dominus erat:...in nube
...thronus paternus. Etenim de Patre ait Isaias:
'Ecce Dominus sedet super nubem levem'. Quia ergo
Pater in nube sedet, ideo et Filio nubem misit.

(Jesus was taken up to heaven, for He was the Lord. ...He ascended in a cloud,...the throne of his Father. For of the Father, Isaiah says 'Behold the Lord is seated upon a cloud'.

Therefore because the Father sits upon a cloud, so he sends the cloud for his son.)²¹¹

The Anglo-Saxon poem Christ also refers to Christ, the king, being taken up into heaven in the clouds at the Ascension,²¹² while the tenth-century Blickling Homilist presented a more extended treatment of the clouds as an element linking the Ascension and the Day of Judgement:

And he mid þy tacne swa on þæm wolcne from heora
gesihþe gewat, and in heofenas astag, þæt he þonne
swa wile on domes daeg eft on þysne middangeard cuman
in wolcne and mid engla þrymme.

(And he, in the cloud, disappeared from their sight and ascended into Heaven, as a sign that from thence, in like manner, he will on Doomsday again come upon this earth in a cloud, with hosts of angels.)²¹³

Similarly, Aelfric, in his Homily on the Ascension made it clear that the clouds played a vital role in the event:

ðaða he to heofonum astah, þa abeah þæt heofonlice
wolcn wið his, and hine underfeng: na þæt þæt wolcn
hine ferede, forðan ðe he hylt heofona ðrymsetl, ac he
siðode mid þam wolcne of manna gesihðum.

(When he ascended to heaven, the heavenly cloud bowed down to him, and received him: not that the cloud bore him, for he holds the throne of heaven, but he passed with the cloud from the sight of men.)²¹⁴

When Christ returned in the clouds at the Day of Judgement it was believed that he would be seen enthroned. In this context much was made of Mark's description of Christ as seated at the right hand of God after the Ascension:

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.²¹⁵

This was taken as further proof that when Christ returned it would be as the Judge. As Gregory explained in his sermon on the Ascension:

...sedere judicantis est, stare vero pugnantis vel adjuvantis. Quia ergo Redemptor noster assumptus in coelum, et nunc omnia judicat, et ad extremum iudex omnium venit, hunc post assumptionem Marcus sedere describit, quia post Ascensionis suae gloriam iudex in fine videbitur.

(To sit is the position of one giving Judgement; to stand that of one who fights or gives help. Since our Redeemer is assumed into heaven Mark describes him, after his assumption, as sitting because after the glory of his ascension he shall at the end be seen as Judge, and even now he judges all things, and at the end of the world he will come as Judge of all mankind.)²¹⁶

The witnesses, crucial to the events surrounding the Ascension, and the bearers of Christ's last words and the angels' prophecy were the apostles. The command to be "witnesses...unto the uttermost part of the earth" had important implications for the Christian Church established among the largely gentile population of the Roman empire. Even for Gregory the Great the last command of Christ was given to legitimise the foundation of church of Rome:

Ut scilicet prius a Iudaea apostolorum repulsa praedicatio tunc nobis in adiutorium fieret.

(So that the preaching of the apostles, first rejected by Judaea, might then be preached to our gain.)²¹⁷

For the Anglo-Saxons, almost literally at "the uttermost part of the earth", the command had a particular relevance.²¹⁸ In his poem Christ, Cynewulf elaborates the last words of Jesus to the disciples:

Farað nu geond ealne yrmenne grund
 geond widwegas; weoredum cyðað,
 bodiað ond bremað, beorhtne geleafan,
 ond fulwiað folc under roderum,
 hweofað to heofonum; hergas breotaþ,
 fyllað ond feogað; feondscype dwaescað,
 sibbe sawað, on sefan manna,
 þurh meahta sped.

(Go now throughout all the spacious earth, throughout the wide ways; make known to men, preach and publish, bright belief, and baptize people under the sky, turn them to heaven; cast down temples, destroy and lay them low; abolish enmity, sow peace in the hearts of men, through the fulness of might.)²¹⁹

In later Old English homilies on the Ascension, a similar emphasis is found. The tenth-century Blickling Homilist, for instance, describes the apostles as witnesses, not just of the Ascension, but of the entire message of the Gospels:

Hwaes sceoldan hie þa halgan urum drihtne gewitan beon? buton þaet hie þaet sceoldan mancynne cyþan and secgean geond þysne middangeard aereþt þaet he ure drihten þaet gefylde, þaet he þurh his þa halgan toweardnesse gehet and saegde...and eac þa his lare and his word þe hie aet his sylfes muþe gehyrdon, þa hie sceoldan mannum secgan and þa bysena þe hie aet his daedum gesawon, þa hie sceoldan eac mannum cyþan...and þaet hie ealle sceoldan geond þysne middangeard mancynne bodian and secgan; swa þaet cup gewearþ þaet hie þaet seopþan gedydon unagaedlice.

(Of what should those holy ones be witnesses for our Lord? except that they should make known to mankind and declare throughout the world, first that our Lord performed what he promised and declared, on account of his holy future coming,...and then also to relate to men his teaching and his words that they had heard from his own mouth, and to make known to mankind the examples they had witnessed in his works;...and were to proclaim and declare it throughout the world, as it became known that they subsequently did unremittingly.)²²⁰

For Aelfric, however, the role of the apostles as preachers of the Gospel was more far reaching than their physical presence. In his Homily on the Ascension he discusses, not only the apostles themselves, but the more important part played by the

written word of their gospels in spreading the Word of God.

þa apostoli waeron gewitan Cristes weorca, forðan ðe hi bodedon his ðrowunge, and his aerist, and upstige...and syððan becom heora stemn to aelcum land, and heora word to gemaerum ealles ymbhwyrftes; forðan ðe hi awriton Cristes wundra, and ða bec þurhwuniað on cristenre ðeode, aegðer ge ðaer þaer ða apostoli lichamlice bodedon, ge þaer ðaer hi na ne becomon.

(The apostles were witnesses of Christ's works, for they preached his passion, and his resurrection, and his ascension...and afterwards their voice came to every land, and their words to the boundaries of the whole globe; for they recorded the miracles of Christ, and the books exist among Christian people, both where the apostles bodily preached, and where they did not come.)²²¹

It is clear therefore that the iconography of the Rothbury Ascension has been organised to highlight both the relationship between the Ascension and the Day of Judgement and the role of the apostles as witnesses and preachers of Christ's salvation according to the themes found both in the Bible itself, and in the later writings of the Church Fathers, including those produced in Anglo-Saxon England from the eighth to tenth centuries. These themes are orthodox and commonplace, and the scene at Rothbury presents them quite clearly. The whole scene is a complex commentary on the Ascension which proved Christ's divine nature, looked forward to the Second Coming, and established the Christian Church throughout the world by means of the written word transmitted by the apostles in the four Gospels:

Ðaera apostola waestm ðurhwunã on ecnyse, forðan ðe þurh heora bodunge is þes middaneard gebiged to ðam soðum geleafan, and to heora Scyppendes biggengum, mid dam wuniað on ecnyse þa ðe wel geendiað. Eac swylce ure gehwaeda waestm, þaet sind, ure godan daeda, þurh wuniað on ecnyse, and hi underfoð anginn aet ure geendunge.

(The fruit of the apostles continues to eternity, because by their preaching this world is turned to the true faith, and to the worship of the Creator, with whom will dwell to eternity those who end well. Likewise, our little fruit, that is, our good deeds, will continue to eternity and they will receive a beginning at our ending.)²²²

C.2: The Raising of Lazarus:

Within the Bible the Raising of Lazarus was regarded as a general prefiguration of the Resurrection, both of Christ and of the Dead. It was also interpreted, by later commentators, as an example for the individual Christian of the spiritual awakening from sin necessary for one's salvation.²²³ These notions, found in the biblical account, and elaborated in the writings of the Church Fathers, are clearly expressed in the iconography of the Lazarus scene at Rothbury. Lazarus is portrayed with the closed eyes of a sleeping or dead man whose grave clothes fall from him as he rises. Martha, to whom Christ explained the significance of the event, kneels beside him.

On his arrival at Bethany Martha greeted Christ with the news that her brother was already dead, but her sadness was mitigated by her faith in Christ and his resurrection. Jesus responded with words which were to become an article of faith:

Then said Martha unto Christ... 'I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.' Jesus saith to her, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' Martha said unto him, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said unto her, 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth

in me shall never die. Believest thou this?' She saith unto him, 'Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.'²²⁴

Following this the early Church Fathers explained the Raising of Lazarus as central to belief in the Resurrection. Christ's words and his action proved the Resurrection, while Lazarus' death and rebirth demonstrated the state of man prior to the loosing of the bonds of sin at confession. In addition, because Christ had addressed himself to Martha, she became an important part of the event and provided an example of the faith necessary for salvation and eternal life. These ideas are found in works such as those of Hilary of Poitiers, who describes Martha as an exemplary figure:

Namque cum Martham rogantem pro Lazaro interrogavit, an eos qui in se credidissent mori non crederet in aeternum, ad illa conscientiae suae fidem clocuta est dicens, 'Utique, Domine, ego credidi quia tu es Christus filius Dei, qui in hunc mundum venisti'; confessio haec aeternitas est, et fides ista non moritur...Magnum est enim fidei hujus sacramentum, et perfecta confessionis istius beatitudo est.

(So when he asked Martha, who was entreating him for Lazarus, whether she believed that they who believed in Him should not die eternally, her answer expressed that trust of her soul; 'Yea Lord I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who art come into this world.' This confession is eternal life; this faith has immortality,...For great is the mystery of this faith, and perfect the blessedness which is the fruit of this confession.)²²⁵

In the late fourth century, Ambrose further explained Christ's action as proof of the Resurrection to come which would bring mankind into the true light of eternal life:

Ostendit tibi Dominus etiam in Evangelio...quemadmodum resurgas. Non enim unum Lazarum, sed fidem omnium suscitavit: quod tu si credas, cum legis, mens quoque tua, quae mortua fuerat, in illo Lazaro reviviscit. Quid enim sibi vult...nisi ut futurae resurrectionis specimen praestaret, exemplum ederet?...Si miraris haec, disce quis imperaverit...Jesus Christi Dei virtus; vita, lux, resurrectio mortuorum; virtus erexit jacentem, vita gressum extulit, lux fugavit tenebras, reparavit obtutum, resurrectio vivendi gratiam reformavit.

(The Lord also shows you in the Gospel,...after what manner we shall rise again. For he raised not Lazarus alone, but the faith of all; and if thou believest, as thou readest, thy spirit also, which was dead, revives with Lazarus. For what does it mean...except that he would give us a visible proof, would set forth an example of the future resurrection?...If thou marvellest at this, consider who gave the command... Jesus Christ, the Power of God, the Life, the Light, the Resurrection of the Dead. The Power raised up him that was lying prostrate, the Life produced his steps, the Light drove away the darkness and restored his sight, the Resurrection renewed the gift of life.)²²⁶

In his commentary on John 11, Augustine echoes these sentiments, and adds that while Lazarus was dead, he was in fact sleeping, as all mankind does prior to the Final Resurrection.²²⁷ However, for Augustine, the important lesson to be learnt from the miracle was the need for confession; only after this could one be cleansed from sin and able to enjoy eternal life:

Quomodo processit ligatis pedibus miraris, et non miraris quia surrexit quatruiduanus? In utroque potentia Domini erat, non vires mortui. Processit, et adhuc ligatus est: adhuc involutus, tamen jam foras processit. Quid significat? Quando contemnis, mortuus jaces; ...quando confiteris, procedis. Quid est enim procedere, nisi ab occultis velut exeundo manifestari? Sed ut confitearis, Deus facit...Ideo cum processisset mortuus adhuc ligatus, confitens et adhuc reus; ut solverentur peccata ejus, ministris hoc dixit Dominus: 'Solvite illum, et sinite abire'... Quae solveritis in terra, soluta erunt et in coelo.

(Dost thou wonder how he came forth with his feet bound and wonderest not at that, that after four days' interment he rose from the dead? In both events it was the power of the Lord that

operated, and not the strength of the dead. He came forth, and yet still bound. Still in his burial shroud, he has already come outside the tomb. What does it mean? While thou despisest [Christ] thou liest in the arms of death; ...but when thou makest confession, thou comest forth. For what is this coming forth, but the open acknowledgement thou makest of thy state, in quitting as it were, the old refuges of darkness? But the confession thou makest is effected by God... Accordingly, when the dead man had come forth, still bound; confessing, yet guilty still; that his sins might be taken away, the Lord said to his servants: 'Loose him, and let him go'...Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.)²²⁸

From sources such as these the themes penetrated into the writings of the Anglo-Saxons. Thus the relevant section of Bede's commentary on John's account of the event is closely based on Augustine's,²²⁹ while the later Old English homilies explore the same themes as do Augustine, Ambrose and Hilary. The tenth-century Blickling Homilist describes Lazarus' grave and the trappings of death as symbolic of the sin which burdens all mankind before redemption was made available by Christ,²³⁰ but more relevant to the Rothbury scene is Aelfric's description of the grave clothes binding Lazarus as themselves symbolic of the sin binding mankind:

Crist araerde of deaðe þone stincendan Lazarum, and þaþa he cucu waes, þa cwaed he to his leorning-cnihtum, 'Tolysað his bendas, þaet he gan maege.' Þa alysdon hi þaes ge-educedan mannes bendas, þe Crist araerde to life...Aelc synful man þe his synna bediglað, he lið dead on byrgene; ac gif he his synna geandett þurh onbryrdnysse, þonne gaed he of þaere byrgene, swa swa Lazarus dyde, þaða Crist hine arisan het: þonne sceal se lareow hine unbindan fram ðam ecum wite, swa swa ða apostoli lichamlice Lazarum alysdon.

(Christ raised the stinking Lazarus from death, and when he was quickened, he said to his disciples, 'Loose his bands, that he may walk.' They loosed the bands of the requickened man, whom Christ had raised to life...Every sinful man who conceals his sins, lies dead in the sepulchre; but if he confess his sins

through inspiration, then he goes from the sepulchre, as Lazarus did, when Christ bade him arise; then shall the teacher unbind him from the eternal punishment, as the apostles bodily unbound Lazarus.)²³¹

Thus the iconographic details found in the Rothbury Lazarus scene express, almost precociously, the orthodox and commonplace themes associated with the event from an early date. The reference to the Resurrection as an article of faith was present in the biblical account and elaborated by the early writers of the Western Church and of Anglo-Saxon England. The presence of Martha, the recipient of Christ's assurance of the Resurrection, is designed to emphasise this aspect of the event. It is evident that the Resurrection and the life everlasting are being communicated at Rothbury by the way the figures have been manipulated to fit the confines of the shaft to include Martha.

Associated with the Resurrection and the Raising of Lazarus was the redemption of mankind from the darkness and bondage of sin. Lazarus' eyes are carved as closed, and are emphasised by the prominent position of Christ's index finger. He is literally being awakened into the light of the living world, from the darkness of death. As he rises, the grave clothes which bind him, fall away; he is released, through Christ's intervention, from the burden of sin and wickedness which kept him in the grave. Mankind is similarly redeemed by Christ, and purged of sin through confession.

D.3: The Damned in Hell:

The earliest accounts of hell are found in the Bible and its apocryphal books. Although most biblical texts refer to hell only generally as a pit or a fiery furnace, the Book of Revelation does describe the devil in hell as "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan".²³² The themes found in the biblical descriptions of hell were expanded in apocryphal texts, such as The Gospel of Nicodemus, which was translated into Old English in the eleventh century. At an earlier date this text formed the basis of the Old English poems attributed to Cynewulf in the late eighth century, the later poem Christ and Satan, and the seventh Blickling Homily, written in the tenth century.²³³ Another influential, if uncanonical text, was the apocryphal Visio Pauli, circulating as early as the fourth century, and known in England in the seventh. It inspired Bede's accounts of the visions of Fursa and Drihthelm, and was translated into Old English in the ninth century.²³⁴

While all the accounts of hell describe it as a place of fire, and some as a place of alternating heat and cold, it is only in the insular accounts that the serpents and snakes devouring the damned appear with any regularity,²³⁵ and it is these images which are most relevant to the scene of men struggling with serpentine monsters at Rothbury. Old English literature abounds with descriptions of hell as a place filled with serpents and dragons which are a constant source of torment for the naked and deformed souls of the damned. The imagery is

found in the seventh century in the writings of Aldhelm,²³⁶ and in the eighth century in Cynewulf's poem Elene where the fallen angels are described struggling in the grasp of dragons.²³⁷ Their fate merely foreshadows that of all sinners damned to hell for eternity; the later Old English poem, Christ and Satan, describes them as naked and struggling with the monstrous denizens of hell in a scene particularly relevant to the panel at Rothbury.

Hwilum ic gehere hellescealcas, gnornende cynn,
grundas maenan, niðer under naessum; hwilum nacode
men winnað ymb wyrmas.

(At times I hear the hell-slaves,^{the} howling^{race}, mourning in the realms of pain beneath the earth; at times men, naked, strive with serpents.)²³⁸

This was also the imagery presented in the writings of the later Anglo-Saxon homilists. The tenth-century Blickling Homilist, for instance, copying the earlier Old English Visio Pauli,²³⁹ described the damned eaten by water-monsters. Hell was:

nicra eardung and wearga and...on ðaem clif hangodan
on ðaem isigean bearwum manige swearte saula be heora
handum gebundne; and þa fynd þara on nicra onlicnesse
heora gripende waeron, swa swa graedig wulf.

(the dwelling place of water-monsters and evil spirits, and...many black souls bound by their hands hanging on the cliff in the icy groves, and the devils in the shape of water-monsters were clutching at them, just like ravenous wolves.)²⁴⁰

Aelfric, followed by Wulfstan, described the same features; hell is a place filled with serpents and monsters constantly devouring the naked and deformed souls of the damned.²⁴¹ For Wulfstan

their nakedness was part of their torment; the damned soul:

...nyste þonne, mid hwam he þone sceamiendan lichaman
bewruge.

(does not know with what he can cover up the private parts of the
body.)²⁴²

Thus throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, from the seventh to tenth century, building on early Christian texts, the descriptions of hell had certain features in common. Hell was filled with monstrous creatures, often resembling snakes which intertwined with each other and devoured the souls of the damned, who, often naked and deformed, struggled in their midst. The image is constant and provides a clear descriptive basis for the scene at Rothbury which uses common Germanic, Anglo-Saxon decorative motifs to compose a picture of hell and damnation familiar in the written accounts of Anglo-Saxon England. Hell on the base of the Rothbury Cross is filled with serpent-like monsters, and others "just like ravenous wolves", which "strive" with naked men hanging upside-down in their coils.

CONCLUSIONS:

The preceeding description, identification and discussion of the figural scenes of the three fragments of the Rothbury cross have provided much information regarding the iconography, style and date of the carving, and given some indication of the methods employed by the sculptor to produce the figural scenes.

I

One of the most interesting features of the iconography of the Rothbury cross is the fact that no one figural scene is reproduced in strict accordance with the iconography usually associated with the events depicted. The Crucifixion (pl.15) has the single moustachioed angel in the upper cross-arm grasping, and so presenting the halo of the crucified Christ, emphasising the glory of Jesus who overcame death on the cross. The authority of God's New Testament is highlighted in the Majestas (pl.17) by the unusual foregrounding of Christ within the arched frame, and depicting him uniquely with his index finger extended and resting on the book held in his left hand. Similarly, the veneration of Christ has been adapted to the confines of the cross-head (pl.16) (usually a scene such as this is found on the wall of a church or the full page of a manuscript), and it is expressed through attributes more commonly associated with secular art: namely the attributes of official power and authority. Below this, The Raising of Lazarus (pl.18) has been awkwardly rearranged in order to refer the scene to the article of faith concerning the "Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come";²⁴³ humanity is shown wrapped in the bonds of sin, sleeping until, at the intercession of Christ, it is granted absolution and redemption.

The greatest iconographical innovations however, are found in the Ascension and Hell scenes. In the depiction of the Damned in Hell on the base of the cross-shaft (D.3; pl.23) the figures

of the Damned, naked and deformed in their sinful state, struggle in the coils of the serpentine monsters whose intertwining bodies define the confines of the space and emphasise the continual nature of the struggle. The scene has been created especially for the cross-shaft from decorative motifs common to the artistic repertoire of Anglo-Saxon England at a time when the iconography of hell was not clearly established, although the themes depicted in the scene were long established in the descriptions of the subject found in early Medieval and Anglo-Saxon literature.²⁴⁴

A similar but more complex process was undertaken in the depiction of the Ascension on the other side of the base of the cross-shaft (A.3; pl.20). Given the lack of comparative material for Ascension scenes in the West from the sixth to ninth centuries, the conclusions concerning the Ascension at Rothbury have to be speculative, but it does seem clear from the iconography of the remaining fragments of the cross-shaft as a whole, and the details of the Ascension scene in particular, that the scene is based on a model which depicted an apocalyptic scene of the Second Coming. The apocalyptic nature of the model may have provided the inspiration for the metamorphosis of the central surround into the clouds pulled back by the angels to reveal Christ the Judge enthroned with a scroll; it may also have inspired the attribution of four gospels to the evangelists standing among the apostles. The context of the apocalypse is further pointed to by the existence of the rather stylised clouds in the upper arm of the cross-head of C.1 (pl.16). The

appearance there of a half-length figure emerging from the clouds in a scene which portrays figures presenting Christ with attributes of his power and glory, is in keeping with apocalyptic scenes of heavenly crowds presenting Christ or the Lamb with symbols of eternal life. At the top of the cross-shaft (D.2; pl.19) are the remains of a scene which included just such a group of the Blessed Community of Heaven.

It is apparent that (perhaps because of the dearth of Ascension scenes in Christian art during the seventh and eighth centuries) the sculptor was in the process of creating his own scene in keeping with both the general pattern of apocalyptic scenes, and with the canonical writings on the subject. These emphasise the relationship between the Ascension and The Final Resurrection, and the role of the apostles as witnesses to Christ's life, miracles, death and resurrection, and as preachers of his saving word throughout the world.

II

The style of the carving is very distinctive, partly because of the good condition of the cross-head and the fragment from the top of the shaft. The "Rothbury Type" face is common to all the figures on the Cross, as are the large, well formed hands and the clothing, carved in regular folds which are cut either in parallel tubes or in tightly concertinaed zig-zags.

The facial features and the hair, which is generally short, are characteristic of a figural style derived from the art of late antiquity, the art which flourished in the late fifth and early sixth century in the East, but which was also found in Italy during the same period.²⁴⁵ Entirely characteristic of this source form is the fifth-century Passion plaque in the British Museum (see pl.86).²⁴⁶ While the impact of this kind of art was vital to the Carolingian revival (it can be seen for example, on the ivory covers of the *Dagulf Psalter*, made at Aachen before 795 A.D.),²⁴⁷ it is also found in the late eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory showing the Assumption of the Virgin (pl.101).²⁴⁸ At Rothbury, it would appear that the model used was probably not too far removed from a late fifth- or early sixth-century date; the carving of the faces, the way the head of Christ in A.2 is slightly turned to the right, and the naturalistic variation of the faces of D.2 suggest the influence of a very good quality source of just such a date.

The same source is probably also responsible for the representation of the drapery in sharp pleated folds and of large hands which are relatively out of proportion.²⁴⁹ Thus the figures in the mid fifth-century stucco decoration of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna, and in the slightly later mosaics of S.Ambrogio in Milan, are characterised by these details. It has been argued that the large hands and inelegant proportions found at Rothbury point to the influence of a style which had become widespread in Italy by the ninth century.²⁵⁰ However these characteristics are also found elsewhere in Western art in

an eighth-century context in works based on the earlier Italian models; the figures found on the Lombardic Cividale altar and the font at Gemona are portrayed with immense hands, but here the clothing, although carved in regular parallel pleats, is more linear than is the Rothbury drapery.²⁵¹ Thus the large hands and the clothing featured on the Rothbury Cross, like the facial features, point to the influence of a late antique prototype. The modelled nature of the folds, although stylised and regular, further suggests that the source was not too far removed from the early prototype. In this connection it is important to stress that the folds are not linear patterns, but well formed and coherent; the plain tunic worn by the *Majestas Christi* is clearly covered by the classical *pallium*.

The facial features of some of the figures have been varied with the large drooping moustache; whilst being a popular motif of eighth-century Northumbrian sculpture, this may also have been derived from sixth-century imperial art. Similarly, the long hair of Christ in A.2 and the fillets in the hair of the figures on D.2 are also features of eighth-century insular art which derived ultimately from sixth-century Italo-Byzantine art. In summary, these (secondary) motifs, as well as the standard face, clothing and hands, all point to a figural style based fairly closely on the art of the fifth and early sixth century from Italy, which was at that time influenced by the "Hellenism" of Byzantine art.²⁵²

It is clear that the sculptor at Rothbury took the figural style found in his model(s) and reproduced it throughout the shaft, except for the upper group of figures in the Ascension scene of A.3. The repetition of this style and the resulting figural type impose a sense of unity on the monument as a whole, but it also enabled the sculptor to create scenes for which he had no models, or for which the model had to be radically altered. Examples of this have been seen in the way in which the standard figure type was adapted to create the distorted figures of the Damned in the Hell (D.3; pl.23), and to compile the crowd of eleven apostles under the ascending Christ (A.3; pl.22).

Granted that the sculptor has adopted a single model-type in some scenes, it is important to note how he exploited the variations he plays upon this basic form, and how he used some of the idiosyncratic features (such as the large hands) to emphasise theological points. The repetition of the Rothbury figures, standardised in the facial features, has the effect of highlighting any variations from the norm; the moustache, or its absence, thus becomes a prominent feature. Similarly the plain clothing of Christ and the angels, decorated only with a thin border, is contrasted with the clothing of the other figures, such as that in the right lateral cross-arm of C.1 which is covered with deeply incised lines. It seems therefore, that an attempt has been made to differentiate Christ and his angels from the other figures on the cross. Likewise, the large hands emphasise the books held by the apostles and the *Majestas Christi*, creating a theme which links the two fragments and makes

clear the importance of the written word. The sculptor has in effect made a virtue out of the fact that the figural style he has adopted is standardised and potentially repetitive.

III

The conclusion of the last section, that a fifth- or sixth-century model lies behind the forms, is supported by the iconography. The crucified Christ on the cross-head (A.1; pl.15) wearing a loincloth and stretching his arms out straight, with his fingers extended and thumb closed, transfixed by a prominent nail, all correspond to iconographic details which point to an early Western model, probably from fifth-century Italy. The attributes held by the figures on the other side of the cross-head (pl.16) (the *mappa circensis*, the wreathed crowns of victory and immortality, and possibly the plain double sceptre), show the influence of fifth-century Byzantine, or very early sixth-century Roman consular art (see eg. pls.109-110). The model which lay behind the Lazarus scene at the top of the shaft (C.2; pl.18) and provided the distinctive iconography dates from the fifth century; indeed, the relative positions of the figures, Martha's posture, and possibly Lazarus' closed eyes, seem only to be found in scenes of this date.²⁵³

Elsewhere the iconography of the scenes shows that these models have been modified by features that reflect eighth-century local preferences and the Hell scene (pl.23) is clearly an

original creation, based on literary sources, exploiting traditional insular zoomorphic ornament.²⁵⁴

IV

The evidence so far presented means that the date of the Rothbury Cross can now be re-examined. Other views, such as those of Coatsworth and Cramp,²⁵⁵ have argued for a ninth-century date on the basis of what was seen as Carolingian influence on the iconography of the Crucifixion and Crowd scenes (A.1 & D.2), and the identity of the symbols held by the figures on the reverse of the cross-head (C.1). However, as we have seen this identification is very doubtful and so cannot constitute a criterion for dating the cross-shaft. In addition, while much of the iconography of the cross is similar to that found in Carolingian art, most of the details are found in earlier Roman art, and more importantly, in insular art of the seventh and eighth centuries. Thus, there is no need for the iconography of the Rothbury cross to have been derived from ninth-century Carolingian art. Indeed it has its closest affinities with the art of fifth- and sixth-century Italy, and with that of eighth-century England. The earlier Italian prototype(s) could have been reproduced in a Northumbrian workshop at any time up to the mid or late ninth-century, but the influence of early to mid eighth-century Anglo-Saxon work suggests a period not pre-dating the middle of that century would be most relevant to Rothbury.

In this context it is worth noting the similarity of the Rothbury cross with those at Ruthwell and Bewcastle, a relationship that has often been pointed to.²⁵⁶ The common details are many and varied, and are limited to these three shafts; they include the deep dished triple cruciferous halo for Christ, the large drooping moustache, and the unusual view of the beasts in the vine-scroll and Hell scene at Rothbury. The vine-scroll itself is very similar to that at Bewcastle, deriving from a single stemmed "root" with V-shaped bindings at the offshoots. The Rothbury plaitwork is of a different kind to that at Bewcastle, but both crosses have large panels of this decoration set at the base of the shaft within a round-arched frame; this is an unusual feature not found elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon sculpture.²⁵⁷

The Bewcastle Cross is presently dated to the first half of the eighth century, and the Ruthwell Cross to the years centering round the mid eighth century;²⁵⁸ both are believed to be the work of the same generation of Northumbrian craftsmen. Given the similarities between these two cross-shafts and that at Rothbury, and taking account of the arguments undermining the necessity for Carolingian influences, it seems reasonable to propose a date within the latter half of the eighth century for the Rothbury cross. A date in the first half of the ninth century would remove the monument further from the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses than is reasonable. That it is later than these two monuments is clear; its carving is more stylised and its figural iconography is precocious in comparison.

The figural iconography of the Rothbury cross may also provide us with some indication of its cultural milieu. Although it has survived only in fragments, the iconography clearly shows that the sculptor who produced the monument was technically accomplished and aware of the theological implications of the scenes that were being carved. These are, for the most part, well carved and well planned. Even where different models were used there was an attempt to create a sense of unity by exploiting the standardised motif of the figural type. The theological points expressed by the iconography of the Crucifixion, the Ascension, and the Lazarus scene are canonical and orthodox, but, particularly in the case of the Ascension and Lazarus scenes, are fairly complex. The ability and awareness necessary to produce the figural iconography of the Rothbury cross indicates the presence of a religious centre which was well established, had access to sophisticated theological training, and to a wide range of artistic models.

Behind the Rothbury carving lies at least one early model imported from Italy which showed the Crucifixion, the Raising of Lazarus and possibly an apocalyptic scene; another which provided the inspiration for the attributes held by the figures in the arms of the cross-head (C.1) may well have been an early consular diptych, possibly used on the altar of the church with which the sculptor was associated. Either of these models may have provided the figural style used throughout the shaft. Other

models used were ultimately derived from Italo-Byzantine art of the sixth century, but were part of the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian repertoire by the eighth century.

As many of these motifs occur also (and only) at Ruthwell and Bewcastle it seems, as Cramp has argued on the grounds of the common style of deeply undercut carving, that the same workshop was responsible for all three monuments, and that the Jarrow/Wearmouth monastic complex was the most likely centre for this.²⁵⁹ By the late eighth century it was sufficiently well established to have developed over a long period the sculptural and theological expertise necessary for the creation of a monument as technically accomplished and iconographically complex as the Rothbury Cross. It is also likely to have had access to the wide-ranging artistic influences found on the cross-shaft, and it must be remembered that it was the Wearmouth abbots who imported the early series of paintings which decorated the church, and which are reputed to have included among their number scenes of the Crucifixion and the Apocalypse,²⁶⁰ scenes which could have provided the basis for most of the figural iconography of the Rothbury Cross.

CHAPTER V

THE SANDBACH CROSSES

INTRODUCTION:

In the market place at Sandbach (Ches.) stand two cross-shafts set in separate sockets placed on a large stepped base (pl.26). They seem to have been in this position in the mid-sixteenth century,¹ but were later broken up and the fragments dispersed through the surrounding countryside.² In 1816 those pieces which had been identified as parts of the cross-shafts were collected together and reassembled in their present position.³

Both crosses were made of local, medium-fine red-brown sandstone, but weathering and pollution have blackened them considerably in places. Due to the thoroughness of their destruction in the seventeenth century, not all the pieces were recovered for reassembly, and so plain pieces of similar stone, cut to shape, were used to replace the missing parts (see figs.8-9,12).

Radford, in his work on the crosses, set them within the context of a Saxon minster, which he saw as a centre of ecclesiastical organisation in the area, serving both local spiritual and administrative needs, and a wider missionary purpose.⁴ However, the only evidence for this is the early and continued existence of a very large parish centred on Sandbach.⁵

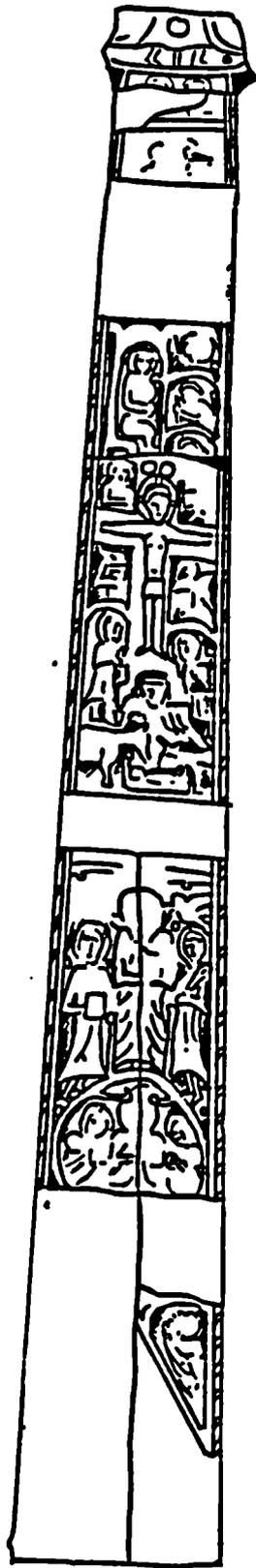
DESCRIPTION:

A full description of the Sandbach crosses and their decoration, both figural and non-figural, will be given here because, so far, there has been no attempt to describe them in any detail. The faces (N, S, E & W, denoting North, South, East and West respectively) of each cross will be dealt with in turn, and the decorative panels (A-Z) described from top to bottom, with the figures (a-z) being viewed within the individual frames (see figs.9-12). As in previous chapters, all references to right and left will be from the spectator's point of view unless otherwise stated.

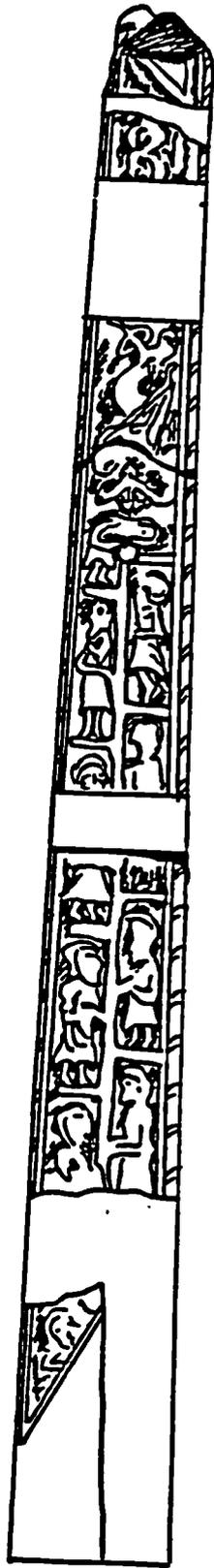
The Stepped Platform:

The present setting for the crosses dates from 1816, and, as Radford has argued, seems to be an adequate recreation of the arrangement which already existed in the sixteenth century, although clearly this is not indicative of the original Anglo-Saxon arrangement.⁶ It is composed of two steps which raise the top platform to approximately 86cm. above the level of the market place.

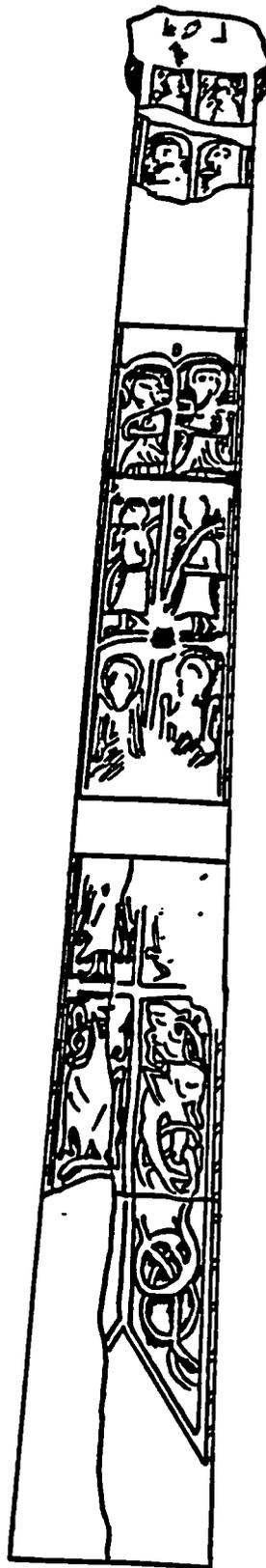
Set on this platform are two sockets; the one to the north carries the larger of the two cross-shafts (cross 1). The upper 31cm. of this stone are dressed and squared and would presumably have projected above the ground at some time, with the lower 34cm. being buried.⁷ If this was the case this stone may well have served originally as the socket for a cross-shaft.



1.E



1.N



1.W



1.S

Fig. 8

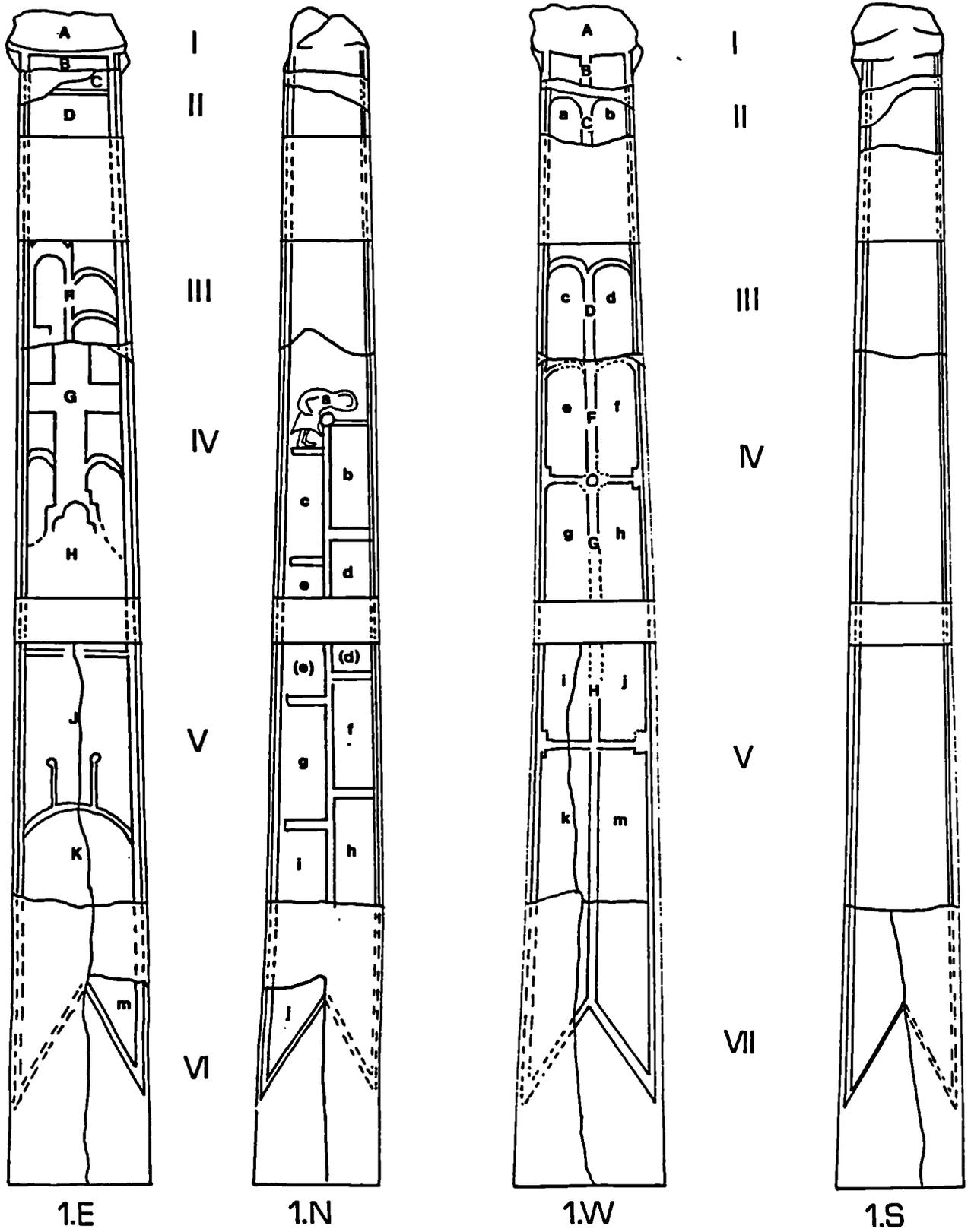


Fig. 9

The North Cross (1):

The present height of the northernmost shaft extends 4.56m. above the top of the stepped base. It was originally surmounted by a cross-head, of which 24cm. still remain. The rectangular shaft tapers from 76.8cm. x 55cm. at the base, to 60cm. x 45.6cm. at the top.⁸

All four faces of the shaft are decorated with carving which terminates well above the base of the shaft in pendant triangles (see figs.8-9). The faces are framed with cabled arris moulding which is set with an additional inner border moulding. Many of the figural scenes are further enclosed in variously shaped frames.

The cross has been reconstructed so that the face with most figural carving on it faces to the east (1E); this will be described first.

1. EAST FACE (1E):

Stone I (fig.9; pl.27):

A. Immediately below the upper broken edge of the cross-head are the remains of the lower half of a figure seemingly impaled on a thin vertical moulding which rises out of the lower circular frame of the scene. The centre of this figure was filled with a large circular boss. Its feet are turned to the right, and it wears a widely flared skirt with a scalloped hemline. At each corner of the skirt is a small

circular pellet, above which are the remains of what appear to have been two flanking figures arranged in the same manner as those found in the circular frame (K) below.

- B. The remains of this scene consist of two haloed heads which face forwards. Between, and on either side of them, are small pellets. The stone is broken at the level of the shoulders, but the fragmentary scene below (C) which was probably a continuation of B, suggests that the two figures were only half-length.

Stone II (fig.9; pl.27):

- C. This scene is very fragmentary, but seems to have been a continuation of the scene above (B). The carved remains may be the robed bodies of two human figures. A thick plain band separates it from the scene below.
- D. There are the vague outlines of a human head on the left, and possibly another on the right of the scene; the two are separated by a thin rod topped by a pellet. The remainder of the scene is too badly damaged to be identified.

Stone III (fig.9; pls.27-8):

The four figures (a-d) on this stone form part of a single scene (F) which is bounded at top and bottom by two breaks; the upper break borders on the plain slab of stone inset in the

nineteenth century, while the lower is placed directly on top of the next piece of the shaft (stone IV). However, a gap in the interlace pattern decorating the equivalent stones (III & IV) on the south face, shows that a few centimeters should separate them. A small section is therefore missing from the bottom of this scene.⁹

F.(pls.27-8) The figures are set within arched niches, one on the left, and three, placed one above the other, on the right (see fig.10).

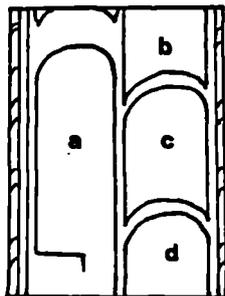


Fig. 10

a) This figure is set within an internal frame formed by an elaborate canopied throne with small turrets. The canopy and its supports are viewed from the front, but the seat which extends from the left-hand support is seen from the side; the right-hand support serves to separate 'a', sitting in the chair, from the other figures (b-d). The knees of the seated figure are contraposed to the rest of the body, being crossed and viewed from the side, while the torso and head face forwards. The nimbed, oval face of 'a' bears the remains of a fringe or head-covering over the forehead. On

either side of the head is a small pellet. The body is clothed in a long robe, and parallel lines which may indicate a cloak, cross over the right shoulder. The right arm is bent across the body at the elbow but the area above the arm is damaged; the remains of a large round halo cover the figure's chest and left shoulder. It would appear that 'a' held another figure in its arms.

b) This niche is filled with the bust of a figure who hangs upside-down from the broken upper edge of the stone. It is turned to the left with a thin outline discernible round the back of the head; a small pellet is placed on either side of the head. The remains of one arm show the figure presenting a small cylindrical object towards the canopy of the throne in 'a'.

c) A second, complete, bust, turned to the left, fills the central niche. It has short hair, a deeply punched eye, and a prominent nose. A thin outline passes from the forehead to the back of his neck. On either side of the head is a small pellet. The torso inclines slightly to the left and only the left shoulder and arm are depicted; the arm bends sharply upwards, and the hand presents a small cylindrical object towards the seated figure (a). The outline of this bust corresponds to that above (b) in the shape of the head, the angle of the bent arm, the size and shape of the cylinder and the position of the pellets.

- d) Only the outline of a head, turned to the left, remains in this lowest niche. The missing piece of carving indicates that only the shoulders and top half of the chest would have existed, and so it too would have been a bust, turned to face the figure (a) seated on the canopied throne.

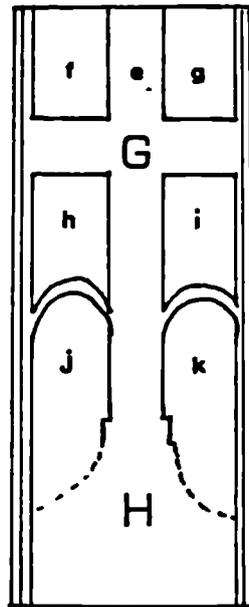


Fig. 11

Stone IV (fig.9; pl.28):

The carving of this stone has been described by Coatsworth¹⁰ and so only the main points of interest will be outlined below.

G.(pl.28) There is some question as to the number of figures involved in this scene (see fig.11). It is clear that it centres on a plain Latin crucifixion cross (Type A.1) which divides the field, extending the full length and width of the scene. The cross stands on a hollow stepped base and has no *suppedaneum*. It is also clear that the figure set on the cross (e) and those in its spandrels (f-i) are part of

the scene. However the two lower figures (j & k) could be involved in either this scene or the next (H).

- e) The figure on the cross is fully frontal and upright, but the head is tipped slightly to the right, and surrounded by a cruciferous halo. It has short hair, deeply punched eyes, and a clean-shaven oval face. The arms and hands are stiffly outstretched and no attempt has been made to separate the thumbs from the fingers. The chest, abdomen, and a brief loincloth have been crudely indicated. The legs are straight and the feet are arched and rigidly outplayed. Above the crucified figure's head, on the upper arm of the cross, are two small convex circles.

- f) In the upper left-hand spandrel of the cross is a half-length nimbed figure with short hair who faces forwards with his head tipped slightly towards the cross. He clasps a square object to his chest with both arms; this can probably be identified as a book.

- g) The figure in this spandrel of the cross is very badly damaged by the break in the stone, and only the remains of a square object, like the book held by 'f', can be discerned.

- h) An animal-headed, half-length figure is set on an arch below the horizontal arm of the cross; the arch extends from the lower arm of the cross at the level of the knees of the

crucified figure (e). The creature has long ears or horns and a long snout turned to face the cross on the right. The thick neck, which still bears incised marks, thrusts round into the body which is half-turned to the left. It also clasps a book-like object to its chest with both arms. A pellet lies above its right shoulder.

- i) An eagle is set on the upper edge of an arch which mirrors that on the other side of the cross (see h). It is seen in profile with its large curved beak turned to the cross; a large wing extends behind it to the right, touching the inner moulding bordering the scene. The bird is full length and is supported on the arch by its tail and feet. A book covers its chest but does not appear to be held in any way.

- j) This figure is contained by the arch, the crucifixion cross and its base. The head, facing forwards, is nimbed with deeply punched eyes, and has a long pointed chin which may have been designed to indicate a bearded face, as opposed to the clean-shaven type previously described (figures 'a' & 'e'). The body is half-turned towards the cross, and the feet are seen in profile turned to the right. The left arm is bent sharply at the elbow to cross the chest; the hand clasps a cylindrical object similar to that held by the busts above (b-d). The figure is clothed in a long flared robe which droops at the sides and has a slightly scalloped hemline. There is a pellet behind the left shoulder.

k) Another full-length human figure is placed under the arch on the right of the cross. The head, turned forwards, is nimbed and has deeply punched eyes, but the face is oval-shaped like those of 'a' and 'e'. Between the head and the inner moulding on the right is the familiar pellet. The body, seen from the side, is slightly inclined to the left and the shape of the shoulder and the angle of the arm crossing the body echo those of figures 'c' and 'j'. The figure wears a widely flared skirt which touches the base of the cross and the right-hand inner moulding; it is pleated and droops at each corner. The legs and feet are seen in profile, one behind the other, and the feet are arched over a pellet.

H.(pl.28) Immediately under the cross, and placed within its hollowed-out stepped base, is the nimbed head of an angel with an oval face and deeply punched eyes. Triangular wings flare out in a curved line from each shoulder and pass in front of the outline of the cross-base. They are deeply scored with lines that converge at the lowest points near the toes of the two figures (j & k) described above (see fig.11). Only the upper part of the torso is shown hovering over the two beasts and crib which form the rest of the scene.

Both animals are seen in profile, their fore-quarters emerging from the inner mouldings. They bend their heads over the crib in the center. The one on the left has an

awkwardly carved foreleg, a long neck stretched over the headstead of the crib, and a long snout. One ear is shown stretched in front of the angel. The animal on the right is shown with two ears, a relatively short snout, a neck which is stretched over the foot of the crib, and a curved foreleg. The rest of the body is damaged by the break in the stone at this point.

The crib lying between the two beasts is seen from the side, but has been cut away to show the swaddled figure within. The head of the crib extends above the child and terminates in a knob. The foot is slightly shorter and is differentiated, by an incision, from the feet of the child, who is nimbed.

Stone V (fig.9; pl.29):

This stone is cracked down the centre, and the upper left-hand corner is severely damaged. It is decorated with two groups of figures; one group (J) is bounded at the top by a thin plain moulding, by the inner mouldings at each side, and by the upper edge of the incomplete circular frame containing the second group of figures (K).

J.(pl.29) The scene involves three standing figures. That in the middle is defaced by the crack, but he appears to have been bearded and nimbed, although it is not possible to tell if the halo was cruciferous;¹¹ the face is deeply set on very rounded shoulders. The right arm appears to have

bent across the chest and a short rod extends over the right shoulder. Above the left shoulder is a large circular pellet. Nothing of the left arm can be clearly discerned, but it may also have bent across the body; it does not appear to hang at the side. The figure is clothed in a long robe with deeply incised lines of pleating which flare out to the sides. He stands on the circular frame which encloses the scene below, with feet which are sharply truncated in an attempt to depict them facing forwards. Extending up from the roundel, on either side of the central figure, are two lines which terminate in knobs just above the level of the knees. It is possible that these were intended to represent the front legs and arms of a throne.

On the left stands a bearded, nimbed figure whose face looks forward and leans slightly towards the centre, but whose body turns sideways. His right arm is bent and he holds a large square object resembling the books held by the figures (f-i) in the spandrils of the cross in G above; it covers his chest and the area of his left arm. The figure wears a long flared robe with straight pleats which droops at each side. His feet are slightly arched and his toes rest on the frame of the roundel below. Pellets lie above each shoulder and below his left heel.

The figure on the right is also bearded and nimbed. His left arm is bent across his chest and he holds a long

cylindrical object over his shoulder which is divided down the middle; it terminates above the shoulder with both halves curving outwards. An attempt has been made to indicate the right arm, down to the elbow, but the forearm disappears behind the cylindrical object. He wears a long robe similar to that worn by the figure on the left, and the remains of a pellet are found at his right elbow and beneath his arched feet, the toes of which rest on the frame of the roundel below.

Above his head is a bird, seen in profile, with both wings extending to the outer edge of the scene. A long beak touches the halo of the central figure, and an arched foot stretches back to the right. A pellet lies behind its head, in the curve of the body and wings.

K.(pl.29) This group of three figures is contained within a roundel, but the very bottom of the circle is broken off and a crack running the length of the stone, cuts through the central figure of the group.

Only the upper three-quarters of this central figure remain. It has a prominent nimbus, but the face has been obliterated. The shoulders are hunched up round the chin as on the central figure above. Both arms are bent at the elbow across the chest, and it is possible, but not absolutely clear, that a cylindrical object is held at an angle across the chest towards the left shoulder; nothing

passes over this or the other shoulder. Below the arms the outline of the garment flares out widely before it reaches the lower broken edge of the stone, but it is not possible to tell if the figure was seated, or simply wore a widely flared and pleated skirt.

On either side of this figure, two nimbed and bearded figures emerge from the outer frame of the roundel in a sweeping motion (see A above). Their heads are lower than that of the central figure, and the skirts of their robes are heavily pleated. The figure on the right has a prominently rounded shoulder. His arm, bent across his body, holds two long thin objects which terminate, near the central figure's left elbow, in two small squares, one of which is hollowed out in the centre. There is a large pellet between the head of this figure and the left shoulder of the central figure. Above his head, and that of the left-hand figure, are curving lines which emerge from behind the frame of the roundel, either as a tendril, or as extensions of the feet of the two flanking figures in the scene above (J).

The figure on the left is more weathered than that on the right. The outline of the halo, face, hunched shoulders and robe can be identified. Across one shoulder, and touching the central figure's right elbow, is a book-like object (see G & J; fig.9), which may have been held in the

right hand.

Stone VI (fig.9; pl.29)

This stone forms part of the base of the cross-shaft and is decorated with the remains of a terminal pendant triangle, bounded across the top by an arch.

Within the niche (m) formed by this arched triangle is a roughly circular shape, possibly the remains of a human head, which surmounts a triangular wing. This hangs down into the angle of the frame, and passes up under the head towards a smaller circle.

1. NORTH FACE (1.N):

Stone I (fig.9; pl.30):

The north face of the cross-head is too damaged to discern the carving above the fragmentary piece of the cross-arm. The area below the cross-arm contains some worn carving which may have been part of the ribbon interlace decorating the stone below (II).

Stone II (fig.9; pl.30):

The whole face of this stone is covered by a panel of ribbon interlace formed by a thick central strand, crossed and intertwined by a thinner strand which forms knots in the twists of the central ribbon.

Stone III (fig.9; pls.30-1):

A winged beast decorates this piece of stone. The body is pierced by what appears to be a continuation of the thin strips of interlace found above (stone II), and it may be that the thicker central strand was a continuation of the tail of the beast. The wing passes up the panel, crossing the body from left to right. It is deeply incised with lines converging at the tip which terminates in a small curl. A pellet lies to the left of the body. Beneath the break, the head of the beast is shown in profile at the top of the next stone (IV). He has a large eye and bulging eyelid. His strong jaws gape open to reveal a tripartite tongue, the forks of which are interspersed with small pellets.

Stones IV & V (fig.9; pls.31-2):

The remainder of stone IV, and all of the next (V) is decorated with a series of human figures (a-j) facing each other in a stepped arrangement of cells on either side of a plain vertical moulding which terminates at the top in a large round boss (see fig.9). Immediately above the framework, and bent double over it, is a human figure (a) seen in profile. He has a clean shaven face, short curly hair and a deeply punched eye. From his nose to the nape of his neck is a thin outline similar to those on the busts of 1.E (b-d). The right shoulder is emphasised and the arm slightly bent. He holds a short cylindrical object across his waist. His short skirt is flared, and droops sharply at the corners. His knees are bent and he rests his toes on the upper rung of the frame on the left.

Although fairly worn the other figures (b-i) seem to have had certain features in common. For instance, all their heads are seen in profile with elongated chins, indicating that they may have been bearded. Indeed the chin of 'd' extends out to the central moulding like a tendril (see fig.9; pl.31). From the forehead to the nape of the neck runs the thin outline found elsewhere on the cross-shaft (1.E, 1.W). Some of the figures lack an inner line marking the hairline while the outline round the head of 'g' terminates in a small curl at the base of the neck (see pl.32); this makes identification of this outer line uncertain. Each man has an exaggerated shoulder; on 'g' the accentuation is such as to suggest a padded short sleeve, or a cloak thrown over the shoulder. The short skirts worn by the figures are widely flared and droop sharply at the corners. On some the remains of pleating are still visible (b, c, f, g). The arm of each figure is bent across the waist to grasp a frond-like object which curves out from the central divide; this does not pass behind or over the central line, but protrudes from it on the same plane. The frond grasped by 'b' passes across the body and over the shoulder. Elsewhere the carving is too worn to tell where their fronds terminated, but in each case they seem to have crossed over part of the figures' chests.

Except for 'b' the figures are set within the frames in unvarying and repeated positions. However, 'b' has his knees bent in a manner comparable with 'a', and his neck is elongated in an extraordinary manner so that the base of his head falls

onto his back; his nose and chin point sharply upwards.

Stone VI (fig.9; pl.32):

The series of cells terminates at the base of the shaft in a pendant triangle on the left, filled with a bearded figure (j) whose head is tilted back to fill the field. He appears to have had a halo. His right arm is bent sharply at the elbow and reaches across to the edge of the niche. The lower point of the triangle is filled with his robe which emerges from the frame and is heavily pleated in the manner of the flanking figures in J on 1.E (see pl.29).

1. WEST FACE (1.W):

Stone I (fig.9; pl.33):

- A. This area of the cross-head is so weathered that no carving remains.

- B. The worn remains of two human figures face each other in square-headed niches formed by a thin vertical moulding. The left-hand cell contains a small pellet behind the figure's head. It is not possible to decipher any further details clearly, but both figures may have been full length.

Stone II (fig.9; pl.33):

- C. This scene consists of two figures (a & b) facing left, each within round-headed niches.

- a) The arm(s) of this figure appear to have been outstretched and there is a small pellet in front of the face. There may be another pellet behind the head; alternatively something was carried over the shoulder which may have crossed into the niche on the right (b).

- b) This figure is too worn to decipher any details. There may have been a pellet in front of the face.

Stone III (fig.9; pls.33-4):

Above the two arched niches (c & d) which decorate this stone is a quatrefoil motif which was probably added during the nineteenth-century reconstruction.

D.(pl.34) The two figures (c & d) face in the same direction and are linked by a cord which is held by 'c'.

- c) This figure had a clean-shaven face and short hair. The thin outline surrounds his head from the forehead to the nape of the neck where it terminates in a curl similar to figure 'g' on 1.N. His left shoulder is very rounded and his arm bends sharply at the elbow to pass across his body. The long thin cord is looped round his hand, passes over his shoulder, behind the central vertical moulding, and around the outstretched hands of 'd'. He wears a short, widely flared skirt with deeply incised pleats. Only his legs are seen, the feet being lost in the break of the stone at this point. A large curled tendril, similar to that noted in the

roundel (K) on 1.E, emerges from the left-hand edge of the niche.

- d) This figure also walks to the left but his face is turned to look at the spectator. His head is surrounded by a cruciferous halo, similar to that of the crucified figure (e) on 1.E (see fig.11). He is bearded and has short hair. His left shoulder is accentuated and his arm bent at the elbow to cross over his body so that his right hand is enclosed with the left in the loop of the rope held by 'c' in front of him. He wears a long, flared and heavily pleated robe.

Stone IV (fig.9; pl.34):

The carving on this face of the stone is very damaged, but was originally divided into four compartments (e-h) with a large circular hole, possibly secondary, lying where the four niches intersect with each other. Although the top of the stone is much battered by the break the beginnings of an arch can be seen on each side of the shaft, indicating that the upper cells (e & f) had arched tops like those enclosing the figures (c & d) above. The horizontal moulding separating figures 'e' and 'f' from 'g' and 'h' however, seems to have terminated, adjacent to the inner roll moulding on each side, in a small oblong block.

It would appear that 'e' and 'f' form one scene (F), and that 'g' and 'h' form another (G).

F.(see pl.34)

e) This figure, like those above, is seen in profile walking to the left. He is clean-shaven and had short hair. There is no sign of an outline surrounding the head. He is barrel-chested, and his left shoulder is rounded. His arm is bent across his waist to hold a long thin object which hangs limply from his hand, and seems to pass behind his body to emerge from his left shoulder and extend to the vertical dividing moulding. His waist is tucked in to the right, so that his torso bends forward. He wears a knee-length skirt which is flared and pleated. On either side of his head is a small pellet and in front of his chin and chest is a piece of carving which resembles a curved tendril. At the upper end it terminates in a small boss; at the lower end it thickens and curls round towards the figure.

f) The niche contains a stiff figure, who also walks to the left, carrying a staff-cross over his left shoulder. The head is extremely large, but there is no indication of the surrounding outline. It is unclear whether or not the figure was bearded. The left shoulder is exaggerated and the arm bends across his body to hold the somewhat limp cross; the body is clothed in a short, widely flared skirt. A large pellet lies between the chin and the central vertical moulding.

G.(pl.34)

g) The niche contains a nimbed angel who has short hair.

Wings, incised with vertical parallel lines, rise sharply from the shoulders and fall on either side of the body in a manner comparable with that found on the angel in H on 1.E (see pl.28). The right arm is bent across the body and it may hold a small cylindrical object. There is no sign of the left arm and the body below the waist has been destroyed.

h) Even less of this figure survives. It was apparently seated sideways in a high-backed chair which curved over at the top and terminated in a knob. The face, looking towards the angel, is long, and the back of the skull is very rounded; there is a small curl at the base of the neck. A long thin vertical object is held out towards the angel, but it is unclear which hand holds it. The figure is broken off just above the waist.

Stone V (fig.9; pl.35):

The carving on this stone is also divided into four cells (i-m). The upper two (i-j) would appear to have composed a figural scene (H), but the lower two (k-m) are filled with animal ornament. The upper horizontal border of 'i' and 'j' has been lost, but that dividing 'i' and 'j' from 'k' and 'm' has the same block-ended terminals as the moulding separating 'e' and 'f' from 'g' and 'h' on the stone (IV) above. A crack runs the length of the stone to the left of the central vertical moulding.

H.(pl.35)

- i) The upper section of the niche is very badly damaged but below are the remains of the lower half of an angel. The right wing, similar to that of the angel (g) above, the elbow of the right arm bent across the body, a widely flared skirt and two legs, with the feet out-splayed, are clearly seen. A slightly curved, long thin object with a projection near the end is seen to the right of the figure, but its identity is not clear.

- j) The contents of this niche have been completely obliterated.

- k) A winged beast fills this cell. He is incomplete and defaced by the crack running the length of the stone, but was apparently placed with his back next to the central vertical moulding. The wing protrudes from the shoulder under the head which is turned up towards the horizontal moulding. He has a deeply punched eye and a bulging eyelid, and an open jaw with a long tongue which develops into a twisted strand of interlace. At the back of the head the ear curls over in a small lappet. The front leg hangs down from the chest. No hindquarters are visible and the animal appears to rest on a plain circular moulding which is damaged by the break of the stone.

- m) The winged beast in this niche is a mirror image of that next to it (k), with its back also turned towards the central vertical moulding, and the head tipped backwards. He has a

pronounced muzzle and gaping jaw with the tongue that develops into interlace, large eyes and bulging eyelid. The ear curls over into a small lappet and his wing arches up from the shoulder and falls over the body to terminate in a small knot, like that of the winged beast on 1.N (see pls.30-1). The front leg hangs down from a prominent chest, ending in a foot arched over a series of circular strands of interlace which grow out of the tail of the beast to cut across the wing-tip. This interlace continues on into the next stone (VII).

Stone VII (fig.9; pl.35):

This stone forms part of the base of the cross-shaft and contains the right-hand terminal pendant triangle which is filled with the knotted interlace continuing from the stone above. The interlace ends in the apex of the triangle, with an animal head similar to that found among the vinescroll of 1.S (see pls.36-7).¹²

1. SOUTH FACE (1.S) (figs.8-9):

Stone I:

The remains of the cross-head seem to have been filled with a regular plaitwork design.

Stone II:

Fragments of the plaitwork found on the cross-head continue on this stone.

Stone III:

Two complete knots of the plaitwork featured on I and II above, fill this stone as well.

Stone IV:

Another knot is found at the top of this stone. However the upper portion of the knot is missing, indicating that the two original pieces of the shaft (III & IV) should have been set further apart in the reconstruction to allow for both the regular interval between the knots, and the missing part of the knot at the top of this stone (see 1.E).

Below this third knot the plaitwork runs into the inhabited vine-scroll which fills the remainder of this stone.

There are no leaves on the vine-scroll which is arranged in a single-stem spiraliform scroll with fleshy offshoots. Small pellets are interspersed among the tendrils the length of the vine. The two spirals on this stone are intertwined with animals seen in strict profile. The uppermost beast hangs down with his hindquarters growing out of the plaitwork above. His head with bulging eye, lapp^fet ear, long snout, gaping jaw and large tongue, is turned backwards.

The second animal runs up the shaft. A long tongue emerges from his gaping jaws, and intertwines with the vine-scroll. A lapp^fet extends from the back of the head and grows into a vine tendril. The creature's feet are arched over into two claws. A

short curly tail fills a small space in the vine-scroll; the spiral enclosing the animal's forequarters terminates in a gaping-jawed animal head.

Stone V:

The vine-scroll featured on the stone above continues on this stone. Immediately below the upper break a small hare-like creature leaps out of the next spiral. His tail grows under the vine stem, to be lost in interlace on the other side. A long front leg hangs straight down to pass behind the stem of the vine. The back leg is similarly extended, over the vine, but ends in a gently curving tendril.

At this point the stem spirals round to terminate in a small animal head. Contained within the spiral and passing in front of it down the shaft is the figure of a man (pl.36). He has the thin outline round the back of his head seen on the other figures (see 1.N & 1.W), a deeply punched eye and a slightly open mouth. From his chin grows a long jutting beard similar to those noted on 1.N. His left arm is bent across his body and he wears a short, slightly flared and pleated skirt. His legs are parted; the one to the left passes behind the vine branch, and grows into a curling tendril, while the one on the right has a rounded knee and a slightly arched foot, below which is a pellet. A larger pellet is placed near the corner of his skirt.

Opposite this figure in a space between the vine and the outline of the panel, is another small animal. It has a curled lappet extending from the back of its round head and a long thin tongue. Its front leg is outstretched but its hindquarters, with a small tendril-like tail, are curled up into the confines of the space.

In the lowest spiral is a bird with a large round head and pronounced beak (pl.37). Its wing, ending in a curl, and its tail, stretch up and out from the body. The foot is forked into two claws. A small pellet lies by the foot. The volute of the scroll in which the bird is enclosed ends in a gaping-jawed animal head.

Stone VII:

This stone contains the terminal pendant triangle on the left of the shaft which is filled with the remains of the vine-scroll featured above (IV & V). It appears to have ended in a loose knot in the apex of the triangle.

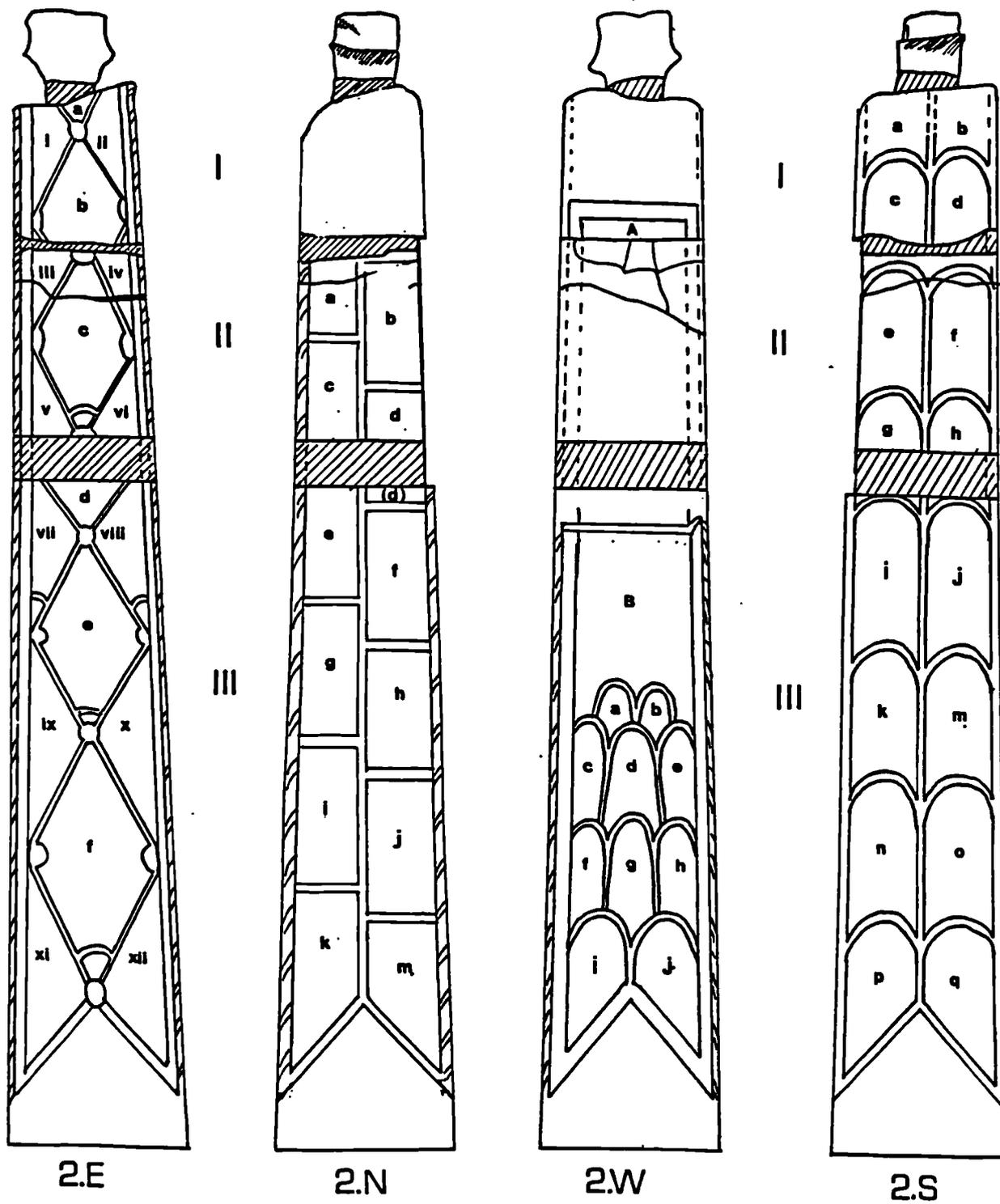


Fig. 12

The South Cross (2):

The southernmost shaft now stands at a height of 3.2m. It measures 60 x 47.5cm. at the base, and tapers towards the top. An Anglo-Saxon cross-head is set on the broken top of the shaft (see pls.38,45), but it appears to have belonged to a smaller cross and so will not be discussed here.¹³ The faces of the shaft are bounded by a cabled arris moulding like those on the larger cross (1). On the east and west faces the decoration is further framed by a narrow border of plaitwork, and on all faces the carving ends in pendant triangles.

As the cross now stands, the main figural carving is on the west face (2.W), and this will be described first.

2. THE WEST FACE (2.W):

Stone I (fig.12; pl.38):

The top of this stone is so worn that no carving has survived. Above the lower break however, is a strip of plaitwork in which a human head has been inserted at each end. Although weathered, the head on the left clearly faces forwards, and is clean-shaven with short hair. It is not clear whether it had a halo. The shoulders have been reduced to a small oblong strip passing horizontally under the chin below which the stone is broken.

A.(pl.38) Between the plaitwork and the break was a figural scene. In the upper left-hand corner is the top of a head;

the same thin outline and hair-line of the profile figures on the first cross is used (see 1.E-S). To the right of this head are three unidentifiable circular shapes.

Stone II (fig.12; pl.38):

The face of this stone is deeply recessed from the surfaces of Stones I and III. On the other faces (S, E & N), the surfaces as reconstructed, have been set flush with each other. It must also be noted that on 2.N and 2.S, the arris cable mouldings adjoining 2.W are missing (see fig.10). This suggests that the original face of this stone has been cut away, and that the pieces of carving found on this face are secondary. It cannot be determined whether they were added in the nineteenth century at the time of the reconstruction or earlier.

Stone III (figs.12-13; pl.39):

The very top of the stone is plain, and the figural carving which fills the remainder of the stone is bordered at the top by a thin plain horizontal moulding. Most of the figures (a-j) are contained in a series of arched cells placed in rows of two or three, one above the other. The decoration is bounded on each side by the plaitwork border, which at the level of cells f-h, is interrupted by a human head in profile. Both of these have the outline round the back of the head; that on the right ends in the small curl noted on 1.N and 1.W. The series of niches ends in two arched pendant triangles (i & j).

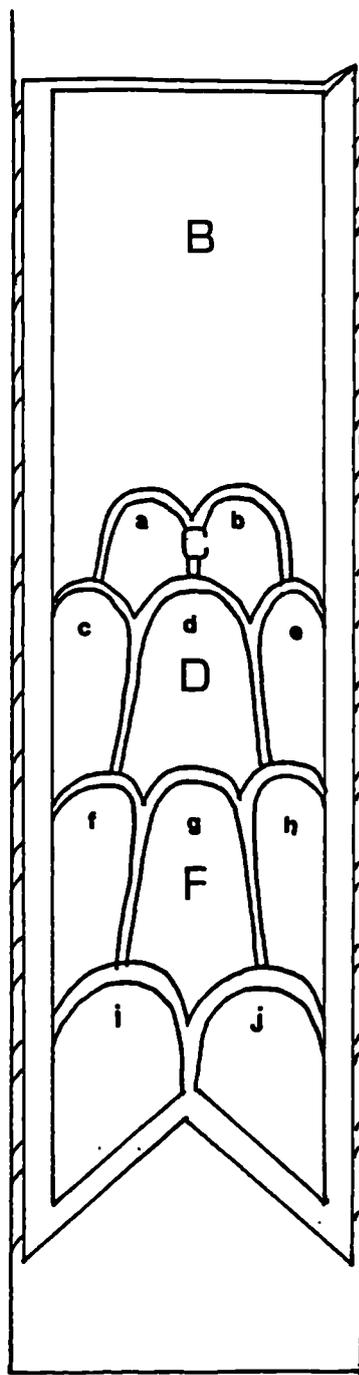


Fig. 13

B.(fig.13; pl.40) The scene immediately below the narrow horizontal border involves three figures, of which the central one is the largest. Although worn, this figure is clearly haloed and had a bearded face. His shoulders are rounded and his arms bent across his body at the waist. He wears a straight, knee-length robe. His knees are modelled and his feet both turn to the right with one foot running into the other to form a straight line. By his right leg and under his right heel are small circular bosses. Across his right shoulder extends a thick rectangular staff-cross; a small pellet lies on either side of the upper arm of this cross. A thin rod extends over his left shoulder into the bird which hovers above the figure on his left. As in J on 1.E, the bird's wing extends out and up to the top right-hand corner of the scene, its tail stretches to the plaitwork border, and its beak touches the halo of the central figure.

Both flanking figures are bearded and haloed. Their faces look forwards but their bodies are turned to the centre. The figure on the right of the scene wears a gently flared knee-length robe which droops a little at the corners. His feet, slightly arched, stand on the left foot of the central figure. His left arm is slightly bent and he holds a long cylindrical object across his chest, which may have had an incision down the centre; it passes in front of his right shoulder and ends by the central figure's left elbow.

The figure on the left of the scene wears a widely flared knee-length robe with a sweeping hemline. His knees are modelled, his legs in a striding position, and his feet slightly arched. His right shoulder bears the mark of a cloak or short-sleeved tunic. His arm is bent across his waist and he carries a well-defined, small square object, like the books featured on 1.E.

Below this figure is an upturned head. It has short hair and the familiar thin surrounding outline. Under the right-hand figure is another head and shoulders. The head is also upturned, but no details have survived. Between these two heads are the first of the arched cells that fill the remainder of the shaft.

C.(fig.13; pl.40)

- a) This niche, and that next to it (b) are relatively small and rest on the second row of arches. It contains the worn outline of a head and shoulders. The head appears to have been clean-shaven and was surrounded by a halo which ends abruptly at the level of the ears. The shoulders are cut away by the lower arches.
- b) The outline of this figure conforms almost exactly to 'a', although it is slightly smaller.

D.(fig.13; pl.41)

- c) The figure in this arched niche faces right in full profile. It is clean-shaven, has short hair, and the thin

outline passing from the forehead to the back of the neck. The arm is bent across the body and the leg is tucked awkwardly under the body in a kneeling position.

- d) The central nich in this row of cells contains a three-quarter length nimbed figure who faces forwards. The right shoulder is hunched up and the left shoulder obscured by a halo. Both arms seem to support an object which crosses the chest. The lower part of the body is cut away by the arches below.
- e) The figure in this niche is a mirror image of that found in 'c', except that the head is slightly bowed onto the chest. The arm is clearly bent across the body and the leg is tucked underneath in a kneeling position.

F.

- f) A full-length figure stands in profile facing the centre and wearing a short skirt. It has a large head which is bowed onto its chest, and displays the short hair and thin outline of the other profile figures. The arm is bent across the body, carrying what may be a small rectangular object.
- g) A very worn three-quarter length figure fills this niche. All that can be discerned is the outline of a halo (possibly ending at the ears like those of 'a' and 'b' above), the shoulders, and the body cut away by the two lower arches.

- h) A full-length figure which is the mirror image of 'f' stands facing 'g'. The head is very worn, but is bowed onto the chest. The right shoulder is hunched up, and the arm bends across the body carrying a cylindrical object over its shoulder.
- i) This triangle contains the awkwardly upturned head of an angel, seen in profile and turned to the right. It has short hair and the standard surrounding outline. Below the head is the wing which fills the apex of the triangle. From beneath the wing a veiled hand is thrust up under the chin.
- j) The angel in this triangle is a mirror image of that next to it (i), having the awkwardly placed head facing left, the short hair and outline, the wing and the upthrust hand.

2. SOUTH FACE (2.S) (fig.12; pls.42-4):

The south face of the cross is filled with the remains of fourteen human figures and two angels set in a framework of arched niches arranged in pairs running the length of the shaft. Some of the figures are frontally positioned, others are seen from the side. Those which are complete show similar characteristics. They have long chins, deeply punched eyes, prominent noses and short hair. Those which face forwards have thin haloes that tuck in abruptly under the ears. Like the figures on Cross 1 and 2.W, the profile figures have the thin outline running from the forehead to the nape of the neck in addition to the hair-line. The full-length figures wear widely

flared short skirts which are heavily pleated; the lines run out to the sides indicating a parted overskirt covering a plain under-garment. The knees are modelled and the feet arched. Both profile and frontal figures have lines over their shoulders indicating a padded sleeve, or a cloak flung over the shoulders. All the figures carry some form of staff or rod.

Stone I (fig.12; pl.42):

- a) Only the lower half of this figure remains. He is turned to the left and carries a long thin staff which touches his toes.
- b) Nothing remains of the carving in this compartment.
- c) Only the head of this figure remains, turned to the right to face the figure next to it (d).
- d) Only the barest outline of this figure's head survives, turning to the left to face 'c' across the central vertical moulding.

Stone II (fig.12; pl.42):

A plain area surmounts the arched niches containing the first pair of figures. A crack runs the width of the stone just below the uppermost arches.

- e) The face of this figure looks forward but is set at an angle on his shoulders. He carries a thin rod over his right

shoulder and walks to the centre of the shaft.

- f) The head of this figure is positioned in a manner similar to that of 'e', and he also walks towards the centre. In his left hand he clutches, at waist height, a long staff which passes over his left shoulder and behind the outer moulding. At the lower end it curves slightly upwards into the central vertical moulding.
- g) In this compartment only a head survives above the break. It faces forwards, and is set deep in hunched-up shoulders.
- h) The head in this niche is turned to the right. The figure may have carried a staff over its shoulder, but nothing below the level of the shoulders has survived.

Stone III (fig.12; pls.43-4):

- i) This full-length figure marches to the right carrying a staff over its shoulder which crosses into the outer moulding (pl.43).
- j) This full-length figure is a repeated version of that on the left (i). The staff it carries over its shoulder however, terminates before the central vertical moulding, although it does appear to turn up at the bottom into the outer moulding (pl.43).

- k) This figure is awkwardly positioned with his head and body turned to the left while his feet are both out-splayed. His arm crosses his body and holds vertically before him, a staff which extends from the level of his chin to the toes of his right foot (pl.43).
- m) This figure walks to the right, and except for the foot nearest the central vertical moulding, is an exact copy of the figure on the left (k), holding a staff of similar proportions before him (pl.43).
- n) This figure faces forwards. A deep line traverses the top of the chest indicating a thick cloak or collar round his shoulders. Both arms are bent across his body, but there is no indication of what, if anything, he carried. His legs are widely splayed and between his feet is a small circular boss (pl.44).
- o) This figure is positioned in much the same way as 'n', standing over a small boss, but his head is set at an angle on his shoulders and he carries a short rod, clasped at an angle in both hands. It passes over his right shoulder and ends between the legs, just below the hemline of his skirt (pl.44).
- p) An angel, similar to that in the left-hand pendant triangle (i) of 2.W, fills this niche. It is however, in better condition than the one on the west face. The short hair and

thin outline are clearly visible, as is the upturned profile. The wing, sweeping up behind the head falls into the point of the triangle in gently curving rows of feathers. From beneath the wing a hand, covered in a long veil, is held up to the figures above (pl.44).

- q) Another angel, comparable with, but in better condition than, the right-hand angel (j) of 2.W, fills this pendant triangle (pl.44). It is a mirror image of that next to it.

2. EAST FACE (2.E) (fig.12; pls.45-6):

Enclosed in the vertical plaitwork borders of the east face of the shaft are a series of human figures and animals enclosed in diamond-shaped rhomboids (a-f). These are placed one above the other the length of the shaft with a large circular boss being placed at the points of intersection. There is a similar boss in each of the side angles. The triangles (i-xii) formed between the lozenges and the outer border are also filled with human figures or animals (see fig.12).

Stone I (fig.12; pl.45):

- a) Only the lower angle and intersecting boss of this rhomboid remain.
- b) The outline of a prancing heraldic beast with back-turned head fills the remains of this lozenge. No other details survive.

i) The remains of this triangle contain an animal's hind-quarters.

ii) The triangle opposite is filled with the lower half of a human figure wearing a long drooping robe. He is turned to the left and carries before him a cylindrical object in his left hand.

Stone II (fig.12; pl.45):

c) The contents of this lozenge are damaged at the top around the crack which runs the width of the stone, but it appears to have been filled with interlace. Placed within the lower reaches are two confronting, diminutive human figures standing on a small arched platform stretched across the lower point of the rhomboid.

iii-vi) The contents of these triangles are too damaged to decipher.

Stone III (fig.12; pl.46):

d) Only the lower half of this rhomboid remains. It is filled with interlace, but unlike 'c', it is uninhabited.

e) This (central) lozenge is filled with a burly figure facing squarely forward. He has a small halo and his head is set deep on hunched, rounded shoulders. His left arm is not discernible but his right is bent and grasps a long thin rod at an angle across his body (see 'o' of 2.S - see pl.44). He

wears a flared and heavily pleated over-garment. His knees are modelled and his arched feet stand on a small platform like that in rhomboid 'c' on the stone (II) above.

f) This rhomboid also contains a forward facing haloed figure, but of less intimidating proportions than those of 'e'. He wears the same clothes, carries a similar rod in an identical position, and stands on the small arched platform. He has, in addition, a small pellet above each shoulder.

vii) The triangle contains a figure who is turned to the right. He wears a short, flared, pleated overskirt and stands, feet arched, on a small ledge that grows from the second lozenge (e). He has a prominent nose and long chin and appears to have the thin outline round his head. The arm is bent across the body and stretches out to grasp the lower frame of rhomboid 'd'.

viii) The figure in this triangle is a copy of that in the triangle opposite (vii). The figure faces left, grasping the frame of 'd' and stands on a small ledge which grows from 'e'.

ix) This triangle contains a confused knot of interlace.

x) A prancing beast fills this triangle. The head, with a small lappet growing from the back of the neck, fills the

upper angle while the fore- and hind-quarters fill the other two angles.

xi) This triangle, which forms the left-hand pendant, contains a human figure, turned to face the centre, who grasps the lower part of 'f'. The profile is similar to those of the figures in 'vii' and 'viii' above. The body, wearing a long pleated robe, sweeps back into the outer frame and lower point of the triangle, in a manner similar to those of the flanking figures in A and K on 1.E (pls.27,29).

xii) In the other pendant triangle is a another human figure who faces the first (xi) across the intervening rhomboid (f) which he also grasps. The profile is the same and the short hair with the thin outline is clearly visible. The body, similarly dressed, also sweeps back into the apex of the triangle.

2. NORTH FACE (2.N):

Stone I (fig.12; pl.47):

This stone is filled with two ribbon animals that wind their way up the sides of the panel. They have large eyes with bulging eyelids, and a small lappet at the back of the head. From their open jaws grow forked tongues. One fork grows up between the bodies to be tied in a double knot. The strands which emerge from this pass alternately over and under the two bodies and are tied in single knots before re-crossing the bodies. Small pellets are placed in the spaces between the interlace and the

animals' bodies.

Stones II - III (fig.12; pls.47-8):

These stones are decorated with the remains of twelve figures set in a stepped arrangement of square cells formed by mouldings, similar to those on the north face of the first cross (1.N).

The figures themselves are of less elongated proportions than those on 1.N, being more like those on 2.S. In common with other figures on this second cross they wear a short, flared, heavily pleated over-garment, and the under-skirt has a slightly scalloped hemline. Their shoulders bear the same indications of a padded sleeve or cloak and their profiles show a prominent nose, long chin, short hair and thin outline round the back of the head.

However, unlike the figures on 2.S, but like those on 1.N, these figures are turned systematically to face each other across the central vertical moulding. Like the figures on the first cross their arms also cross their bodies to grasp a curved frond-like strand which grows from the central divide, even more clearly than on 1.N. The figures which face each other in 'g' and 'h', have, in addition, long thin beards which grow into the central stem (see 1.N).

It is not possible to tell if the uppermost figure (a) bent over the framework as was the arrangement on 1.N, because here the comparative figure is obliterated above the waist. However, the upper frame of 'b' does survive, and to bend over it 'a' would have had to be rather more elongated than is usual for the figures on this face (see pl.47).

As on the other faces on both crosses, the last two niches are formed by pendant triangles (pl.48). The figure in 'm' is awkwardly positioned; his over-large head is tipped back, and his small body reduced to a roughly rectangular shape angled in order to fit the space. Only one leg is shown.

IDENTIFICATION:

I

It is clear from the preceding description that in some cases the two cross-shafts are decorated with similar motifs and subject matter. In addition there is a close identity of figural styles and details, such as the distinctive profile with the thin outline round the heads of the small figures, and the pleated skirts with drooping edges and scalloped hemlines. There is also a similarity in the animal ornament found on both cross-shafts (1.S and 2.E) which is characterised by prancing heraldic poses, and the large gaping muzzles of the winged beasts. Perhaps the most noticeable similarity is the tendency to

surround groups of figures with variously shaped frames, and to arrange others, repeated up and down the faces of both cross-shafts, in small square and round-headed niches.

These distinctive features are not easy to parallel outside the two crosses elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and so it would seem that the carvings are related to each other. There are a variety of possible explanations for this relationship, including the copying of one cross-shaft from the other centuries later. However, the similarity of the animal ornament makes this possibility unlikely. It seems more probable that the two cross-shafts are nearly contemporary with each other, that they are probably based on the same source material, and that one acted as the inspiration for the other.

If this is the case, examination of a scene on one shaft may lead to an understanding of a similar scene on the other shaft. Thus the following discussion, while dealing (generally) with the iconography of one monument at a time, will refer occasionally to the decoration of the other.

The use of repeated images on both monuments has other implications: the stance of the profile figures with their arms bent across their bodies, for instance, is found on 1.N where the figures hold tendrils emerging from the framework; on 2.N and 2.S, the stance is repeated with the figures holding a variety of attributes. These figures are not clearly part of a narrative scene and may be purely decorative.¹⁴ However, the pose is also

found on 1.E for figures 'b-d' and 'j' where the cylindrical object held across the body may have some iconographical significance although the exact nature of that significance is unclear. In these latter instances therefore, the repetition of the pose, while serving to link the two monuments, can also give rise to some confusion, and so the degree of influence of the figural style will have to be borne in mind throughout.

No attempt will be made to discuss those figures and scenes which are too damaged or incomplete to identify, hence the following sections will be concerned primarily with scenes F - K on 1.E, scenes D - G on 1.W, and the figures on 1.N (see fig.9). On the second cross, the discussion will centre on scene B, figures a-j on the west face, and the figures on 2.S and 2.N (see figs.12-13).

II

1. East Face (1.E):

F.(See fig.10; pls.27-8). Bu'Lock identified this group of figures as The Adoration of the Magi,¹⁵ but did not discuss its iconography in any detail. Given that the three busts (b-d) are contained within niches which grow out of the support of the throne surrounding 'a', and that they (more or less) face, and present objects towards this enthroned figure who appears to hold a nimbed child, this identification would seem to be correct;

thus Mary is seated in 'a' on the throne, the Christ Child occupies the damaged area above her knees, and the three busts (b-d) represent the Magi.

There were two main pictorial types of The Adoration found in early Christian art. One, found only sporadically in the fourth century, but fully developed by the sixth century in the Eastern Mediterranean, was characterised by the central position of the seated Virgin and Child, with the Magi, varying in number, grouped on either side of them.¹⁶

The second type, more relevant to Sandbach, and found among the earliest decoration of Roman catacombs and sarcophagi,¹⁷ depicts Mary with the child on her knee to one side of the scene. Both are seated sideways, facing the Magi who, half-bowed, approach from the other side. The Virgin and Child are not always placed on the same side of the scene. This type of Adoration was fully developed by the fifth century.¹⁸

It was this second type that was adopted into Western European art of the early Medieval period, and modified to impose majesty on the non-centralised child. This was done by emphasising Mary's seat to give her more importance as the Throne of the Son of God, and by adding architectural details. The late seventh- or early eighth-century Franks Casket from Northumbria, for example (pl.117), shows the Virgin facing forwards under an architectural canopy to the right of the advancing Magi, holding the child in a medallion before her; the

Virgin from the centrally organised Eastern arrangement has been set in the Western processional scene.¹⁹ The later Lombardic altar at Cividale (pl.118), dated between 734-7 A.D.,²⁰ shows a more consistent iconographic image; the Virgin and Child, half-turned to the front, are seated on a canopied throne, while the Magi approach from the left before a back-drop of arches. In Carolingian art of the ninth and tenth centuries Mary and the Child were shown more strictly in profile, but the elaborate throne, often with an architectural surround, and the Magi advancing in profile, continued to be used;²¹ the later Irish examples, such as that at Monasterboice, which derived from the Carolingian versions, also show the Virgin in strict profile.²²

At Sandbach it would appear that this Western iconographic type was used and adapted to fit the confines of the shaft. Looking first at the Virgin and Child, it is clear that Mary is depicted under an architectural canopy as she is on the Northumbrian Franks Casket, the Cividale altar, and the later Carolingian examples.²³ She is also shown seated in the awkward half-turned position adopted by the Virgin in the eighth-century Lombardic Adoration and found elsewhere in insular art in the *Book of Kells* (conventionally attributed to the ninth century), although here the scene is not an Adoration of the Magi, but an Adoration of the Virgin and Child by the angels.²⁴

At Sandbach it is impossible to tell if the Child is seated in profile on the Virgin's lap (as was usually the case),²⁵ if he

was placed in a medallion, or if he was held as an infant in swaddling clothes; the last possibility is rare but not unknown.²⁶ The type which showed the Virgin holding a medallion of Christ is believed to lie behind the centrally arranged Eastern type of Adoration,²⁷ and it is depicted on the Franks Casket. Thus all three are possibilities, but the seated or medallion types would be the most likely, and given the parallels in Western European art for the awkward position of the seated Virgin, and the architectural throne, the Child seated in profile, which is most commonly associated with these elements, is the most probable type for the Sandbach scene, although the damaged condition of the carving at this point means this suggestion cannot be verified.

Turning to the Magi on the right, it can be seen that although they have been placed one above the other within arched niches, they still retain the half-bowed, profile position of the kings in the Western type of Adoration.²⁸ The fact that they do not approach Mary in single file could be explained by the vertical nature of the cross-shaft, but even in the model types which show Mary seated on one side of the scene, there are groupings other than the horizontal arrangement. There are, for instance, two early ninth-century Carolingian ivories which show the Magi in a tightly knit group to one side of the Virgin and Child.²⁹ Nor is it unknown for the Magi to be placed before or within arched niches, as they are at Cividale (pl.118).³⁰ However, at Sandbach this latter detail can be explained more probably as a reflex of the artist's general tendency to

compartmentalise the figures on the cross-shaft.

The use of busts to represent the Magi is unusual, but there are some possible precedents. One is the tendency to show only the upper torso of one of the Magi when they are tightly grouped together in Adoration scenes.³¹ The other may be a stylistic feature of profile busts arranged in superimposed rows, such as is found in the *Book of Kells* (see eg. pl.106).³² If the decorative style which gave rise to this latter motif was available to the Sandbach sculptor, or he had access to a model which showed a tightly grouped arrangement of Magi, either of these may have inspired the use of busts to represent the three kings. However, the restrictions of the space available on the shaft at this point must have been of primary consideration. In this respect the use of busts placed within small arched cells, one above the other, is an extremely economic use of a very limited field.

The positioning of the uppermost Magus, upside-down, is somewhat problematic in that it is without precedent. However if the top figure had been upright, he would have been presenting his gift over the top of the canopy, and it is possible that by turning him upside-down, the sculptor hoped to bring him (and the spectator's eye), in towards the focus of the group. (The similarity of this uppermost bust to the middle figure suggests that a template might have been used for this purpose.) It may simply be that the sculptor was coping (maybe with limited

sucess) with the restrictions imposed by the size of the cross-shaft.

The use of scroll-like objects for the gifts of the Magi is also unusual. Generally they were depicted presenting gifts on circular dishes, but occasionally, as on the Franks Casket, they were portrayed carrying a number of variously shaped objects (see pl.117).³³ However, there was also an Eastern iconographic tradition which showed the Magi bearing cylindrically shaped gifts to the Virgin and child. In the fifth- to sixth-century wall-paintings of the Cappadocean rock churches which betray early Syrian and pre-iconoclastic Eastern iconographical motifs, the Magi are repeatedly depicted in this manner.³⁴ It is possible that the Sandbach figures were influenced by either of these traditions.

However, another alternative must be considered; it is possible that the sculptor, forced to adapt the scene to the limited confines of the shaft, was here unthinkingly, reusing the standard shape of the figure holding the scroll-like object which is found elsewhere on the cross. In this case the shape of the Magi's gifts would not actually reveal anything about the model-type behind the scene, but would rather be an instance of individual stylistic conventions over-riding iconographical considerations.

This stylistic control, possibly operating in the shape of the gifts held by the Magi, may also explain the thin outline

round the head of 'c'. The detail is found elsewhere on both the Sandbach cross-shafts and so consideration of it will have to include a view of figures outside the scene presently under discussion. Although a stylistic convention is the most probable explanation for the double outline motif, there are a number of possibilities regarding its original function; these suggest it may have derived from representations of a variety of head-dresses or a halo.

Considered initially as a head-dress, it is worth noting that the very earliest examples of the Adoration in the fourth century show the Magi wearing a distinctive Phrygian costume to stress the identity of the kings as foreigners, and therefore as heathens.³⁵ Part of this costume consisted of a soft cap which rose sharply at the front into a knot and covered the back of the neck. This distinctive head-dress was maintained in the iconography of The Adoration (albeit not strictly), until the tenth century when the Magi were given royal crowns.³⁶ It is possible that the Magi at Sandbach are depicted wearing such a cap because in some instances, such as the eighth-century Cividale Adoration (pl.118), the Phrygian head-dresses are virtually indistinguishable from the hair of the kings and flip up slightly at the base of the neck; here the knot at the front is all that remains to clearly identify the cap. Its absence at Sandbach may suggest that the cap in the model was not understood, particularly if it was of the reduced type found at Cividale. Thus, considered only in this scene, the thin outline

surrounding the head of 'c' may well be identified as a Phrygian cap.

As noted however, this same detail is employed widely on both crosses at Sandbach. Thus it could be argued that the motif, originally a specific iconographic detail associated with The Adoration scene, was used throughout the decoration of the monuments as a stylistic feature both in The Adoration and elsewhere. Identifying the thin outline as a development of the Phrygian head-dress helps to explain the presence of the small curl which appears at the base of the neck of some of the figures (see 1.N & 1.W), and its use on the profile masks in the plaitwork border of 2.W suggests that the motif had become a decorative feature, whether or not its origins lie in the Phrygian cap of the Magi.

The Phrygian head-dress of the Magi is not the only possible explanation for the original identity of the double outline; it may have indicated some form of helmet. Although this would be without precedent in depictions of the Magi, it might apply to the other figures on the north faces of this and the smaller cross-shaft (1.N & 2.N). Knowledge of Anglo-Saxon helmets is limited, but possibly relevant to the feature on the Sandbach crosses may be the design of the helmets from Sutton Hoo and Coppergate.³⁷ These cover the face and neck and have a crest running along the top; they are of a type thought to have inspired the helmets depicted on the Franks Casket.³⁸ Apart from this ivory casket, attested depictions of helmets in insular art

are rare, and do not resemble the motif found at Sandbach. For instance the Viking-age helmeted warrior at Sockburn (Co.Dur.) does not show hair under the helmet, and the helmet of the figure at Norbury (Derbys.) is not comparable.³⁹

However, in the early decades of the eighth century, a Mercian sceatta was struck in the mints at London and South Mercia which showed a king standing with two long cross-staffs held out on either side (pl.119); the figure, whose head is seen in profile, wears a *cynehelm*, described by Metcalf as the helmet-crown of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Whether or not this attribution is correct, at least six of these coins have survived, illustrating a head-dress which is very similar to the detail found at Sandbach.⁴⁰ It may be that the *cynehelm* entered the repertoire of Mercian art, and by the time it is reproduced on the Sandbach crosses, had become a decorative motif. Alternatively it was still recognised, and used, as a regal attribute which, although unusual in terms of the iconography of the Magi, might be deemed appropriate. This however, would then raise questions as to the intended identity of the schemes of figures on 1 and 2.N, and of 'c' on 1.W. The decorative effect of the figures in the plaitwork borders of 2.W would also be called into question. Overall, therefore, it is more likely that the detail, if derived from the Mercian *cynehelm*, was being used by the Sandbach sculptor(s) as a decorative motif.

Another possible explanation for the original identity of the feature would be to see it as derived from a nimbus. Although this would also be iconographically inappropriate for the Magi, who were not portrayed with haloes in Christian art until the thirteenth century,⁴¹ this explanation could well be appropriate for the other figures distinguished by this outline, and its use in the Magi scene would imply that here the sculptor was adapting a standard haloed figure-type used elsewhere, but in this instance, without much thought or understanding of the iconographical implications.

The detail is certainly easily explained as a halo which the sculptor had difficulty in describing round a profile head; he had no problem at all with full-face figures. For instance, the crucified figure in G on 1.E clearly has a halo surrounding its head (see pl.28). The series of profile figures on 1.N and 2.N, display the outline most frequently, but it is unclear whether they should be seen in a religious or secular context.⁴² Only one of the figures on 1.W (c) clearly has the outline, and the figure next to him (d) has his face turned forwards to accommodate the halo which surrounds his head (see pl.34).

The haloes round these full-face figures, although distinct, are small. Henry has argued that in early Christian art haloes were sometimes depicted in such tiny proportions that confusion tended to arise in later derivative material.⁴³ An example of this phenomenon is provided by the *Book of Kells* where a minute halo surrounds the full-face heads, and a thin double outline

follows the curve of the profile heads, as it does at Sandbach.⁴⁴

Thus, as far as the Magi are concerned, the thin double outline round their heads is either a poorly represented version of the Phrygian cap commonly associated with the Magi in scenes of The Adoration, in which case it is used merely as a decorative motif elsewhere on the cross-shafts; alternatively it is a sculpted version of the *cynehelm* which may be applicable to the Magi, but which may also be a decorative feature; or it is an awkwardly described halo, which may be appropriate for the other contexts in which it appears, but is iconographically inappropriate for the Magi. However, if the detail was originally a halo, but was used indiscriminately as a stylistic convention for the profile figures, its appearance for the Magi would not be inappropriate, merely decorative. Given that the scrolls held by the Magi seem to be the result of repeating a standard motif, it is likely that the double outline is also the result of a similar repetition, either of a poorly described head-dress, or of an ill-defined nimbed, profile head.

Reviewing the iconographical elements of this scene therefore, it is more than probable that F can be identified as The Adoration of the Magi. Some of the unusual features, such as the use of busts for the Magi and their arrangement, are either not unprecedented in Western art, or were dictated by the confines of the shaft and the tendency of the sculptor to frame the figures. Other features, such as the shape of the gifts and

the thin outline round the head, may have been influenced by iconographic model-types, or more likely by a somewhat indiscriminate use of the decorative motifs available to the sculptor.

As far as the potential iconographic models are concerned, the position of the Virgin to one side of the scene, indicates the use of a specific pictorial type which was circulating in Western Europe from the fourth century and which became common on the Continent from the ninth century onwards. Her half-turned seated pose suggests that the model influencing the scene is more likely to date from a later, rather than an earlier stage in the development of this iconographic type, while this, together with the architectural surround, suggests that the model could have been produced during the late seventh or eighth century, before the Carolingian types of the ninth century which featured the strictly profile Virgin became widely used.

G.(fig.11, pl.28) This scene has long been recognised as depicting the Crucifixion of Christ with the four evangelist symbols surrounding the cross, while the type of cross and its use to fill and quarter the scene have most recently been described by Coatsworth as features common to Anglo-Saxon depictions of the Crucifixion, which are rare in Continental art.⁴⁵

Looking first at the figure of the Crucified, the depiction of Christ in a brief loincloth is indicative of the use of a specific iconographic type,⁴⁶ and analogies of the type of garment seen at Sandbach are found in early fifth-century work produced in Italy which show the loincloth knotted in the middle (eg. pls.86-7). The loincloth type seems to have disappeared in the sixth to eighth centuries⁴⁷ but when it was reintroduced into Continental art of the eighth-century, the loincloth was usually knotted at one side and was knee-length.⁴⁸ The very brief garment found at Sandbach seems only to have occurred elsewhere in the early Christian examples.

The body-type of the Crucified at Sandbach is also distinctive, being rigidly upright and fully turned to the front with the arms, legs and hands stretched stiffly out; it depicted the "living" Christ on the cross, and symbolised the certainty of the Resurrection.⁴⁹ When the loincloth type reappeared in eighth-century Western art it was used in conjunction with a figure whose arms were slightly relaxed and whose hands were generally depicted ^{with} the thumb separated from the fingers.⁵⁰ It is only in the art of the late antique period that the very rigid living-type of crucified Christ, and the brief loincloth are found together on a cross without a *suppedaneum* as they are at Sandbach; this latter detail was normal in Carolingian Crucifixions from the ninth century onwards.⁵¹

The crude attempt to carve the torso at Sandbach may also indicate dependence on a classical model-type. Carolingian

Crucifixions of the early ninth-century, such as appear in the *Utrecht Psalter*, tend towards a vapid and wispy body type, and it was only in the late ninth- and early tenth-century that a more solid body form was used.⁵² The use of the late antique model-type in the mid eighth-century occurs on an ivory from St.Gall, now at Cividale (pl.120), where despite "Carolingian" details (such as the *suppedaneum*, the longer knotted loincloth, and the elaborate personifications of the sun and moon), the body of the Crucified is portrayed standing stiffly against the cross, and a crude attempt has been made to delineate the rather solid torso, as at Sandbach.⁵³ Thus, if the Anglo-Saxon sculptor was dependent on a specific Carolingian model for his depiction of the Crucified, this could have dated from the later ninth-century, as Coatsworth has argued, and the rigidity of the body would be explained by the carver's ineptitude. Or it could have been derived from an early model, such as was used for the St.Gall ivory, a late antique model which featured the stiff solid body, the very short loincloth, and the cross without a *suppedaneum*.

Turning to examine the cross itself more closely, the small circles in the top arm above Christ's head, are identified by Coatsworth as symbols of the sun and moon, common to Crucifixion scenes from the third century onwards.⁵⁴ In Western art generally these symbols accompany the cross as attributes of Christ's sovereignty, and in Carolingian art they were given additional importance as symbols of triumph - witnesses of Christ's

victorious death.⁵⁵ Until this time they remained fairly small and insignificant elements of the Crucifixion scene, and were usually placed on either side of the cross; in the ninth century they were dramatically developed in size and detail, in both Eastern and Western art. Thus the small size of the symbols at Sandbach could indicate a date for the scene prior to the iconographic developments of the ninth-century, or dependence on a model which predated them. However, the sculptor was more probably guided by the restrictions of the space available on the cross-shaft. This would have led him to take the unusual step of placing the symbols on the upper cross-arm, a move which would in itself have dictated the size of the symbols.

What is not common in Crucifixion scenes is the hollowed-out nature of the stepped socle of the cross found at Sandbach. Coatsworth sees this as an adaptation accom^modating the scene (H) below (see pl.28). This accom^modation could be another manifestation of the sculptor's tendency to compartmentalise his subject matter, seen elsewhere on the cross-shaft, or it could have been an element of the model which lies behind the Crucifixion scene. It is unlikely to represent a variation of the inner frames dividing the figures and scenes because elsewhere these are of three basic types: straight lines (vertical, horizontal, and diagonal), arches and circles. It would therefore seem more likely, as Coatsworth argues, that some form of stepped-base appeared in the sculptor's source material and was hollowed out to accomodate H below.⁵⁶

One model which may have been adapted is the type of Crucifixion which depicted a symbolic Hill of Golgotha at the base of the Crucifix. This type survives from the seventh century onwards, with the Hill generally represented by an amorphous mass of curves. Despite the great variety in the rendering of these curves, however, they never become angular.⁵⁷ Admittedly, in tenth-century Byzantine art the hillside is cut away to reveal Adam's head⁵⁸ but this motif is not found earlier and the shape of Golgotha never really resembles that of the stepped-shape found at Sandbach. Thus it would seem that the inspiration for the socle lies in a model with a stepped-base cross.

Coatsworth provides examples of the stepped-base crucifix in Crucifixion scenes from Carolingian art of the ninth-century, such as the *Psalter of Louis the German*, the *Stuttgart Psalter*, and ivories originating at Tours.⁵⁹ However, it must be noted that the *Psalter of Louis the German*, which depicts an Adoration of the Crucified Christ with a small kneeling figure clasping the lower arm of the crucifix outside the frame surrounding the miniature, was produced at a centre heavily influenced by earlier insular art.⁶⁰ Neither is the *Stuttgart Psalter* regarded as representative of early ninth-century Carolingian art; rather it is a close copy of late antique Italian art.⁶¹ Likewise the art produced at Tours tended to depend on insular and earlier Italian works, while the centre itself maintained close links with Anglo-Saxon England well into the ninth century.⁶² Thus the use of the stepped-base socle at Sandbach need not necessarily depend on

Carolingian developments. It has been suggested that the most likely source for the figure of the crucified Christ lies in an early Italian work rather than a later Carolingian type. If this is the case, the cross on which Christ hangs at Sandbach, may also depend on a similarly dated source; it probably represents therefore, the type of stepped-base cross the Carolingian examples derive from, whether this originated in the Western Mediterranean or Anglo-Saxon England.

In Christian art the stepped-base cross originally represented the monument raised by Constantine to mark the site of the Crucifixion on Golgotha in Palestine in the fourth century.⁶³ The motif spread from Eastern art into Western Europe,⁶⁴ and appears in insular contexts by the seventh century. For instance, the sixth-century Wilton cross from East Anglia incorporates an earlier Byzantine coin embossed with a stepped-base cross,⁶⁵ and derivations of these coins were produced in England, and elsewhere in Europe, throughout the seventh century.⁶⁶ In a different medium in late seventh-century Northumbria, the wooden coffin made to contain the earthly remains of St. Cuthbert had, etched on its base, the outline of a stepped-base cross (pl. 121).⁶⁷ Thus the motif found at Sandbach existed in various contexts prior to its assimilation with the Crucifixion by Carolingian artists of the ninth century. Its appearance at Sandbach need not necessarily, therefore, look to Continental sources for its inspiration, but could represent an independent and contemporaneous insular development.

Also of interest in the Sandbach Crucifixion scene is the arrangement of evangelist symbols round the arms of the cross. As noted by Coatsworth the crucifixion cross surrounded by evangelist symbols is not an arrangement found in Carolingian scenes; in the pre-Norman period it is an iconographical phenomenon which seems to be limited to insular art.⁶⁸ In examining the symbols at Sandbach it will be necessary therefore, to consider both the type of symbol being used, and their incorporation with the cross.

It has long been demonstrated that evangelist symbols in Christian art evolved from depictions of the winged beasts which appear as divine attributes in Ezekiel's vision of God.⁶⁹ These are described as having human bodies, wings and the heads of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. In the Book of Revelations creatures with similar characteristics appear as attributes of the Lamb attesting to its divinity.⁷⁰ By the fourth century these apocalyptic beasts had been interpreted in Western commentaries as symbolic of the evangelists, with the man identified as St. Matthew, the lion as St. Mark, the ox as St. Luke, and the eagle as St. John.⁷¹ In Christian art the winged beasts are clearly symbolic of the evangelists when accompanied by books, and they could be used either in place of the evangelist they represent, or accompanying him. They are found, representing the evangelists, and even set round an empty cross as early as the fifth century,⁷² but this arrangement, most commonly found on the four-symbols' page in manuscripts, is not strictly comparable with the scene at Sandbach.⁷³

Concentrating first on the type of evangelist symbol shown at Sandbach, it is clear that they are, for the most part, half-length, unrobed, without haloes and wings, and carrying books. In early Medieval art the evangelist symbols were generally depicted as full-length creatures without attributes, or as half-length ones with attributes. There were, in addition, two separate traditions which depicted the half- and full-length symbols either as clothed zooanthropomorphic creatures, or as unrobed beasts.⁷⁴ It is clear that the symbols at Sandbach, unlike those at Wirksworth in Derbyshire (pl.51), are not clothed (except for the man), and so it is the beast-type tradition which would seem to be most relevant for Sandbach.

Comparing the symbols at Sandbach with other examples of this type which survive from the fifth century onwards,⁷⁵ it is apparent that they do not conform exactly to any of the main variations; the greatest difference is the lack of wings. Other instances which show the same combination of unrobed beasts as at Sandbach (a halo surrounding only the man's head, half-length symbols with a full-length eagle, and all four figures carrying books), are rare but do exist in North Italian manuscript art of the early sixth-century; the *Codex Millenarius*, for example, portrays them set within arched niches.⁷⁶ However, such examples also depict the symbols with wings. The only unrobed creatures which correspond with Sandbach in this (wingless) respect are not half-length, but the full-length variation illustrated in the eighth-century *Trier Gospels* (pl.122).

This Gospel Book, thought to have been produced at a Continental scriptorium under strong insular influence, is of interest not only because it depicts symbols comparable with the wingless Sandbach creatures, but also because it shows the full-length symbols in a symbolic *Majestas Domini* scene; a scene which is composed of an ornamental cross containing a bust of Christ set in a medallion at the centre, and surrounded by the evangelist symbols. Thus the *Trier Gospels* may provide a possible parallel for the overall arrangement of the symbols set round a cross containing an image of Christ. This is an arrangement found also in the early ninth-century *Essen Gospels* (pl.124), produced under insular influence at Corbie.⁷⁷ Although this latter manuscript depicts winged evangelist symbols, they are half-length and set round a cross bearing the bust of Christ in a central medallion (they have no haloes, and all, except the ox, carry books).

The symbolic *Majestas Domini* depicted in these manuscripts traces its origins to early Coptic art where, in later extant examples, it is found in conjunction with a stepped-base cross.⁷⁸ It is possible that what we see at Sandbach represents a development of this same tradition; half-length evangelist symbols with books, but no haloes, are set round a cross with a stepped base and the crucified Christ has replaced the *Majestas Domini* set in the medallion.

It is unclear if the fusion of the crucified figure with the symbolic *Majestas* arrangement was the work of the Sandbach

sculptor himself, or whether it was derived from a model. The presence of the stepped-base cross in insular art from the seventh-century, and the production of the Continental Majestas scenes in centres influenced by insular art, indicates that the necessary elements were probably present in Anglo-Saxon England before the scene was produced at Sandbach. However, the clear antiquity of the Christ figure, and the rare occurrence of the evangelist symbols combined with the Crucifixion, even in insular art, suggests that the Sandbach sculptor may well have replaced the medallion portrait of the Majestas with a figure of the crucified Christ, while retaining the stepped-base cross and evangelist symbols of the more symbolic scene.

As a postscript, it is perhaps worth noting that if the Sandbach arrangement did derive from a scene comparable with that found in the Essen manuscript (which features half-length winged symbols), the absence of the Sandbach symbols' wings still needs to be explained; various possibilities present themselves. The lack of wings, for instance, could be the result of an attempt to simplify the scene; if the wings had been included the figures round the cross would have been extremely crowded given the limited amount of space available within the spandrels. Alternatively the omission could have had a deliberate theological point.⁷⁹ The association of the winged beasts with the Lamb or Christ in Majesty meant that when positioned round a cross the cross became the throne of Revelations, which is the primary significance of the scene found on the Mercian

sarcophagus cover at Wirksworth in Derbyshire (pl.51).⁸⁰ At Sandbach however, the creatures are set round a crucifixion cross, and in this context they signify the gospel proclaimed to all four quarters of the earth.⁸¹ The removal of the wings and the inclusion of the books identifies the beasts clearly and unequivocally as symbols of the evangelists, and at the same time removes them further from the apocalyptic symbolism which is always potentially present in such images.

To summarise the various iconographic elements present in the crucifixion scene at Sandbach therefore, it would appear that there were a number of models available to the sculptor and that he used them to create a "new" scene. The figure of Christ crucified was probably based on a model not too far removed from an early Christian prototype of the Mediterranean West, while the evangelist symbols and the cross suggest more widespread influences, possibly present in Anglo-Saxon England from the seventh century. The symbols and the stepped-base cross betray ultimately Eastern origins, but the symbol-type was present in Italian art of the sixth century, and the distinctive cross was present throughout Western Europe by the seventh century. Thus, the component parts of the scene at Sandbach could have been produced at any time after the seventh century, but given the analogous developments in the iconography of the symbolic *Majestas Domini* on the Continent, and the Carolingian Crucifixion iconography of the ninth century, a date nearer to these, and probably contemporary with them, in the first half of the ninth century is most likely for the Sandbach Crucifixion.

H.(fig.11; pl.28) Before considering the identity of 'j' and 'k' flanking the Crucifixion, the iconography of the scene under the Crucifixion will be examined. The position of these two figures is such that any conclusions concerning them will have to take account of them in relation to both scenes (G & H).

This scene has long been recognised as depicting the Nativity of Christ,⁸² a scene found in Christian art from the fourth century onwards, and which by the fifth century, was a traditional scene of the Infancy cycles, often appearing in conjunction with The Adoration of the Magi as a scene manifesting God's presence on earth, for which the Adoration provided the necessary confirmation.⁸³

Looking first at the arrangement of the scene at Sandbach, it is distinguished by the close-knit grouping of the child in the crib with the adoring ox, ass and angel. This abbreviated Nativity, or adoration scene, which centres primarily on the beasts and the Child, and omits other figures such as Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds or the Magi, is an extremely early iconographic type.⁸⁴ The symbolism expressed by the scene concerned the adoration of Christ by Jews, Gentiles and the natural world; it did not represent the birth of Christ so much as a pictorial sermon confirming the universal worship accorded to the Saviour.⁸⁵ It was the introduction of Mary, reclining on a mattress, or seated to one side of the scene, in Eastern art, which identified the event as a birth.⁸⁶

This arrangement, centering on the crib, the ox and the ass, is found on Roman sarcophagi of the fourth century (see pl.127),⁸⁷ and by the fifth century had found its way into Gaul where it appeared on the mosaics of La Daurade at Toulouse.⁸⁸ After this, the type is rare, being superceded by the more complex Nativity scenes which included the Virgin, Joseph, the midwife, and other figures adoring the Child, although it is found in some Eastern contexts of seventh-century date (see eg. pl.123).

Turning to the various elements of the scene found under the Crucifix at Sandbach, the elaborate crib is not a common feature of Nativity or Adoration scenes. Generally, in the early abbreviated adoration scenes, the swaddled Child was placed in a willow basket or trough, which by the sixth century was replaced by a high structure representing a manger or, more often, an altar.⁸⁹ The closest parallel to the crib featured at Sandbach is found on a late fourth-century sarcophagus cover in Rome (pl.127) where the scene consists only of the Child, the ox and the ass.⁹⁰ Closely based on an early Christian model such as this, is the crib illustrated in the ninth-century *Sacramentary of Reginaldus* from the scriptorium at Tours, which also resembles the Sandbach bed.⁹¹ Apart from these two examples, the crib at Sandbach, with its elaborate head and foot, is difficult to parallel, and so indicates the use of a model which, like that in the Tours manuscript, cannot have been too far removed from a very early model of the Christian West.

The ox and ass are found adoring the Christ Child in almost every instance of the Nativity and their relative positions to the left or right of the crib seems to be indiscriminate. Thus their presence at Sandbach is only significant in so far as they provide information concerning the iconographic type used. However, the angel hovering over the group is extremely unusual, both in complex and abbreviated Nativity scenes, before the ninth century; even then the angel is a rare element until the late tenth century. Generally speaking he is found only when the Nativity is depicted in conjunction with The Annunciation to the Shepherds.⁹² An exception to this iconographic norm is found on the early ninth-century Harrach Diptych (pl.125) where, in a complex Nativity scene containing Mary and Joseph, an angel surmounts the central group composed of the Child (placed on an altar), and the ox and ass. Here the angel is a half-length figure with a halo and outspread wings, similar to that found at Sandbach.

Given the rarity of the angel in Nativity scenes, its presence at Sandbach may suggest the use of an up-to-date model such as the Harrach Diptych. However, the scene depicted on the Carolingian ivory is of a very different iconographic type to that depicted on the Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft, being of the complex rather than abbreviated version, and it uses the altar-bed for the child instead of the crib. This implies that the Sandbach sculptor either added the angel to an abbreviated adoration-type Nativity which was provided in his model, or he reduced a more complex scene which included additional figures, to fit the

confines, not only of the cross-shaft, but of the space created by the hollowed-out base of the crucifix above. The appearance of the archaic crib would seem to argue against this second possibility, but consideration of the two figures (j & k) flanking the Crucifixion and standing above the Nativity is now necessary to clarify the nature of the possible model and date of this scene.

j-k.(fig.11; pl.28) There are two possible explanations for these figures: they are either part of the Crucifixion scene, or part of the Nativity. From the description of 'j' it would appear that the figure is bearded and therefore a man; 'k' on the other hand, given the different head-type, is more likely to be a woman. The iconography of both the Crucifixion and the Nativity allows for a man and a woman flanking the scene.

In the Nativity the female figure would be identified as the Virgin who can appear in the scene without other women, whereas the midwife or other attendant female figures are never present without Mary.⁹³ The male figure however, could be identified as Joseph, a prophet, or a shepherd, all of whom are included with the Virgin, in the iconography of the Nativity.

Mary was not an integral part of the Nativity until the end of the fifth century when she was introduced either seated to one side of the scene, or reclining on a mattress slightly in front

of the Child. The seated variation was always favoured in Western art, while the reclining version, introduced initially in Eastern art, found its way into the Western repertoire by the sixth century. Instances of Mary standing to one side of the scene are not found until the tenth century, but even then the image is extremely rare.⁹⁴

A single shepherd was often found standing by the side of the crib with the ox and ass in early, fourth-century depictions of the Nativity, even if the seated Virgin was not present.⁹⁵ He is identified by the slightly curved staff or crook which he always carries. The prophet, on the other hand, never appeared as an integral part of the Nativity, although in Eastern manuscripts, such as the sixth-century *Codex Rossanensis* he appears on one side of the page carrying an open scroll signifying the Messianic prophecy now fulfilled by the Child adored by the beasts.⁹⁶ On a fourth-century Roman sarcophagus he appears, with a rolled-up scroll, standing near a manger adored by the two beasts and two shepherds; the Virgin is not present and the prophet does not seem to be part of the scene.⁹⁷ The third possible identity for the male figure (j) within a Nativity context is Joseph. He is not included in the scene as early, or as often, as Mary, but from the earliest appearances in the fifth century, he is always found seated; only in the late tenth century is he sometimes depicted standing to one side of the scene. As far as Joseph's attributes are concerned, there is one surviving example which shows him holding a staff,⁹⁸ but usually he is empty-handed; Joseph never appears with a scroll.⁹⁹

Given these possibilities it would seem that if the figures are to be viewed within a Nativity context the male, scroll-carrying figure would have to be identified as a prophet; the shepherd always carries a crook, and Joseph never holds a scroll. It could be argued that the figure is unthinkingly given a scroll as the Magi were in the scene (F) above, and could therefore be either Joseph or a shepherd. However, the Magi were repeated from a scroll-carrying standard figure-type, and if the male figure (j) was intended to be a shepherd he could have been given a staff or crook; other figures on this cross-shaft and Cross 2 are shown in similar poses carrying a variety of long thin objects which could easily be adapted into such an attribute (see 1.N, 2.N, 2.S). Similarly the empty-handed Joseph could have been reproduced from the empty-handed figure-type illustrated by 'k' opposite.

The identification of 'j' as a prophet however, rests only on the fact that he does carry a scroll. One problem with this identification is that the prophet is never really included as an integral part of the actual Nativity or Adoration of the Manger - which is possibly not a telling argument here given the confusing positioning of 'j' and 'k'. More problematic is the fact that when the prophet is found in conjunction with Mary, she is always seated. Indeed she is never depicted standing, as would have to be argued for Sandbach, until the late tenth century. That she could have been shown seated within the confines of the cross-shaft is clear; in the Adoration of the Magi above (F) Mary is seen in just such a position in a niche of similar proportions.

Given these reservations, and the similarity of the crib and the arrangement of the scene under the crucifix at Sandbach with early Western versions of the Adoration of the Manger, it would seem that 'j' and 'k' are unlikely to be part of the Nativity scene. However the iconography of such figures within Crucifixion scenes must also be considered before any firmer conclusions can be drawn.

If the two figures are viewed as part of the Crucifixion scene they would be identified as Mary and John. Their presence at the foot of the cross in Christian art illustrated the words of Christ to his disciple and mother at the time of the crucifixion,¹⁰⁰ and demonstrated their role as mourners and witnesses of the event.¹⁰¹

In these capacities Mary and John were present in Crucifixion scenes in both Eastern and Western art from the earliest period. Mary was usually found standing, empty-handed, to the left of the scene, while John was shown standing on the right carrying a book or scroll, identifying him as the evangelist who witnessed the Crucifixion.¹⁰²

The presence of the two standing figures flanking the Crucifixion and Nativity at Sandbach, (one male holding a scroll, and one female), are thus far more likely to be identified as John and Mary at the Crucifixion than any of the possibilities considered for the Nativity. Whether or not they were present in the model for the Crucifixion is not possible to say with any

certainty, but given that on the Sandbach cross they stand on opposite sides of the crucifix to the positions they normally adopt, and given the similarity they bear to other figures on the cross-shaft, it is likely that the sculptor, in creating his composite Crucifixion scene, added the two witnesses from the standard figure-type which he used elsewhere, possibly strengthening an emphasis on the theme of witnessing of the Crucifixion.

One problem with identifying 'j' and 'k' as part of the Crucifixion are the arches above their heads which separate them from the evangelist symbols around the cross. This however, can be explained by the sculptor's tendency to set the figures in individual frames, and the possible need to separate those historically present at the Crucifixion from the more symbolic element introduced by the inclusion of the evangelist symbols. A further problem lies in the lack of any comparable frame below their feet, separating them clearly from the beasts of the Nativity. This absence of clear deliniation between one scene and another is unique on the cross-shaft, but the angel's wings and the backs of the beasts do form a natural boundary and successfully enclose the Child of the Nativity who is the focus of the scene. Alternatively the comparative lack of distinction between the two scenes may indicate that they are to be viewed as two parts of a whole; what was started at the birth of Christ on earth, is completed at the Crucifixion. This was a notion found frequently in Church writings, and will be examined further

below.¹⁰³

Returning, in summary, to the Nativity scene, it would thus seem that the figures contained within the hollowed-out base of the crucifix form a complete scene derived from an early Christian iconographic type of The Adoration of the Manger used in Italo-Gallic art of the fourth and fifth centuries. This scene consisted of the ox and ass adoring the swaddled Child, who was sometimes placed within an elaborate crib such as is depicted at Sandbach. The angel, who is not usually present in such a scene, would therefore have been added by the sculptor, possibly to emphasise the notion of universal adoration accorded the Christ Child. It has been noted that the upper half of the angel 'g' on the west face of this cross is very similar to that found here in H, and this may well have provided the necessary model.

J.(pl.29) The scene above the roundel on 1.E is generally thought to portray The Transfiguration.¹⁰⁴ This subject was rarely depicted in early Christian art,¹⁰⁵ but the event was commonly referred to in written sources as a clear manifestation of the Divine Trinity prior to the Crucifixion.¹⁰⁶ In the early years of the ninth century, however, interest in the scene grew in the European West, and the image was produced in monumental frescoes and mosaics in Rome at SS.Nero and Achilles, S.Prassede and Sta.Maria in Dominica. In North West Europe it was used to adorn the wall of the church of St.Johns at Mustair in Switzerland (c.800).¹⁰⁷

Pictorially, from the sixth century onwards, the scene can be identified by some iconographically constant elements,¹⁰⁸ but it must be stressed that there was a great deal of variation in the detail. While this was due in part, no doubt, to the infrequent depiction of the event, it is also thought to be a result of the varying accounts given in the Gospels.¹⁰⁹ These agree in their description of Christ with Moses and Elijah, but vary their descriptions of the disciples' reactions.¹¹⁰

Details which remain constant in the iconography of the scene include its division into two halves; one showed the transfigured Christ with the two Old Testament figures Moses and Elijah, and the other showed the disciples Peter, James and John. Sometimes the three exalted figures could be depicted on their own, but the disciples never were.¹¹¹ In the upper half of the composition the three figures are always shown haloed, and standing with Christ set between Elijah and Moses. Above them a variety of symbols were used to indicate the voice of God; these included the Hand of God, a cloud, and rays of light.¹¹² In order to identify the scene as a manifestation of Christ's divinity he is often surrounded by a mandorla or rays of light,¹¹³ while another variant has Christ, either making a gesture of benediction with his right hand across his chest, or holding a book or scroll.¹¹⁴ The two Old Testament figures are sometimes also shown making gestures of speech towards Christ, and occasionally one (or both) carries a book or scroll.¹¹⁵ These are the features which are present in Transfiguration scenes (not necessarily all at the same time), from the sixth century

onwards; early in the ninth century the scene took its place in Western cycles of the life of Christ.¹¹⁶

The scene depicted on 1.E does consist of three standing, nimbed figures which means that a Transfiguration scene may provide a possible explanation despite some potential problems; it is clear, for example that the disciples have been omitted. This is unusual, but, as mentioned above, it is not without precedent in early examples of the scene, such as that illustrated in the late sixth-century *Rabula Gospels*.¹¹⁷ It is also possible that the late ninth- and tenth-century cross-shafts in Ireland depict only Christ and the Old Testament figures in their version of the Transfiguration.¹¹⁸ The fact that Christ is not surrounded by a mandorla or rays of light at Sandbach does not detract either from a Transfiguration identification, as this feature is also absent from other examples of the scene, including a ninth- or tenth-century Carolingian ivory, and the Irish versions.¹¹⁹

Another feature which distinguishes the Sandbach scene from other versions of The Transfiguration is the portrayal of the two flanking figures at Sandbach carrying attributes rather than making gestures of speech - gestures which are, it might be noted, absent from the shaft as a whole. The figure on the left of the Mercian scene carries a square object which would, in the context of The Transfiguration, identify him as Moses carrying the book or tablets of the Old Law. The cylindrical object over

the shoulder of the right-hand figure would likewise identify him as Elijah carrying the Words of the Prophets. Although rare, it is however not unknown for both Moses and Elijah to carry these attributes identifying them as representatives of the Law and the Prophets, and so attesting the fulfillment of these writings in the person of Jesus Christ. An excellent parallel is found, for example, in a late ninth-century Carolingian ivory, now in the British Museum (pl.126), which shows Moses carrying the tablets of the Old Law on the left, Elijah holding the scroll of the prophets at an angle across his shoulder in much the same way as does the figure to the right of the scene on 1.E, and Christ standing between them with both arms bent across his body; the central figure in the Sandbach scene also appears to bend both arms across his chest.

The Sandbach scene can therefore be seen to contain the basic features of the Transfiguration with the central figure identified as the transfigured Christ flanked by Moses and Elijah. There are still some problematic features however, which do not conform with the general iconography of The Transfiguration. Given the variation of detail in the scene in Christian art generally, this is perhaps not surprising, but at Sandbach there are some elements which are unique even within the varied iconography of the Transfiguration and so need to be examined further. These are the two vertical, boss-topped bars found on either side of Christ, the damaged rod over his right shoulder, the bird, and the double curl-topped nature of the scroll held by Elijah.

The two bars flanking Christ at Sandbach are not an integral part of any Transfiguration scene in Medieval Christian art. They could be part of the frame which surrounds the lower scene, but this is unlikely given the sculptor's penchant for regular frames. The bars may alternatively represent a clumsy attempt to separate the central Christ, and isolate him from the other two figures in much the same way that a mandorla would do. While this may have been a motive, it is doubtful if it was a primary concern; the sculptor was more than capable of fully isolating his figures in compartments. It is therefore probable that the bars are adapted from a feature in the model which lay behind the Sandbach transfigured Christ. Such motifs do occur, for example, in insular manuscript art of the eighth-century flanking standing figures where they represent ornate thrones reduced to two upright bars (see eg. pl.105).¹²⁰ This would suggest that the model for the central figure may well have been placed before a bar-throne. Whether this model figure was Christ, or another person is uncertain. In insular manuscripts the figure concerned is invariably an evangelist, but Christ enthroned in Majesty is a common feature in Christian art.¹²¹

The presence of a rod over Christ's shoulder may provide a further hint as to the original identity of the figure. On the second cross-shaft (2.W) there is a similar composition (B) involving three figures with a bird hovering in the right-hand corner (see pl.40). The major difference between the two scenes is that the central figure on 2.W carries rods over both shoulders. However, the cross-staff placed over the right

shoulder, which corresponds to the damaged rod of the Christ on 1.E, implies that something similar may once have existed on the larger cross-shaft. It was common in English and Irish art to depict Christ the Judge in an Osiris-pose carrying joined or crossed sceptres over his shoulders.¹²² However, these attributes were also used as general symbols of divine authority and were not limited to depictions of Christ. The Lichfield portrait of Luke for instance (pl.105), shows the evangelist grasping an ornate floriate sceptre and a staff-cross in the crossed Osiris-pose. Similarly, the eighth-century *Trier Gospels*, which show the evangelists standing before bar-thrones, also depict a Tetramorph holding a crossed sceptre and floriate rod in the Osiris-pose.¹²³

Thus, consideration of the two Sandbach scenes (J on 1.E & B on 2.W) which share similar compositions and iconographic details, implies that the central figure in both cases was based on a standing figure who carried some symbol(s) of his authority. The boss-topped bars on 1.E indicate that this model figure was placed before a throne. The prototype could have been a representation of Christ, but equally, it could have depicted another figure imbued with divine authority. All this suggests no more than that the central figure in both scenes bears the traces of having been invested with a special power that set him apart from other figures. This, however, is not inconsistent with an identification of the central figure on 1.E as the transfigured Christ; the Transfiguration was the moment when

Christ was revealed as the Son of God. There is however, a further implication to be drawn from this derivation: namely that the scene at Sandbach may well represent an accumulation of composite pieces assembled at some point to create a Transfiguration scene of which the basic iconographical features were known but not available. The presence of the bar-throne on 1.E and its absence from 2.W suggests that the amalgamation may have been undertaken by the sculptor of the larger cross.

In this context it is interesting to note that the posture of Elijah and Moses repeats those of Mary and John flanking the Crucifixion (G) above (pl.28), as well as those of the two comparable figures in B on 2.W (pl.40). All these figures are characterised by a body which is half-turned to the centre while the face is fully turned to the spectator. The angle of the arm holding the book and scroll-like object across the chest is also repeated, not only for these figures, but for those decorating the west face of this cross and the south face of Cross 2 (pls.33-5, 42-4). The implication is that for the Transfiguration the sculptor did indeed reproduce a standard figure-type available to him to create a scene needing three standing figures.

The bird and the unusual double nature of Elijah's "scroll", however still need to be examined, although the accumulation of a series of composite iconographical elements may go some way to explaining their presence. It has been noted that the bird in this scene bears a great similarity to the bird found in the

comparable scene (B) on 2.W, and to that set in the vine-scroll of 1.S (pl.37). This may suggest that the sculptor was again reproducing a standard type, this time of a bird distinguished by the outstretched tail and wing(s), a prominent beak and, in the case of the birds on 1.E and 1.S, an exaggeratedly arched foot.

While the repetition of this bird may explain its presence in both figural scenes, it does not explain its significance in a Transfiguration scene where a bird is otherwise unattested. If however, the scene on 1.E was created from a series of disparate elements, the bird might here be identified as a dove which is a commonplace symbol of the Holy Spirit in Christian art from the very earliest period.¹²⁴ As will be shown below there were strong verbal, thematic and theological links both in the Bible and in Western Christian thought, between the theophany of Christ afforded by The Transfiguration, and that afforded by his Baptism.¹²⁵ In scenes of Christ's Baptism the dove of the Holy Spirit was commonly illustrated along with the Hand of God, the rays of light and the cloud, symbolic of the Voice of God at that event as they are when included in scenes of the Transfiguration.¹²⁶ Given the close relationship between the two events, it is possible that the link is being manipulated at an artistic level in the Transfiguration scene at Sandbach. If the sculptor was composing his own scene it is conceivable that he used a commonly accepted symbol of the Spirit of God in place of the motifs more usually associated with this scene to depict the Voice of God. Thus the bird touching Christ's halo in J, would

be identified as a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, which was associated with images of Christ's theophany; the dove in a Transfiguration scene thus retains the sense of the event, if not the strict iconographic detail, which was in any case extremely varied.

Still problematic is the double curl-topped nature of the cylinder held over the shoulder of Elijah. When the prophet is depicted carrying an attribute in Transfiguration scenes it is generally a scroll or a book; in the ninth-century ivory which shows Moses holding a book, Elijah is depicted with a scroll (pl.126). It is interesting to note however, that here the scroll is not a tightly rolled cylinder but one which has been opened and partly re-rolled into two scrolls; this was a fairly common way of depicting the scroll in Christian art¹²⁷ and it may provide a possible explanation for the double nature of the cylinder held by Elijah at Sandbach. What the sculptor was attempting to convey here by carving two cylinders side by side which terminate in outward turning curls is a single scroll which has been opened and re-rolled into two scrolls. In the comparable scene B, on 2.W (pl.40) the potential confusion has been avoided. The relevant figure here holds a plain cylindrical object which has only the slight incision down the centre, and does not feature the outward turning curls. Also of note are the three figures (f-h) lower down on 2.W (pl.41). These hold attributes similar to those in B above, and in J on 1.E; 'f' carries a book and 'h' holds a plain cylindrical object over his shoulder. These comparisons suggest that a scroll was intended

in all three scenes, that a double-rolled scroll may lie behind the object held by the right-hand figures in B on 2.W and in J on 1.E, and that this was clumsily portrayed on the larger cross.

Thus, an analysis of the problematic details found in the Transfiguration scene on 1.E does not in fact detract from an interpretation of it as such. The ornate bars indicate that an image of a throned figure may lie behind the central Christ, and the rod over his shoulder implies that the throned figure may well have carried symbols of his authority; the combined image is found in insular evangelist portraits of the eighth century. The bird can probably be identified as the dove of the Holy Spirit, synonymous with the Voice of God which was an important element in the Biblical accounts of the Transfiguration, while the odd attribute held by Elijah may well arise from an inability to reproduce a double-rolled scroll. These suggestions imply that the sculptor was creating his own Transfiguration scene from a series of disparate elements, and did not have a model of the scene before him; this makes a dating of the scene from its iconography somewhat problematic. The only identifiable element in the accumulated details which is not found elsewhere on the cross and which is found elsewhere in Christian art, is the bar-throne. The manuscript analogies for this detail suggest that the model for the central figure may have been of an eighth-century date, and of insular provenance. In addition, the existence of a similar scene in Carolingian art of the late ninth-century may imply that the Sandbach scene was produced at a

time when the Transfiguration scene was becoming more popular in Christian art, but was not commonplace. As has been noted, this interest increased in the early years of the ninth century, and the scene at Sandbach, with its assorted accumulation of iconographic details, could well have been produced against this background.

K.(pl.29) Radford saw the figures within this roundel as Christ flanked by Peter and Paul - the saints to whom churches in Anglo-Saxon England were most commonly dedicated.¹²⁸ His explanation is based on the similarity of the central figure to Christ in The Transfiguration (J) above, and the identification of the object held by the right-hand figure, as keys. Along with a staff-cross, these were the common attributes of Peter in early Christian art, and when two keys were held together the teeth would be turned out to the sides as they seem to be at Sandbach.¹²⁹ The motif is found in Anglo-Saxon art by the late seventh century on the Cuthbert Coffin where Peter is shown holding the two keys over his shoulder.¹³⁰ Elsewhere in insular art Peter is found with his keys on the Hedda stone at Peterborough (pl.89), and with Paul on the ninth-century cross-head at Hoddum (Dumfries.) where Peter carries two keys and Paul a book.¹³¹ Thus Radford's identification of the figures would seem to be valid.

To fully understand the arrangement and iconography of the Sandbach scene, however, it is necessary to examine a number of

iconographically separate but thematically related programmes: The Traditio Clavis, The Traditio Legis, and the combined Traditio Legis cum Clavis.

The Traditio Clavis, which appears in Christian art during the fourth century, is identified by Peter receiving the key(s) from Christ in an arrangement consisting only of these two figures.¹³² It was a scene limited to the Western artistic repertoire, and was based on the Biblical account of Christ's promise to Peter:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.¹³³

This was seen by the early Church Fathers as a reference to the salvation Christ offered the Church on earth through Peter, and came to be enormously influential in the ideological formation of the Roman Church.¹³⁴

Contemporaneous with the development of the Traditio Clavis, was the Traditio Legis, favoured in Italian and Gallic Christian art; this scheme showed Christ handing a scroll to Peter who stood on the left, while Paul stood to the right raising his hands in prayer or acclamation. Here the scroll symbolised the Word of God made manifest through Christ's triumph over death, and was given to Peter (and his heirs) as a sign that he must instruct the Christian community in its meaning. Unlike the Traditio Clavis, the Traditio Legis was not based on a specific

text, but it is generally agreed that it reflects the roles of Peter and Paul as the great teachers of the Jews and Gentiles who, being the first and last witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, announced its promise of salvation. The scene is therefore, a general, abstract statement of the eternity and triumph of the Church.¹³⁵

The difference between the two scenes in early Christian art is that while the *Traditio Clavis* is essentially a two-figure composition, the *Traditio Legis* is a hieratic centralised composition involving three figures. The one illustrates the giving of the keys to Peter, the other, the giving of the law to Peter, witnessed by Paul.

There are, however (and more relevant to our understanding of the tradition in which the Sandbach scene stands), fifth-century examples of a *Traditio Legis* in Ravennate art where Christ hands the scroll to Paul on the left, while Peter stands on the right holding a staff-cross and key.¹³⁶ This arrangement is thought to represent the specific investment of Paul with the mission to teach the law to the Christian community; it was developed in the East in response to an increased emphasis placed on Paul in the Eastern Church and State during the late fourth and fifth centuries. While Peter was being propagated by the Church of Rome as the sole founder and first occupant of the see, Paul was viewed in the East as the apostle of the Gentiles, and the first exponent of Church doctrine.¹³⁷ The combined presence

of the two apostles in these Ravennate Traditio Legis scenes therefore, probably comments more on the position of Ravenna in the power struggles of the early fifth-century, than on the development of Pauline and Petrine iconography. However, the arrangement found at Ravenna does seem to be a fore-runner of the later Traditio Legis cum Clavis which is the iconographic scheme most relevant to the scene at Sandbach.

It is unclear exactly when or how this arrangement developed, but it began to appear in the ninth century,¹³⁸ and continued in use, sporadically, until the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it enjoyed considerable popularity.¹³⁹ The Traditio Legis cum Clavis is a distinct iconographical type which shows Christ handing the keys of heaven (and so the powers of loosing and binding) to Peter, and the scroll or book of the Law to Paul. In common with the early Christian Traditio Legis, the scheme is characterised by a centralised and hieratic arrangement, but combines the subject matter of the Traditio Legis with that of the Traditio Clavis. The scene could vary in detail, but generally consisted of a central Christ, who could be shown standing,¹⁴⁰ but was more often depicted seated and holding a book, or delivering the attributes to the apostles on either side. These two could therefore be shown either in the act of receiving the keys and the Law, or standing with empty hands, often veiled, outstretched.¹⁴¹

It is generally accepted that the scheme continued to symbolise the revelation of the Law, and as Peter and Paul are

given equal importance in receiving their specific commissions from Christ, the scene expresses their role as being foremost among those spreading the message of salvation, and together they express the establishment and universal character of the Church.¹⁴² Like the earlier *Traditio Legis*, the double commission is not drawn from a Biblical text, although Kinder-Carr has argued that a textual source, such as the liturgy for the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, may lie behind the pictorial scene.¹⁴³ The so called seventh-century *Gothic Missal*, for example, states that Christ founded the earthly Church through these two apostles so that they could teach the Law by which the repentent gain eternal life.¹⁴⁴

The earliest surviving example of the combined *Traditio Legis cum Clavis*, which dates from c.800, is found at Münstair, Switzerland (pl.131). It shows Christ enthroned handing the keys to Peter on the left, and the scroll to Paul on the right; both apostles stand with heads bowed and their veiled hands outstretched towards Christ.¹⁴⁵

The greatest difference between this Continental scene, and that found on the Sandbach cross, lies in the fact that the fresco shows the apostles in the act of receiving their attributes; on the cross-shaft they actually hold them and Christ has his arms bent across his body, possibly holding something in his left hand. This arrangement, although highly unusual among the early Medieval versions of the combined

Traditio Legis cum Clavis, is found on an early ninth-century metal plaque, now in the Vatican (pl.129). This shows Christ enthroned and holding a book in his left hand which he blesses with his right. He is flanked by Peter on the left holding two keys over his shoulder, and Paul on the right holding a book. Two half-length angels are placed in medallions above the apostles' heads.

Thus, the details of the Sandbach scene can be paralleled elsewhere in early ninth-century art. The disposition of the figures, however, is unique in Traditio Legis cum Clavis scenes which normally depict three full-length figures within a square or rectangular frame.¹⁴⁶ At Sandbach we find a three-quarter length Christ, and two flanking figures who emerge from the circular frame in the sweeping motion found elsewhere on the cross-shaft.¹⁴⁷

There are various possible analogies to this arrangement, but these occur in contexts other than Traditio Legis schemes. One such instance is found in early tenth-century art where a saint is shown standing full-length, flanked by two churchmen emerging from the frame of a circular medallion, proffering attributes of their holy orders towards the saint.¹⁴⁸ Although this image does not depict the Traditio Legis, it may well derive from the iconography of the three-figured Traditio Legis cum Clavis established during the course of the previous century. In this case the Sandbach scene may represent an otherwise unknown iconographic type of the Traditio Legis cum Clavis which led to

the later, tenth-century image.

An alternative explanation for its inspiration may lie in the iconography of the early ninth-century Irish *Turin Gospels* miniature of the Ascension (pl.93) which shows a three-quarter-length Christ, wearing a widely flared robe (similar to that worn by the Sandbach Christ), set in a circular medallion. He holds a book across his chest, and is flanked by two diminutive full-length figures who are placed at such an angle that they appear to emerge from the circular frame.¹⁴⁹ It is thought that a possible prototype for this arrangement may lie in depictions of Christ in Majesty seated within a circular glory containing two flanking angels, such as that found on the eighth-century Lombardic altar at Cividale.¹⁵⁰ If the Sandbach scene was inspired by an image similar to the Turin miniature, or the Cividale scheme, it would mean that the sculptor was adapting a closely associated iconographic scheme to depict another subject: the *Traditio Legis cum Clavis*.

Whatever the ultimate derivation of the arrangement found at Sandbach, the scene can clearly be identified as an early example of the *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* which may, or may not, have been copied from a model depicting this actual scene. In this context it is interesting to note that the Sandbach Peter stands almost uniquely outside the normal tradition of Anglo-Saxon Petrine iconography. Higgitt has recently shown that from the seventh century, Peter was depicted in insular art as a Papal figure, tonsured and clean-shaven, in what may have been, in the earliest stages at least, a conscious attempt to associate the

apostle with the Roman Church.¹⁵¹ At Sandbach Peter is clearly bearded as he usually is outside insular art. This means either that he is reproduced from the standard bearded figure-type the sculptor used elsewhere, or was copied from a Mediterranean model which possibly depicted the Traditio Legis. If this latter alternative is the case the sweeping poses of the two apostles may, or may not have been included in the model. If however, the figure was reproduced from the standard bearded-type, it may imply that the sculptor was again creating his own scene in accordance with contemporary developments. Alternatively, but less likely, he may have been imposing a sense of unity on the cross-shaft as a whole by repeating various standard figure-types as seems to have been the case at Rothbury.¹⁵²

It was noted by Radford that the composition of this scene involving three figures with a central Christ, bears certain similarities to the Transfiguration scene (J) above. It has also been argued that this scene was, in all likelihood, built up from a series of disparate iconographic elements into a scene depicting the Transfiguration, and that one of these elements was a figure enthroned on a bar-throne; the other figures and the bird are provided from the fund of figural and animal motifs available to, and used elsewhere by the sculptor.

With this in mind, and turning again to the three-figured Traditio Legis cum Clavis it is possible that it too depends in some way on an image which included an enthroned figure; the

similarity between the widely flared skirt and that of the Christ in the Turin Ascension (pl.93) which probably derived from an enthroned Majestas, has already been noted. General schemes of Christ enthroned and flanked by two figures, who were often Peter and Paul, but could also be martyrs and saints of the early Church, are common in Christian art. A fifth- or sixth-century bronze casket found at Strood in Kent, for instance, is decorated with the repeated pattern of Christ seated and flanked by two figures.¹⁵³

It may well be therefore, that the Sandbach sculptor had before him a general scheme such as this, which depicted three figures, one of whom was enthroned and who may have held rods of authority across his chest. The use of the standard figure-types to provide the flanking figures of Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration, and Peter and Paul in *The Traditio Legis*, would then be explained by the adaptation of the three figured scheme (common to both scenes) to the differently shaped frames in which they are placed on the shaft. The sweeping posture of Peter and Paul in K is, for instance, found elsewhere on this shaft in the cross-head above (A), and is also used for figures on Cross 2 (2.E).

Whether or not this was the case, it is clear that the scene depicts the *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* and shows Christ flanked by Peter with the keys and Paul with a book of the Law. This was a scene which was being developed in Christian art of the West in the early years of the ninth century, and the various puzzling

features of the Sandbach scene may well be explained by its production at a time when the iconography was not yet well established.

m.(pl.29) The one angel which survives in the pendant triangle near the base of 1.E, was in all likelihood one of a pair, as indicated by angels found on 2.W and 2.S (pls.41,44). Although badly worn, enough remains of this one angel to indicate that it was like the others; all have their heads tilted backwards to gaze up the length of the shaft, have long wings similar to those of the angels in H on 1.E and in 'g' on 1.W (pls.31,34), and they all raise their veiled hands towards the figures above them. The cumulative effect of these figures is to add a sense of veneration to this, and the other faces of the two monuments.

The veil covering the outstretched hands originated in Imperial art of the Byzantine court but found its way into Christian art in both East and West at an early date. It is a common motif associated not only with angels, but with any figure holding a divine attribute, or simply stretching their hands out towards the Trinity.¹⁵⁴ Thus it cannot be used as a criterion for dating or identifying a model type. However, the presence of these angels does indicate that they were taken ultimately from a scheme in which angels were shown in attitudes of adoration.¹⁵⁵

The upturned face of the angel is a slightly unusual feature

but is found in insular manuscripts, such as the *Book of Kells*,¹⁵⁶ where angels with upturned heads fill small triangular spaces. Elsewhere it is used for the faces of the apostles in the Last Judgement scene of the *St.Gall Gospels* (pl.99), and the Ascension scene on the Rothbury cross-shaft (pl.22).¹⁵⁷ Thus, while the veiled hand provides nothing more than an instance of the iconography generally associated with angels adoring Christ in Christian art, the upturned head places the figure within the context of insular decorative motifs of the eighth to ninth centuries.

1. North Face (1.N).(pls.30-2):

The entire north face of the cross-shaft has been identified as depicting The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.¹⁵⁸ The interpretation is based on the triple-forked tongue of the winged beast at the top of the shaft which is presumed to symbolise the Trinity (pl.30-1). On its own, however, this beast would probably be regarded as no more than one of the fantastic Anglo-Saxon beasts which commonly adorn insular manuscripts, metalwork and sculpture.¹⁵⁹ It is only the shape of the beast's tongue and the fact that it is found above a series of human figures, that has led to it being identified as the Holy Spirit descending onto the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

If this identification is accepted however, then it must be recognised that it is a highly eccentric formulation of the scheme. The iconography of the Pentecostal scene, which was in

existence by the sixth century, consisted of the twelve apostles standing, or seated in a horizontal row, with the Virgin sometimes included in their number.¹⁶⁰ This arrangement was maintained until the tenth-century when the row was sometimes replaced by an inverted "U" or circle, with the apostles seated round a table.¹⁶¹ Centrally positioned above them was the Holy Spirit from which issued rays of light. These could extend out to touch each apostle on the head,¹⁶² or alternatively, tongues of fire were shown hovering over each head.¹⁶³ The earliest examples portray the Holy Spirit as a dove, which was sometimes accompanied by a bust of Christ. In ninth-century Carolingian art the Hand of God began to be associated with the dove and Christ, and sometimes replaced them, while later an Arc of Heaven was occasionally depicted.¹⁶⁴ In post-iconoclastic Byzantine schemes the Holy Spirit could be further varied as the Throne of God, but this motif did not find its way into Western Pentecostal scenes.¹⁶⁵ In order to interpret the carving on the north face of the cross-shaft as The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the winged beast would thus have to be interpreted as an otherwise unattested symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the eleven figures within the stepped framework would be the apostles touched by the rays of light issuing from the Holy Spirit. There are however, a number of problems with this explanation.

It is not clear, for instance, whether the figures should actually be considered as a composite group of eleven. The figure doubled over at the top (a; see fig.9) may be in that

position because of bad planning, or, more probably, because he is to be considered separately from the others. Similarly, the figures in the rectangular cells (b-i) may have been separate from the two which once filled the pendant triangles at the base of the shaft. Before an identification with a Pentecostal scene can be made therefore, the total count of figures must be agreed, and their relationship with the winged beast.

The uppermost figure has a more clearly defined head than the rest, and the object held at his waist does not grow out of the framework. In this respect he differs from the other figures set in the rectangular cells. Another individualised figure is 'b' who has his head bent back at such an awkward angle. The unusual positions of these two figures may, or may not be deliberate, but if 'a' was to be regarded as part of the group one would expect the object held at his waist to grow out of the framework, and so link him to it, as is the case with most of the other figures on this face. The figure in the pendant triangle is also different from those above him; he faces forward and emerges from the framework, and does not hold a frond. This may indicate that the two figures who once filled the triangles were not intended to be included with the other eight niched figures, who may, in turn, have been separate from figure 'a' who bends over the top.

Despite these differences however, the figures could in fact be regarded as having features in common which provide some sense of overall unity. All have short hair, the thin outline round

the head, and except for the top figure, were all bearded. The garments of the figures indicate that a standard type lies behind them; they wear a short sleeved over-tunic which is heavily pleated and flared. Similarly the awkwardly back-turned head of 'b' is like the upturned faces of the angels in the pendant triangles on both cross-shafts. It is unclear, however, whether these similarities merely arise from an indiscriminate and repeated use of standard figure-types, or whether they indicate an intended unity among all eleven figures on 1.N.

Nevertheless, even if the figures are regarded as a composite group numbering eleven, it does not follow that they form a Pentecostal scene. The written accounts of the event, both biblical and exegetical, give the number of apostles present at the Descent of the Holy Spirit as twelve,¹⁶⁶ and this consistency is reflected in the pictorial versions of the event which depict twelve apostles even in the earliest instances of the scene.¹⁶⁷ Prior to the eleventh century when variations in the numbers of the apostles did occasionally appear in Christian art,¹⁶⁸ there is only one extant example, of late tenth-century date, which shows eleven apostles.¹⁶⁹ However, unlike the Sandbach arrangement, this ivory shows them seated in the upturned "U"-arrangement, and the rays of light which touch the head of each apostle issue from the Hand of God and are supplemented by small tongues of flame. Set against the overwhelming number of instances of the scene which contain twelve figures, and the very real differences the ivory has with

the Sandbach scheme (over and above the common factor of eleven figures), it is difficult to identify the figures on 1.N as the apostles in a Pentecostal scene solely in the light of this example.

It could be argued that because the closely related scheme on 2.N involves twelve figures (fig.13; pls.47-8), twelve were originally intended for 1.N, but this face was badly planned, so that only eleven were actually fitted. Such mis-planning seems *a priori* unlikely, and even if there were twelve figures, and these could be identified as the apostles, it does not necessarily mean that the scene was a Pentecostal one. For this to be so the winged beast would have to be shown to be the Holy Spirit descending on the apostles in a manner comparable with the dove and rays of light normally featured in scenes of the Pentecost; it is far from clear that the winged beast can be identified as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Although symbols of the Holy Spirit varied in Pentecostal scenes, they were clearly limited in Western art to the dove, the Hand of God, a bust of Christ, and occasionally, the Arc of Heaven. Of this well-established selection the Sandbach sculptor was capable of reproducing a bird and a bust of Christ in a medallion. But even without these possibilities the use of a winged beast that extends into an interlace pattern covering the upper half of the cross-shaft, is not a convincing motif symbolising the Holy Spirit. It appears rather to be a decorative feature comparable to the intertwining ribbon beasts

above the twelve figures on 2.N (pl.47), and its body is pierced by interlace similar to the interlace which crosses the winged beast on 1.W (pl.35). The tripartite tongue seems to function as a terminal motif, rather than providing a link with the figures below, which would be necessary if it is to be interpreted with the framework as the rays of light issuing from the Holy Spirit and descending upon the heads of the apostles gathered at Pentecost. The framework on 1.N does not resemble such rays in any convincing way; it is a structural device which contains the figures in separate compartments, and displays a tendency to grow fronds which are sometimes continuous with the figures' beards. In this respect the figures are more comparable with the man found in the vine-scroll on 1.S (pl.36) whose chin also sprouts a long jutting beard.

Admittedly, it is always debatable when dealing with schemes such as are featured on 1.N, as to whether the decoration is primarily ornamental, or part of a narrative scene. However here, unlike the Hell scene at Rothbury (pl.23) which could potentially be interpreted as decorative,¹⁷⁰ there is nothing which points obviously to a symbolic interpretation. It therefore seems highly unlikely that the carving on 1.N can be interpreted as The Descent of the Holy Spirit; what it does represent is not clear, and comparisons with similar figures and arrangements elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon art do not, unfortunately, reveal much that is illuminating.

If the scope of the enquiry is widened to include the comparable scheme on the north face of Cross 2 the differences, as have been noted, further undermine the case for a Pentecostal interpretation for 1.N, while pointing to a more coherent planning for 2.N. The similarities, however (the stepped arrangement and the systematic profile poses of the figures), do suggest that both faces (2.N & 1.N) served a similar function, be that decorative or symbolic, and that the scheme was either derived from the same model, or that the decoration on Cross 2 was based on Cross 1.

One possible approach to determining the significance (if any) of the figures on 1.N and 2.N is to examine whether they have a religious or secular reference. It has been argued¹⁷¹ that the thin outline round the heads may have been derived from a model depicting a nimbed head in profile, and that this was used as a standard figural type repeated across the faces of the shafts whenever it was needed. If this was the case it may mean that the figures on 1.N and 2.N have a religious significance, but it could equally be argued that such a reference was not intended if the model was regarded only as a source for a standard profile figure. Thus because the double outline may have been derived ultimately from a nimbed figure does not mean that it was necessarily understood to depict this, or that it was used to denote this attribute at Sandbach, any more than it was understood to depict a cap or helmet (if it was these items, rather than the halo, which provided the ultimate source of

inspiration for the motif).

While the double outline is thus not very helpful in determining the significance of the figures in question, there are other details which may be more revealing. The clothing, for instance, is very distinctive; it consists of a flared and pleated skirt, which on 2.N, 2.S and 2.E covered a plain undershirt. There are some indications that this garment was a short-sleeved over-tunic. Although not in profile, the two lowest figures on 2.S (pl.44) seem to be wearing a cloak flung over their shoulders. This means that the short sleeve of the profile figures may be a cloak fastened at the front, even though there are no signs of such a garment hanging down the back of any of the figures on the cross-shafts; in Christian art, the Phrygian attire of the Magi consisted of just these elements: pleated, short-skirted tunics, which were originally tucked up at the sides, and cloaks fastened at the front.¹⁷² In some cases the skirt lost the tuck and the cloaks were omitted even though part remained over the shoulder.¹⁷³ It is possible that the garment reproduced at Sandbach may derive from a model such as this, particularly if the double outline round the head was not derived from a nimbed figure, but from the Magi's Phrygian cap.

Perhaps more significantly the garments should be seen as sculpted versions of the male attire which seems to have been standard in Anglo-Saxon England between the seventh- and ninth-centuries.¹⁷⁴ The ninth-century Fuller Brooch (pl.107) provides a metalwork example showing four figures with belted tunics which have full and heavily pleated skirts, each with a stylised fold

at the front which causes the tunic to droop at the sides.¹⁷⁵ The fullness of the over-skirt may have resulted in the stylised representation found at Sandbach of a flared, pleated skirt, and the hem of the undergarment hanging in an inverted "U"-shape round the legs.¹⁷⁶ Examples of secular costuming in Anglo-Saxon sculpture are rare, but not unknown; the piece at Codford St. Peter for example, shows a similarly dressed figure clothed in a short pleated tunic.¹⁷⁷ It would seem therefore, that the clothing of the Sandbach figures can be explained equally well as deriving from Christian art, or as representative of contemporary secular dress.

The function of the fronds held by the figures is even less clear. Close examination of the cross-shaft shows that they are part of the central divide and are not likely to be swords or scrolls.¹⁷⁸ A possible parallel is found at Ingleby, near Repton in Derbyshire (pl.130) where a piece of cross-shaft is carved with a slightly elongated standing figure. This figure stands in three-quarter profile (wearing a heavily pleated skirt which has a distinctive fold in the middle where it appears to be divided), while his arm is bent at the elbow across his body to grasp a curved tendril which grows from the tree at the side of the panel. Although dated by Routh to the tenth-century,¹⁷⁹ this piece of carving is believed to be derived from earlier ivories.¹⁸⁰ This may suggest that the figures at Sandbach were based on a similar model, but were less coherently executed, and that they should thus be regarded as being set in some form of

debased vegetal framework. Whether this arrangement was intended to have a religious or secular significance, or whether it was a purely decorative scheme is still unclear.

Another possible indicator may lie in the number of figures involved on the two faces. It has been suggested that 1.N, which only has eleven figures (if they are to be regarded as a single unit), may have been intended to carry twelve as does 2.N. If this is so, the presence of twelve figures in any context in Christian art is likely to indicate the twelve apostles. While the presence of twelve figures does not necessarily imply that apostles were intended, the alternatives for a series of this number of divine figures are very limited.¹⁸¹ Comparisons therefore need to be made with programmes of twelve figures (possibly apostles) who hold long, thinly curving fronds which grow from a framework or a tree. Such schemes are not common.

At a number of Anglo-Saxon sites there are cross-shafts which have been carved with figures of the apostles and the evangelists: at Hoddam (Dumfries.), Halton (Lancs.), Otley, Ilkley, Collingham and Easby in Yorkshire.¹⁸² With the exception of Easby (where the figures are placed in groups) these cross-shafts depict single busts of nimbed figures placed one above the other in arched niches running the length of the shaft, and most seem to have had identifying captions. Only the small fragments at Otley, believed to be of ninth-century date,¹⁸³ show figures set within a floral surround, but this foliated ornament appears to be only a variation of the strictly architectural

surrounds of the other cross-shafts. Where enough of the figure is shown, they are seen to hold books. Thus although pre-Viking sculpture probably did use the motif of a series of apostles and evangelists, nothing in the extant material resembles the scheme at Sandbach, either in the position, length and style of the figures, or in their numbers.

Another possible interpretation of these figures might be as Old Testament prophets who were used in Christian art to express the theme of the Incarnation of the Son of God as consubstantial with the Father, and as fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of Christ.¹⁸⁴ It is extremely rare to find programmes of these figures before the tenth-century, when they appear, almost for the first time, on the stole of St. Cuthbert.¹⁸⁵ Although the number of prophets in any one scheme could vary between four and sixteen, the normal programme consisted of the twelve counterparts to the apostles; who stand holding scrolls or books.¹⁸⁶ The Cuthbert Stole shows tall thin, bearded prophets standing, one above the other, some holding books, and others holding out palm leaves to one side like a sceptre; that held by Daniel curves out slightly at the bottom of the stem.¹⁸⁷ Hohler has argued that these palm leaves, which are unique attributes for prophets, demonstrate the derivation of the figures from a standard saint-figure without much regard for the appropriateness of the attributes when in the hands of the prophets.¹⁸⁸ It may be that a similar saint-figure provided the inspiration for the figures on 1.N and 2.N, with the palm leaf transformed into the

stylised curving frond growing from the vertical moulding. Against this explanation, it must be said that the sculptured tendrils do not have the sheaf of fronds at one end as palm leaves normally do, and as they are found at Wirksworth (pl.52); neither do the Sandbach figures wear the long robes normally worn by saints and prophets.

It may be, however, that the complete iconographic programme of Otley 1 provides a comparison with Sandbach. The remains of this Yorkshire cross-shaft associate religious figures with foliate ornament and inhabited vinescroll, and, as Wood has argued, convey aspects of pastoral and evangelical work.¹⁸⁹ Although the carving is not stylistically similar to Sandbach, and the figures are not arranged in the same way, Otley does present a systematic iconographic programme in which symbolic vegetal ornament is used in conjunction with human figures to signify the work of the Church. Sandbach has a stylistic affinity only with the Ingleby fragment (pl.130) which shows a single male figure collecting fruit from a tree whose iconographic import is unknown, but it may be that the Sandbach sculptor was attempting to depict the figures, religious or otherwise, within a framework intended to symbolise the Church.¹⁹⁰

The iconography of this scheme as it exists at Otley is unique in Christian art, but programmes depicting the Church were, although uncommon, rather vaguely conveyed by an overall programme. For instance, the fifth-century mosaics of S.Paolo,

Rome, show Christ enthroned with the four evangelist symbols flanked by twelve bareheaded figures and twelve others with covered heads - these being the prophets of the Old Testament who saw the Truth veiled and the apostles of the New Testament who saw the Truth face to face. Together they represent the union of the Old and New Dispensation with Christ on whom The Church is based.¹⁹¹ Alternatively the Church could be presented as a corporate body symbolised by a flock of sheep,¹⁹² or, within a programme of Christ and his apostles, the Church could be represented by the woman *Ecclesia* who would be set against another woman representing *Synagoga*.¹⁹³ If viewed against this background of extremely diverse images representing the Church, both in the Mediterranean West and in Anglo-Saxon England, it could well be that the scheme on the Sandbach crosses was intended to convey similar diffuse notions about the Church as a single unit incorporating many parts.

1. West Face (1.W):

D-F.(pls.33-4) With one exception, the four niches (c-f) on 1.W. have been identified as a soldier (c) leading Christ bound (d), and below them, another soldier (e) leading Simon of Cyrene (f) who carries the cross.¹⁹⁴ Radford initially believed 'c' and 'd' to be on their way to Calvary, but later described them as on their way to the flogging.¹⁹⁵ In a slightly different interpretation, Bu'Lock saw 'c' and 'd' as thieves or soldiers, and the lower pair (e & f) as Christ and Simon of Cyrene.¹⁹⁶

Whatever the variation in detailed interpretation, however, it is generally agreed that the top four figures form the part of the Passion cycle composed of the Road to Calvary sequence.

To examine the more detailed suggestions made by Radford and Bu'Lock, the cruciferous halo round 'd', clearly identifies the figure, bound and led by a rope, as Christ. As no other figure within this grouping of four shows any sign of being similarly nimbed, including the figure below carrying the staff-cross, this suggests that 'f' is Simon of Cyrene rather than Christ. Further, if the sequence follows the biblical account Christ is bound and being led either before Caiaphas after his arrest,¹⁹⁷ or before Pilate after leaving Caiaphas.¹⁹⁸ However there is no pictorial tradition in early Medieval art of Christ being bound and led to his trials. On these occasions he is shown either standing before one of his judges with his hands tied, or more often, with a hand raised in speech.¹⁹⁹ Christ is only depicted bound and led in the company of Simon of Cyrene, when they are on the way to Golgotha. This indicates that the four figures (c-f) at Sandbach are best examined in the light of the iconography of The Road to Calvary sequences.

In Western art of the early Christian period there were at least three ways of depicting the Bearing of the Cross. In the earliest of these Simon is shown on his own carrying the cross; Christ is not depicted.²⁰⁰ The second type featured Simon, again on his own carrying the cross, but this time set next to the scene of Pilate Washing his Hands.²⁰¹ The third Western

pictorial type, showed Simon together with Christ, helping him to carry the cross.²⁰² None of these types bears a close resemblance to the two distinct scenes at Sandbach where Christ is bound and led by a rope, and Simon, led by another figure, carries the cross.

In Eastern art of the pre-iconoclastic period, however, there seems to have been another tradition which does bear a closer resemblance to the sequence at Sandbach. One of the few examples surviving from this early period is found on the fifth-century wooden doors of Sta. Sabina, believed to be the product of Syrian craftsmen working in Rome (pl. 134).²⁰³ Here Christ is shown bound and led to Golgotha by a priest, followed closely by Simon bearing the cross.²⁰⁴

After the fifth century, in both East and West, the scene was not used very frequently again until the tenth-century,²⁰⁵ when in the East, on the walls of the rock church of Elmali, Cappadocia (pl. 133), it is found, showing Christ bound with a rope round his neck and led by a soldier with a lance; the image is believed to be an isolated scene from a more complex Road to Calvary sequence.²⁰⁶ On the early eleventh-century gold antependium at Aachen, in a scene derived from the same iconographic tradition featured at Elmali, Christ is shown bound by his hands and led by a soldier.²⁰⁷ In neither of these instances, however, is the image of Christ combined with Simon bearing the cross. It is only in tenth-century Ottonian art that

the figures found at Sandbach are shown together. The *Codex Egberti* (c.980), for instance, and the later *Book of Pericopes of Henri III* (1039-43 A.D.), show Christ with his hands outstretched, following Simon who carries the cross.²⁰⁸ Although not bound, the position of Christ's hands in these two manuscript miniatures indicates that the iconography was derived from a prototype which showed them bound, as they are in the fifth century at Sta.Sabina, and in the eleventh century at Aachen.

The accumulation of this pictorial evidence demonstrates the existence of an iconographic type which showed Christ bound by the hands and led along the road to Calvary while Simon carried the cross. This version is believed to have originated in the East, as indicated by its early presence on the Sta.Sabina doors and its later appearance both in Eastern work, and in European art dependent on Byzantium; it was probably not a predominant type until the tenth-century when it appears in a more schematised form in both Eastern and Western art. That it continued in use, even if infrequently, in the period before the tenth century, however, is suggested by the frescoes at Müstair, Switzerland (c.800; pl.132).²⁰⁹ Here a figure (now almost totally destroyed), carrying a staff-cross over his shoulder, is followed by Christ who has at least one arm out-stretched; the other arm and the hands are too damaged to be sure if they were bound. Nor, unfortunately, is it possible to see if the person accompanying Christ led him by a rope. What is clear is that Christ is in the attitude of being bound and led, while another figure, presumably Simon, carries the cross.²¹⁰ This

demonstrates that the sequence, consisting of Simon with the cross, Christ, and at least one accompanying figure, be he priest or soldier, was present in Continental art of the early ninth century. In the light of this the Sandbach figures could reasonably be interpreted as a vertical arrangement of the Road to Calvary scenes such as are featured at Sta.Sabina and Mustair.

There do not seem to be any other examples of this scene surviving in insular art of the pre-Viking period,²¹¹ but at Leek (Staffs.), the "Calvary Stone" (pl.64) shows a draped elongated figure, his body stooped under a long staff-cross which he carries over his shoulder; above his head are a pellet and the remains of a figure wearing a short skirt. If the cross-bearing figure is taken in conjunction with this upper figure it may well represent an abbreviated version of the Road to Calvary sequence adapted to a vertical arrangement.²¹²

Turning to examine the figures accompanying Christ and Simon at Sandbach in more detail, we find Christ bound and led by a rope held by a figure (c) who, in other versions of the scene already described, is either a priest or a soldier. On the cross-shaft this accompanying figure wears the standard, possibly secular, short-skirted tunic worn by so many of the figures on the monument, but does not carry any attributes such as a sword or lance which could identify him as a soldier. He does have the thin outline round his head, which in this case terminates in a curl; this may suggest he was wearing a head-dress or, as argued

above, indicates no more than the use of a stylised standard figural-type.²¹³ Below this figure is another (e), followed by Simon. The long, slightly limp object which passes behind his body and over his shoulder, is odd, but it was probably intended to be a lance or spear as is found on the Elmali frescoes in Cappadocia (pl.133). Its curved nature may indicate that it was adapted from the rope held by 'c' above, but the equally flaccid character of Simon's staff-cross suggests that this was not necessarily the case.

The greatest difference between the Sandbach sequence and the other examples cited, is its arrangement in individual niches set in pairs one above the other. As suggested above, the vertical presentation could have resulted from adapting the sequence to the shape of the cross-shaft; normally, as at Müstair and Sta.Sabina (pls.132,134), the sequence is portrayed in a single horizontal group scene, while the later Ottonian examples show it as an uninterrupted procession. However, the Cappadocean fresco does imply that the sequence could be broken up into separate scenes, which is what appears to have happened at Sandbach.

Thus it could be argued that, as elsewhere on the cross-shaft, the arrangement of figures in individual niches represents no more than another instance of the sculptor's tendency to separate his scenes and figures into individual cells. However, the curling tendrils found in front of 'c', 'e' and 'f' may be the remnants of a previous series of vegetal divisions which

separated the figures in the model or its prototype. This type of division, although not associated with the Road to Calvary in any extant sequences, is common in early Christian art in many other contexts; it is, for instance, used to separate pairs of figures in the pictorial narrative of Genesis in the ninth-century *Moutier-Grandval Bible*, which is based on a fifth-century work.²¹⁴ In insular art, on the front panel of the seventh- or eighth-century Northumbrian Franks Casket (pl.117), small foliate tendrils separate individual stages of the narrative; the motif is believed to indicate the indirect influence of an arrangement such as is found on early Christian sarcophagi and in the Carolingian manuscript.²¹⁵ Thus the tendrils emerging, only from the left of the niches on the Sandbach cross, might, on this hypothesis, suggest that the figures were taken from the model in pairs, possibly separated by trees, and set in the vertically arranged arched cells more commonly used by the sculptor.

Whether Christ preceded Simon or followed him in this model is not certain. On the Sta.Sabina doors (pl.134) Christ leads the group as he does in all extant examples of the scene found in early Christian art, including those which do not show him bound.²¹⁶ In the later Byzantine and Ottonian examples Christ walks behind Simon.²¹⁷ Reading down the cross-shaft at Sandbach it is clear that here Christ is shown led in fetters, before Simon carrying the cross. If this arrangement is due to the source, it indicates dependence on a model either dating from

the fifth or sixth century, or on a later copy which reproduced the elements and arrangement of the Eastern pictorial type found in Italy at this time.

G.(fig.9; pl.34) The presence of the angel in 'g' makes Radford's interpretation of this pair of figures (g & h) as Christ before Pilate impossible.²¹⁸ This scene was composed of only the two major protagonists, Christ and Pilate, who were sometimes accompanied by an attendant; an angel is never found in the scene.²¹⁹ Thus Bailey's identification of the two figures as Gabriel and the Virgin of The Annunciation, which was later followed by Bu'Lock, would seem more appropriate, as this scene usually consists of an angel and a seated figure.²²⁰

As discussed above, The Annunciation in Christian art of the West had, by the sixth century, adopted the arrangement which showed Mary on the right and the angel on the left of the scene; in the earlier versions of this iconographic type Mary was often shown spinning, while there was also an increasing tendency to emphasise her nobility by placing her in an elaborate seat. The angel on the left was usually shown holding a sceptre or scroll in one hand, while extending the other hand towards the Virgin in greeting.²²¹

The damaged remains of 'g' and 'h' at Sandbach would seem to correspond broadly to these iconographic features; the nimbed angel holds a small cylindrical object in one hand which, like

other such objects on the cross-shaft, can be identified as a scroll, here symbolising the divine message he brings to Mary;²²² she is seated in profile on the right in an ornate high-backed chair, holding out before her a long object which could be either a long scroll, or a much damaged version of the spindle more commonly depicted. As the scrolls elsewhere at Sandbach are shown as fairly short cylinders, it is more likely that Mary is portrayed here as holding the spindle and thread.

The Sandbach scene thus has certain elements in common with other versions of The Annunciation found elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon sculpture at Hovingham (Yks.) and Wirksworth (Derbys.).²²³ As already noted, the Hovingham Mary is depicted holding the spindle and thread (pl.3),²²⁴ while at Wirksworth the angel is portrayed holding a scroll across his chest (pl.57). It is also worth noting that while the Virgin in the Adoration scene (F) on 1.E is seated in a canopied throne (pls.27-8), here Mary is seated in a high-backed chair with a curved terminal, not dissimilar to the chairs featured repeatedly on the Masham column (Yks; pls.8,10). This may indicate the use of a model different to that lying behind The Adoration of the Magi scene.

Thus, although the figures are so badly damaged, they are clearly within the well-established Western iconographic tradition, and have features in common with those in other Annunciation scenes surviving in pre-Viking sculpture from the north of England. The only detail which may give some indication

of the date of the scene is the curve-backed chair which seems to point to an insular context of the eighth and early ninth centuries.²²⁵

H.(fig.9; pl.34) Although the remains of an angel can be discerned in 'i', there is insufficient to determine the identity of the scene it formed with 'j', which has been totally lost.

2. West Face (2.W).(figs.12-13; pls.38-40):

As noted earlier,²²⁶ discussion of this face of Cross 2 will not include A (see fig.12) as it is too fragmentary. It will instead concentrate on the remainder of 2.W, the carving of Stone III (see fig.13), which has commonly been interpreted as depicting the Final Resurrection. As such the central figure of the uppermost group (B) is identified as Christ the Judge standing in the Osiris-pose holding what are usually described as a double-barred cross over one shoulder and a flowering rod over the other; the two flanking figures are identified as Peter and Paul, while the figures in the arched niches below (a-j) are presumed to be the dead rising from their graves.²²⁷

There are, however, certain problems with this identification. One of these is that the interpretation involves a confusion between two closely related, but iconographically distinct, schemes. The Final Resurrection, which is one scheme, is rare in early Western art because the event was usually expressed symbolically by The Women at the Sepulchre on Easter

Morning, or by The Harrowing of Hell.²²⁸ When it did appear, it was usually combined with the other scheme, The Last Judgement, to which it added the bodies of the dead rising from their graves. It was in fact, one episode associated with the Last Judgement.²²⁹

The Last Judgement, which depended on gospel and extra-biblical traditions for its pictorial material,²³⁰ had a long tradition separate from the Final Resurrection, and is distinguished by its arrangement; it is divided into two parts consisting of the Judge and the judged, who are in turn separated into the saved and the damned (see eg. pl.106).²³¹ At first the division was hieratic and vertical, derived from images of judgement in late antiquity;²³² this arrangement prevailed in Christian iconography from the sixth-century onwards. Later a lateral division was used as well which, to achieve a greater impact, placed the judged on either side of Christ.²³³ The earliest known representation of the laterally divided scene is found on the late seventh-century Merovingian sarcophagus of Agilbert at Jouarre (pl.137). Here Christ is shown sitting with an open scroll while beside him stands an angel; the elect and the damned flank them on either side, all standing in the *orans* position. At each end a figure waits to lead them to heaven or hell.²³⁴

While the Last Judgement had a long-established tradition, the earliest image of the Final Resurrection is found on a late eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory, now at the Victoria & Albert

Museum (pl.92), which shows the dead rising from their graves within the context of a Last Judgement scene. At the top of the scene Christ the Judge is enthroned in a mandorla holding an open scroll in each hand. He is flanked by six angels sounding the last trump. Around and below him the dead rise from their coffins in a variety of attitudes. In the lower left-hand corner the elect are welcomed into heaven, while in the opposite corner the damned are swallowed by Hell. As at Jouarre, Christ the Judge is an enthroned figure with an open scroll, but unlike the Merovingian carving, the dead do not stand in the same identical position to receive judgement.

It is the motif of repetition and schematisation, characteristic of The Last Judgement, that finds its way into later, Irish examples of the scene where Christ is depicted standing in the Osiris pose rather than enthroned with a scroll, and, as on the eighth-century ivory, flanked by at least one angel blowing the last trump. However, unlike the earlier ivory, the elect and the damned in Irish art are portrayed in serried rows of identical figures.²³⁵ Thus, in the eighth-century *Gospels of St.Gall* (pl.99) twelve figures looking up at Christ and carrying books are arranged in two rows below the Judge who is flanked by two angels with trumpets. Likewise, in the closely related ninth-century *Turin Gospel Book* (pl.135), the resurrected fill ninety-six regular compartments placed round a central Christ; each clasps a book to his chest, while in the top right-hand corner is a small figure with a long trumpet. Elsewhere, on

the tenth-century cross-shafts at Monasterboice and Clonmacnoise, Christ the Osiris-Judge stands by a trumpeter, and the resurrected are arranged in superimposed rows of almost identical figures.²³⁶

Despite the variations exhibited in these examples of The Last Judgement, it is clear that in all instances when Christ the Judge is found standing, the resurrected are arranged in serried ranks waiting to be judged, and there is always a figure sounding the last trump. At Sandbach we have an Osiris-pose figure who may be a judge, but there is no trumpeting angel, and while the varied attitudes of the figures below may suggest a Final Resurrection, it is not at all clear that they are in fact rising from their graves. If all the figures on 2.W are to be interpreted as a Final Resurrection scene, these discrepancies will have to be explained

A further problem with the Final Resurrection interpretation is the identity of the three figures in B, and those in the niches a-j. B (pl.40) consists of a central figure who carries a cross and a rod over his shoulders, and who could well therefore be identified as Christ; but it is the apparently double-barred nature of the cross and the foliate nature of the rod this central figure holds over his shoulders which has most influenced the identification of the entire west face as The Final Resurrection. Yet close examination of these attributes has shown that the cross is in fact a normal staff-cross with a pellet on either side of the upper arm; the "floriate" rod is a

thin staff which passes before or behind the bird whose similarity to those on 1.E and 1.S (pls.29,37) clearly confirms that the "flowering" part of the rod is in fact a bird. It has also been noted in the discussion of J on 1.E (pl.29) that the presence of crossed sceptres does not mean the figure holding them has to be interpreted as Christ the Judge.²³⁷

Compounding this problem is the identity of the two flanking figures in B who carry a book and a scroll; neither blows a trumpet as would be expected if they form part of a Last Judgement scene. Furthermore (if they are to be identified as Peter and Paul), there is no extant pictorial instance of The Last Judgement or Final Resurrection in early Christian art which includes these two apostles.²³⁸ The tenth-century Cross of Muirdach which does include a figure with a book among those flanking the Judge, who could possibly be identified as Peter, does not show a Pauline figure; instead it depicts the trumpeter.²³⁹ Neither do the adoring angels in the pendant triangles on the Sandbach cross carry trumpets; but these are, in any case, not placed near Christ as is usual, for example, in the Irish Judgement scenes.²⁴⁰

In addition, in order for the other figures on the shaft to be identified within the context of The Last Judgement, one would expect them to be identical in a repetitive and schematic manner, but each of the niched figures (a-j; pl.41) is individualised and their poses varied as might be expected in a Final Resurrection. However, it is only the arched nature of these niches which

inspires the notion of the dead rising from their graves; the attitudes of the figures within these arches do not actually resemble such actions. Rather they are arranged in two groups of three with the two flanking figures in each row turning to face, and possibly venerate, the figures in the central niches (d & g). Thus a Final Resurrection explanation is extremely unlikely.

It could be argued that the central figure of B, the "Judge", is meant to be considered separately from the figures in the arched niches in an abbreviated Judgement scene. A possible analogy for this is found in the *Book of Kells* (pl.106) where only the Judge is found below The Temptation scene, but even here the bust of Christ the Judge is placed above rows of busts which are divided into the two groups of the saved and the damned.²⁴¹ At Sandbach, the fact still remains that the central "Judge" figure is flanked by the two figures holding a book and scroll for which there is no parallel or explanation in a Judgement or Final Resurrection context, and he is not associated with the elect and the damned in a way which is easily explained by the figures in the arched niches. Given these inconsistencies, it seems that the iconography of the figures on Stone III of 2.W should be reconsidered. The following discussion will therefore examine the groups of figures in turn as they are shown in fig.13; the three figures in B will be treated first, followed by those in niches a-b (as Group C), c-e (as Group D), f-g (as Group F) and lastly the angels in 'i' and 'j' (see pls.40-1).

B.(pl.40) The discussion of J on 1.E argued that in creating his own version of The Transfiguration, the sculptor of 1.E probably adapted a model depicting an Osiris figure, to portray the transfigured Christ.²⁴² The similarities between the group in B on 2.W and the Transfiguration on 1.E (pl.29) include not only this central figure, but also the composition involving three figures, the position of the bird, and the attributes carried by the two flanking figures. Also distinctive are the half-turned position of the bodies, and the shape of the robes, feet, haloes and pellets. Such similarities suggest that the figures on 2.W are likely to have been derived from the same model as J on 1.E, with some of the iconographic inconsistencies rationalised; the scene is therefore less likely to be part of a Last Judgement scene, than to have the same identity as the figures in J: The Transfiguration of Christ.

If this is the case the group on 2.W would consist of the transfigured Christ flanked by Moses with the Law and Elijah with the Word of the Prophets; as on 1.E the dove has been used to symbolise the Holy Spirit present at the revelation. The confused double cylinder held by Elijah on 1.E has been simplified and is clearly a double scroll. The only difference is that is held out before him like the scrolls held by other figures on both cross-shafts; it is not held over his shoulder. Whether this indicates the use of a different figure-type to that used for the figure on 1.E is uncertain, but the occurrence of the scroll held over the shoulder in 'h' (pl.41) below suggests that

it may be a possibility; this group of figures, as will be argued below, does not seem to depict The Transfiguration, and so different scroll-bearing poses were adopted for the otherwise similar figures on 2.W in an attempt to distinguish between them.²⁴³

The two sceptres held by Christ, as opposed to the single staff-cross shown on 1.E, pose a similar problem. The same model may lie behind both figures of the transfigured Christ, but whatever the number of sceptres held by the prototype, one of the Sandbach Christs differs from it. Given the presence of the bar-throne on 1.E it is most likely that that figure adheres more closely to the model. In this case the use of the two sceptres on 2.W may represent no more than an aesthetic principle of balance; alternatively, and as will be argued below, it may indicate an attempt to make a particular theological point concerning the divinity, and therefore the divine authority invested in Christ, manifested at The Transfiguration.²⁴⁴

The two upturned heads found below the feet of the Old Testament figures, can also be interpreted in the context of The Transfiguration. While the resurrected in Judgement scenes could be shown looking upwards and were sometimes reduced to heads, as is the case in the *St. Gall Gospels* (pl.99), the Transfiguration could include not only the three exalted figures, but also the disciples who witnessed the event. It is possible that the sculptor, maybe trying to clarify the scene, was attempting to

fit this second part of the scene into the space below Christ, Moses and Elijah. The reduction of the disciples to busts at The Transfiguration was not usual, but it is not without precedent if the limitations of space required it; an eighth-century Syrian pectoral cross (pl.128) provides just such an instance where the Transfiguration, placed at the bottom of the lower cross-arm, has led to the disciples being depicted as three small busts.

In summary then, although elements of the scene could be interpreted in the light of The Final Resurrection, the figures in B have more in common with the iconography of The Transfiguration scene found on 1.E. As on this cross-shaft, the details which are unusual in a Transfiguration context, such as the dove, can be explained by the use of common models and the influence of the larger cross on Cross 2.

C.(fig.13; pl.40) The two figures in 'a' and 'b' are too worn to be identified, but their general outlines are so similar that it would seem that they formed a pair of figures.

D.(fig.13; pl.41) Bu'Lock identified this group of three figures (c-e) as an Adoration of Mary and the Child;²⁴⁵ an interpretation based on the kneeling attitude of the two flanking figures (c & e) and the suggestion that the central figure (d) holds a nimbed child in its arms. It could be argued that the two kneeling figures in 'c' and 'e' were carved in this pose to fit them into

the confines of the cell. However, the two figures below them (f & h) are in niches of similar dimensions and are full-length, standing figures; the sculptor was capable of fitting standing figures into the compartments, and the kneeling pose of 'c' and 'e' would therefore seem to be deliberate and so supports an Adoration interpretation. Although the central figure (d) is so worn, the vague position of the arms and the suggestion of a halo against the right shoulder can be deciphered, and so lends added support to Bu'Lock's interpretation of the figures as forming an Adoration of the Virgin and Child.

The iconography of such Adoration images had a long history in Christian art, and was well established by the sixth century. It consisted of a centrally arranged composition showing the Virgin enthroned, or standing, facing forwards, with the Child in her arms (sometimes within a medallion), flanked by saints and angels who stand attendant beside them; sometimes angels are shown standing slightly behind the throne of the seated Virgin (see pls.136,138-9).²⁴⁶ The scheme was enormously popular in the sixth century, and symbolised Mary as the Mother of God, emphasising Christ's divine nature despite his human incarnation.²⁴⁷ It was used in almost every decorative media, in a great variety of contexts, from monumental mosaics and frescoes, to ivories, metal-work, and textiles.²⁴⁸ On a sixth-century gold medallion from Byzantium (pl.123), for instance, the Virgin and Child are enthroned between two angels in association with an ox and ass Nativity and a processional Adoration of the

Magi. The sixth-century diptych which now covers the *Etchmiadzin Gospels*, on the other hand, shows Mary and the Christ child enthroned between two archangels, and surrounded by scenes from the infancy of Christ, while on the other leaf Christ is enthroned between Peter and Paul surrounded by scenes from his life which emphasise the theophanic mysteries (pl.141).²⁴⁹ The sixth-century icon from Mt.Sinai (pl.139), however, shows only the central mother and child flanked by two saints, behind whom stand the two archangels.²⁵⁰

The image continued in use throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, achieving renewed popularity in the ninth century in both Italian and Carolingian art.²⁵¹ An interesting variation on the scheme dating from this later period, which has a bearing on the Sandbach figures, is found at Sta.Maria in Trastevere (Rome) in the mosaics produced by Pope John VII (705-7 A.D.).²⁵² These show the Virgin and Child enthroned, flanked on the right by a standing saint, but on the left, the pope is seen kneeling at Mary's feet. If the figures on the cross-shaft do portray an Adoration of the Virgin and Child, as seems likely, they may well have derived from a scheme such as this later, more personalised, Roman variation.

The general scheme was also known in Anglo-Saxon England, being found in manuscript art and on sculptured cross-shafts. It has been demonstrated, for instance, that the Virgin and Child miniature in the *Book of Kells*, although featuring a profile Virgin, derives from an Adoration scene involving attendant

angels.²⁵³ Also from the ninth century is the carving on the cross-shaft at Eyam (Derbys; pl.65) where, under the angels from a Last Judgement which adorn the cross-head, Mary, half-length, is shown in a medallion holding the child; a similar image may once have decorated the nearby cross-shaft at Bakewell (Derbys.), although here the carving is too weathered to allow a clear identification. On the near contemporary cross-shafts of St.Oran, St.John and St.Martin on Iona, the Virgin and Child are also found in medallions; on the cross of St.Martin they are attended by angels.²⁵⁴

It is clear from these insular examples, and from the other Continental versions of the image, that although the scheme had a fixed composition which centred on the frontally positioned Virgin and Child, the identity of the flanking attendant figures could vary between angels, saints, and indeed popes, while the number and actual position of these figures could also vary. What the Sandbach scheme has in common with them is the centrally placed mother and child and the two flanking figures who, in this case, kneel to adore them; all have been placed within the arched niches in keeping with a stylistic device employed throughout the cross-shaft. But even this organisation may reflect a pattern in the model because the early sixth-century frescoes at Sta.Maria Antiqua (Rome), show the Virgin and two angels under triangular-headed arches,²⁵⁵ while a late eighth-century casket from Enger shows them within round-headed niches (pl.140); the mid ninth-century version of the image found at Sta.Maria Novae Urbis

(Rome) features the Virgin and Child between Peter, Andrew, James and John, who are shown standing under arches.²⁵⁶

Because the scheme often shows two additional figures, sometimes angels, standing half-hidden behind the the throne of the seated Mary, it may be that the two figures in the niches above (a & b) were also intended to be a part of this group, although they would not have been angels. Their worn condition does mean that this interpretation cannot be advanced with any certainty, but the iconography of the Adoration of the Virgin and Child does allow for two such figures in this position, as the sixth-century Mt.Sinai icon and the Berlin diptych referred to above, illustrate (see pls.138-9).

In summary therefore, it would seem fairly certain that the three figures of D, and maybe those of C, formed an Adoration of The Virgin and Child. This was an extremely common image in Christian art from the fifth century onwards, and was current in Italian, Carolingian and insular art of the ninth century.

F.(fig.13; pl.41) Due to the very worn condition of the central figure 'g' of this group interpretation is uncertain. This central figure may have been Christ but such an identification is based primarily on the association of the two flanking figures (who carry a book and scroll) with similar figures in the Transfiguration scenes on 1.E and 2.W above. The motif of the left-hand figure carrying a book and the right-hand figure with a

scroll is common to both Sandbach versions of the Transfiguration, and like the comparable figure on 1.E, 'h' holds the scroll over his shoulder.

Against this interpretation it must be noted that the figures of F are not associated with any symbol of the Holy Spirit; the arrangement and the figures are common to the Transfiguration, but the vital detail of the Holy Spirit is absent. Although this might have been the result of insufficient space in the niches, it does mean that the group cannot with certainty be identified as forming a Transfiguration scene, and the chances of the same scene occurring twice on the same face of a cross-shaft would be, to say the least, extremely unusual.

The group may, therefore, only illustrate a general scheme of Christ flanked by two apostles or saints. The fact that they are turned towards him (as are 'c' and 'e' adoring the Virgin above), suggests that a degree of veneration may be implied, as opposed to the more hierarchic arrangement of the three figures standing side by side in the Transfiguration scenes. Such images of Christ, flanked by two or more figures holding a variety of attributes, including books and scrolls, are extremely common in Christian art, and form the decoration of much of the earliest Italian churches of Rome and Ravenna.²⁵⁷ It is a scheme found also on the early sarcophagi,²⁵⁸ on ivories (see pl.141), and on small reliquaries. The late eight-century reliquary from Enger for example (pl.140), shows Christ and the Virgin and Child set one above the other in small arched niches flanked on each side

by adoring figures also set in arches. Thus the figures (f-h) on the Sandbach cross could well be viewed within what was an extremely common iconographic tradition in Christian art from the fourth century onwards, and was produced on small-scale artefacts in eighth century Europe in conjunction with The Adoration of the Virgin and Child.

To create this general image on the cross-shaft, figural types commonly used at Sandbach may have been used, or a straight copying of the larger cross-shaft may be indicated. The position of the scroll over the shoulder of 'h' which is repeated in the Transfiguration on 1.E suggests that a type common to this cross-shaft was employed. However, figures on 1.N, 2.N and 2.S do stand in profile with objects crossing over their shoulders and this may have provided the model for 'h' on 2.W.

Whatever the specific iconography of this lower group of figures, whether it be an incomplete Transfiguration or, as is more likely, a general Adoration of Christ, the iconographic implication is in keeping with the remainder of the west face. Christ is revealed at the Transfiguration (B), adored with the Virgin (C-D), and venerated by two standing figures (F), below whom are the adoring angels (i & j) found elsewhere on the cross-shaft. The scenes are composed of elements found both in Christian art generally from the fourth to ninth centuries, as well as on Cross 1. The overall scheme carved on 2.W is also paralleled elsewhere in Christian art of the eighth century. The

Enger reliquary (pl.140), as already mentioned, depicts the Adoration of Christ and the Virgin and Child, while the eighth-century Syrian pectoral cross (pl.128), which is referred to above as showing the disciples reduced to busts at The Transfiguration, includes an image of Christ adored by angels, and the Virgin standing with the Child in her arms flanked by the twelve apostles; the face of this pectoral cross is filled with images of theophany and adoration emphasising the divine nature of Christ in a manner which is comparable with the Sandbach cross.

2. South Face (2.S).(fig.12; pls.42-4):

The iconography of this face of the cross was not discussed with the iconography of 1.N and 2.N (pls.30-2,47-8) because, although it consists of single figures set in individual cells, these do not systematically face the centre, and neither do they carry attributes which link them to a framework surrounding them. It is also clear that while there were either eleven or twelve figures involved in the schemes of 1.N and 2.N, on 2.S the round-headed niches may have continued the entire length of the shaft, the top part of which has been lost; thus there are at least fourteen figures on 2.S (see fig.12), and there may have been more. Of course, any discussion of the figures on 2.S faces the same problems outlined for 1.N and 2.N;²⁵⁹ the similar clothing and the reproduction of the same standard figures, some with the double outline round the profile head, raises the same questions concerning the potential religious or secular significance of the

scheme, although on this face the presence of the adoring angels may support a religious interpretation.

Previous scholars, such as Radford and Bailey described the figures of 2.S but did not offer any interpretation of their iconography,²⁶⁰ while Bu'Lock only suggested a possible identity for 'n' and 'o' as Peter and Paul.²⁶¹ This, however, is unlikely given the absence of the scroll and keys normally held by these figures, and held by them in K on 1.E (see pl.29).

Given that the figures were at least fourteen in number, and possibly more, any explanation for the scheme should include an examination of large groups of individual figures in Christian iconography who carry a variety of staffs or sceptres. The iconography of the apostles and prophets has already been examined for groups of twelve figures, and while the number of prophets could exceed twelve, they are, as already described, normally given books and scrolls to carry; even the palm fronds they hold on the Cuthbert Stole are not really analogous to the staffs held by the figures on 2.S.²⁶²

Another analogy for these fourteen figures may lie in the iconography of the Ancestors of Christ. Until the eleventh century this scheme was rarely produced in Christian art,²⁶³ although the earliest instance is found in the *Codex Aureus of Lorsch*, dated to c.810.²⁶⁴ In this manuscript three groups of the thirteen generations of the Jewish race preceding Christ are

grouped round half-length portraits of Abraham, David and Jeconeah (three of Christ's Ancestors); this bears little resemblance to the figures set in individual cells on 2.S at Sandbach. A better parallel may lie in the tenth-century *S.Bertin Gospels* produced by an Anglo-Saxon artist in a Continental scriptorium.²⁶⁵ This manuscript contains one and a half pages illustrating thirty-six of Christ's Ancestors as half- and three-quarter length figures who are placed in arched cells. They hold a number of objects, including plain and ornamented rods.²⁶⁶ A similar programme is repeated on the Matthew portrait-page in the same manuscript where two pairs of Ancestors are portrayed seated; three of them hold stylised palm fronds, and the fourth holds a floriated rod out to his side. This miniature is followed by two more half-length portraits of the Ancestors.²⁶⁷

The programme found in the *S.Bertin Gospel Book* was that generally used in eleventh-century versions of the scheme. It was characterised by groups of figures carrying palm-frond sceptres who were not generally individualised by specific attributes. The sceptres are believed to represent shoots of the Tree of Jesse and so symbolise Christ's humanity. The purpose of the scheme was to illustrate Christ's descent from the spiritual and physical leaders who had ruled Israel in the name of God.²⁶⁸

The number of Ancestors was never numerically standardised in Christian art; as already seen they could vary from two to thirty-six. This was due in some cases to the amount of space

available, but was also a result of the discrepancies in the Bible itself; Matthew gives the number of ancestors between Jesse and Joseph as twenty-eight, while Luke lists fifty-six generations from Abraham to Jesus.²⁶⁹

Thus the general iconographic characteristics of Christ's Ancestors, unformed in the ninth century, have in common with 2.S an indeterminate number of figures who can be depicted in a variety of positions (standing, seated, half- and full-length), and who carry a variety of attributes (rods and palms). They are sometimes shown in small frames, but this motif, as at Sandbach, was probably an organisational device and not an integral part of the iconographic scheme.²⁷⁰

The two angels in the pendant triangles of the cross-shaft may argue against this interpretation of the figures on 2.S as the Ancestors scheme does not include angels. However, the angels on the cross-shaft may have been part of a standardised pattern; the design of each face of the monument is terminated by these triangles containing adoring figures and angels. Another problem is that the Sandbach figures can only be said to resemble the Ancestor schemes as they eventually evolved in a very general sense. The actual shape of the staffs held by the figures on 2.S, the fully profile position of some, and their figural style show very little real similarity with the extant Ancestor schemes. However this could be explained by the sculptor's use of his own standard figure-types to depict an iconographic

programme which was not really established until the eleventh century, and was extremely rarely portrayed even at that later date. It does nevertheless remain that any interpretation of the figures, as Christ's Ancestors or otherwise, can only be tentative at best.

2. East Face (2.E).(fig.12; pls.45-6):

No attempt has been made to identify the figures on this face of the cross-shaft. This is because they seem to be decorative rather than iconographically significant, although the association of single figures with the distinctive rhomboid frames found on 2.E is unusual even within purely decorative schemes on Anglo-Saxon cross-shafts.

The arrangement of figures set within central frames and supported by flanking figures is vaguely reminiscent of the *Majestas Christi* and Eastern Ascension images, but in these contexts the central figure is usually identifiable as Christ, and the supporting figures are angels.²⁷¹ Here (pl.46) the figures in 'e' and 'f' are not clearly Christ (they do not even recall the figure of Christ in B on 2.W; pl.39), and two such images of him, one after the other, would be without precedent. Furthermore, the flanking figures in 'vii' and 'viii' (pl.45), and 'xi' and 'xii' are not angels, and 'vii' and 'viii' grasp the edge of rhomboid 'd' which does not clearly contain a figure. On the other hand 'e' (pl.46) does contain a figure but is not supported by flanking figures and its lower quadrant is bordered

by interlace and animal decoration (ix & x). Also of note is the fact that the figures in 'e' and 'f' are repeated versions, albeit with more burly proportions, of figures 'n' and 'o' featured on 2.S (pl.44). The flanking figures 'vii' and 'viii' are smaller versions of 'j' and 'k' set beside the Crucifixion on 1.E (pl.28), while 'xi' and 'xii' are similar to the figures of Peter and Paul in K on 1.E (pl.29) and the other figures featured in the pendant triangles of the two crosses. This repeated use of the standard figure-types, the schematised arrangement, and the association of figural, animal, foliate and interlace decoration, would seem to suggest an ornamental scheme, rather than one of iconographic significance.

DISCUSSION:

I

The preceding section has indicated that the iconography of some of the scenes may have had specific theological references, while the symbolism of other figural scenes would be more usefully examined in the light of the overall significance of the decoration. However, only those scenes which have been clearly identified can be discussed with any certainty; thus only F-K on 1.E will be examined here, along with the significance of D-G on 1.W, and B-D on 2.W.

1.E (F): The Adoration of the Magi:

The Adoration of the Magi, described only by Matthew,²⁷² was important to the early Christians because, not only was it the first occasion on which God manifested himself to man through Christ, it also represented the extension of the Christian faith to the Gentiles.²⁷³

By the fourth century the idea of the event as a divine manifestation is clear in the works of men such as Ambrose and Prudentius,²⁷⁴ and by the fifth century, Leo the Great was to describe the revelation in some detail:

Adorant in carne Verbum, in Infantia sapientiam, in infirmitate virtutem, et in hominis veritate Dominum majestatis; atque ut sacramentum fidei suae intelligentiaeque manifestent, quod cordibus credunt, muneribus protestantur...scienter divinam humanaque naturam in unitate venerantes; qui quod erat in substantiis proprium, non erat in potestate diversum.

(They adore the Word in our flesh, Wisdom in Infancy, Power in Weakness, and in true man the Lord of Majesty. And that they may make clear the mystery of their faith and understanding, that which they believe in their heart, they proclaim by their gifts...with knowledge adoring in unity the human nature and the divine: for what was proper to the person is not separate from the Godhead.)²⁷⁵

Thus through the Magi Christ was made manifest to all mankind, but it was not simply to mankind in general that he was so revealed. For writers such as Augustine, the Magi indicated quite clearly that Christ and his salvation were to be extended to the Gentiles:

Quia et illi Magi quid iam fuerunt, nisi primitiae Gentium? Israelitae pastores, Magi gentiles...isti longe...Manifestatus ergo est, nec illis doctis, nec istis justis. Praevalet namque imperitia in

rusticitate pastorum, et impietas in sacrilegiis
Magorum. Utrosque sibi lapis ille angularis
applicuit: quippe qui venit stulta mundi eligere, ut
confunderet sapientes; et non vocare justos, sed
peccatores; ut nulles magnus superbiret, nullus
infimus desperaret.

(These wise men, what were they but the first fruits of the
Gentiles? The shepherds were Israelites, the Magi
Gentiles...from far away...[Jesus] is made manifest neither to
the learned nor to the just. For ignorance dominated the
rusticity of the Shepherds, impiety the practices of the Magi.
But that Corner-stone joins them to Himself, Who came to select
the foolish that he might confound the wise, and to call not the
just, but the sinners to repentance; so that no great one might
take pride in himself, and no lowly one despair.)²⁷⁶

These notions, so common and widespread in the works of
early writers were also articulated by the Anglo-Saxons. Aelfric
for example, saw the Adoration of the Magi as a moment of divine
revelation, and the Magi themselves as heathen Gentiles:

Des daeg is gehaten Epiphania Domini, þæt is Godes
geswutelung-daeg. On þysum daeg Crist waes geswutelod
þam ðrym cyningum, ðe fram east-daele middangeardes
hine mid þrymfealdum lacum gesohton...Ða tungel-
witegan, ðe waeron on haedenscipe wunigende, haefdon
getacnunges ealles haedenes folces, ðe wurdon to Gode
gebigede þurh ðæra apostola lare. Þe waeron
Iudeiscre ðeode. Soðlice...Criste...is se hyrn-stan
þe gefegð þa twegen weallas togaedere, forðan ðe he
geþeodde his gecorenan of Iudeiscum folce and þa
geleaffullan of haedenum, swilce twegen wagas to anre
geladunge.

(This day is called the Epiphany of the Lord, that is, the day of
God's manifestation. On this day Christ was revealed to the
three kings, who sought him from the Eastern part of the world
with threefold gifts...The astrologers, who were dwelling in
heathenism, betoken all heathen people who are turned to God
through the teaching of the apostles, who were of the Jewish
people. Truly...Christ...is the corner-stone which joins the
two walls together, because he united his chosen ones from the
Jewish people and the faithful ones from the heathens, like two
walls of one church.)²⁷⁷

In this same sermon Aelfric also explains the particular relevance of the Epiphany for the Anglo-Saxons:

...we waeron swiðe fyrlene, aegðer ge stowlice ge ðurh uncyððe; ac he us gegaderode mid anum geleafan to ðam healicum hyrn-stane, þæt is to annysse his gelaðunge.

(we [the heathens] were very remote, both locally and through ignorance; but he has gathered us with one faith to the high corner-stone, that is to the unity of his Church.)²⁷⁸

Thus the ideas expressed by men such as Augustine are here echoed in tenth-century England, carried into the Anglo-Saxon exegetical tradition by writers such as Bede.²⁷⁹ They indicate that the Adoration of the Magi carved at Sandbach would, despite its unusual iconography, have signified the adoration of three heathen kings from the far reaches of the earth (a notion with particular personal relevance to the English), who present their gifts in recognition of the Christ Child's divine and saving nature, here made manifest by virtue of their visit.

There is, however, another idea which may be present in the Sandbach depiction of the Magi: namely the association of the Epiphany with the Eucharist. This association was common in the works of writers such as Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory the Great,²⁸⁰ and was later repeated by men such as Bede and Rabanus Maurus.²⁸¹ These works described the Magi as prototypes of the Church congregation which, in faithful veneration, approaches the true Bethlehem and the true manger of the heavenly bread, the altar. Gregory's Eighth Homily in particular had found its way into the Western liturgy by the ninth century, appearing in the

Christmas office as the first lesson of the third Nocturn,²⁸² while in the Hours on Epiphany, the coming of the Magi was regarded as an image of the Eucharist.²⁸³ Although these ideas may have been relevant to any image of the Adoration of the Magi, the placing of this event next to the Crucifixion and the Nativity on the Sandbach cross, makes the likelihood more probable on this monument; the Crucifixion is the moment when Christ literally gave his body and blood for the salvation of mankind, and it is the action commemorated in every celebration of the Eucharist.²⁸⁴

1.E (G): The Crucifixion:

Coatsworth has examined the complex ideas surrounding the portrayal of the Crucifixion, central in Christian art, and particularly those pertinent to Anglo-Saxon England.²⁸⁵ However, the image at Sandbach is distinctive in its use of the sun and moon, and the positioning of the evangelist symbols round the arms of the crucifix. These points are worth commenting on because, in keeping with the Adoration scene above, they emphasise the universal and far-reaching reference of the event. Indeed it has been argued that arranging the evangelists round the cross not only places it at the centre of the world, but also symbolises Christ's triumph over death, the institution of the Eucharist, and the establishment of the Church.²⁸⁶

Following the works of Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome,²⁸⁷ Bede referred to the universal nature of the Crucifixion in his

Commentary on John's account of the Crucifixion, where he interpreted Ephesians 3.18 ("that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height [of]...the love of Christ"), as referring to the cross of Christ:

Quae sit latitudo, et longitudo, et altitudo, et profundum...quid est quod omnes noverunt signum Christi, nisi crux Christi?

(What is the depth and length and height and depth...what is this sign of Christ which everyone knows, if not the cross of Christ?)²⁸⁸

Following Bede, Alcuin referred to the universal and saving nature of the cross in the same tradition:

Iacens vero crux quatuor mundi partes appetit, orientem videlicet, et occidentem, aquilonem et meridiem, quia et Christus per passionem suam omnes gentes ad se trahit.

(Indeed as it lay, the cross stretched out to all the four quarters of the world, East and West, North and South, because even so by his passion, Christ draws all people to him...)²⁸⁹

And for Aelfric, two hundred years later, the same ideas were still relevant:

Drihten waes gefaestnod mid feower naegelum to west-daele awend; and his wynstra heold ðone scynendan suð-dael, and his swiðra norð-dael, east-dael his hnol; and he ealle alysde middaneardes hwemmas swa hangiende.

(The Lord was fastened with four nails, turned to the West; and his left held the shining south part, and his right the North; the East part the crown of his head; and thus hanging he redeemed all the regions of the world.)²⁹⁰

It is to this interpretation of the Crucifixion, and particularly the cross of the Crucifixion, that the symbols of the sun and moon and evangelists add a certain emphasis. The sun and moon have been seen as symbolic of the Old and New Law, but in so far as they appear in Crucifixion scenes as a reference to the darkness which fell over the face of the earth at the time of Christ's death,²⁹¹ they express the involvement of the natural world in the death of the Creator, and therefore indicate the roles of Christ as the Son of God and Lord of the Cosmos. As Aelfric said in his sermon on the Epiphany:

Heofonas oncneowon heora Scyppend...Sunne oncneow,
þaþa heo on his đrowunge hire leoman fram mid-daeg ođ
non behydde.

(The heavens acknowledged their Creator...the sun acknowledged him when at his passion she hid her light from midday until the ninth hour.)²⁹²

It is an idea also exploited in the verses of The Dream of the Rood whose account of the Crucifixion was probably circulating in Anglo-Saxon England from the eighth century onwards.²⁹³

The evangelist symbols of the Sandbach scene also add to the universal application of the Crucifixion in its victory over death. The arrangement of these symbols round the cross signifies not only the witnessing of Christ's salvation, but also that that salvation embraces the whole world; the evangelists were the ones who recorded the event in their gospels, and so guaranteed the spread of Christianity to the far ends of the earth. Again, in the words of Aelfric:

Ðas synd þa feower ean of anum wyllspringe, þa gað of
Paradisum ofer Godes folc wide.

(These are the four waters of one well-spring, which runs from
Paradise over God's people far and wide.)²⁹⁴

It is not only a sense of universality which is expressed by
the iconography of the Sandbach Crucifixion; the evangelist
symbols and the sun and moon are accompanied by Mary and John,
the historical witnesses to the event and reminders of Christ's
words from the cross. In the seventh century, the moment is
recorded in a poem of Aldhelm's:

Christus passus patibula
Atque leti latibula
Virginem virgo virgini
Commendabat tutamini.

(Christ, having suffered the cross and the hiding-places of
death, himself a virgin, commended a virgin to a virgin for safe-
keeping.)²⁹⁵

However, John and Mary not only emphasised the historicity
of the Crucifixion and one of the sayings of Christ which could
become a focus for devotion,²⁹⁶ they could also provide important
thematic links between the Crucifixion and other events both
before and after Christ's death on the cross. Mary provided a
link between the mysteries of the Incarnation (seen below the
crucifix in the Nativity scene at Sandbach) and the Passion,²⁹⁷
while John linked the Crucifixion with the Resurrection,
Ascension and Second Coming. It was John's account of the
Crucifixion which was read during the liturgical commemoration of
the event,²⁹⁸ and he was also believed to be the author of the
Book of Revelation and so was witness to the Resurrection.²⁹⁹ In

addition his symbol, the eagle, was also the symbol of the Ascension.³⁰⁰ This can be seen in Aelfric's Life of Mark the Evangelist where he describes the symbols of all four evangelists following the works of earlier writers such as Jerome; in his account of John's eagle he refers to the many associations:

þaes earnes gelicnys belimpð to iohanne forðan þe se earn flyhð ealra fugela ufemest and maeg swyðost starian on þære sunnan leoman. Swa dyde Iohannes se driht-wurða writere; he fleah feor upp. Swylce mid earnes fyðerum and beheold gleawlice hu he be gode mihte maerlicost writan.

(The eagle's likeness belongs to John, because the eagle flies the highest of all birds, and can most steadily stare at the sun's light. So did John, the divine writer; he flew far up, as if with eagle's wings, and beheld clearly how he might write most nobly of God.)³⁰¹

Thus the Crucifixion scene at Sandbach probably carries the usual references associated with such images which range from the Eucharist, Christ's suffering and death, and his victory over death with the promise of salvation implicit in this, to the Second Coming of the Son of Man, and the cross as the sign of Christian faith.³⁰² However, its distinctive position in the scene, filling and quartering it, highlights the universal application of the Crucifixion; this world-embracing notion is emphasised in the symbols of the sun, moon and evangelists, while these latter symbols and the figures of John and Mary provide an added reference to the witnessing of the event by those who were able to affirm and spread its message of salvation to the far corners of the world. The presence of Mary and John also provides a thematic link with other events central to Christianity, including the Incarnation which is depicted above

and below the Crucifixion on the Sandbach cross itself.

1.E (H): The Nativity:

The image of Christ's Nativity on the Sandbach cross has, as discussed above, been reduced to the figures of the swaddled child, the ox and ass, and the angel hovering above. The net result of this reduction is to downplay the event as a virgin birth in favour of the manifestation of God in the world, and recognition of the new divine ruler by the natural world; in this case the created world is represented by the two animals thought to symbolise mankind in general, but also the heathen Gentiles in particular. As Ambrose put it in his commentary on Luke's account of the Nativity:

Hic est Dominus, hoc praesepe, quo nobis divinum
mysterium revelatum est: irrationabiles gentes,
pecudum intra praesepia more viventes, alimoniae
sacrae ubertate pascendas. ("Agnovit enim bos
possessorem suum, et asina praesepe domini sui".)
Agnovit ergo asina, species scilicet et forma
gentilium, praesepe domini sui. Et ideo dicit:
"Dominus pascit me, et nihil mihi deerit."

(Here is the Lord, in his manger, in Whom is made known to us the divine secret: that the peoples of the pagan world, now living after the manner of beasts in their stalls, are to be nourished from the abundance of the sacred Food. "The ox knoweth his master, and the ass his master's crib". The ass therefore, which is the figure and type of the heathen peoples, knoweth the manger of his Lord. And he says accordingly: "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.")³⁰³

It was noted in the preceding section that angels were not commonly included in the iconography of the Nativity.³⁰⁴ However they were often included in ecclesiastical writings on the

subject. Ambrose, for instance, follows his account of the ox and ass at the manger with a reference to the Magi and the angels:

An mediocribus signis Deus probatur, quod angeli ministrant, quod Magi adorant?...terreno in diversorio jacet, sed coelesti lumine viget.

Impleta igitur prophetia est. Laudatur de coelis Dominus, et videtur in terris. De quo sanctus Marcus ait, quia, "Cum bestiis erat, et angeli ministrabant ei"; ut in altero misericordiae insigne, in altero divinae indicium potestatis agnoscas. Tuum est quod bestias patitur, suum quod ab angelis praedicatur.

(Can anyone say that the Lord is made known to us by signs of little import, when the Magi come and adore him, and angels serve him?...He lies in an earthly resting place, but round about him is the brightness of heaven.

Fulfilled now is the prophecy. The Lord is praised from the heavens; and He is seen on earth. Of him the Holy Mark says: "And he was with beasts, and the angels ministered to Him". As in one is a sign of mercy, in the other you behold a witness of divine power. It was because of men he suffered beasts; it was because of himself he is proclaimed by angels.)³⁰⁵

It may well be that this written association, included also in the exegetical writings of Bede,³⁰⁶ explains the presence of the angel in the Sandbach Nativity scene. The notion of revelation and adoration expressed in the iconography of The Adoration of the Magi on the cross-shaft above is here extended to include Christ revealed and adored at his birth, not only by the beasts of the natural world, symbolic of mankind in general, but by the angels of heaven.

However, as suggested in the discussion of the symbolism of The Adoration of the Magi,³⁰⁷ the Nativity did have another significance, linking it to the Eucharist. Bede's commentary on

Luke's account of Christ's birth, makes the association implicit, not only by referring to the Child in the crib, but also to the beasts and the angels of heaven:

Cui coelum sedes est, duri praeseptis angustia
 continetur, ut nos per coelestis regni gaudia dilatet.
 Qui panis est angelorum, in praeseptio reclinator, ut
 nos quasi sancta animalia carnis suae frumento
 reficiat.

(Straightly is he, whose throne is in the heavens, confined in the narrowness of a crib, so that he might open wide to use the joys of his eternal kingdom. He that is the Bread of Angels reclines in a manger, that we as sanctified beasts might be fed with the corn of his flesh.)³⁰⁸

Aelfric, in the tenth century, deriving his ideas from the earlier writings of Gregory the Great and Bede,³⁰⁹ makes the link with the Eucharist explicit in his sermon on Christ's Nativity; the birth of Christ was the birth of the Eucharist, provided by Christ's death and resurrection:

Crist, se soða hlaf, [waes] acenned...þaes hlafes we onbyriað þonne we mid geleafan to husle gað: forðan þe þaet halig husel is gastlice Cristes lichama; and þurh ðone we beoð alyseð fram ðam ecan deaðe. Maria acende ða hire frumcennedan sunu...and hine mid cild-claðum bewand, and for rymetleaste on anre binne gelede...He waes mid wacum cild-claðum bewaefed, þaet he us forgeafe ða undeadlican tunecan, þe we forluron on ðaes frumsceapenan mannes forgaegednysse. Se Aelmihtiga Godes sunu, ðe heofenas befon ne mihton, waes geled on nearuwre binne, to ði þaet he us fram helicum nyrwette alyseð.

(Christ, the true bread, was born...this bread we partake of when we go to the Eucharist with faith: for that ^{holy} husel is spiritually Christ's body; and through that we are redeemed from eternal death. Mary bore her first-born son on this present day and wrapped him with swaddling clothes, and for want of room, laid him in a manger...He was wrapped with mean swaddling clothes so that he might give us the immortal tunic, which we lost in the transgression of the first created man. The Son of Almighty God, whom the heavens could not hold, was laid in a narrow manger, so that he might redeem us from the narrowness of hell.)³¹⁰

Thus, as in the preceding images of the Adoration of the Magi and the Crucifixion, the iconography of the Sandbach Nativity has a potentially multivalent significance. The theme of adoration and revelation is present in the beasts and angel who surround the child in the crib, while the lack of distinction between the Crucifixion scene and the Nativity (the latter scene actually being enclosed within the base of the crucifix) points to an association of the two events with the Eucharist.

1.E (J): The Transfiguration:

Continuing the theme of revelation which is symbolised by the iconography of the three scenes previously discussed, The Transfiguration was also regarded primarily as a moment when the divinity of God was revealed to be present on earth in the body of his Son; but this time the theophany immediately preceded the death of Christ, and was interpreted as a sign of hope and a promise of the resurrection to come. These notions are clearly present, even in the Biblical accounts of the event:

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: And he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. And...a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him...And as they were coming down from the mountain Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen from the Dead.³¹¹

This account, taken from Matthew, is closely followed by Mark,³¹² but in Luke, the subject of Christ's conversation with Moses and Elijah is revealed to further relate the event to his forthcoming Passion:

[they] spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.³¹³

By the fourth century, the event was commonly regarded as proof of Christ's divine nature which would guarantee the resurrection of his body, and was confirmed as such by the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)³¹⁴ Leo the Great explained it in his sermon on the meaning of the Transfiguration:

Christum ob id maxime esse transfiguratum: ut veritatem et virtutem suae carnis comprobaret. Ut ergo...assumpsit Jesus Petrum, et Jacobum, et fratrem eius Joannem, et...claritatem illis suae gloriae demonstravit: quia licet intellexissent in eo majestatem Dei, ipsius tamen corporis, quo Divinitas tegebatur, potentiam nesciebant.

(That for this especially was Christ transfigured: that he might give proof of the power and the reality of His Body. So therefore...he took unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and...He showed them the splendour of his glory. For though they had witnessed in him the power of the Divinity, yet they had not yet begun to know the power of the Body with which the Divinity was clothed.)³¹⁵

This interpretation was transmitted into the writings of the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, to be found in such works as Bede's Commentary on Matthew, where reference is made not only to Christ's resurrection, but also the the Final Resurrection which it prefigured:

Et transfiguratus est ante eos. Non substantiam verae carnis amittendo, sed gloriam futurae resurrectionis suae vel nostrae ostendendo; quia qualis tunc apostolis apparuit, talis post iudicium omnibus electis apparebit...Nam quia nihil sole clarius novimus videre, ideo non solum Domini, sed et sanctorum gloria in resurrectione solis aspectui comparatur.

(And he was transfigured before them, not by losing the substance of true flesh, but by showing the glory of the future resurrection of himself or of us, because as he then appeared to the apostles in such a form, he will appear to all the elect after the judgement...For because we know nothing brighter than the sun to look at, so not only the Lord's glory, but also the glory of the saints at the resurrection, is compared to the sun.)³¹⁶

However, it was not only Christ's divine power which was made manifest at The Transfiguration. For men such as Augustine and Hilary of Poitiers, the presence of Moses and Elijah was also extremely significant, because between them they symbolised the Law and the Words of the Prophets, transformed and consolidated by Christ:

...hoc significat Evangelii claritatem...hoc significat Ecclesiae mundationem...Elias et Moyses collequebantur ei: quia Evangelii gratia testimonium habet a Lege et Prophetis. In Moyse Lex, in Elia Prophetiae...Sunt enim beneficia Dei per Martyrem sanctum quae recitabuntur. Ille commendabatur, unde Lex et Prophetiae gloriabantur...in Prophetis ipsum audistis, et in Lege ipsum audistis...Iam demonstratur nobis, in Ecclesia regnum Dei. Hic Dominus, hic Lex et prophetae. Sed Dominus tanquam Dominus: Lex in Moyse, Prophetia in Elia, sed ipsi tanquam servi, tanquam ministri. Ipsi tanquam vasa: ipse tanquam fons. Moyses et Prophetiae dicebant et scribebant: sed de illo implebantur quando fundebant.

(...a figure of the shining of the Gospel...this is a figure of the purity of the Church...Elijah and Moses were talking with him because the grace of the gospel receives witness from the law and the prophets. By Moses is signified the law, by Elijah are signified the prophets...For there are the mercies of God vouchsafed through a holy Martyr to be rehearsed.

He from whom the Law and the prophets derive their glory...You have heard him in the prophets; you heard him in the Law...Here now we are shown that in the Church is the Kingdom of God. Here is the Lord; here is the Law; and here the prophets. But the Lord as Lord; in Moses the Law, in Elijah the prophets, but both as servants and ministers. They are as vessels; he is the spring. Moses and the prophets wrote and spoke; but it was from him they were fulfilled whom they gave forth.)³¹⁷

Augustine's primary concern with the significance of Moses and Elijah as representing the Law and the Prophets,³¹⁸ was reflected in the later writings of Bede:

Moyses et Elias oracula legis et prophetiae designant,
quae in Domino completa, et nunc doctis patent, et in
futuro electis manifestius patebunt.

(Moses and Elijah stand for the oracles of Law and Prophecy, which were fulfilled in the Lord, and both now are clear to the learned, and in the future will be more manifest to the elect.)³¹⁹

Parenthetically it should be noted that in Augustine's treatment of Christ's Church uniting that which had preceded it, the theme of witnessing and recognition, found in all the scenes on this face of the cross-shaft, is extended to include, not only the natural world, mankind, and the angels, but also the patriarchs of the Old Testament.

Also pertinent to the Sandbach image is the treatment of the Voice of God in patristic exegesis. It was suggested above,³²⁰ that the biblical account of the Transfiguration was verbally and thematically reminiscent of the Baptism which may have accounted for the presence of the dove of the Holy Spirit in the Sandbach scene. While at The Transfiguration the Voice of God was heard from a bright cloud proclaiming "This is my beloved Son, in whom

I am well pleased", on the occasion of Christ's Baptism, a similar voice was heard making the same proclamation:

And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.³²¹

It is the revelation of Christ as the Son of God, common to both events which led Bede, in his Commentary on Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, to refer to the Baptism when explaining the voice in the cloud on the mountain:

"Et ecce vox de nube dicens, etc." Notandum quod sicut mysterium Trinitatis, Domino in Jordane baptizato declaratur, ita in monte clarificato, quia quem in baptismo confitemur, in resurrectione collaudabimus.

("And behold a voice speaking out of the cloud, etc." It is to be noted that as the mystery of the Trinity is declared when the Lord was baptised in the Jordan, so also when he is transfigured on the mountain, because we shall praise in the resurrection, him whom we confess at baptism.)³²²

For other writers, such as Augustine, the voice of God marked the moment when the Church on Earth was established in Christ:

Nube ergo obumbrante omnes, et quodam modo eis faciente unum tabernaculum, sonuit et vox de nube dicens: 'Hic est Filius meus dilectus...' Iam demonstratur nobis, in Ecclesia regnum Dei.

(As the cloud overshadowed them, and in manner formed for them one tabernacle, a voice spoke out from the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son... Here now we are shown that in the Church is the kingdom of God.)³²³

For Leo the words had a more specific relevance, coming as they did so soon before the Passion. His sermon on the meaning of the Transfiguration ends with an invocation:

Hoc testimonio Patris...Confirmetur ergo secundum praedicationem sacratissimi Evangelii omnium fides, et nemo de Christi cruce, per quam mundus redemptus est, erubescat.

(By this testimony of the Father...Let the faith of all men be strengthened by means of the preaching of the most holy Gospel; and let no-one be ashamed of the cross of Christ, through which he redeemed the world.)³²⁴

Thus, the iconography of The Transfiguration at Sandbach, which does not include the disciples, focuses on the image of the transfigured Christ and so emphasises the event as a revelation of his divine power. Implicit in this particular theophany, and distinguishing it from others such as the Adoration and the Baptism, is the promise it offers for the resurrection after Christ's death on the cross (illustrated at Sandbach above The Transfiguration). As a result of the resurrection, foreshadowed by this particular theophany, the Church on earth was founded in Christ. This was an interpretation of the event which drew special significance from the presence of Moses and Elijah; the Law and the Prophets were confirmed in the person of Christ, and by the words of his Father spoken at the Transfiguration, symbolised at Sandbach by the dove of the Holy Spirit. Again, the scene offers a complex series of references which relate it to the other events depicted on the shaft and to the themes which their iconography expresses.

1.E (K): The Traditio Legis cum Clavis:

As stated above,³²⁵ the combined image of the giving of the keys and the law to Peter and Paul is not based on a biblical event, although individually the commission to Paul is held to represent the specific investment to teach the New Law to the Christian community, while the donation of the keys to Peter is based on Christ's words to his disciple which, in the Bible, form part of a revelation scene:

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.³²⁶

As Kinder-Carr has shown, the image was associated with a rich complex of ideas in Church writings, but always central to the treatment of Peter and Paul is the view of them as the two apostles responsible for spreading the Gospel and founding the Church throughout the world; while the Church was founded on Peter, the faithful Christian was expected to follow the Law set down by Paul in order to gain entrance to heaven, over which Peter had the power of binding and loosing.³²⁷ The references are many and varied; they are found in the Bible, in later exegesis, in documents of Church and State, and in private letters throughout the early Medieval period and throughout Europe.³²⁸

What is interesting in the context of the Sandbach image, however, are the references to Peter and Paul found in the sermons on The Transfiguration of writers such as Augustine and Leo the Great. Augustine for instance, describing the appearance of the transfigured Christ, uses as an analogy, Paul and his preaching to the Gentiles and the establishment of the Church on earth:

Dominus ipse Jesus resplenduit sicut sol; vestimenta eius facta sunt candida sicut nix...Vestimenta autem eius, Ecclesia eius. Vestimenta enim nisi ab induto contineantur, cadunt. Horum vestimentorum quaedam quasi novissima fimbria Paulus fuit. Ipse enim dicit: 'Ego enim sum minimus Apostolorum'; et alio loco: 'Ego sum novissimus Apostolorum'. In vestimento autem fimbria est novissima et minima...sic Ecclesia quae ex Gentibus venit, Paulo praedicante salvata est.

(The Lord Jesus shone bright as the sun, and his garments became white as snow...His garments are His Church. And his garments, unless they are properly sustained, fall off. And of these garments, Paul was as it were, but the outward hem. For as he says of himself: "I am the least of the Apostles". And in another place: "I am the last of the Apostles". Now in a garment the hem is the last and least part of it...so the Church which came from the Gentiles was saved by the preaching of Paul.)³²⁹

Leo the Great, on the other hand, introduced his sermon on the meaning of The Transfiguration with an explanation of Christ's earlier words to Peter:

Petrus apostolus per revelationem summi Patris corporea superans et humana transcendens, vidit mentis oculis Filium Dei vivi, et confessus est gloriam Deitatis...Tantumque in hac fidei sublimitate complacuit, ut beatitudinis felicitate donatus sacram inviolabilis petrae acciperet firmitatem, super quam fundata Ecclesia portis inferi et mortis legibus praevaleret.

(Peter the Apostle, rising above what was corporeal, and transcending what was human,...saw with the eyes of his soul, and through the revelation of the Father on high, the Son of the Living God; and confessed the glory of his Divinity. So greatly pleasing was his sublime faith, that rewarded with the joy of the divine blessing, he receives a sacred steadfastness as of an indestructible rock, founded upon which the Church would overcome the gates of hell, and the rule of death.)³³⁰

At Sandbach, The Traditio Legis cum Clavis is depicted below The Transfiguration; indeed the bar-throne of the transfigured Christ extends up from the frame surrounding The Traditio Legis, while the feet of the two Old Testament figures at The Transfiguration, seem to develop into tendrils which pass into the roundel framing the lower scene. To this extent the decoration links the two scenes, as the characters in them are linked together in the writings of Augustine and Leo the Great.

They are not explicitly associated in this way in later Anglo-Saxon exegesis (although Bede does pick out Peter for special praise in his Commentary on Luke's account of The Transfiguration),³³¹ but the ideas associating Peter and Paul as the preachers, founders and keepers of the Church on earth, are widespread in Old English literature.³³²

Bede's description of the Synod of Whitby for instance, gives an early account of the importance placed on Peter at that meeting as the key-bearing guardian of heaven and the rock on whom the Church was based,³³³ while Aldhelm makes the same point in a letter, even quoting one of his own poems on the subject.³³⁴ Elsewhere in his writings Aldhelm describes Peter as:

claviger aethereus, qui portam pandit in aethra,
Ianitor aeternae recludens limina vitae.

(the celestial key-bearer, who opens the gateway to heaven, the doorman who throws open the doors of eternal life.)³³⁵

Paul, "tutor tremulis cum Petro" (the kindly guardian, in company with St. Peter)³³⁶ he describes as:

Hic erat egregius doctor mundique magister, Barbara
convertens doctinis agmina sacris.

(...the man who was the pre-eminent doctor and teacher of the world, who converted barbarian multitudes with his sacred teaching.)³³⁷

Towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, Aelfric, drawing on an earlier insular tradition, also described the two apostles as the founders of the Church, and teachers of nations. In his sermon on St. Peter he described the disciple as an apostle who "sceolde gehwaer gecuman, and cristen-dom araeren" (had to go everywhere and establish Christianity):³³⁸

Beda se trahtnere us onwrihð þa deopnysse þysre
raedinge...Drihten cwaed to Petre: þu eart staenen,
for þaere strenþe his geleafan...And ic timbrie mine
cyrcaþ on þyrsum stane, þæt is, ofer þam geleafan
þe ðu andetst. Eall Godes gelaðung is ofer þam stane
gebytlod, þæt is, ofer Crist, forþan ðe he is se
grundweal ealra þaera getimbrunga his agenre cyrcan.
Ealle Godes cyrcan sind getealde to anre gelaðunge,
and seo is getimbrod mid gecorenum mannum, na mid
deadum stanum, and eall seo bytlung þaera liflicra
stana is ofer Criste gelogod, forþan ðe we beoð þurh
ðone geleafan his lima getealde, and he ure ealra
heafod.

(Bede the interpreter reveals to us the deepness of this reading...The Lord said to Peter: "Thou art of stone", because of the strength of his faith..."And I shall build my Church upon this stone". That is, on the belief that you confessed. All God's congregation is built on this stone. That is, on Christ because he is the foundation of all the buildings of his own Church. All God's churches are a tent for the one congregation,

and it is built with chosen men, not with dead stones, and all the buildings of these living stones are laid on Christ. Therefore, we be accounted his members through the faith, and he is the head of us all.)³³⁹

Although Paul was not given such extended treatment by Aelfric, he was also clearly identified with the establishment of Christianity:

Paulus se apostol awrat manega pistols, for þan þe Crist hine gesette eallum þeodum to lareowe, and on soþre eufaestnysse he gesette ða þeawas, ðe þa geleafullan folc on heora life healdað, þa þe hig sylfe gelogiað and heora lif for Gode. Fiftyne pistols awrat se an apostol...þa syndon micle bec on þære bibliothecan and þa fremiað us to ure rihtinge, gif we þaes leoda lareowes lare folgiað.

(Paul the apostle wrote many epistles, because Christ set him to be a teacher of all peoples; in true sincerity he set down the course of life which faithful people hold to in their life, who themselves betake their life to God. Fifteen epistles this one apostle wrote...They are the great books of the Bible which help us to our amendment if we follow the law of the teacher of the nations.)³⁴⁰

From these very few examples, taken from a multitude of such writings, it is clear that Peter and Paul were consistently regarded as intrinsic to the foundation of Christ's Church on earth: Paul by virtue of his commission to preach Christ's law to all nations; Peter by virtue of the promise made to him by Christ. In the writings of Leo and Augustine, whose sermons were circulated widely in Anglo-Saxon England,³⁴¹ the Transfiguration is inseparable from the commission to Peter, and Paul's role as the teacher of nations.

The scene at Sandbach, while carrying the symbolism associated with all images of the Traditio Legis cum Clavis, is

set in close association with The Transfiguration, so that Christ appears transfigured in one scene, and donating the Law and keys below; Paul is seen holding the New Law, while above, Moses carries the Law of the Old Testament. As the foremost of the apostles in the spreading of the Gospels, Peter and Paul at Sandbach are further linked to The Transfiguration in that the upper scene symbolises the confirmation of the Church in Christ, while the lower signifies its establishment on earth; the theme is a continuation of one inherent in the Crucifixion, while the notion of spreading the law to the Gentiles is found not only in the Crucifixion, but also in The Adoration of The Magi and The Nativity.

Thus the scenes which have survived on this face of the cross show a surprising multivalency of ideas, common to each scene, which refer in a complex fashion, back and forth down its length. God is revealed, recognised, and adored in Christ; his Church on earth is confirmed and established through a variety of witnesses; his salvation is foretold and accomplished by his victory over death, and commemorated in the continual celebration of the Eucharist.

The Remainder of Cross 1:

It is not easy to assess the iconographic significance of the other figural scenes carved on this cross-shaft: the two scenes from the Road to Calvary on 1.W (pl.34) appear only to have had a narrative function, although in his sermon on the Transfiguration, Hilary of Poitiers does speak of the event as providing a hope which transcends the shame of bearing the cross to Calvary.³⁴² Apart from illustrating the humiliation of Christ at his Passion, it is not easy to see what, if any, the significance of these two scenes was, particularly as the scenes above are missing (pls.33-4), and below only a portion of the Annunciation to Mary survives (pl.34), while the base of the shaft is filled, not with figural decoration, but with panels of animal and interlace ornament (pl.35).

As far as The Annunciation is concerned, the Virgin is too worn to see clearly, and the legs of the angel are missing; this makes it impossible to tell whether the conversation between Mary and Gabriel is being emphasised, as at Hovingham,³⁴³ or whether the initial greeting and Mary's reaction of bewilderment is being stressed, as at Wirksworth.³⁴⁴ The high-backed chair may suggest that the Virgin's nobility is being pointed to, as it is on the Hovingham panel; the spindle and thread however, may suggest that Mary's role as the handmaiden, humbly accepting the will of God, is more relevant.³⁴⁵

Despite this lack of clarity, however, it can be said that the Sandbach scene, like any depiction of The Annunciation in

Christian art, carries with it a reference to Christ's Incarnation and the promise of man's future salvation made to Mary by the angel; through Mary the entrance to Paradise was again made possible:³⁴⁶

Heo cwaed̃ to ðam engle, "Getimige me aefter ðinum worde". þæt is, gewurðe hit swa ðu segst, þæt ðaes aelmihtigan Godes sunu becume on minne innoð, and mennisce edwiste of me genime, and to alysednyse middangeardes forðstaepe of me."

(She said to the angel, "Let it betide me according to thy word". That is, be it as you say, that the son of Almighty God enter my womb, and receive human substance from me, and proceed from me for the redemption of the world.)³⁴⁷

A different problem attends any discussion of the figural iconography of 1.N; the identity of the scheme is unclear. It has been suggested that the figures on this face may have represented a programme of Old Testament prophets, or alternatively a group of figures set within a framework intended to symbolise the members of the Church.³⁴⁸ Either of these explanations would be consistent with the themes expressed on 1.E if the figures on 1.N are to be seen as an iconographic extension of 1.E. The prophets would be in keeping with the theme of recognition expressed in scenes such as The Adoration and the Transfiguration, being men who anticipated and foretold the Incarnation, Passsion and Resurrection of the Messiah.³⁴⁹ Alternatively a scheme symbolic of the Church would be in keeping with the theme of the foundation of the Church of Christ, expressed in the scenes of The Transifuration and The Traditio Legis cum Clavis. As Ambrose described it, the Church is

established through the early apostles as a vast network protecting its members:

Ramus est Petrus, ramus est Paulus...In quorum sinus, et quosdam disputationum recessus, qui eramus longe, nos scilicet ex nationibus congregati, quos diu per inane mundi procello et turbo nequitiae spiritualis agitabat...ut nos umbra sanctorum ab istius mundi ardore defendat, certae stationis jam securitate vernantes...in ramos Domini.

(Peter is a branch, a branch likewise is Paul...into whose bosom, in the security, so to speak, of whose teaching, we who were afar off, we that are gathered from the nations, whom the confusion of the spirit of iniquity, and the distress of this world have long vainly tossed about, now [hasten]...so that the protecting shadow of the saints may defend us from the heat of the world, dwelling happily in the peace of this sure haven...in the branches of the Lord.)³⁵⁰

The series of figures on 2.N being so similar to those on 1.N, is presumably open to the same interpretations; the fact that there are twelve figures involved there, does not unfortunately, throw any further light on the subject. Thus, in the absence of a clear identification of the schemes, any interpretation of their significance must be, and will probably remain, extremely tentative.

Cross 2:

Again, it is somewhat difficult to assess the intended symbolism expressed in the iconography of the figural scenes on this cross-shaft. The suggested explanation for the scheme on 2.S was a programme of Christ's Ancestors, an interpretation which would suggest a similar significance to that expressed by the prophets of the Old Testament; the Ancestors were also

witnesses to the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ.³⁵¹ However, as with the figures on 1.N and 2.N, interpretations of the scheme on 2.S cannot, at present, be established with any degree of certainty.

The scenes on 2.W however, do at first sight offer more hope; B has been interpreted as The Transfiguration, while the other figures in the arched niches were explained as an Adoration of The Virgin and Child and an Adoration of Christ. Like the scenes on 1.E the revelation and recognition of Christ's divinity would seem to apply here as well.

It may be worth noting that the Transfiguration on 2.W, for all its similarities with the scene on 1.E, does have its differences; Christ on this cross holds two sceptres, while on 1.E he holds only one. This difference, while possibly being due to the influence of a model-type, may also have been due to a desire to express a further theological point. It has been argued³⁵² that while this Transfiguration scene does not actually portray the Final Resurrection or the Last Judgement, the Osiris-pose in which Christ is depicted is nevertheless reminiscent of the insular versions of Christ the Judge. In this context it will be remembered, as quoted above,³⁵³ that while descending from Mt.Tabor after the Transfiguration, Christ enjoined the disciples not to speak of the event until after his resurrection; thus the event foreshadowed and confirmed the Final Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ. In later commentaries the Transfiguration was described not only as a clear revelation of

Christ's divinity, but also, as implied in Bede's works, as a confirmation of The Second Coming;³⁵⁴ in the writings of men such as Hilary of Poitiers the association is made explicit:

Quod autem Moyses et [Elias] ex omni sanctorum numero assistunt; medius inter legem et prophetas Christus in regno est; cum his enim Israelem, quibus testibus praedicatus est, iudicabit.

(That only Moses and Elias are present from all the multitude of saints, means that Christ in his kingdom will stand between the Law and the Prophets; for he will judge Israel in the presence of those by whom he was made known to the people of Israel.)³⁵⁵

Thus, it may well be that, in addition to the theme of revelation expressed in any depiction of the Transfiguration, the version on 2.W at Sandbach may carry a reference to the Second Coming and the Final Resurrection expressed in the two sceptres held by Christ in that scene. As they survive however, the scenes below The Transfiguration do not uphold an eschatological interpretation of the scene. The Adoration of the Virgin and Child, as it survives, would seem only to repeat the themes of veneration found in the Adoration of the Magi and the Nativity on 1.E, but without the references to the spreading of the gospel and the extension of the Church to the Gentiles; it is purely an adoration scene, the expression of which is echoed, both by figures 'f-h', and by the angels (i & j) in the pendant terminal triangles.

II

Although much of the carving of the Sandbach crosses is unclear, enough has survived to indicate that originally there was a potentially complex programme of references operating through the figural iconography; this is of course, most evident for the present east face of Cross 1 where a significant number of the scenes have survived in relatively good condition. Here the iconography refers, not only to the Incarnation, the Passion and the Resurrection, but also to more doctrinal themes of the recognition and confirmation of Christ's divinity, to the establishment of his Church on earth through those chosen and appointed by him, and also to the Eucharist as the central ritual of that established Church. It is clear that these events depicted on 1.E are linked in the homilies and sermons of Western ecclesiastics of fourth- to seventh-century Italy, and of seventh- to tenth-century England; they are also linked to a certain extent in the liturgy of the Western Church celebrated during the seventh to ninth centuries. In the light of these associations it is possible that there was a further, overall, iconographic control operating in the selection of the scenes depicted on 1.E.

It must of course be stressed that the relative lack of iconographic coherence in the other faces of the Sandbach crosses may mean that the inter-relatedness of the scenes on 1.E is only apparent. However, given the common themes referred to in all the scenes on this face of the cross, it is worth examining the

possibility of an intended control, particularly in view of a commentary on the Eucharist written by Germanus of Constantinople at the turn of the eighth century.³⁵⁶ The interest in this commentary is due to the fact that it refers to most of the scenes carved on Cross 1 in a single Eucharistic text, and therefore provides additional information regarding the overall iconographic programme of the monument.

It has been argued by Ó Carragáin that the liturgy of the Western Church during the seventh to ninth centuries, particularly as it affected the Eucharist, was greatly influenced by the practises of the Eastern Church during the early years of the eighth century, and that these Eastern "innovations" had been introduced into Anglo-Saxon England by the mid eighth century, their presence being reflected in the iconography of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses.³⁵⁷ From the turn of the eighth century the celebration of the Eucharist in the Western Church was preceded by the ceremony of The Entrance of the Gospel, when the Gospel Book was carried into the church and laid on the altar, and then followed down the nave by the celebrant and his assistants carrying the bread of the Eucharist.³⁵⁸ It is an explanation of the significance of this ceremony which is given by Germanus in his commentary, written at the time when Pope Sergius was introducing Eastern Eucharistic practices into the Western liturgy;³⁵⁹ the notions expressed in this commentary show the extent to which the iconographic scenes on the Sandbach cross could be linked.

While such Eastern works would not generally be held to have a great deal of relevance to Western practices, or more specifically, to the iconography of Anglo-Saxon cross-shafts, it is possible in this case, that given the extremely close and personal links which existed between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople during the late seventh and early eighth centuries,³⁶⁰ and the almost universal practise of The Entrance of the Gospel in both Churches, that an Eastern commentary on the ceremony dating from c.700 may well represent a common attitude towards it, particularly as Germanus' Commentary is thought to have been available to Anglo-Saxon churchmen by the mid ninth century.³⁶¹

The Entrance of the Gospel is described by Germanus as signifying the coming of Christ into the world:

The entrance of the Gospel shows the appearance and the entrance of the Son of God into this world, as the apostle says, "When He [God the Father] brings the first-born into the world, he says 'Let all his angels worship him'."³⁶²

At this point he goes on to describe Christ as being incarnate "not just in the manger of irrational beasts, but in the table of the Word":³⁶³

As the angels sang "Glory to God in the Highest" at Christ's birth, so we sing "O come let us worship and fall down! Save us, O Son of God!". As the Magi offered gold, frankincense and myrrh, we offer our faith, hope and charity.³⁶⁴

Having referred to the Adoration of the Manger and the Adoration of the Magi, the Commentary then continues with a description of

the Holy Ghost and the revelation of Christ's Trinity to mankind through the Transfiguration, and its relevance to the Christian community:

The Holy Gospel is the appearance of God in which He is seen by us, no longer through clouds and speaking in riddles as once to Moses...but he appeared openly as the true Man and was seen by us...through whom God the Father has spoken to us face to face,...concerning whom the Father gives witness from Heaven and says, "This is my beloved Son". Wisdom, Word and Power, announced to us in the prophets, and revealed in the Gospels, so that "all who receive him and believe in his name receive power to become children of God". To him whom we have heard and with our own eyes have seen to be the Wisdom and Word of God, we all cry "Glory to you, O Lord!"³⁶⁵

It is clear from the preceding discussion on the significance of the iconography of the Sandbach crosses, that the notions expressed by Germanus are present in more diverse forms in texts written by Western ecclesiastics from the fourth century onwards; here they are related in one piece of writing, a commentary on a ceremony common to the celebration of the Eucharist in the Churches of both East and West, and certainly practised in Anglo-Saxon England by the ninth century. It both underlines and draws together the multivalent themes expressed by figural iconography of the Sandbach cross, and emphasises the links between the events of the Incarnation, the Passion and the Resurrection, and the establishment of the Church, its doctrine and its practices, all based on the words and actions of Christ related in the Gospels of the four evangelists.³⁶⁶ Thus despite an apparent incoherence of some of the figural schemes on this cross-shaft, a unity of thought is potentially present, combining

scenes which are not arranged in narrative sequence, and of which a large number still remain unidentified.

CONCLUSIONS:

The preceding discussion of the iconography of the Sandbach crosses has revealed certain points relating to the model-types used for the figural scenes which are worth examining in more detail. Obviously more information is available for the scenes decorating the present east face of Cross 1 than for the others, but at least one of the scenes on the second cross (B on 2.W) is related to 1.E and so some conclusions concerning both crosses can be drawn.

The figural carving on both monuments is also distinguished by a common style, and this will be discussed further below, as will the non-figural ornament; together with the figural decoration, this has implications for the dating of the crosses, while the iconography also has a bearing on the cultural milieu within which the crosses may have been produced.

I

In one of the earliest studies of the Sandbach crosses, Browne exclaimed that:

The crosses are unlike anything else in many of their details and it is a matter of very interesting question whence the inspiration came.³⁶⁷

It is indeed true that among the scenes which survive, at least on Cross 1, a number of unique iconographic schemes have been pointed to. However, during the course of the preceding discussion, some of the model-types used have been identified; a few reveal a strong dependence on the art of the late antique West, while others demonstrate a much later, seventh- and eighth-century inspiration.

The body of the crucified Christ, for instance (pl.28), with its rigidly stiff pose, its brief loincloth, and the attempted delinization of the torso, all point to the use of an iconographic-type very closely based on a late antique prototype, much as the St.Gall ivory (pl.120) seems to have been, although unlike this mid eighth-century work the Sandbach Christ is not associated with iconographic elements such as the elaborate personifications of the sun and moon, the *suppedaneum*, and the longer knotted loincloth, which were characteristic of later Carolingian Crucifixion scenes.³⁶⁸ Similarly the abbreviated Adoration of the Manger set within the hollowed-out socle of the crucifix (pl.28) demonstrates the use of a fourth- or fifth-century model type, both in its arrangement and in the type of

crib illustrated.³⁶⁹ This suggests the presence at Sandbach of late antique models, or of models based very closely on late antique prototypes, for the Crucifixion and Nativity scenes.

Set against this apparent use of early Western model-types is the more common use of seventh- and eighth-century material. The half-turned, seated position of the Virgin and her canopied throne in The Adoration of the Magi, for example (pls.27-8), are best paralleled in Western work of the late seventh and early eighth centuries.³⁷⁰ Similarly the step-based cross featured in The Crucifixion (pl.28) is found in Western art throughout Europe, including that of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, during the seventh century. Apart from Sandbach it is only found within a Crucifixion context in Continental works of the ninth century produced under insular or late antique influence. Likewise the type of evangelist symbols placed round the cross of The Crucifixion at Sandbach are best paralleled in Continental manuscripts produced by Anglo-Saxon scribes in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.³⁷¹ The indication is that the Sandbach sculptor had at his disposal a variety of motifs, which were circulating in England during the seventh and eighth centuries.

This conclusion is lent further support not only by the arrangement of The Annunciation scene on 1.W (pl.34) with Mary on the right, which is the iconographic type featured in all carved insular examples of the pre-Viking period, but also by the use of the curve-backed throne in this scene. As seen at Masham (Yks.)

this throne-type is widespread in insular art, but is particularly distinctive in manuscript art of the eighth century and in insular sculpture of the ninth.³⁷² The bar-throne featured in *The Transfiguration* on 1.E (pl.29), and the two sceptres held in the Osiris pose by the transfigured Christ on 2.W (pl.40), provide yet more examples of the use of iconographic motifs characteristic of insular art of the eighth century.³⁷³

Other features indicate the use of material of a possible eighth- or early ninth-century date, but not of known insular provenance. The *Road to Calvary* scenes on 1.W (pl.33), for instance, are of a pre-Iconoclastic Eastern iconographic type which was produced in Italy in the fifth century and in Carolingian work of c.800, although it did not gain popularity in either Eastern or Western art until the later tenth and eleventh centuries. The remnants of foliate tendrils emerging from the arches dividing the Sandbach figures in these scenes further indicate that the model was based on a late antique series prototype. Given the rarity of *The Calvary* sequence in Christian art of the eighth and ninth centuries, and the presence of the large-scale scheme at Münstair (Switz.) at the turn of the ninth century, the model used at Sandbach was probably of an eighth- or very early ninth-century date.³⁷⁴

The evidence provided by the iconography of *The Traditio Legis cum Clavis* (pl.29) is less certain; Peter's keys are present in Anglo-Saxon art from the late seventh century (when

they appear on the Cuthbert Coffin), to the ninth century (when they occur on the Hoddom cross-head), while the arrangement of the figures, with Christ wearing a widely flared robe and Peter and Paul emerging from the roundel, is best paralleled in insular manuscript art of the early ninth century. However, The Traditio Legis cum Clavis is not an iconographic scene which is commonly depicted in Christian art until after the ninth century; thus if the Sandbach scene dates from this period, as the separate iconographic details strongly imply, it provides us with an example of this scheme from a time when it was still relatively rare.³⁷⁵

The deductions to be drawn from the iconography of The Adoration of the Virgin and Child on 2.W (pl.41) are also extremely unclear. The scheme is common in Christian art from the sixth century onwards, and took a variety of forms, all centred round the focal point of Mother and Child. As Mary in this instance has been reduced to three-quarter length, it is not possible to ascertain if she was derived from a model which showed her standing or seated, although it would appear that it may well have shown her flanked by four figures - one on either side, and two half-hidden behind her. The kneeling position of the two flanking figures at Sandbach is unusual, but not without precedent in Italian art of the eighth century.³⁷⁶

In summary therefore, it would appear that the sculptor(s) of these two crosses had access to a large number of varied iconographic models, some showing a close dependence on Western

works of the late antique period, others reflecting the iconography of insular art of the seventh and eighth centuries, while others still, demonstrate the very up-to-date iconographic developments of late eighth- and early ninth-century work on the Continent.

II

The description and discussion of the iconographic models used for the figural scenes, also demonstrated that much of the detail was reproduced from standard figural-types. Thus the three figures of The Transfiguration on 1.E reappear on the west face of Cross 2 (pls.29,40); likewise the diminutive figures of 1.N are featured again, albeit more coherently, on 2.N (pls.31-2,47-8). However, this repetition of figural-types is not only an inter-cross phenomenon; it is also used within, and across scenes, on the same cross. Thus the arms and torsos of the Magi (pls.27-8) appear in full-length form as Mary and John in the Crucifixion, as Moses and Elijah in The Transfiguration, as the figures on 1.N (pls.30-2), and as Christ, Simon and the soldiers on The Road to Calvary (pls.33-4). Similarly the nimbed full-face bearded head, the rounder, nimbed, clean-shaven head, and the distinctive profile face are repeatedly employed across all four sides of both cross-shafts. There are also three distinctive dress-types which are used; the long robe with heavy pleats and widely flared skirt which is used for Christ in The Transfigurations, The Road to Calvary, and possibly in The

Traditio Legis cum Clavis; the long robe used for the other figures (such as Mary, John, Moses and Elijah), with the drooping corners and scalloped edges; and thirdly, the distinctive shorter over-tunic with drooping corners and scalloped hem-line, which also features an over-skirt and short sleeves.³⁷⁷

Like the iconographic-types, these various figural styles reveal the influence of different models. The nimbed, oval face, for instance, used for the crucified Christ and both images of Mary in The Adoration of the Magi and The Crucifixion (pl.28) probably betrays a late antique Western provenance, much as inspired the figural style used on the Rothbury cross-shaft (pls.15-23), although there, admittedly, it is rendered in a more accomplished manner.³⁷⁸

The nimbed bearded full-face, used for the Old Testament prophets of The Transfiguration scenes, for John at The Crucifixion, for Peter and Paul in The Traditio Legis, and for Christ on The Road to Calvary (and possibly in The Transfigurations and The Traditio Legis), is not as easily traced to a particular model-type. It is interesting to note, however, that the Christ of The Crucifixion (pl.28) is clean-shaven while on The Road to Calvary (pl.34), he is bearded; the clean-shaven nature of the former figure does provide an added indication of its late antique Western origin, but the bearded nature of the latter figure may reflect the different origin of The Road to Calvary scheme. The use of the bearded type of Christ is

generally accepted as indicative of an ultimately Eastern source of inspiration,³⁷⁹ as seen, for example, in the Sta.Sabina version of The Road to Calvary, which portrays a bearded Christ and a clean-shaven Simon (pl.134).³⁸⁰ Thus it may be that the bearded Christ of the Sandbach Calvary sequence, thought to have been derived from an early Eastern-inspired prototype, provided the model for the other bearded figures on the cross-shafts.

The double outline round the profile head has been examined, and is thought to be a stylised motif which may have derived from a local secular source, or from details in Christian art, such as a head-dress or a nimbus.³⁸¹ What is of interest here, however, is the distinctive profile view with which the double outline is associated at Sandbach; it is characterised by a long pointed chin (and beard) which juts out from the curve of the nose. This same profile also appears on the later Tower cross at Kells in Ireland, where the long hair of some of the figures ends in a point curving off the back of the neck, and also on the South cross at Clonmacnoise.³⁸² It has been argued that the figural style displayed on these Irish monuments is the development of a native style already established in works such as the *Book of Kells*, but which originated in centres in the South of England in the early eighth century, from where it spread to Pictland and Iona during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, and into Ireland in the course of the ninth century.³⁸³ It is possible, therefore that the profile face on the Sandbach crosses, with the double outline, prominent nose, pointed chin and jutting beard provides an instance of this distinctive insular style in Mercia

after its introduction into Southern England in the course of the eighth century. If this is the case, the same range of late antique and eighth-century insular models, revealed in the iconography of the figural scenes at Sandbach, is supported in the range of figural styles used.

The clothing worn by the figures provides additional evidence of the same range of influences, although here the primary inspiration may well be of a local nature; it has already been demonstrated that the short-skirted tunic is comparable with insular examples of the ninth century.³⁸⁴ In addition the long robe worn by Christ with the widely flared skirt and heavy pleats is best paralleled in the garments depicted in the *Turin* and *Lichfield Gospels* (pls.93,103); both insular manuscripts of the eighth century.³⁸⁵

The inspiration for the longer robes worn by Mary, John, Moses and Elijah however, is less clear. The drooping nature may suggest an adaptation of the shorter garment, but the scalloped hem-line may alternatively, indicate an ultimate origin in late antique art where the robe was shown clinging to the legs, as it still does, for instance, on the Hovingham panel (pls.1-4). By the time it is reproduced on the Sandbach crosses however, such coherence has disappeared, either through the process of multiple copying, or through technical inabilities, and the detail has become a stylised scalloped edge.

Overall though, the varied figural styles which are used repeatedly on the cross-shafts, demonstrate the presence of a mixture of model-types, some revealing an early Western Mediterranean provenance, and others a more insular origin; these are the same sources suggested by the figural iconography.

III

The non-figural ornament of the Sandbach cross-shafts shows less diversity; that on Cross 1 points more clearly to insular art of the second half of the eighth and the early ninth century, while that on Cross 2 seems to reflect the influence of ninth-century insular work. Both cross-shafts demonstrate a strong dependence on the metalwork of that period.

Looking first at the dog-like animals on 1.W (pl.35) with their boxed muzzles, gaping jaws, prominent eye-lids, and long interlace tongues, Wilson has argued that characteristic of Anglo-Saxon animal ornament of seventh- to tenth-century metalwork is the square snout, bump over the eye, and the tongue which develops into an interlaced ribbon.³⁸⁶ Indeed the heads of the Sandbach animals are very reminiscent of the animal heads which decorate the terminals of the Ninian Isle chape (dated to the eighth century), which have been compared with late eighth-century decoration in the Mercian *Book of Cerne*, and the ninth-century Bible, *Royal I.E.vi*.³⁸⁷ Also of note is the wing which rises sharply and terminates in the small curl, found growing

both from the animals on 1.W at Sandbach, and from the beast on 1.N (pl.30). This sharply everted, pointed wing is generally held to be a feature of Southern English art of the eighth century and can be found elsewhere in Mercian sculpture at Brixworth in Northamptonshire.³⁸⁸

Also within the menagerie of animal ornament at Sandbach, is the smaller prancing creature found in the vine-scroll on 1.S and among the rhomboids of 2.E (pls.45-6). These animals, which are not subordinated to the interlace and vine-scroll with which they are associated, are distinguished by the curled foreleg, raised hindquarters, separated paws, and the often back-turned head with the crest spiral. These are all features held to be characteristic of Anglo-Saxon animal art which formed the basis of the Trehiddle creatures of the mid to late ninth century.³⁸⁹ The early ninth-century Dymchurch strap-end for example, is decorated with four animals very like the smaller heraldic beasts on the Sandbach cross-shafts.³⁹⁰

Another distinctive feature of the non-figural ornament at Sandbach are the open-jawed animal heads which form the terminals of the vine-scroll (pl.36-7). The heads themselves are clearly comparable with the heads of the other animals on the cross-shaft, but the tendency to replace the terminal fruit or leaf of the vine-scroll with an animal-head is characteristic of art associated with the West Midlands in the late eighth and early ninth century. It is found in manuscript art, for example, in the *Book of Cerne*, the British Museum Bede manuscript (*Cotton*

Tiberius C.II), and *Royal I.E.vi*; elsewhere in sculpture it is featured at Cropthorne in Worcestershire.³⁹¹

From these comparisons it would appear that the ornamental motifs associated with the figural decoration of the cross-shafts are best viewed within the context of insular art of the eighth and early ninth centuries, and specifically that produced in Southern England and the West Midlands, a conclusion which is not at odds with those drawn from the figural style of the cross-shafts and its iconography.

As a post-script it might be added that the plaitwork borders set with small human masks (see 2.E and 2.W) are an extremely rare decorative feature. Possible analogies might be drawn with the Last Judgement page of the ninth-century *Turin Gospels* (pl.135) where the lower corners of the surrounding frame are decorated with human masks, although these are not set within the frame;³⁹² alternatively the grotesque masks which interrupt the frame of the John portrait-page in the *Book of Cerne*, where the arch meets the outer border, might offer another possible parallel.³⁹³ However neither of these is associated with plaitwork decoration as the Sandbach masks are. This in itself is an unusual decorative feature in Anglo-Saxon sculpture; plain plaitwork borders are only found elsewhere in the North in the pre-Viking period, on carvings at Walton (Yks.), Irton (Cu.) and Closeburn (Dumfries.). Here, however, the borders are not set with human masks as they are at Sandbach.³⁹⁴

IV

Also of note at Sandbach is the layout of the decoration in distinctive and regular frames which contain the figures up and down the lengths of the cross-shafts. On Cross 1 these compartments vary in size and shape between small and large arches, circles and rectangles, all of which terminate in the pendant triangles. The second cross displays a more systematic arrangement, of arches on 2.W and 2.S, of rectangles on 2.N, and of lozenges on 2.E; again the decoration is terminated on each face by the pendant triangles (see figs.8-9,12).

Although the setting of figures under arches has been demonstrated to be characteristic of Mercian art of the early ninth century, being found not only in manuscript art in the *Book of Cerne*, but also in the sculpture at Peterborough (pl.89), Castor and Fletton (Cambs.), and Breedon (Leics.),³⁹⁵ the use of circles, squared cells and triangles is less well attested. In this context it is worth noting the way in which some of the figures have been set within the variously shaped compartments; Mary at the Crucifixion, for example (pl.28), wears a long robe which touches the outer border, as does the wing of the eagle evangelist symbol; the cross of that scene and the Nativity below it have been arranged so that they provide a continuous and unbroken line with the surrounding frame, and most of the figures set in the triangles emerge from the apex of the triangle as do Peter and Paul from the circle surrounding them (pl.29). This arrangement is strongly reminiscent of figures cast in metalwork

where they are commonly joined to each other and to the frame. The layout is familiar, for instance, in metal Crucifixion plaques such as the early ninth-century plaque in Dublin.³⁹⁶

Also common to metalwork decoration is the division of the field into variously shaped compartments. Thus the Enger reliquary mentioned above (pl.140), shows figures set in small arches, one above the other, so that the bodies are cut off by the arcade below, as happens on 2.W at Sandbach (pl.41). Likewise the ninth-century Fuller Brooch (pl.107) arranges the figures in a central lozenge and surrounding ellipses, with busts set in smaller circles round the edge. Associated with the division of the field into such panels (more often containing interlaced animals than human figures) on the metalwork is the use of dome-headed rivets which are reminiscent of the distinctive bosses on 2.E (pl.46). The use of large rivets was long-established in Anglo-Saxon metalwork; it is found as early as the mid seventh century, but flourished during the eighth and ninth in both England and Ireland.³⁹⁷ However the use of the dome-headed rivets increased during the ninth century, and was used at that time in conjunction with the division of the field into larger areas of decoration.³⁹⁸

Thus the positioning of the figures within the variously shaped frames covering the Sandbach crosses, the frames themselves, and particularly the large bosses set at the intersections of the lozenges on 2.E, point strongly to the influence of insular metalwork designs current in the eighth and

ninth centuries. If this is the case the block-ended horizontal borders on 1.W (pls.34-5) may also have derived from a similar source, while the small circular pellets which appear in profusion on almost every face of the cross-shafts could be explained as small skeuomorph nails from an open-work metal artefact such as a book-cover,³⁹⁹ but which, having no functional purpose in a stone medium, have become a distinctive decorative motif on the cross-shafts.

The metalwork medium may also have provided the inspiration for the terminal triangles on the Sandbach crosses. Bailey has argued that this feature was derived from round cross-shafts such as the Wolverhampton pillar, although another potential sculptural model is found on the square socle at Lindisfarne dated to the late eighth or ninth century where a plain double outline decorating one side of the stone forms two 45° angles in the lower corners.⁴⁰¹ However, pendant triangles such as are featured at Sandbach are also common terminal motifs on metalwork objects such as bishops' croziers.⁴⁰² Given the predominant influence of metalwork motifs elsewhere in the layout of the shafts, the pendant triangles may thus also derive from a similar source.

It has become apparent during the preceding discussion on the iconography and style of the figural scenes, and on the associated decorative motifs and layout of the Sandbach crosses, that a date within the early years of the ninth century can be set for the larger monument, and a slightly later date within the ninth century for Cross 2.⁴⁰³

The dating for Cross 1 is based not only on its figural iconography and style, but also on the associated vegetal ornament and distinctive animal decoration which is featured on the north, south and west faces of the shaft. It has been argued that the figural scenes of this cross most probably pre-date those which are repeated on Cross 2, and the lozenges with the large bosses which decorate the east face of this cross suggest a date well within the ninth century, but not too far removed from Cross 1 with which it shares certain models, or even, on which it is based.

Coatsworth has argued for a late ninth- or early tenth-century date for the larger cross-shaft,⁴⁰⁴ but this conclusion was reached on the basis that the Crucifixion and its relationship with the Nativity below were based on Carolingian work of the early to mid ninth century. It has been argued here that this was not necessarily the case as certain elements of these two scenes were circulating in insular art before the mid ninth century and so could have been put together in England

rather than on the Continent. This, taken in conjunction with the iconography of the other scenes and the associated non-figural ornament, suggests that an early ninth-century date would provide a more accurate setting for the production of Cross 1.

VI

It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that Sandbach is thought to have been the centre of a large parish, already in existence during the pre-Viking period.⁴⁰⁵ The iconography of the Sandbach shafts does not contradict this evidence, although it does not provide a great deal of explicit information concerning the nature of the ecclesiastical establishment on which such a parish might have been focused. The figural iconography of Cross 1, despite having potentially liturgical, and clearly doctrinal references, is not overtly monastic in its symbolism in the way that the iconography of the Ruthwell cross has been shown to be, and in the way that the Wirksworth stone may also have been;⁴⁰⁶ the messages expressed by the figural scenes are applicable to the Christian community at large.

It is clear however, from the sheer size of Cross 1, the complexity of its figural iconography, and the variety of model-types available for its decoration, that even on its own it indicates the presence of an ecclesiastical centre of impressive resources. This cross-shaft however, is only one of many which were produced at the centre; at least one other, whose

iconography is closely related to it, survives almost intact (Cross 2), and the remains of numerous others are divided between the present market place and church yard, some of them also betraying the weathered signs of having been decorated with pairs of figures set in niches.⁴⁰⁷ One can only speculate on the reasons for the wealth of material at this one site, and its comparative absence from the surrounding area. It is unclear, for instance, whether the fragmentary remains indicate the existence of a large workshop which provided monuments for other religious centres, or whether the carvings served only to embellish the foundation at Sandbach itself.

Nevertheless, it does remain clear that the Sandbach crosses mark the presence of a significantly impressive ecclesiastical establishment in Western Mercia, which was flourishing during the late eighth and into the first half of the ninth century. The late eighth century was a period when Mercia was at its political, military and cultural height under Offa (d.796 A.D.), and sculpture produced during the early years of the next century may well be seen as a confirmation of this achievement in both religious and political terms.⁴⁰⁸

In this context it is interesting to note that the formation of the combined *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* scheme, which symbolises the establishment of Christ's Church on earth in the manner of a formal commission of doctrine and power, has its recognised beginnings in the art of Charlemagne's empire in an environment where Christian kingship was consciously being established with

all the authority and panoply of Church and State.⁴⁰⁹ In this respect late eighth-century Mercia was comparable in many ways to Charlemagne's Gaul; the ruling dynasties of both kingdoms imposed their authority in state and religious affairs in remarkably similar ways, supplementing and strengthening ecclesiastical links, while maintaining the notion of secular unity under God and his earthly vicar, the Pope. It has been noted that during the last years of the eighth century Mercia played host to papal legates and Carolingian dignitaries, both royal and ecclesiastic; that despite the exchanges of gifts between Charlemagne and the Northumbrian kings, his greatest and closest relations with Anglo-Saxon England were with the Mercian rulers.⁴¹⁰ Thus another early example of *The Traditio Legis cum Clavis* in a Mercian context at Sandbach can probably be seen as a reflex of this period of state and ecclesiastical consolidation within the kingdom. This would indicate that if the centre responsible for the production of the Sandbach crosses was a monastic, as opposed to a secular, foundation, it was one with extremely close ties to the rulers of Mercia, as seems to have been the case with many Northumbrian foundations.⁴¹¹

Whatever the specific nature of the centre, those responsible for the production of the Sandbach crosses worked within an environment that had access to significant economic resources as well as to a remarkable variety of Anglo-Saxon, Continental and early Italian artefacts. It was, in addition, in touch with contemporary artistic developments in the iconography of certain

scenes for which models were not actually available, and the sculptors (possibly not very technically accomplished), utilised every means at their disposal to create at least one, and probably more, extremely impressive monuments betokening the wealth and panoply of a Church and religion well established and flourishing in Western Mercia by the ninth century.

CHAPTER VI

THE WIRKSWORTH SLAB

INTRODUCTION:

I

The Wirksworth slab (pl.49) is set in the wall of the north aisle of the parish church of St.Mary the Virgin in the Derbyshire village of Wirksworth. It was discovered in 1820-21 when the pavement in front of the altar was being removed during "the shocking havoc" of renovation work;¹ the stone had been placed face downwards over a stone-built vault or grave which contained a human skeleton. The carving was recognised as "a specimen of rude and ancient sculpture",² and the slab set in the north wall of the chancel, being later transferred to its present position in the aisle.³

The slab is coped and cut from a block of red sandstone. It measures 1.58m. along the plain moulding dividing the two registers of high-relief figural ornament, and is 80cm. wide (85cm. if measured across the cope). As now set, the upper register is 32.5cm. wide, and the lower, 42.5cm.⁴

These dimensions, however are not those of the original stone; it was broken so that the carving at the extreme right and left of the upper frieze is now incomplete and a portion of the slab on the lower left has been completely lost (see fig.14). It

has been estimated by Cockerton, from the arrangement and dimensions of the various figural scenes covering the monument, that approximately 42cm. has been lost from a stone originally 2m. long.⁵

II

It is evident from the find-report that the Wirksworth slab was discovered in a secondary position; Cockerton assumed that the vault over which the slab was placed was the original grave,⁶ but whether this was in fact so has to remain an open question. Nevertheless the find circumstances do not affect the likelihood of the stone originally having been some form of grave-cover. Christian cemeteries from late Anglo-Saxon Mercia, such as those at Lincoln and Raunds (Northants.), have yielded a large number of coped stone grave-covers, although none are very elaborately decorated. They were found in a variety of positions, being placed above simple shroud burials, above burials within wooden coffins, and above cist burials as well as over stone coffins. They were not always put directly above the body but were often placed on ground-level to mark the position of the grave.⁷ These monuments, while pertaining to a slightly later period, do suggest from their similar shape that the Wirksworth piece is indeed best viewed as some form of grave cover.

However, set against the comparatively simple decoration of these grave covers, the more elaborate ornament of the Wirksworth

slab suggests that it had a more elaborate function than serving as a simple grave cover; it was more likely to have been the cover of a sarcophagus or shrine. In addition, the condition of the carving, although damaged, is relatively unworn, suggesting that the stone spent little, if any time outside. This implies that it may well have been part of a prestigious funerary monument set within the church.⁸ Kurth suggested that because the figures have been arranged in order to be viewed from one position (that being the side), the slab was originally set against a wall, and that damp running down the wall may have contributed to the more worn condition of the (now) upper strip of carving.⁹ She supported this argument for the original function of the Wirksworth slab by pointing to the many features it has in common with Christian sarcophagi of the fourth- and fifth-centuries produced in Gaul and Italy, such as the slightly coped shape of the stone, the crowding of the figures into continuous bands without any clear division between them to indicate separate scenes, and the layout of the carving in two rows separated only by a narrow band. She considered the apparent lack of chronological and iconographical order to be additional features reminiscent of the earlier sarcophagi where the style of figural carving is also similar to that found at Wirksworth.¹⁰

The original nature of the tomb however, can only be guessed at; we cannot be sure, for instance, whether it was set under or upon the floor. Cox suggested that the lid was slightly raised

above the level of the pavement and the coffin half-set under the floor.¹¹ Another possible explanation may lie in the stone sarcophagus at the church of St. Alkmund in Derby (ten miles south of Wirksworth). This monument (2.10m. long by 90cm. wide, and dated to the late eighth or ninth century), of which part of the lid remains, was richly decorated on all four sides with panels of interlace and was clearly designed to stand upon the floor of the church, but in the twelfth century it was set in the floor so that the lid was level with the surface of the pavement.¹² Funerary practices elsewhere in Merovingian Gaul show that sarcophagi could be used as empty cenotaphs placed over the actual tomb which was set under the floor.¹³

The evidence thus suggests that while the Wirksworth slab was probably made to cover a sarcophagus or shrine, we cannot be certain whether or not it originally stood above the floor inside the church. If the tomb was buried under the pavement the lid would have provided the only visible decoration, but if it stood above ground, then the sides, as well as the cover, may have been decorated, in which case the iconography of the slab would provide only part of a scheme which once covered the entire monument.

III

The few scholars who have studied the Wirksworth slab, have been faced with three inter-related problems: the identity of the scenes depicted, the source of the model(s) and the date of the piece. Initially the identification of the scenes was of less concern to commentators than the style of the figural carving which was used both to suggest a date for the monument and to relate it to other pieces of pre-Viking sculpture in Northumbria and Mercia.¹⁴

Although the earliest explanation (and illustration) of the scenes was given in the short description of the piece accompanying the notice of its discovery,¹⁵ Kurth and Cockerton have been the only scholars seriously to consider the identification of all the scenes, their iconography, and the implications of this evidence for dating the slab.¹⁶

The following discussion of the Wirksworth slab will adopt the same methodology as the previous chapters; it will provide a description of the figural carving, attempt both to identify the scenes with more certainty than has been achieved so far, and discover the possible sources of the model(s) lying behind the decoration in order to draw some conclusions concerning its date and cultural milieu.

DESCRIPTION:

I

As Kurth noted there is no framework which clearly divides the figures into separate scenes within the two registers. However in most cases stylistic devices have been employed which indicate that the figures were intended to be viewed as independent groups. The most common device employed is to use the side of a figure to mark the edge of a scene. The position and relationship of the figures to each other is another indicator, although in some cases it is a less certain one.

It is according to these criteria that the figures have been divided up for the purpose of discussion according to the arrangement shown in fig.14; this is the division adopted by Cockerton. Only at one point, the junction of scenes 4 and 5 of the upper register, is the boundary questionable. Of course, the description of the slab according to its "upper" and "lower" registers, even bearing Kurth's explanation of the monument in mind, is purely for the sake of convenience; these "upper" and "lower" strips of decoration refer to the carving as it is now seen, set vertically in the wall of the church.

As in previous chapters, references to left and right will be from the spectator's point of view unless otherwise indicated.

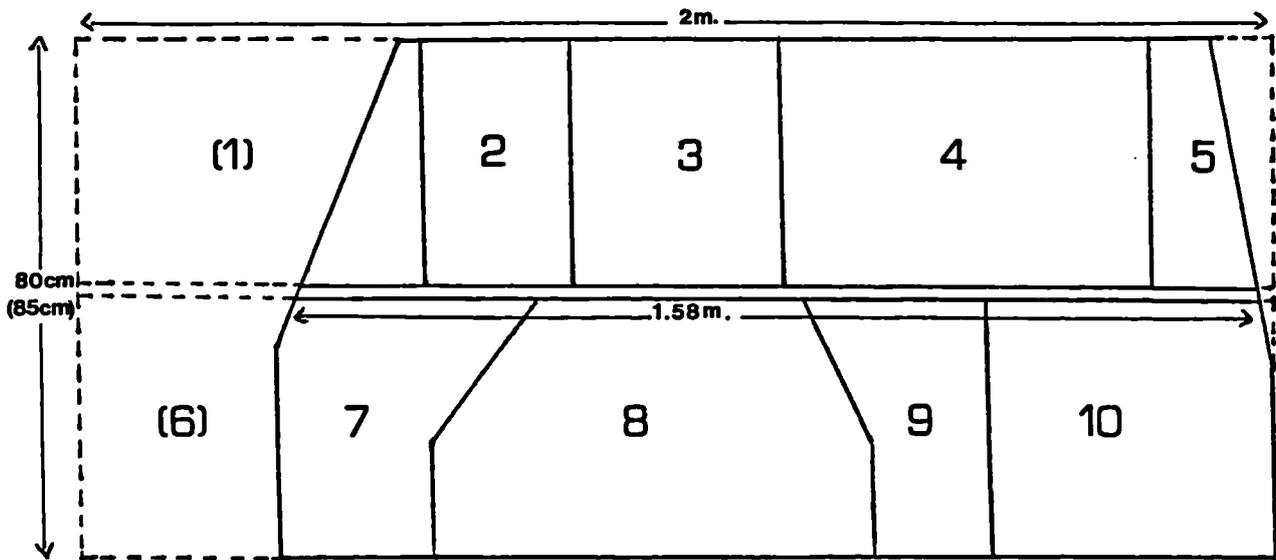


Fig. 14

II

Upper Register:

1.(pl.50) The first group of figures has been largely lost due to the broken condition of the stone. All that remains of this scene is the foot and robe of a figure grasping a long plain staff which separates it from the next scene; the lower edge of the robe indicates that it was of the same full-length as those worn by the figures in scenes 2, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10.

2.(pl.50) The first complete scene is composed of three figures standing behind a fourth; all of them lack haloes. This fourth figure stands to the left and bends deeply towards the right. The head, only slightly turned to the right, is almost wedge-shaped. It is considerably worn but seems to have been crowned

with a wig-like cap of short hair. The short hair indicates that the figure was a man. The eyes and nostrils are deeply drilled.

The body is awkwardly positioned in a three-quarter view and dressed in a full-length robe below which only the feet show, pointing to the right. The robe is marked with ribbed pleats which follow the curve of the body from the midriff to the lower hem. Another set of parallel folds runs round the midriff and under the arms. The figure extends one arm to grasp the leg of one of the others who stands to the right of the scene behind him. His left arm passes behind this background figure to grasp the other leg.

The heads of the two figures standing on the left are more rounded than that of the bending figure, but the hair, eyes and nose appear to have been the same. The head of the background figure on the right has been badly damaged but the outline suggests that it was of the same proportions as the other two. All three gaze straight ahead.

The lower half of the bowed figure and the side of the figure on the far left separate the group from the previous scene. The clothing of the background figure on the left is very worn but it appears to have been draped over his shoulders in heavy folds. His hands are clasped together in front of his chest. The lower part of his body disappears behind the foremost figure.

The details of the second figure are even more worn, but only his right hand seems to have been placed across his chest; there is no sign of his left hand. The lower edge of his robe and his feet appear below the bent figure. There has been an attempt to portray the feet in a standing position, one seen facing forwards, and the other turned slightly to the right, but in effect both feet hang rather awkwardly in mid-air.

The uppermost portion of the figure on the right is badly damaged, but the details below his chest are clear. His garments have been gathered tightly round him in deep tubular folds held behind the head of the foremost figure, so that his legs are bared. They are placed in a deep round basin and held by the foremost figure who bends deeply over the bowl. The right side of the figure and the edge of the bowl separate this group from the next.

3.(pl.51) This scene, originally (on Cockerton's model) central in the upper register, consists of an equal-armed Greek cross (although the lower vertical arm is slightly longer than the other three). The cross is deeply scored in places but these marks are probably not part of the original carving. Placed in the centre of the cross is a quadruped, awkwardly carved in low relief. The head, on the the left, is seen from the front with small ears, drilled eyes and a long snout. The rather long and rounded body is seen from the side. Both the front and back legs curl towards each other under the belly and a short tail follows

the line of the rear legs, curving down and under the body.

A half-length figure is placed in the each spandrel of the cross. All four lack haloes. They wear garments which are draped across their shoulders and hang over their arms. In the top right spandrel the head of the figure is a smaller version of the heads of the three standing figures in scene 2 (see pl.50). There are the remains of the wig-like hair and deeply drilled eyes and nostrils. His left hand emerges from his robe and, resting on the upper edge of the cross-arm, points towards a large square object, presumably a book, which covers the left side of the body. The extended index finger is placed on the book.

In the spandrel below is an animal-headed figure; its long snout, seen in profile, faces the cross-stem. It has two clearly distinct ears or horns, a deeply drilled eye and a slight incision indicating the mouth. A well moulded, rounded neck emerges from the garments draped over its shoulders; the shoulders and body are seen from the front. A large square object is held across the body in the creature's veiled right hand. Its left hand emerges from the central dividing band to point upwards at the object, its index finger in the same position as that of the figure above.

Facing this beast on the other side of the cross is a creature with a round duck-like head, long beak and deeply

drilled eye. The head is turned towards the cross-stem, while the shoulders and body face forwards. A book-like object is placed over the body, and appears to have been held in a veiled hand. There is no clear indication of the other hand pointing at the object, although there is a piece of carving angled up from the left in an appropriate position. The square itself bears incisions which may have been intended as decoration.

Above this creature in the upper left-hand spandrel of the cross is another animal-headed figure. The head is again seen in profile, facing the cross. It is badly damaged but appears to have had a long downward-curving snout. The rounded outline of the shoulders (facing forwards) are visible, but no other details can be discerned.

On both sides of this scene the ends of the cross-arms form a boundary-line with the sides of the creatures in the spandrels. The result is a compact, self-contained composition, separate from the groups of figures on either side of it.

4.(pl.52) As noted already, the division between this scene and the next (5) is the most questionable on the slab, but the figures will, for the time being, be treated according to Cockerton's model.

This scene (4) consists of three standing figures. Two of these carry a body on a stretcher under which is another body.

Above the stretcher are a number of human heads contained within an oval frame set on its side. None of the figures is nimbed.

The stretcher-bearer to the left of the group forms one edge of the scene. He is badly damaged but the outline of his head conforms to that of the upright figures in scene 2 (pl.50), and the remains of the drilled eyes and nostrils can be discerned. He wears a long-sleeved robe which hangs like a tube over his body. The back of the garment can be seen behind the legs which emerge from the robe just above the ankles. The body and head face forward but the feet are seen from the side and turn to the right. The figure's right hand reaches almost to the lower hem of the robe where it grasps one handle-bar of the stretcher. The other bar crosses the body behind the right arm but the figure is too damaged to ascertain whether or not this second bar was also held.

The figure who carries the other end of the stretcher is better preserved. His head, the same shape as the heads of the other figures, is slightly turned to the right and bears the signs of a short fringe of hair across the forehead. The eyes are deeply drilled under eyebrows that run in a line continuous with the nose; the nostrils are drilled. The mouth, cheeks and chin have been carefully modelled. Tubular folds mark a garment draped round his half-turned shoulders under which he wears a plain, long-sleeved robe which reaches to the ankles. As with the other bearer, the back of the robe can be seen behind the

feet which are turned to the right. His long right arm grasps one handle of the stretcher in the same position as that of the figure on the left. The other bar of the stretcher crosses his body at waist height, but it does not appear to be held by the left hand.

The stretcher itself is indicated by a long plain horizontal bar held at each end by the two standing figures. Set on the stretcher is a wedge-shaped body lying with the head to the right. It is wrapped tightly in a plain piece of cloth which passes up over the head. The face, lying on its side, looks forwards but is very worn. It has the same shape as that of the foremost figure in scene 2 and the deeply drilled eyes are still visible. Behind the body and under the head is a semi-circular shape, presumably representing a mattress, on which the body apparently rests.

Another figure lies below the stretcher. The head is turned at the same angle as the face of the figure above. It is badly worn and only the eyes and short hair are discernible. The figure lies on its back with both hands reaching up to the stretcher; one hand can clearly be seen clutching the stretcher-bar. It wears a long plain robe that is rolled back to the knees; these are bent so that the feet touch the leg of the stretcher-bearer on the left.

Placed above, and slightly behind the stretcher, is the oval frame. It contains the remains of six heads arranged in two

rows. Those in the upper row are badly worn, but are the same shape as those of the other figures, and the eyes and nostrils of two of them are still visible. The shoulders of the figures in the lower row can be seen above the edge of the frame and the heads are better preserved. The fringe of hair, the modelled eyebrows and nose, the nostrils and eyes, and the mouth, are all discernible. In the left corner of the frame is a small oblong piece of carving which does not seem to have been another head.

At the far right of the group is the third standing figure. His face is the same as that of the figure next to him and is turned only slightly to the right. His body, also in the half-turned position leans gently backwards, while his feet, emerging from the full-length plain tube-like robe, are turned to the right. He wears a garment gathered over his shoulders so that it falls in a heavy cascade of folds across his right arm and down the length of his body. Both hands are held at chest-height to grasp the long stem of a branch which terminates in a series of tubular fronds in front of his face. The side of his body does not form a clear boundary with the next group of figures. In fact his left hand and the branch-stem are positioned in front of, rather than beside, the next figure.

5.(pl.53) This last scene on the upper register of the slab originally consisted of two full-length figures. That on the left is complete but much of the right-hand figure is missing. The un-nimbed head of the first figure is the same as that of the

others on the slab and is fairly well preserved. The face, body and feet all face forward, the feet hanging down in the same manner as those of the second background figure in scene 2 (pl.50). He wears a full-length robe carved in a series of vertical ribbed pleats over which another garment was gathered at the shoulders.

In his right arm he holds a small human figure at an angle across his body. The head of this figure, resting against his right shoulder, has the same characteristics as the other heads, with the deeply drilled eyes and fringe of short hair. The extremely small body has been reduced to an oblong shape as though tightly wrapped in a plain piece of cloth.

All that remains of the figure on the right is the lower part of its body and an arm which reaches over to grasp the minute body held by the first figure. This figure wore a robe decorated with vertical pleats similar to that of the figure next to it. The feet hang down from the hem in the same awkward position. Between the two figures (beside the head of the first), is a piece of ribbed carving with the middle 'rib' being slightly longer than the other two.

Lower Register:

6. This scene no longer exists but its presence can be supposed from Cockerton's reconstruction of the scenes (see fig.14).¹⁷

7.(pl.54) It is unclear how much, if any, of this scene is missing due to the broken condition of the stone. It now consists of five figures, three of whom are placed in a row in the lower half of the scene. Their heads are fairly worn but the fringe of hair, the general shape of the face, and the eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth are identical to those of the figures in the upper register. They all face forwards, and their shoulders are indicated in the same manner as those of the figures in the oval frame of scene 4 (pl.52).

Placed across, and in front of, the shoulders of these three figures is a plain band which ends in line with the two outer busts. Below this band is a repeated pattern set under each human head. It consists of a central rod rising from a rectangular block to terminate in a small circular knob under the plain band. Half-way up this rod four similarly knobbed rods branch out on each side. The top two curve up to the plain band and the lower two curl down towards the rectangular block. The band and this repeated motif form an ornamented container from which the three heads emerge.

The fourth and fifth figures are situated above these three heads; that to the left has a face with the same characteristic details, and looks straight ahead while the body is turned to the right. One arm, clothed in a long plain sleeve, reaches across the body and up to the right towards the fifth, smaller, figure. The rest of the body either passes behind the three lower figures, or has been lost in the break.

The fifth figure lies diagonally towards the right. It is set within, but to one side of, a sub-rectangular "container" which is held, on the left, by the first figure. The body of the reclining figure is depicted as a slightly tapering tube as though tightly wrapped in a winding sheet which passes over the head. The face which looks out is the same as the other faces in the scene.

The side of the lower container, and the edge of the upper container set at an angle, form the clear, if irregular edge to this scene, separating it from the next group of figures.

8.(pl.55) At the centre of this scene is an oval moulding forming a mandorla which extends the full height of the register. It rests on a small curved piece of carving, which echoes the lower edge of the mandorla, and contains within it the full-length figure of a man. It is flanked and grasped by four angels, below whom are the busts of two more winged angels and two further figures. None of the figures are nimbed. The outlines of the flanking angels form the outer boundaries of the scene.

The man who stands within the mandorla, facing forward, has a wig-like fringe of short hair across his forehead, small ears on either side of his head, and deeply drilled eyes under eyebrows which are continuous with the nose. His nostrils are drilled and the mouth, cheeks and chin have been carefully

modelled. He wears a plain, long-sleeved, full-length robe under a piece of cloth which is draped over his left shoulder and across his body to hang in ribbed folds down his right side. The back of the under-garment can be seen behind his ankles. Both feet, seen from the front, turn slightly to the right, in one case to accommodate the line of the mandorla. His right arm is bent across his body to grasp a long cross-staff which he holds in both hands at an angle over his left shoulder. The head of the cross-staff extends out over the mandorla. Behind the figure the back of the mandorla has been scored with a number of small incisions.

The four flanking angels grip the mandorla very firmly. The upper two are half-length (disappearing behind the lower two), and are mirror images of each other. They have the same type of head and facial features characteristic of all the figures on the stone. One arm, clothed in a long, plain sleeve, is bent across the body to grasp the mandorla. The other hand, also holding the mandorla, emerges from a strip of material draped across the shoulder. One wing lies horizontally beside the head and passes behind the top of the mandorla; the other wing begins by the head and flares out and away from the figure. They are round-topped and composed of long sweeping parallel lines which pass behind the wings of the full-length angels below.

The lower pair of angels are carved in positions which are meant to mirror each other, but are not strictly identical - the

torso of the angel on the right is longer, and the leg shorter, than those of the angel on the left. The wings growing from their backs are seen in profile, sweeping back and up at the ends. The wings of the angel on the left separate so that the back wing rises above the one in front. The parallel ribbing of each wing ends in tapering tubes, the central one being longer than the others. The wings of the angel on the right are the same except that the front wing is raised to reveal the other wing behind and below it.

The carving of these lower angels is among the best preserved of the stone. The fringe of hair across the forehead consists of rows of tight circular curls, the eyebrows protrude and the cheeks are very rounded. Although their faces gaze out at the spectator, their bodies are seen from the side and are bent at right-angles to stretch over the lower group of figures. One arm of each angel, clothed in a plain, long sleeve, reaches across the body to grasp the lower edge of the mandorla. The other hand can be seen behind the arm also holding the mandorla. A piece of clothing is draped over the far shoulder, to pass under the arm and round the upper torso in a series of horizontal folds. Beneath this band of clothing the undergarment falls forward in a series of diagonal folds. Tucked under the stomach of each angel is a round object. A plain moulding passes from this "knob", round the lower edge of the garment and up the other side of the leg. One foot is visible hanging down towards the centre of the group; the other is seen, in profile, kicking backwards. The whole arrangement of the legs and feet is

awkward, but it seems to have been an attempt to carve the two angels so that they lean over, balanced on one foot, while the other leg is kicked back in line with the upper part of the body. The "knob" under the stomach therefore represents the knee of the horizontal leg.

In the space formed under these angels are two half-figures on either side of the mandorla. On the left is a head, half-turned to the centre. It is thinner than usual, but has the same protruding eyebrows continuous with the nose, deeply drilled eyes and nostrils, and well modelled cheeks, chin and mouth. The hair is covered by a veil which passes round the side of the face to be draped in heavy folds over the shoulders, and possibly over the curved object on which the central mandorla sits.

Behind this figure is the bust of an angel who has the same short curly hair and facial features of the angel above. A rather fore-shortened arm, wearing a plain long sleeve, is tucked under his chin with the hand held up behind the head of the figure in front. The other arm, covered by a heavily folded piece of drapery crosses over the body in the opposite direction to hold a small cylindrical object, presumably a scroll. Both wings are visible; one is tucked in behind the open hand, the other passes behind the foot of the upper angel.

To the right of the mandorla are two similar, but smaller figures. The one nearest the mandorla has a face and headdress

comparable to that of the figure opposite, but the shoulders are not visible, and so the folds wrapping the headdress round the shoulders of the figure on the left are absent. Against the lower edge of the mandorla is a small piece of carving which may be a veiled hand. Behind is another figure similar to the half-length angel opposite; the large raised hand is visible, but not the arms crossing the body. The wing behind the hand is not discernible while in the place of the other wing is a plain piece of carving.

9.(pl.57) This scene consists of two un-nimbed figures, one of whom is half-hidden behind the wings of the full-length angel in the preceding scene. This figure on the left is slightly worn, but has the same short curly fringe of hair and facial features, characteristic of the slab. On either side of his head a round-topped wing hangs down in vertical ribs. One arm, crossing his body to the right, is sharply bent at the elbow, so that the hand is raised. Three fingers of the hand are extended towards a seated figure facing him on the right. The other hand can be seen under his arm clasping a long cylindrical object.

The head of the seated figure is half-turned to the front but the body is viewed from the side. The face is worn so that only the deeply drilled eyes and the incision for the mouth remain. Across the top of the head and down the side of the face is a plain veil which passes under the chin. The upper part of the body is swathed in an over-garment which is gathered in heavy

folds and held at the waist by one of the hands. The other hand, held open, is raised towards the angel on the left. The skirt of a plain robe falls almost to the ground; the feet have been too badly damaged to determine their position.

The chair in which this figure is seated is seen from the side and is carved in a series of regular horizontal lines. The arm of the chair curves up and round behind the figure. The back of the chair and the seated figure separate this scene from the next group of figures.

10.(pl.56) The last surviving scene of the monument is composed of a row of five figures, all of whom lack haloes. The figure on the far left is seen in three-quarter view, with both feet turned to the right. The head is somewhat worn but has the same cap of short hair and facial features already noted. A piece of clothing, draped over the shoulders and round the torso, is held at the waist by the left hand. The right arm emerges from this over-garment, crossing the body and bending sharply at the elbow so that the open hand is placed on the shoulder of the next figure; the plain, long-sleeved robe falls nearly to the ankles. The figure's side forms one boundary of the scene.

The figure to the right stands in a similar position, but wears a plain veil covering the hair and falling down one side of the face. It is unclear if this head[^]dress is separate from, or

part of the over-garment which covers most of the body. This is gathered at the waist by the left hand, to reveal the lower edge of a plain robe on the right. The other hand emerges from inside the folds of the over-garment to rest on the shoulder of the next figure.

The position and details of this third figure repeat those of the second figure except that the left hand cannot be seen at the waist. The right hand holds the shoulder of the fourth figure who is full-length, but shorter. His head is capped by the fringe of short hair and he appears to carry a long cylindrical object in his right hand. His left arm hangs awkwardly down to the right passing across the body of the next figure. He wears a long pleated robe similar to those worn by the two figures in scene 5 above, from which his feet emerge dangling at the level of the knees of the other figures.

The figure at the far right of the group faces the other four, the head being half-turned to the left. The facial features are the same as those of the other figures, but the hair, although described as a fringe across the forehead, is carved with a series of light vertical incisions and appears to hang down the neck. The figure wears a pleated garment over a plain robe. This over-garment is draped diagonally across the body, extending up towards the chest of the diminutive figure to the left.

On the right of the scene is a low rectangular object which passes in front of the fifth figure and under the diminutive figure. On the right it curves up to a point half-way up the back of the fifth figure. It bears the marks of a few incisions, but it is unclear if these are original or the result of later embellishments.

The remains of a plain narrow strip run up the side of the slab from the lower corner to the shoulder of the last figure where it is broken off. This was probably a plain border which once ran round the edges of the slab.

IDENTIFICATION:

I

Since the first recording of the monument a variety of explanations have been offered for the identity of the figural scenes found on the Wirksworth slab, but all have viewed these scenes as divided in the way described above. The diversity of opinion is primarily due to the worn and broken condition of the stone, but assumptions concerning the models and iconographic controls lying behind the choice of scenes have also influenced the explanations.

The following section will attempt to identify the figures, taking account of the explanations already made by previous

scholars, before discussing their significance. From this it may be possible to discover the iconographic pattern which could have influenced the selection and positioning of the scenes on the slab.

II

Upper Register:

1.(pl.50) Too little remains of this scene for any identification, but it seems fairly certain that its partially surviving figure did not belong to the group of figures next to it. The boundary formed by the staff and the way the figures in 2 have been positioned to exclude the figure holding the staff have clearly created two independent scenes.

Cockerton, having identified the controlling programme of the slab as a liturgical or festival cycle, suggested that the first scene had most probably depicted the Nativity of Christ.¹⁸ If this were the case, the remains of the standing figure with the staff could have been a shepherd. Among the early representations of the Nativity, such as those on fourth-century sarcophagi in Rome and Gaul a shepherd was shown standing to one side holding a staff or crook.¹⁹ As demonstrated at Sandbach, Joseph, who was introduced into the scene in the fifth century, was generally shown seated and was never depicted holding a staff.²⁰

However, because the identification of this scene as The Nativity depends on the *a priori* suggestion that the programme controlling the selection of the scenes was a liturgical or festival cycle, and because so little actually remains of the scene, it is probably advisable to delay the explanation of this scene (if any is possible) until the other scenes have been examined.

2.(pl.50) The first complete scene on the upper register has always been identified as Christ Washing the Disciple's Feet (The Pedilavum).²¹ The iconographic details to note in this particular version of the event are the positioning of the two apostles standing to the left of the main action, the fact that Christ bends very deeply over the bowl to wash the disciple's feet with both hands, and that this disciple has both feet in the basin.

It is these details which distinguish the scene from the iconographic type developed on Roman and Gaulish sarcophagi of the fourth-century where Christ was shown on the right, standing erect before a disciple seated on the left.²² In such depictions Christ had a towel placed round his neck which he held with both hands. The disciple held one hand on his chest and extended the other towards Christ while placing one foot over the basin and holding the other back.²³

A development of this iconographic type can be found in later Byzantine art of the ninth-century where Christ, standing on the right with a towel round his waist, raised his hands and leant slightly towards the disciple, who sat on the left with one foot in the basin, holding his head with his hand.²⁴ In both the Roman and later Byzantine scenes one or more disciples looked on from the right.

Carolingian representations of the scene tended to emphasise the dialogue between Christ and the disciple. Thus Christ was shown standing upright with a towel round his waist and raising his right arm. The disciple sat on the left with one foot in the basin and both hands stretched out towards Christ. Behind him, the group of apostles were shown on the left of the scene.²⁵

It is evident that none of these iconographic types is strictly comparable to the scene found on the Wirksworth slab. However, the scene depicted in the sixth-century Italian *Gospels of St. Augustine* and the late sixth-century Greek *Rossano Gospels* do bring us closer to the Wirksworth arrangement. In the latter manuscript (pl.143) the disciple is shown seated on the right with both feet in the basin, reaching towards Christ who is shown to the left with a towel wrapped round his waist, bent double, and pouring water over the disciple's feet with both hands. On the left, two apostles stand behind Christ, while another group stands behind the disciple. Similarly, the *St. Augustine Gospels* (pl.142) show Christ on the left, with a

towel round his waist, bending deeply over the basin, holding the disciple's feet with both hands. This figure sits on the right with both feet in the basin and his hands outstretched towards Christ. The apostles are divided into two groups: one behind Peter and the other behind Christ. Both this manuscript, and the *Rossano Gospel Book* have been traced back to Syrian prototypes.²⁶

In other examples of the scene (differing in date and place of origin) which vary the relative positions of the major characters, the numbers of apostles, or the stance of Christ and the position of the disciple's feet, the details which are commonly attributed to an early Eastern influence are precisely those features found at Wirksworth: the deeply bowed position of Christ, and the placing of Christ on the left with the disciple on the right.²⁷ It should be emphasised, nevertheless that the detail of the disciple having both feet in the basin is relatively rare and seems only to be found in the earlier works and those showing the strong, even direct, influence of early provincial art from the East.²⁸

The shape of the basin and the position of the watching apostles do seem to vary, but the deep round proportions of the basin at Wirksworth seem to have been favoured in the Eastern examples and in later works showing an Eastern influence.²⁹ Similarly, the positioning of the apostles did depend to a certain extent on the field to be filled by the scene, but the

very early Eastern iconographic type was characterised by the positioning of the watching apostles in two groups, one of which was behind Christ.³⁰ More commonly the apostles were grouped behind the disciple, leaving Christ on his own, and so emphasising him.³¹ At Wirksworth the model may well have had the apostles arranged in two groups but the confines of the slab only allowed for the reproduction of one of the groups or a token number of witnessing apostles.

The unusual pose adopted by the disciple having his feet washed may also be due to difficulties encountered by the sculptor in adapting the scene to the confines of the slab. As noted, in other examples of the scene this disciple is shown seated, usually in full or three-quarter profile, but at Wirksworth he is depicted facing forwards, in a manner comparable to the other two figures on the left, except that he has his feet in the bowl. It is likely therefore, that the forwards-facing stance was used for the disciple having his feet washed, as well as for those watching, in order to fit the scene into the space available for it in the register.

Another detail at Wirksworth which may point to the iconographic type lying behind the scene, is the carved detail round Christ's waist. In the early Eastern pictorial type found in the *Rossano Gospel Book* (pl.143), Christ is shown with the towel tied round his waist, as opposed to hanging round his neck, and it may well be that the ribbed folds round Christ's midriff at Wirksworth were intended to represent the towel used to wipe

the disciple's feet, rather than a piece of clothing. This detail is also found in later European art deriving from the East, such as the fresco at Müstair, Switzerland (c.800)³² which shows Christ with a towel round his waist. In this fresco, however, Christ is not deeply bowed over the basin in which the disciple has only one foot, and the emphasis of the scene is on the conversation between Christ and the disciple, as it is in other Carolingian versions.

Thus, the relative positions of the figures, the inclined posture of Christ who has the towel wrapped round his waist, and the disciple with both feet in the bowl all point to an ultimate Eastern provenance for the model on which the Pedilavum scene at Wirksworth was based. The location of the other apostles to the left of the scene and the deep round proportions of the basin also point to a similar background. This source is most likely to have been the product of provincial art of the sixth-century, as opposed to the Byzantine art produced at Constantinople. Likewise, the simplicity of the composition, while resulting partially from the small amount of space, is a trait associating the scene with its early development as part of the Passion Cycle in the fifth century.³³ The close relationship between the scene at Wirksworth and examples of sixth-century date and Eastern origin and influence, combined with the differences it has to later Western works adapted from such sources,³⁴ suggest that although the actual model used probably emerged from the West, it was, like the *Augustine Gospels*, not too far removed from its original prototype.

3.(pl.51) Apart from Raw³⁵, most commentators have identified the central scene in the upper register as a Symbolic Crucifixion.³⁶ This explanation has been based on three elements in the scene: the identification of the quadruped at the centre as a lamb, the fact that this lamb is placed on the cross, and the arrangement of the four creatures round the cross. Whilst accepting that these details are crucial to an interpretation of the scene, the following analysis of the individual iconographic details of the scene suggests that the combination points to a different conclusion: that this is an apocalyptic scene showing the Majestas Agni.

The Lamb is a common biblical and pictorial symbol of Christ, and while the animal on the cross is hard to identify because it is so crudely carved, it does seem reasonable in context to assume that it is a Lamb. According to the orthodox interpretation, its position on the cross is taken to symbolise the Crucified, particularly because of its drooping head,³⁷ and the creatures placed in the spandrels of the cross are interpreted as the four evangelist symbols, "witnesses to the truth of the crucifixion".³⁸

The actual identity of these details is not problematic; the Lamb is placed in the centre of the equal-armed Greek cross and surrounded by creatures who can be identified as symbols of the evangelists given the shapes of their heads and the books held in their veiled hands. However to explain them as constituting a Symbolic Crucifixion is less certain.

First it should be remarked that very few examples of the Lamb on a cross designed to show a Symbolic Crucifixion actually exist. When the Lamb is used to symbolise the crucified Christ, then that interpretation of the scene is very clear because in these images the iconographic details (such as the spear- and sponge-bearers, or Mary and John) commonly associated with the Crucifixion scene are present. In such cases the Christ of the Crucifixion is replaced by the Lamb without affecting the identity of the scene.

One such example of the Lamb used in a clear crucifixion context is found on one of the fifth-century ciborium columns at St. Marks in Venice (pl.144) where the nimbed lamb stands at the centre of a Latin cross. In the upper spandrels are the personified symbols of the sun and moon while below are the figures of John and Mary. The cross itself is flanked by the recognisably human bodies of the two thieves crucified on either side. Another possible example is found at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period on a stone slab from Wormington, Gloucestershire (c.1000 A.D.) which is carved with a crucifixion scene. Taylor has argued that the crucified figure is human but the nimbed head, which falls on to the chest, is that of a lamb shown in profile; Coatsworth, however, seems less certain about this identification.³⁹

When compared with the Italian example, if not with the later Anglo-Saxon carving, it is clear that the Wirksworth lamb

does not stand upright but has been carved in an awkward position with its legs bent under its body; this may have been deliberate as there is sufficient room for it to have been carved standing upright. Again, unlike the scene on the St.Marks column, it is the four evangelist symbols which have been placed round the cross at Wirksworth, instead of the usual accompanying figures of Mary and John (or Longinus and Stephaton).

Another comparison might be made with Cross 1 at Sandbach (Ches; pl.28) where evangelist symbols are associated with a Crucifixion scene, but here, unlike the Wirksworth scene, they are included as an integral part of the scene and do not affect its identity; they are on the same iconographical level as the sun and moon and the human witnesses, and the crucified Christ is clearly identifiable as such.

Compared with these examples, the iconographic elements and their arrangement within the Wirksworth scene, detract from any clear interpretation of it as a Crucifixion; the different uses of the Lamb in symbolic Crucifixion scenes, and of the evangelist symbols in "historical" Crucifixion scenes, suggest that it is worth considering the validity of the accepted interpretation of the scene at Wirksworth.

Looking first at the lamb in the Wirksworth scene, it is clear that the premise on which the orthodox explanation rests is that the Lamb on the cross is the Agnus Dei, the sacrificial Lamb.⁴⁰ This symbol was used to indicate the death of the

Redeemer, and was not employed in Christian art as a specific symbol of sacrifice until the ninth century.⁴¹ However the Agnus Victor, the Lamb of the apocalypse,⁴² used to denote Christ the eternal victor and universal sovereign, was employed in Christian art from a very early date.⁴³

In their most pictorially developed form, the Agnus Dei and the Agnus Victor can be similar - it is the context and the attributes with which they are associated that indicate the iconographic reference of the image. For instance the Lamb associated only with the symbols of the Passion and the Eucharist (the lance, the sponge, and the chalice), in works like the *Alcuin Bible*, indicates the Agnus Dei,⁴⁴ but the presence of a scroll or the book with seven seals, the Alpha and Omega, a cross-staff or a wreath, suggest the more apocalyptic significance for the Lamb, as seen for example in the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeran*.⁴⁵

Admittedly, it is a somewhat artificial distinction to treat the Agnus Dei as a separate iconographic motif from the Agnus Victor; as Raw has said:

The Lamb belongs to that field of symbolism where Crucifixion imagery and Apocalypse imagery overlap: the Lamb who is worthy of honour and dominion, and who stands on the throne among the four beasts, is also the Lamb who is the sacrifice.⁴⁶

However the distinction does demonstrate that if the primarily sacrificial symbolism associated with the Lamb is discounted,

there is another, more apocalyptic, interpretation of the Lamb which may account for its crouched position at the centre of a cross,⁴⁷ and its association with the evangelist symbols in the scene on the Wirksworth slab.

The motif of the Agnus Victor was established in Eastern art by the sixth century; it is found for example at the centre of the cross of Justin II where the nimbed lamb is shown with the cross-staff of the Resurrection, symbolising Christ's victory over death.⁴⁸ The lamb at Wirksworth is without any such attributes but this does not undermine the case for an Agnus Victor identification since it was in this fashion that the Agnus Victor was first employed in Western art in contexts where it is perfectly clear that it is the Lamb of the Apocalypse. It is found standing on Mt.Sion for example, on the fourth-century *fondi d'oro* and the early Christian sarcophagi,⁴⁹ or (more relevant to Wirksworth) surrounded by the four evangelist symbols in the mosaics of the early Italian basilicas where it forms the central motif of the Adoration of the Lamb.⁵⁰ In the sixth-century mosaics of the church of S.S. Cosmas and Damianus (Rome), the Lamb is found twice: once standing on Sion, and again (pl.145) seated on a throne flanked by candlesticks, angels and the four evangelist symbols, depicting the scene from The Book of Revelation.⁵¹

In these (early Apocalypse) instances the standing lamb is generally seen from the side with its head turned to face the spectator, and has no attributes other than the cross-halo which

it acquired towards the end of the fifth century.⁵² When the Lamb is depicted as enthroned, however, it is shown, again from the side and without attributes, but with its legs tucked underneath it (see pl.145). In other apocalyptic scenes the enthroned Lamb is sometimes replaced by a cross resting on the Throne of God (also flanked by the four evangelist symbols).⁵³

The details of these early adoration scenes vary, but the elements which appear constantly are the Lamb or cross, sometimes on a throne, in close association with the four evangelist symbols.⁵⁴ On more portable items the Agnus Victor was also sometimes found closely associated with the cross. On the front of a sixth-century ivory diptych from North Italy (pl.146), for example, which was later reused as a book-cover, the nimbed Lamb stands in the centre surrounded by a wreath of victory. On the back, also in the centre (behind the Lamb) the gemmed cross stands on the Mountain of Paradise as the source of the four Rivers of Life. The four evangelists and their symbols are set in wreaths in the corners of the diptych leaves.

Although not placed on a cross in such depictions, this form of Lamb, without attributes, sometimes shown seated or crouched and flanked by evangelist symbols, provides the best parallel for the creature found at the centre of the scene at Wirksworth. The lack of a halo is in keeping with the absence of this attribute throughout the scenes on the slab as a whole and may well indicate the early date of the model.⁵⁵ The association of the

Lamb with a cross and the four evangelist symbols suggests that the apocalyptic context probably provided the original inspiration for the whole scene. In other words, the Lamb at Wirksworth is derived from the Agnus Victor without attributes, "enthroned" on the cross instead of the throne, in a truncated version of the Adoration of the Lamb, surrounded by the four evangelist symbols who, as already described in the discussion of the Crucifixion at Sandbach, have their origins in the four beasts of the apocalypse.⁵⁶

Although there are not many examples of the Lamb on the cross in Mediterranean art, there are some Merovingian works which do depict just this. In the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, for instance (pls.147-8), produced in northern France c.750, a Lamb without a halo occurs twice, placed in the central medallion of a decorative cross. On both occasions it stands in front of a cross-staff, and an Alpha and Omega hang from the arms of the cross, placing it within an apocalyptic context; in one miniature its legs are cut off by the frame of the medallion (pl.148). Even more relevant to the scene at Wirksworth is the decoration of the *Laon Orosius* (pl.149), also dated to the mid eighth century, where the nimbed Lamb without any attributes, is portrayed standing in the central square of a cross. As in the *Gelasium Sacramentary* the Alpha and Omega hang from the cross-arms, but in the four terminals of the cross are the busts of animal-headed evangelist symbols. These manuscripts depict The Majestas Agni, an abbreviated apocalyptic iconographic image which has much in common with the scheme found at Wirksworth; it

is this type of abbreviated apocalyptic scheme which is believed to lie behind the cross-type *Majestas Domini* image that seems to have been so influential in the iconography of the Crucifixion at Sandbach.⁵⁷

Elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon art there is very little which is strictly comparable to the Wirksworth scene. At Hart (Co.Dur.) a creature, possibly a lamb, is found at the centre of an eighth-century cross-head with evangelist symbols in the cross-arms, and at Hoddom (Dumfries.) the Lamb, without attributes, is found at the centre of a ninth-century cross head.⁵⁸ Although these examples depict the Lamb at the centre of a cross-head, the monument form being radically different to the Wirksworth slab, the creature is placed at the centre of a cruciform shape and so may have an apocalyptic reference. At Ramsbury (Wilts.) however, the iconography of an early ninth-century grave cover is more clearly analagous to that found at Wirksworth. This monument is decorated with a Latin cross that has a Lamb on the cross-head and an angel, a worshipper and an evangelist symbol on the shaft. Although the head of the Lamb is raised into the upper arm, the hind legs are drawn underneath the body, and the forelegs kneel in a seated position.⁵⁹ This would seem to offer an iconographic programme closely related to the scene at Wirksworth both in the detail of the Lamb enthroned on the cross, and in the presentation of an abbreviated Adoration of the Lamb of the Apocalypse, although those "adoring" the Lamb at Ramsbury differ from the four evangelist symbols found at Wirksworth.

It would seem therefore, that at Wirksworth we have an image of the enthroned Lamb, an image which has a long history in Christian art of the West, and which was in England by the ninth century. On the Mercian slab this enthroned Lamb has been combined with the cross and evangelist symbols associated with the upright Majestas Agni found in the manuscript art of Merovingian Gaul, although as the Agnus Victor it is also associated with these symbols, albeit less closely. Both the enthroned (Agnus Victor) Lamb and the Majestas Agni have an apocalyptic reference, and it seems likely therefore, that the Wirksworth Lamb should be identified as the Lamb of the Apocalypse rather than the Lamb of the Crucifixion. It is not clear whether the model for the scene was similar to those of the early Agnus Victor, or to those which lie behind the Merovingian manuscripts, or whether indeed, it was dependent on these eighth-century Continental developments; an examination of the iconography of the evangelist symbols may help to determine this.

It has been noted that the evangelist symbols were found in association, both with the enthroned Lamb of the Apocalypse in sixth-century Italian art, and with the Lamb of the eighth-century cross-type Majestas Agni. In the earlier Italian schemes however, the evangelist symbols are not strictly comparable to those found at Wirksworth, which are robed zooanthropomorphic creatures, half-length and holding books, but which lack wings and haloes.

The lack of the halo may be due to the fact that this attribute is absent from the slab as a whole. Similarly the half-length nature of the symbols could have been dictated by their positioning round the cross and the confines of the scene; the lack of wings might have been the result of similar considerations. The clothed, animal-headed features, and the fact that at least three of the creatures carry books in veiled hands, to which two (maybe three) point, suggest that they were based on a book-bearing zooanthropomorphic type of symbol, which may have been half-length and which may or may not have had haloes and wings.

The zooanthropomorphic evangelist symbol originated in Syrian or Coptic art and was widely distributed at an early date in countries directly and indirectly influenced by Eastern art, such as Visigothic Spain and Merovingian France.⁶⁰ From S. Martin de Dume a late sixth-century relief (now in the Braga Museum, Portugal) shows Christ in Majesty flanked by nimbed, full-length figures who are clothed in long robes. They are winged and carry books, and have the distinctive animal heads.⁶¹ Similar figures are used as initials in the mid eighth-century *Gellone Sacramentary*, a manuscript believed to have been produced at the Columban foundation of Laon during the same period as the *Laon Orosius* and the *Gelasian Sacramentary*.⁶²

However, it is the cross-type *Majestas Agni* page of the *Laon Orosius* (pl.149) that provides the earliest Continental example of half-length, winged, zooanthropomorphic symbols carrying

books. These differ from their full-length counterparts by being un-nimbed, as are the closely related symbols found in medallions surrounding an enthroned Christ in the late eighth-century *Gospels of S. Croix* at Poitiers (pl.150). This manuscript also originated in the diocese of Amiens that had produced the slightly earlier *Laon Orosius* and *Gellone* and *Gelasian Sacramentaries*.⁶³ These half-length, book-bearing, zoo-anthropomorphic creatures without haloes were not a common type of evangelist symbol and seem to have flourished for a short period only, during the mid to late eighth-century in northern France at centres founded by the Columban mission.

In Anglo-Saxon art they are even rarer, but are found at a slightly earlier date (the early eighth century) in a setting rather different to that in which they flourished on the Continent. They are found for instance in medallions above the canon tables of the fragmentary *Maaseik Gospels* (pl.151) where the un-nimbed, winged zooanthropomorphic busts grasp books in veiled hands. It is not certain whether this Gospel Book was produced in Northumbria or an Anglo-Saxon centre with Northumbrian connections, but the comparative rarity of the "Beast Canon Tables" and the similarity of the symbols with those found in the eighth-century manuscripts of northern France strongly suggest a close link between the areas which produced them.⁶⁴ A related symbol is engraved on the gold plaque from Brandon, Suffolk (pl.153). It shows the half-length eagle of St. John, haloed, clothed and holding a book in one hand and a pen

in the other; it does not have wings. The plaque is believed to be southern English work of the late eighth- or early ninth-century which reflects the contemporary and slightly earlier art of the Continent. It may well have been one of four plaques set round a cross, or accompanying a *Majestas* as part of the decoration of a book cover.⁶⁵

There are differences between the Wirksworth symbols and their Continental and English counterparts. All except the Suffolk and Wirksworth beasts have wings, and although all the manuscript symbols are clothed animal-headed half-length creatures without haloes, the French examples hold their books in naked hands. In the *Laon Orosius* only one hand is visible, holding the book; in the *S. Croix Gospels* one hand supports the book and the other half holds, and half gestures towards it. The Maaseik symbols hold their books in two hands, both of which are veiled.⁶⁶ The position of the hands of the Wirksworth symbols is slightly different to all of these. Where discernible they hold the book in one, veiled, hand and gesture towards it with the other, unveiled, hand which is placed over the book.

This gesture is similar to that made by the apostles placed in medallions above the canon tables of the *Maaseik Gospel Book*, which precede the "Beast Canon Tables" (pl.152). Here each apostle is shown pointing with a naked hand towards a book held in his other veiled hand. Although these are not evangelist symbols they perform a function in the manuscript comparable to the zooanthropomorphic symbols. The Wirksworth symbols are

closer to the Anglo-Saxon manuscript apostles (with one hand veiled and one hand naked) than to the symbols with both hands veiled. This suggests that the Wirksworth sculptor may have been drawing on a model similar to that used by the Northumbrian artists.

From this discussion it would seem that the third scene on the upper register at Wirksworth should be identified, not as a Symbolic Crucifixion, but as an abbreviated apocalypse scene which in Continental art of the late eighth century resulted in a cross-type *Majestas Agni*. This iconographic composition accounts for the placing of the Lamb on the cross at Wirksworth and the close association of the half-length evangelist symbols around the cross.

Looking at the various details of this Mercian *Majestas* scene, the crouched position of the Lamb has its closest affinity with the Lamb of the Apocalypse in sixth-century Italian art, such as the mosaics at SS. Cosmas and Damianus (pl. 145), and is found in early ninth-century Anglo-Saxon art on the Ramsbury grave-cover in a similar, but more coherent iconographic context produced under Mercian influence. The lamb-on-the-cross arrangement has its closest parallels in eighth-century Merovingian art in the *Laon* and *Gelasium* manuscripts, while the zooanthropomorphic type of evangelist is found in an early eighth-century context in Anglo-Saxon England, and in the manuscript art of a slightly later date in Gaul.

The evidence thus indicates that the details found at Wirksworth are those which were circulating in the West between the sixth and eighth centuries. The iconographic elements are found together for a brief period in the art of the second half of the eighth century in Gaul, but because the rare type of evangelist symbol was found in an Anglo-Saxon context before it appears in Continental art, and because a similar scheme is found elsewhere in Mercia, there is no reason why the scene at Wirksworth must, of necessity, depend on a Continental model. It may represent a contemporary insular development of the same, somewhat eccentric and short-lived, iconographic scheme, indicating that Wirksworth was open to the same influences as were operating on the Continent in the late eighth century.

4.(pl.52) It has been generally accepted that this scene depicts the funeral procession of the Virgin Mary as most fully described in the Apocryphal Latin narrative of the Pseudo-Melito, and known in England by at least by the early eighth-century.⁶⁷ This describes how, after Mary's death when her soul was given to the Archangel Michael by Christ, her body was carried to a new sepulchre by the apostles, led by John bearing a palm given to Mary earlier by the Archangel Gabriel. The procession was accompanied by a host of angels singing in a cloud. The chief priest of the Jews, angered by the procession, attempted to overturn the bier and in doing so was paralysed, his hands sticking to the bier so that he hung there. After Mary's body was placed in the tomb, Christ and

Michael returned with her soul and commanded her body to rise, whereupon she was carried into heaven by a host of angels.

According to this identification, the body carried on the stretcher is that of the Virgin, the procession being led by John bearing the palm. Above the Virgin, in the oval moulding representing a mandorla, are the angels, while below, the body of the chief priest is dragged along as his hands adhere to the bier. The scene conforms so closely to the written description of the apocryphal event that its identity as The Funeral Procession of the Virgin Mary seems undeniable.

However, no other examples of this scene seem to have survived from the ^{early} Medieval period.^{67a} The events surrounding the death of the Virgin Mary were commemorated pictorially in two ways in ^{early} Christian art: by The Dormition (or Koimesis - the "Falling Asleep" of the Virgin) and The Assumption (the ascension and reception of the Virgin's body into heaven after her burial). The scene at Wirksworth, if correctly identified, therefore depicts those moments in the narrative which separated the two events which are usually depicted.⁶⁸

Despite this lack of known parallels, it should be noted that the earliest attempts to create a Marian cycle in Western fresco painting in the eighth century drew their inspiration from the apocryphal lives, and there is some evidence for the existence of an iconographic tradition of the Death of the Virgin

in the East before this date.⁶⁹ During the sixth century, for instance, particularly in those areas associated with biblical events, there seems to have been a conscious effort to create specific iconographic scenes promoting the holy sites. In fact Weitzmann has argued that the *Loca Sancta* stimulated the creation of images with very specific topographical details.⁷⁰ It is worth remembering that the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon pilgrim Willibald describes a series of monuments in and around Jerusalem associated with the events surrounding the death of the Virgin. One of these commemorated the Dormition and another was built at the tomb of the Virgin; a third was raised at the point believed to mark the site where the Jews tried to interrupt the funeral procession:

Similiter et ipse dixit, quod ante portam civitatis staret magna columna, et in summitate columne stat crux ad signum et ad memoriam, ubi Iudei volebant tollere corpus sanctae Mariae. Cumque illi 11 apostoli tollentes corpus sanctae Mariae portaverunt illum de Hierusalem, et statim cumque ad portam venerunt civitatis, Iudaei voluerunt comprehendere illum. Statimque ille homines qui porrigebant ad feretra et eam tollere conabant, retentis brachiis quasi glutinati inherebant in feretro et non poterant se movere, antequam Dei gratia et apostolorum petitione iterum resoluti fuerant, et tunc eos reliquerunt.

(Willibald himself said that in front of the gate of the city [Jerusalem] stood a tall pillar, on top of which rose a cross, as a sign and memorial of the place where the Jews attempted to take away the body of our Lady. For when the eleven apostles were bearing the body of the Holy Mary away from Jerusalem the Jews tried to snatch it away as soon as they reached the gate of the city. But as soon as they stretched out their hands towards the bier and endeavoured to take her, their arms became fixed, stuck as it were to the bier and they were unable to move until, by the grace of God and the prayers of the apostles, they were released, and then they let them go.)⁷¹

During the fifth and sixth centuries Jerusalem and Ephesus had vied with each other over the site of Mary's burial place, so it is not impossible, as Weitzmann has suggested, that in the East a very detailed iconographic scheme, possibly associated with the *Loca Sancta*, was developed which related, in detail, each event associated with the Virgin's death (The Dormition, The Funeral and The Assumption), of which only the first and last parts have survived recognisably in Christian art.

The scene at Wirksworth may therefore depend on such a source, now lost. Alternatively, it could represent an original creation by the sculptor who was involved in producing an illustration of the apocryphal event, using the text to inspire the picture. However, discussion of the next scene (5) is required before any firmer conclusions can be drawn concerning the possible iconographic inspiration of the scene(s).

5.(pl.53) The figures on the far right of the upper register have always posed a problem. Much of this is due to the fact that most of the right-hand figure is missing. To Kurth they represented the "Sword Type" of The Massacre of the Innocents, thought to be of Syro-Egyptian origin.⁷² However, examples of the "Sword Type" of Massacre which date from the sixth to ninth century and occur primarily in Eastern art, depict a soldier on the left holding a sword behind his head and the child at arms' length; the mother stands on the right, sometimes reaching across towards the child.⁷³ The "Sword Type"

of Massacre is found on Irish sculpture of the pre-Norman period, and may be depicted on a pre-Viking fragment from Bakewell (Derbys.), but it is only from the twelfth century that the scene begins to occur with any regularity, and it never really resembles the scene at Wirksworth.⁷⁴ The iconography of the Massacre most favoured in the West was the "Smashing Type" which originated in the sarcophagus art of North Italy and Provence. It consisted of a soldier holding a child above his head, or trampling it beneath his feet.⁷⁵ However, neither this type nor the "Sword Type", both of which are fairly well established in Christian art from the fifth century, bears much resemblance to the figures on the Wirksworth slab. Although both schemes could be varied in detail, nothing which survives is sufficiently close to the Derbyshire example to warrant this identification.

Rejecting this explanation of the two figures therefore, Cockerton followed Rawlins in identifying them as representing The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.⁷⁶ According to this interpretation, Simeon stands on the left holding Christ, with Mary on the right having just placed the child in the priest's arms. Between them is the hand of God which Cockerton first describes as "pointing down from above", and then as "pointing upwards in an antique formal Greek version of the Presentation".⁷⁷ The arrangement he suggests for this scene is extremely rare; it is only really paralleled in later art of the eleventh century, and then very seldom. There is admittedly one example dating from the mid-eleventh

century which shows Simeon on the left holding the child out over an altar (rather than closely to him), Mary on the right gesturing towards the two, and the hand of God pointing down from above to child held between them.⁷⁸ However, Mary is more often shown on the left of the scene, holding the child out towards Simeon; the two are also usually accompanied by one or more figures. In all cases the figures are in full or semi-profile, never positioned in a frontal pose.⁷⁹

Thus, there is some doubt that the Wirksworth slab depicts The Presentation of Christ in the Temple; closer examination of the figures clothing reinforces these doubts. Throughout the slab the male figures are shown with garments slightly shorter than the female, whose feet only just show beneath the hem-line of their robes.⁸⁰ The figure on the left (in scene 5) is clearly male because he has the fringe of short hair and he wears a shorter length robe; the head of the second figure is missing but the robe is the same length which indicates that it was probably not a woman. Although this is not certain evidence, it does suggest that the scene consisted of at least two male figures, one of whom holds a swathed child, and it is therefore unlikely to represent The Presentation because even in its abbreviated form the scene consisted of one male and one female figure.

A second problem is the identity of the object which hangs between the heads of the two figures. It is not clear that this represents the Hand of God pointing either up or

down. It consists of only three parallel mouldings - not the four or five expected in depictions of the Hand of God associated with The Presentation or with any other scene. Looking at the carving on the rest of the slab the object most resembles the wing-tips of the angels in the register below (scene 8; pl.55). There the wings clearly terminate with the central "rib" being slightly longer than those on either side; this is the exact form of the object found between the two figures of 5. From this comparison it would seem that the scene in question consists of two male figures; one (on the left) carries a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and the other (on the right) is an angel who reaches towards the infant.

A third point to be considered is the relationship of these two figures with those in the preceding scene. Up to this point the groups of figures have been separated from each other into clearly identifiable scenes. The Pedilavum (pl.50) is clearly separated from the preceding scene by the figure holding a staff, and the four figures concerned present a unified whole; similarly the Majestas Agni is clearly separated from the scenes on either side of it (pl.51).⁸¹ The last two figures on the upper register, however, are not so clearly separated from the figure of John bearing the palm at the head of the Virgin's funeral procession; his sleeve and the palm-branch pass in front of the figure carrying the swaddled child. In addition, the feet of the two figures in 5 are seen from the front. This position is awkwardly conveyed by the sculptor but

it is found elsewhere on the slab where figures are seen facing forward in the centre of a scene.⁸² The feet of the figures in the funeral procession are consistently seen from the side and face the last two figures on the upper register who are depicted as facing forward and are not clearly separated from the figures who walk towards them. The arrangement and details of the figures of scene 5 thus suggest that they should be viewed as a continuation of The Burial Procession.⁸³

A male figure holding a child in swaddling clothes and an angel reaching towards that infant do have a place within scenes of The Death of the Virgin. In Ottonian and Byzantine images of The Dormition for instance, Christ was shown standing by Mary's bedside holding a child in swaddling clothes, representing the soul of the Virgin at the moment of her death. Sometimes this moment was associated with the angels carrying the soul to heaven.⁸⁴

A version of The Dormition which may be relevant to the scene(s) at Wirksworth is found in a fresco in the Cappadocian rock church of Ağaç Altı (pl.154) which is dated between the sixth and eighth centuries. Here the scene is divided into two parts: Mary lies on her bed, at the head of which is John holding the palm; Christ is at her side. Above this group of figures, Christ is shown again holding Mary's soul, a small figure in swaddling clothes, while the Archangel Michael stands beside him ready to receive the soul.⁸⁵ This example shows the division of the scene into two parts, where the second part of

the event is abbreviated in such a way as to provide a possible analogy for the figures at Wirksworth although the relative positions of the two Eastern figures are reversed; Christ is on the right and the angel on the left. In this earlier scene Christ and the angel are also placed in an unchronological position; they appear before The Dormition instead of after it. The figures at Wirksworth may represent a similar confusion; in the written and pictorial versions Christ usually hands Mary's soul to the Archangel at the time of the Dormition; here at Wirksworth they are shown after the death and at the head of the funeral procession. Alternatively the two figures (of 5) could depict the later return of Christ and the angels with Mary's soul to the sepulchre to claim her body at the time of the Assumption as described in the literary sources;⁸⁶ there are, however, no pictorial versions of this latter incident which are comparable to Wirksworth.

In summary therefore, although there are no actual pictorial examples of the Funeral Procession of the ^{in early Christian art} Virgin Mary_A, and hence no instances of the Handing over of the Soul associated with it, the latter event is depicted as a sequential part in scenes of The Dormition such as occur on Byzantine ivories.^{86c} In the pre-iconoclastic iconography of the Death of the Virgin in the Cappadocean provinces, the Handing over of the Soul is separated from The Dormition and consists of two standing figures. The seried arrangement of this scene bears the closest resemblance to the scenes at Wirksworth, and has in common the details of John

bearing the palm, Christ with the Virgin's soul, and the angel. It also provides an explanation of the last two figures which is consistent with their identification as men, with the fact that one is an angel, and that the other holds the swaddled soul.

If the identification of the two scenes at Wirksworth can be accepted as together depicting the Funeral Procession of the Virgin Mary, it would suggest that although the sculptor may have been creating his own scene from the apocryphal text, it is more likely that he had before him a scene which originated in the Eastern provinces as part of the iconographic tradition of the Death of the Virgin developed between the sixth and eighth centuries, but which has now been lost.

Lower Register:

6.(see fig.14) This scene, which can be assumed to have existed because of the partial presence of a scene directly above it in the upper register of figures, is now completely lost. Cockerton suggested that it may have depicted The Baptism of Christ which he saw as being an appropriate counterpart to the Nativity that he envisioned as having existed above.⁸⁷ However, this identification, like that of the Nativity for scene 1, rests on the *a priori* assumption that the scenes depict the events of the festivals celebrated in the Liturgical year. As nothing of the scene remains it seems best to leave any hypothesis as to its identity until all the scenes have been identified and a controlling programme, if any, deduced.

7.(pl.54) The first surviving scene on the lower register has been variously interpreted as The Nativity of Christ, The Three Women at the Sepulchre, Christ's Descent into Limbo, and The Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace.⁸⁸ Seen as The Nativity by Kurth, the upper figure is identified as the Virgin opening the lid of Christ's cradle - analogies being presented from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries.⁸⁹ However the figure in question is clearly male, identified by the fringe of short hair across his forehead. In order to comply with her identification, Kurth identifies the lower figures as the shepherds crouching behind a hedge, forming a Symbolic Annunciation, or "more likely" The Arrival of the Magi at Bethlehem. No analogies are offered for these, and they are so far removed from the depictions of these events that do exist, that such an interpretation seems most unlikely.⁹⁰

Marucchi also saw the upper figure as the Virgin but placed her in a Resurrection scene of The Three Women at the Sepulchre; he describes Mary as raising the lid of Christ's tomb. Again the identification of the upper figure as the Virgin is unlikely given its male characteristics; in addition Mary is never shown raising the lid of Christ's tomb either as part of the iconography of The Three Women at the Sepulchre, or as part of other Resurrection scenes. Marucchi describes the lower figures as the three women at the sepulchre, but the arrangement of these figures is unlike any known representations of this event, making such an interpretation dubious.⁹¹

Ignoring the upper figures, Routh identified the three half-length figures as The Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace.⁹² In the earliest representations of this scene found in the Roman catacombs, the Three Hebrew Children are depicted as full length figures (one or all of them in the *orans* position), either with, or without the angel to the left of them, while at their feet burn the flames of the furnace. Another type is found on Roman and Gaulish sarcophagi of the fourth century. Here three three-quarter length figures are found within a brick furnace closely resembling the grill-like decoration of the container at Wirksworth. Again one or all of the figures is in the *orans* position, while the presence of the accompanying angel is optional, and his relative position variable. A small crouching figure at the base of the furnace is sometimes shown stoking the flames.⁹³ Alternatively, in early Cappadocian and Byzantine frescoes, the three Hebrews are depicted as half-length figures within the furnace, and never in the *orans* position; the figure stoking the flames is usually absent.⁹⁴ The similarity between the early Eastern representations of The Three Hebrews and the three half-length figures at Wirksworth may indicate that the iconography of The Three Hebrews was adapted to the scene found on the Derbyshire slab. However, the explanation of the whole scene as depicting The Three Hebrew Children in The Fiery Furnace is very unlikely. In no instances of this event is there a parallel for the upper figure opening the coffin-like box containing the swathed figure.⁹⁵

More recently Cockerton has interpreted the scene as depicting Christ's Descent into Limbo (The Anastasis). The large upper figure he explains as Christ, the second Adam, symbolically delivering Man, in the form of the first Adam, the living soul, from the bonds of hell. The lower figures he identifies as the three souls left in hell after Christ's Resurrection.⁹⁶ The relevant text is found in the fifth century Coptic Apocryphal Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle:

Jesus rose from the dead, and Abbaton (Death) and Pestilence came back to [Hades]...they found it wholly desolate, only three souls were left in it (those of Herod, Cain and Judas).⁹⁷

While such a specific identification of the three lower figures may be questionable, Cockerton's overall interpretation of the scene is worth examining. There are no representations of The Harrowing of Hell exactly equivalent to the scene at Wirksworth, ^{but} all of the details can be paralleled in representations of The Anastasis with one exception: the opening of the tomb. Yet this has its parallels in the iconography of The Last Judgement; in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory of the Last Judgement, for example (pl.92), the angel of the Lord is shown reaching out towards open rectangular box-like coffins, arranged diagonally around him, in which lie the fully swathed bodies of the dead. Thus it is possible that what is seen at Wirksworth is an element taken from a Last Judgement scene, or an element which later came to be used in Last Judgement scenes as a result of the close association

between The Last Judgement and The Resurrection of the Dead.⁹⁸

The iconography of The Descent, which symbolised the promised future Resurrection of the Dead, was developed in the East and shows a full-length Christ leading Adam (and sometimes Eve), out of a coffin or out of hell (see eg. pls.155-7).⁹⁹ A tenth-century icon from Mt.Sinai, for instance, shows an abbreviated version of the scene with Christ, Adam in an open sarcophagus, and Eve praying; Weitzmann has argued that this reproduces an iconographical type that pre-dates the iconoclast centuries and which, in turn, lies behind such Western works as are found in the early eighth-century frescoes at Sta.Maria Antiqua in Rome.¹⁰⁰ Here the Anastasis is depicted twice with Christ shown leading Adam from a coffin.¹⁰¹

An Anastasis interpretation for the Wirksworth scene also provides an iconographic counterpart to the three lower figures. In very early Eastern depictions of The Descent two or three bodies are often placed in a coffin to represent the resurrection of the dead. On a silver and niello reliquary of Byzantine or Syrian origin (pl.157), dated c.700, for example, The Descent of Christ into Hell is shown in an abbreviated form (Christ on the left reaches out to raise a half-kneeling Adam and Eve), which includes the busts of two figures placed within a plain rectangular container. Another example of The Anastasis on a Syro-Palestinian cross-reliquary of the early eighth-century (pl.155) shows two small half-length figures within a plain

rectangular box above a deeply bent Christ reaching towards Adam. The motif is expanded in a ninth- or tenth-century Byzantine ivory where two half-length figures within sarcophagi are repeated four times on either side of the bowed figure of Christ reaching towards Adam.¹⁰² From a later period, the twelfth-century mural of the Anastasis in the rock-cut chapel of Sta. Barbara of Soganli, Cappadocia, portrays two three-quarter-length figures standing behind an ornamented band, and four half-length figures, two behind, and two within an ornamented sarcophagus; in the foreground a central Christ bends over the kneeling figure of Adam.¹⁰³

The type of Anastasis which includes half-length figures in sarcophagus-like containers and a deeply bowed Christ is also found in the art of the West; the late ninth-century fresco at SS. Martiri, Cimitile (Italy) for example (pl. 156), depicts a deeply bowed Christ, behind whom, on the left, are four swathed figures in an ornamented sarcophagus representing the dead. In an eleventh-century ivory from Italy (now in Salerno) Adam kneels on a coffin while Christ reaches over to grasp his hand and five swathed half-length figures in a decorated coffin look on from above.¹⁰⁴

Thus the details common to the archaic Eastern form of The Anastasis which is found repeatedly, if spasmodically, in the art of the East, and in Western works directly influenced by the East, from the seventh century onwards, are comparable to the details of the scene at Wirksworth. A deeply inclined figure of

Christ reaches over from the left towards Adam who is often placed in a coffin. Associated with this action is the motif of the dead awaiting salvation depicted as half-length figures within a rectangular container. The number of figures varies from two to five, they are sometimes forward-facing, sometimes seen in profile, and the container could be a decorated or plain rectangle or sarcophagus. The decorating of the plain sarcophagi found in the earliest pictorial examples of The Descent could be the result of copying the fashion for strigilated sarcophagi which originated in the East and were imported into the West during the course of the fourth century.¹⁰⁵

The broken condition of the stone at Wirksworth may mean that the lower half of the figure of Christ leaning over towards the lid of the coffin has been lost. The swathed figure within the coffin, probably representing Adam, does not resemble the usual depictions of the First Father in scenes of The Anastasis, but the dead rising from their graves were commonly depicted as swathed figures in coffins.¹⁰⁶ The use of this motif at Wirksworth may indicate that the sculptor was copying an extremely archaic model depicting The Descent, or adapting such a scene to fit the confines of the space available, and using a motif which occurs in insular art in scenes symbolising The Resurrection of The Dead.

It is probable therefore that the scene at Wirksworth can be identified as The Anastasis, that Christ is shown bending over

the other figures forming the left-hand boundary of the scene, helping Adam (symbolised by the swathed figure in the diagonally positioned box at the top of the scene) from his coffin, while below the dead rising from their graves are represented by the three figures half-emerging from an ornamental sarcophagus. The closest parallels for this scene are found in the early eighth-century representations of The Anastasis found on the cross-reliquaries produced in the Eastern provinces, although the iconographic motifs did survive iconoclasm in the East and are found in Western art in the eighth-century at Sta. Maria Antiqua, and later at Cimitile, both frescoes produced under the direct influence of the East.¹⁰⁷

8.(pl.55) The central scene of the lower register has universally been accepted as depicting the Ascension of Christ into Heaven.¹⁰⁸ As noted at Rothbury, the iconography of this event is extremely varied, but generally speaking, the Eastern Ascension, which seems to be the type most relevant to the Wirksworth image, showed Christ, from the sixth century onwards, carried up to heaven within a mandorla by two or four angels. Below, the Virgin and apostles were flanked by the two men "in white apparel" addressing the "men of Galilee".¹⁰⁹ Christ standing in the mandorla has been identified as a detail originating in Syrian art, but the type soon became widespread in Christian art and alternated with the Palestinian version of the seated Christ.¹¹⁰

Most of the iconographic details of the Wirksworth scene conform closely to the early Eastern images of the Ascension; however the lower group of figures betray a number of inconsistencies which suggest that the sculptor was either forced to abbreviate, and so adapt the Ascension depicted in his model, or he was using a closely related image, such as the *Majestas Christi*, which he expanded in order to portray the Ascension.

The earliest examples of the oval mandorla placed round Christ appear in the sixth century in Syro-Palestinian art in both *The Ascension* and *The Majestas Christi* where it illustrates the biblical visions of the "rainbow round about the throne" of God.¹¹¹ Elsewhere in the East the circular mandorla was employed until the seventh century when the oval aureole became more widespread.¹¹² In the West however, although the oval shaped glory was found, it was the earlier circular mandorla which remained most popular until the development of the lozenge and "figure-of-eight" mandorlas in later Carolingian and Ottonian art.¹¹³

The figure of Christ standing holding a long cross-staff across his body is not usual in either *Ascension* or *Majestas* scenes, although it is ultimately an Eastern motif which was rare in Christian art after the sixth century. In the West Christ with this attribute (symbolising the resurrection) first appears on fourth-century sarcophagi but only on the columnar sarcophagi imported from Asia Minor into Rome, North Italy and Gaul. In the fifth century it was used in mosaic art in areas under direct

Eastern influence, such as Ravenna, and it appears again in the late sixth-century mosaics of Rome at a time when the patrons of Roman art were the Eastern Popes. During the course of the sixth century the cross-staff held across the body of Christ became shorter until it was replaced by the smaller cross-sceptre.¹¹⁴ A rare instance of a frontally positioned Christ holding a cross-staff across his body as at Wirksworth, in Christian art after the sixth century, is found in the early ninth-century illustration of Christ, not at the Ascension, but in the iconographically related image of The Second Coming, in the insular *Turin Gospels* (pl.93). In the ninth-century Carolingian versions of The Ascension, Christ does hold a cross-staff over his shoulder but in these images he is seen from the side, striding up a hill and the cross is held almost horizontally over his shoulder; the iconography is derived from a different tradition to that found at Wirksworth.¹¹⁵

The presence of four angels round the mandorla is not unusual in the Eastern iconography of either The Ascension or the *Majestas*;¹¹⁶ the number only seems to be reduced to two when the scene is confined within a narrow space as in the Rothbury Ascension (pls.20-1). The distinctive feature of the angels in the Wirksworth scene, however, is the way they grip the edge of the mandorla, as opposed to simply supporting it. It was shown at Rothbury that generally two of the angels were shown carrying the mandorla while the other two adored the Christ figure within or helped to support the mandorla.¹¹⁷ It is only in a few early

Eastern examples that the four angels are shown actually grasping the mandorla in a manner comparable to that found at Wirksworth. One of the early sixth-century ampulla now at Monza, for example (pl.97), shows the four angels grasping the outer edge of the mandorla containing an enthroned Christ, while a sixth- or seventh-century silver plate from Syria, now in Leningrad (pl.98), shows them grasping the mandorla in such a way as to distort the outline surrounding the standing figure of Christ.¹¹⁸ The detail seems to have been limited to the early Syrian iconography of The Ascension, and was not popular in art elsewhere either in the East or West.¹¹⁹

The arrangement of the angels at Wirksworth so that the upper two are half-hidden behind the lower two is somewhat distinctive. Generally the upper two angels emerge from behind the mandorla, while the lower two are stretched out over the crowd below (see pls.97,128).¹²⁰ The awkward position of the legs of the lower angels is closely paralleled on the Monza ampulla but the placing of the upper pair behind the lower is only found elsewhere on the Leningrad plate (pl.98) where the lower pair are themselves cut off by the row of standing apostles. The arrangement at Wirksworth could mean that the sculptor was following the iconography of a rather rare, and probably early, Eastern type Ascension scene, or was adapting the figures in an composition of his own making. This latter suggestion is supported by the fact that the angle at which the two lower angels bend over towards the mandorla is very similar to that adopted by Christ in The Pedilavum, and may well have

been used for Christ in the preceding Anastasis (pl.54).

The wings of the angels are not very distinctive features in ascertaining the possible identity, date and provenance of the model on which the Wirksworth Ascension scene was based. However, they are closer in style, with the rounded tops, stylised ribs, and slight upturn at the tips, to the wings of the angels found in Eastern art of the sixth- to eighth-centuries, than to Western and later Eastern versions.¹²¹

Thus the iconographic features of the main group of ascending Christ and angels do seem to betray the strong influence of Eastern-type Ascensions. However, the slight base on which the mandorla rests is not consistent with such images.^{121a} The edge of the slab has been slightly broken all the way round, but it is probable that only the border is missing, so we can assume that the object is fairly complete as it exists. Placing the mandorla on a base is extremely unusual. Possible analogies might be found in the early fifth-century mosaics in the apse of Hosios David in the Latomos Monastery (Salonika) which show Christ in Majesty within a circular mandorla resting on a stream running through the landscape which fills the lower portion of the scene.¹²² Elsewhere the ninth-century Constantinopolitan *Cosmas Indicopleustes* version of The Vision of Isaiah, copied from a mid sixth-century Alexandrian manuscript illustration, shows Christ in Majesty enthroned in a circular mandorla which rests on a horizontal strip traversing the page.¹²³ Although

these examples offer instances of the few examples in Christian art where a mandorla actually rests on something, as opposed to floating in the centre of the field, neither of them is strictly comparable to the detail found below the mandorla at Wirksworth.

An alternative analogy for the mandorla containing Christ resting on something may lie in the early representations of The Vision of Ezekiel. The sixth- or seventh-century fresco in a niche of the chapel at Bawit (Egypt) for example shows the circular mandorla containing the enthroned Christ placed on the small platform of the winged and wheeled carriage featured in the vision.¹²⁴ This same detail was abbreviated below the oval mandorla in the sixth-century Syrian version of the Ascension found in the *Rabula Gospels* (pl.102). However the object at Wirksworth although forming a small platform, lacks wheels and wings and it is doubtful that there was ever room for them; these parallels therefore are not entirely convincing.

Thus at Wirksworth it seems that the main part of the Ascension scene (composed of the standing Christ holding the long cross-sceptre placed within the oval mandorla, and the four angels, two half-hidden behind the others, all of whom grasp the mandorla), is quite closely related to Syro-Palestinian versions of the scene dating from the sixth and seventh centuries. The oval mandorla was fairly well established in the art of the East at that time; Christ with the cross-staff was not very common after that period, and was never very popular in Western art independent of Eastern influence. The positioning of the angels,

one behind the other, is a rare iconographic feature, and if copied from a model, was most probably derived from a Syrian prototype. The iconography of the angels grasping the mandorla has a similar provenance and was not favoured in Western art.

The figures below the ascending Christ and angels, however, are very distinctive and are not easily paralleled in other images of the Ascension. Although it is common to have the two men "in white apparel" depicted as angels addressing the apostles assembled at The Ascension, it is not usual to have them reduced to half-length figures carrying scrolls. Usually, if there is not sufficient room for them, they are omitted altogether; the presence of the twelve apostles and the Virgin then identifies the scene as The Ascension. When they are included they either gesticulate with both hands, indicating speech, or carry a long floriated rod in one hand identifying them as heavenly messengers.¹²⁵ There is one instance, in the Ascension on the fifth-century doors of Sta. Sabina (Rome), where a half-length angel is placed on a level with the striding-Christ ascending into heaven above the lower group of four apostles crouched on the ground.¹²⁶ It is unclear in this instance whether the angel is gesturing towards Christ or addressing the apostles, but he does not carry a scroll or have his arms crossed over his body as the two lower half-length angels do at Wirksworth.

These angels are thus without parallel in Ascension scenes but on the Wirksworth slab itself the angel in the next scene (9;

pl.57), also has his arms crossed, carries a scroll in one hand and raises the other. In a context such as that presented by 9 (that of The Annunciation to the Virgin),¹²⁷ this crossed-arm stance of the angel, if not its half-length, is fairly common in Anglo-Saxon representations of the event. In other words, the pose of the half-length Ascension angels, although not common in Ascension scenes, is found in Annunciation scenes where the function of the angel was the messenger of God announcing the gift of the Holy Spirit represented by the scroll.¹²⁸ Although the attribute of the scroll is not specially applicable to the Ascension angels, the role of the lower group of angels in Ascension scenes was as messengers of God. It is possible therefore that a pose associated with this function was responsible for the position they assume in the Wirksworth Ascension scene, and that they were copied from the Annunciation angel, either because of the lack of the angels below the mandorla in the model, or because the scene had to be adapted to fit the confines of the register.

The two veiled half-figures who flank the mandorla are also without parallel in Ascension scenes. The figures who witness the ascension of Christ are usually full-length, not busts, they consist of the twelve apostles, and include in their midst the Virgin Mary.¹²⁹ The reduction of this crowd to two figures is unique, as is their shortened length. These factors however, can be explained by the restrictions of the space available; there simply was not room to depict the full crowd of apostles, Virgin and angel-messengers below the ascending Christ accompanied by

the four angels.

What cannot be explained by the need to reduce the crowd witnessing the Ascension, is the identity of the two figures at Wirksworth. The condition of the carving is good at this point, and both seem to be wearing the veiled headdress which universally distinguishes women in Medieval Christian art,¹³⁰ and which distinguishes the female figures from the male on the Wirksworth slab. Although it must be stressed that the relatively incomplete version of the headdress worn by the figure on the left of the Wirksworth scene, may mean that it is not intended to be a woman, its similarity to the figure on the left, and the absence of the short wig-like cap of hair which distinguishes the male figures, does suggest rather strongly that we are dealing with two women witnessing the Ascension.

The presence of one female figure, the Virgin Mary, at the Ascension is common in pictorial versions of the event, but there are no instances where two female figures are found in this scene. If the group of witnesses assembled at the Ascension had to be reduced in number to a token pair because of the lack of space, and one of this pair was the Virgin, the other could reasonably be expected to be a male figure representing the apostles. The appearance of a second female figure can only be plausibly explained as an inconsistency, probably unintentional, on the part of the sculptor. There are other details in the scene which support this suggestion. The wings of the lower

half-length angel on the right, for instance, have been carved in outline, but the ribs have not been incised, suggesting that the carving of the slab at this point is incomplete.

If iconographic inconsistency is accepted as an explanation for the appearance of two women below the ascending Christ at Wirksworth, this, combined with the use of half-length angels borrowed from The Annunciation, suggests that the lower group was created for the scene. What is uncertain is whether it was created because the model for the scene did not depict it (whether it did not illustrate the Ascension, but rather the closely related *Majestas Domini*); or whether the lower figures at Wirksworth simply resulted from having to reduce a large and complex model of the Ascension to the confines of the register. The only clue to this question probably lies in the identity of the curved moulding below the mandorla. The influence of the iconography of the *Majestas Christi* and Ezekiel's Vision were considered above, but because the iconographic trappings of the biblical visions from which the *Majestas* scenes evolved, are also found in Ascension scenes, particularly those of early Eastern provenance, such as the *Rabula Gospels*, a firm conclusion cannot be drawn. It is, nevertheless, most likely that an elaborate early Eastern Ascension scheme lies behind the rather puzzling Wirksworth scene, and that the iconographic inconsistencies and adaptations are the result of a less than expert reduction of this complex scene to the confines of the lower register of the Wirksworth slab.

Whatever the identity of the model, the scene at Wirksworth does clearly depict the Ascension, and it is also fairly clear that it is iconographically related to Eastern images, particularly those which had a sixth-century Syro-Palestinian origin. This is revealed by the arrangement of the figures, the shape of the mandorla, the cross-staff held by Christ across his body, and the four angels grasping the edge of the mandorla surrounding the ascending Christ. It is also clear that the lower group of figures, despite their inconsistencies, have been supplied for the scene; the half-length angels were probably co-opted into the Ascension from an Annunciation, and the figure of the Virgin, normally found in pictures of the Ascension, was unthinkingly repeated. The result of this adaptation is to place the emphasis of the scene on the figure of Christ ascending to heaven with his cross of the resurrection, in the company of angels.

9.(pl.57) The penultimate scene of the lower register is widely accepted as The Annunciation to Mary.¹³¹ As argued in the discussion of the Hovingham and Sandbach Annunciation scenes, the iconographic version found at Wirksworth is derived from the type which appeared in the sixth century in Christian art, principally on monuments of Syro-Palestinian origin. This was characterised by the angel approaching from the left while Mary sat or stood on the right;¹³² it is an arrangement common to all examples of The Annunciation found in Anglo-Saxon art from the eighth century.¹³³

The chair in which Mary is seated at Wirksworth, however, is distinctive, and not found in other insular versions of the scene. The distinctive parallel ribbing, and the upward curve at the back of the chair indicate that it is a copy of the high-backed wicker chair which appeared in Eastern Annunciation scenes of the sixth-century. As already shown at Hovingham, if Mary was not seated on a stool at The Annunciation, she was generally shown on a cushioned bench-throne or a high backed throne.¹³⁴ The only variation to these seats in the iconography of the scene is the brief appearance of the high-backed wicker chair in the sixth century, found on artefacts produced in Constantinople and Ravenna, Palestine or Syria.

A gold medallion made in Constantinople (pl.159) and dated to the sixth century (now in Berlin) shows Mary seated on the left in just such a chair, the wicker-work is indicated by horizontal parallel ribs interrupted by single vertical lines. The same chair is found behind Mary who stands to the right of the scene on one of the sixth-century Palestinian ampullae now at Monza.¹³⁵ Another example is provided by a sixth-century Syro-Palestinian ivory diptych (now in the Stroganoff Collection, Rome) which shows Mary seated in a high-backed wicker chair,¹³⁶ as does an ivory plaque on the episcopal throne of Archbishop Maximian produced in Constantinople between 545-7 A.D. (pl.158). Here the wicker-work is indicated by horizontal parallel ribs incised with a herringbone pattern.

Mary's half-turned seated position may be due to the figural style adopted for the slab as a whole; all the figures seen in profile have their faces turned towards the spectator. However, in the iconography of The Annunciation there is a precedence for this stance. On the sixth-century Maximianus Throne and the gold medallion in Berlin (pls.158-9) Mary is shown recoiling from the angel. This is not a common feature and is found in the West only in the early ninth-century Harrach diptych (pl.71) produced under the influence of the court school of Charlemagne.

In both of the sixth-century Annunciations where Mary is seated in the wicker chair, half-turning away from the angel, she is also shown with one hand held across her body, in much the same manner as the Virgin at Wirksworth. However, in these Eastern examples, the other hand is not raised in greeting, but holds the spindle and thread commonly found in earlier Annunciation scenes.¹³⁷ However, the hand raised in speech indicating Mary's acceptance of the situation is a common gesture of the Virgin at The Annunciation;¹³⁸ thus an eighth- or ninth-century enamel cross from Palestine (pl.74) shows the Virgin frontally enthroned on the right with one hand raised in reception and the other enveloped in the folds of her garments as seems to be the case at Wirksworth.

As already mentioned, the half-length of the angel is not common, but is explained by the restrictions of the space available for the scene on the register, and the extension of the wings of the Ascension angels in the preceding scene. The

positioning of his arms is a recognisable, if somewhat eccentric, feature associated with Annunciation scenes. It is found on the Palestinian enamel cross referred to above, where the angel on the left gestures towards Mary with his right arm, while his left hand is held under his arm. (His wings also fall down on either side of him in a manner comparable to the Wirksworth example.) Two of the other Anglo-Saxon Annunciations also show the angel with his arms crossed in this way: the eighth-century Genoels-Elderen diptych and the Hovingham panel (pls.69,3).¹³⁹

The three fingers extended by the angel towards the Virgin are described by Cockerton as forming "the type of benediction common in early and late Christian art", characterised by the extension of the first two fingers, the thumb and last two fingers being bent down over the palm of the hand.¹⁴⁰ This interpretation of the angel's gesture at Wirksworth is far from clear, however. It is apparent that three fingers are extended, but the position of the other two digits is not certain. The Latin blessing, identified by the extension of the thumb and first two fingers and the folding down of the last two fingers, seems to be the gesture which most probably explains the gesture of the Wirksworth Annunciation angel. Besides illustrating benediction this gesture was also used in Christian art from the third century onwards as a general gesture of speech.¹⁴¹ Thus the angel may well be depicted speaking with Mary rather than simply blessing her, although it must be stressed that Mary is not portrayed as conversing with Gabriel as she is at Hovingham.

Rather her demeanor is that of amazement, which suggests that despite the elaborate chair the Virgin at Wirksworth is being presented as the humble and obedient handmaiden of the Lord.

The details of the Wirksworth Annunciation scene, therefore, indicate that while it has much in common with the iconographic type used elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon art of the pre-Viking period, it was probably based on a model derived from an Eastern prototype of sixth-century date. The relative position of the figures, with Mary seated on the right and the angel on the left, was an arrangement introduced into Eastern art during the sixth century which did not gain much popularity although it appears sporadically in Western art, and is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon Annunciations, as is the crossed-arm stance of the angel. The distinctive and unusual wicker chair for Mary strongly indicates the presence of a model based on the Annunciation which flourished for a short period in the Eastern Mediterranean during the sixth century, as does the half-turned attitude and the position of the Virgin's hands; these latter details are also paralleled in Eastern art of the eighth century on the Palestinian enamel cross.

10.(pl.56) There have been many explanations for the identity of the last scene on the Wirksworth slab. Rawlins described it as The Return of The Disciples to Jerusalem, following The Ascension.¹⁴² However this is not an event which is depicted, or even thought to have existed in Medieval Christian art, and does

not explain the presence of two female figures and the one diminutive figure holding the scroll.

Routh, trying to account for the arrangement of the scene, suggested that the right-hand and smaller figures were Mary and the Christ Child at The Adoration of the Magi.¹⁴³ However there is no parallel in the iconography of The Adoration for the presentation of the Christ Child, for the absence of the Magi's gifts, or the presence of two female figures among the Magi.¹⁴⁴

Cockerton, followed by Thomas, identified the scene as The Mission to the Gentiles.¹⁴⁵ He identified the figure on the right, who "stands in a boat" symbolising the Church, as Peter ready to depart from Joppa.¹⁴⁶ Peter is in the act of receiving the Word of God (symbolised by the diminutive figure of Christ holding the scroll) from the Virgin while her mother, St. Anne, and Joseph (or her father Joachim) look on from the left.¹⁴⁷ There is no pictorial tradition of Peter's departure from Joppa, nor for such an elaborate symbolism concerning the Word of God. But, as Cockerton points out, there was a well established scene representing Peter's receipt of the Word of God: The Traditio Legis found on early Christian sarcophagi. This shows Christ handing Peter a scroll, and is found in an extended form at Sandbach (Ches.) in The Traditio Legis cum Clavis (pl.29).¹⁴⁸ There is nothing, however, in the iconography of these scenes which resembles the last scene at Wirksworth. As The Traditio Legis was an iconographic scheme that was well established in

Christian art from the fourth century onwards, and is found in its complex form elsewhere in Mercia during the pre-Viking period, it seems unlikely that an elaborately symbolic scene of the sort described by Cockerton, would have been created to express what was already recognised in *The Traditio Legis*.¹⁴⁹

Although rejected by Cockerton, Kurth's suggestion that the scene represents *The Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple* seems the most reasonable.¹⁵⁰ The iconography of this scene offers analogies for the arrangement of a group of figures facing another, and for the diminutive figure; he is identifiable as the Christ Child presented to Simeon by Mary, while Joseph and the widow Anna look on.¹⁵¹

The Presentation is not found very often in early Christian art and did not have a long established iconographic tradition as a result of the ambiguity concerning its place in the liturgical calendar in the churches of both East and West.¹⁵² The earliest iconographic type portrayed *The Hypapante: The Meeting of Christ and Simeon*. This scheme, originating in the East where the feast was first celebrated, is characterised by the absence of an altar, emphasising the meeting of the priest and the Child outside the temple.¹⁵³ This differentiates it from *The Presentation* which commemorates the ceremony of the presentation of the first-born in the temple,¹⁵⁴ and is characterised by the conspicuous position of the altar. The scene could be pictured either inside or outside the temple; an inconsistency arising from the coexistence of this iconographic tradition with the

earlier Hypapante.¹⁵⁵

The disposition of the figures round the Christ child was never a fixed element of either tradition. In the fifth-century mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore (Rome), Simeon, watched by attendants on the right, holds out veiled hands towards the Christ child held by his mother on the left, and watched by Joseph, Anna and an angel.¹⁵⁶ An eighth-century Palestinian enamel cross (pl.74) shows only Mary and Joseph on the left while Simeon receives the child on the right. This arrangement is repeated in the early ninth-century frescoes at Müstair,¹⁵⁷ and on the eleventh-century Farfa casket (pl.160) produced in Southern Italy from an Eastern prototype pre-dating the eighth-century.¹⁵⁸ In the tenth-century Codex Egberti Simeon and Anna stand on the right of the Christ child held by Mary, and watched by Joseph on the left.¹⁵⁹ The frescoes of Sta. Maria Antiqua and the now lost mosaics at St. Peter's, Rome (705-7 A.D.) originally showed three figures on the left (Joseph, Anna and Mary) and only Simeon on the right,¹⁶⁰ an arrangement found again in the mid tenth-century frescoes of Bahaltin Samanlıđi Kilise in Cappadocea, and the late tenth-century illustration in an Antiphonary from Prüm.¹⁶¹

Although these examples vary the disposition of the figures gathered round the Christ Child, they show the action taking place from left to right, and the tendency to isolate Simeon on the right. Another feature linking them is the depiction of the

child as a diminutive adult. In the mosaics of St. Peter's and on the Farfa casket (pl. 160), he is further portrayed in the upright position he adopts at Wirksworth; on the casket he also carries a scroll and wears a robe similar to that worn by the child at Wirksworth. In the other instances Christ, although shown as a small adult, is portrayed sitting in Mary's arms.

The gestures of the protagonists are also varied in the iconography of The Hypapante and The Presentation. Christ could be held by Mary and Simeon, or by Simeon alone; he could be handed by Simeon to Mary, or from Mary to Simeon. However Simeon is always shown with his hands covered with drapery, and those witnesses who do not carry the sacrificial doves, are generally shown with their hands half-raised in acclamation.¹⁶²

At Wirksworth the details of the last scene are thus consistent with the general features of The Hypapante and The Presentation. Joseph and Anna stand on the left, their hands raised in acclamation, as Mary, also on the left, hands the Christ child, depicted as a diminutive adult holding a scroll, to Simeon standing on the right with his hands, covered by his overgarment, outstretched to receive him.

In most scenes of The Hypapante and Presentation Simeon is shown as having long hair, sometimes white, while Joseph is often shown with shorter or darker hair.¹⁶³ It may be this difference that the sculptor at Wirksworth was attempting to express in the depiction of Simeon with ribbed hair that seems to hang down his

neck, as opposed to Joseph on the far left whose hair is portrayed as the ^rfinge of short hair characteristic of the male figures on the slab as a whole.

The one detail which is not clear is the rectangular object that curves up on the right of the scene; a shape which led Cockerton to identify it as a boat. In scenes of The Presentation the altar over which Christ is passed between Mary and Simeon can vary in shape. On the eighth-century Palestinian enamel cross mentioned above (pl.74), it is a small square block; in the tenth-century *Codex Egberti* it resembles a Victorian writing-box, while in the Cappadocian fresco it is a tapering block with a triangular top. Despite such variations, none of the altar-shapes found in Presentation scenes resemble the object at Wirksworth. However, the Farfa casket (pl.160) which portrays The Hypapante, shows Simeon on the right, behind an ornamented wall which tapers upwards towards the right, at less of an angle, but in much the same way as the object does at Wirksworth. On the casket this wall is continued in front of Mary and Joseph on the left, leaving a space under the upright figure of Christ.

All this argues that at Wirksworth the scene was probably copied from an Eastern version of The Hypapante dating from before the eighth-century, such as lay behind the scene found on the Farfa casket. This provided the arrangement of one group of figures on the left, and Simeon on the right receiving the Christ child portrayed as a small adult. One half of the wall,

perhaps signifying the temple, was retained in front of the long-haired figure of Simeon, but the other figures were carved as reproductions of the short-haired and veiled figures found elsewhere on the slab.

DISCUSSION:

The following section will discuss the possible significance of the individual scenes as identified above. It will be limited to those scenes which are complete, or virtually complete; thus the scenes which were on the extreme left of the slab (1 & 6) will not be considered initially. From an examination of the individual scenes it is hoped that the pattern controlling the choice and layout of the decoration can be identified.

I

2. The Pedilavum:

The event is described only in St. John's Gospel where a clear allusion to baptism is made and an indirect reference to the Eucharist, establishing a connection between the two sacraments.¹⁶⁴ Because of these associations the Church Fathers interpreted the Washing of the Disciple's Feet as causally connected to the institution of the Baptism, and through that, to the Eucharist; this was in addition to its commemoration of Christ's commandment to mutual love:¹⁶⁵

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.¹⁶⁶

As an expression of this "new commandment" the act of Foot-Washing was firmly established in monastic life at an early date.¹⁶⁷ It continued to be practised with the spread of monasticism into Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century; as an act of brotherly love and humility it was the constant habit of Cuthbert to wash the feet of those who visited him:

Quorum dum pedes aqua calida devotus lavaret, coactus est aliquotiens ab eis etiam se discalciare, suosque pedes illis ad abluendum praeberere.

(And when he had devoutly washed their feet in warm water, he was sometimes compelled by them to take off his shoes, that they might wash his feet also.)¹⁶⁸

However the practise was also established within the liturgy of the church as a specific ritual. In the writings of the Eastern Church the washing of the disciples' feet by Christ was interpreted as the institution of Baptism by Christ before the Last Supper, enabling the disciples to receive the sacrament in a state of purity.¹⁶⁹ In the third century Origen, in his commentary on John 13, had seen both the removal of the shoes and the washing of the feet as symbolising the laying aside of sin.¹⁷⁰ Such ideas were expanded in the Eastern Church generally, to the extent that the basin was understood to contain the waters of baptism, and the towel was seen as the deacon's stole.¹⁷¹

In the West, outside Rome, the significance of the event was viewed in a similar fashion. In North Africa, Milan, Ireland and Gaul the rite of Foot-Washing formed part of the ceremony of Baptism. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (347-97 A.D.), in his Catechism on Baptism, described the sacrament as purging men of their everyday sins, while the ritual of Foot-Washing cleansed them of original sin because Adam's heel was interpreted as the seat of evil:¹⁷²

Mundus erat Petrus, sed plantam lavare debebat, habebat enim primi hominis de successione peccatum: quando eum supplantavit serpens, et persuasit errorem. Ideo planta eius abluatur, ut haereditaria peccata tollantur; nostra enim propria per baptismum relaxantur. Simul cognosce mysterium in ipso humilitatis consistere ministerio.

(Peter was clean, but he must wash his feet, for he had sin by succession from the First Man, when the serpent overthrew him and persuaded him to sin. His feet were therefore washed, that hereditary sins might be done away, for our own sins are remitted through baptism. Observe at the same time that the mystery consists in the very office of humility.)¹⁷³

Further west the Irish church had been responsible for spreading the baptismal rite of foot-washing into Western Europe.¹⁷⁴ It appeared in the Frankish church of the seventh-century,¹⁷⁵ and also had a place in the reformed ninth-century Carolingian church liturgy. In response to the question asked at Baptism about its significance, The Pedilavum was recognised as central in the progression of the catechumen from the font to communion at the altar:

Quare renati fonte baptismatis mox corporis et sanguinis domini sacramenta percipiunt?
Resp: Ob hoc videlicet ut omnia christianitatis in eis sacramenta firmentur. Nam et salvator, postquam

lavit pedes apostolorum, tradidit eis sui corporis et sanguinis misteria.

(Why are those reborn in the font of baptism led to the table of the lord?

Resp: To confirm them in all the sacraments of Christianity. For also the Lord, after washing the feet of the apostles, handed them the mysteries of his body and blood.)¹⁷⁶

The Washing of the Feet was thus a fairly widespread practice throughout the non-Roman churches of the West; it appears to have died out in Spain in the fifth-century, but continued in Ireland, Gaul and Milan until the ninth-century.¹⁷⁷ In Anglo-Saxon England there is evidence that it was still understood in terms of the rites of Baptism in the late tenth-century. Aelfric, in his Homily on Palm Sunday, interprets the washing of the disciples' feet by Christ:

Se Haelend hi ađwoh mid þweale wiđutan fram fenlicere fulnysse mid his faegerum handum, and wiđinnan eac heora andgit ađwoh fram eallum horwum healicra leahtra; and het gehwilcne ođerne ađwean fram fulum synnum mid foređingunge, and eac wiđutan eadmodnysse cyđan mid geswaesre đenunge symle gebrođrum.

(The Saviour washed them, from muddy foulness, with an ablution without, with his fair hands, and also washed their understanding within from all the dirt of deadly sins; and commanded each to wash the other from foul sins by intercession, and without ever to manifest humility with kind service to brothers.)¹⁷⁸

The interpretation of the action as an expression of love and humility was never lost, but as part of the ritual of the church it had a significance in the Baptism service over and above a simple demonstration of charitable humility.

However, the Papal Church (those churches in Rome in which the Pope officiated, as distinct from those served by the Bishops

of Rome)¹⁷⁹ never accepted the baptismal interpretation of the practice. Augustine, whose work was extremely influential in the Papal Church, reacted to the ritual in the North African church and warned against confusing the ceremony of humility with the sacrament of regeneration; in Baptism he argued, the whole man was cleansed, but in the washing of feet, only the daily sins could be removed. In his commentaries on John 13 he examines this notion in detail:

...homo in sancto quidem Baptismo totus abluitur, non praeter pedes, sed totus omnino: verumtamen cum in rebus humanis postea vivitur, utique terra calcatur. Ipsi igitur humani affectus, sine quibus in hac mortalitate non vivitur, quasi pedes sunt, ubi ex humanis rebus afficimur; et sic afficimur, ut si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos decipiamus, et veritas in nobis non sit. Quotidie igitur pedes lavat nobis, qui interpellat pro nobis: et quotidie nos opus habere ut pedes lavemus, id est, vias spiritualium gressuum dirigamus; in ipsa oratione dominica confitemur, cum dicimus, 'Dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris'.

(...in holy baptism a man has all of him washed, not all save his feet, but every whit; and yet, while thereafter living in this human state, he cannot fail to tread on the ground with his feet. And thus our human feelings themselves which are inseparable from our mortal life on earth, are like feet wherewith we are brought into sensible contact with human affairs; and are so in such a way that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. And everyday, therefore, is he who intercedeth for us washing our feet; and that we, too have daily need to be washing our feet, that is, ordering aright the path of our spiritual footsteps, we acknowledge even in the Lord's Prayer, when we say 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.')¹⁸⁰

For Augustine the importance of the event lay in Christ's living demonstration of strength gained through humility:

Didicimus, fratres, humilitatem ab Excelso; faciamus invicem humiles, quod humiliter fecit Excelsus. Magna

est haec commendatio humilitatis:...Cum enim ad pedes fratris inclinatur corpus, etiam in corde ipso vel excitatur, vel si iam inerat, confirmatur ipsius humilitatis affectus.

(We have learned, brethren, humility from the Highest; let us, as humble, do to one another what he, the Highest, did in his humility. Great is the commendation we have here of humility... For when the body is bent at the brother's feet, the feeling of such humility is either awakened in the heart itself, or is strengthened if already present.)¹⁸¹

The difference between the attitude taken by the Papal Church, and that adopted by the rest of the Church in Western Europe was one result of the influence exerted by the Eastern Church on the formation of the early Church in the West. Pilgrims visiting the East, and particularly Jerusalem, during Holy Week, were impressed by the elaborate rites practised there and sought to imitate them in their own churches in Spain and Gaul, a sentiment not shared by the hierarchy of the Papal Church in Rome.¹⁸² Thus, in Western Europe generally during the eighth and ninth century, the place of ritual (such as that of The Pedilavum) gained importance, particularly on the solemn days between Palm Sunday and The Easter Vigil. During this time the rite of Foot-Washing was established in the Western liturgy by the Gallo-Frankish reformers, not just as a baptismal practice, but as part of the services for Maundy Thursday; its inclusion was also extended into the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁸³

Thus the significance of The Pedilavum in the early medieval churches of East and West was varied. The biblical event was elaborated and first adopted as a liturgical ritual in the Eastern Church associated with the sacrament of Baptism. This

interpretation was also accepted in most of the countries of the West, initially under the direct influence of the Eastern church, in areas such as North Africa, Spain and Ireland. With the spread of the Irish church the baptismal importance of The Pedilavum was established in the eighth-century liturgies of Gaul, where it continued into the ninth-century under the Carolingian reformation of the liturgy. It seems also to have had this importance in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England, possibly as a result of the post-Carolingian influence on the church reforms of the time, but also as a reflection of what had existed in England at an earlier date; the liturgy found in eighth- and ninth-century Gaul had first been established in England before being adopted in the Franco-Germanic world under Pippin and Charlemagne.¹⁸⁴

Only in Rome was the practice of The Pedilavum not included in the rites of Baptism. There it was interpreted primarily as an act symbolic of humility, an association it had long held in the writings and practices of both Eastern and Western monasticism. In Anglo-Saxon England it was known, not only as a liturgical ritual, but also, in the monastic context, as the long-established act of brotherly love and humility.

The iconographic details of The Pedilavum on the Wirksworth slab indicate that the ultimate source of the scene was of Eastern origin; this may indicate that the iconography of the model on which the Wirksworth scene was based, may have had a

liturgical significance. However, in Anglo-Saxon England, probably in a monastic environment, the reproduction of The Pedilavum (albeit from a model closely based on an Eastern exemplar) does not necessarily mean that the scene had the same relevance as it would have had in sixth-century Syria;¹⁸⁵ it could have had a liturgical significance associated with Baptism and the cleansing of sins, but it could equally have been expressive of the example of love and humility given to Christians by Christ at The Last Supper.

3. The Majestas Agni:

The association of Lamb, cross and evangelist symbols in one scene evokes a rich symbolism in an image which, although based on the vision of the Apocalyptic Lamb, retains a reference to the sacrificial but victorious death of Christ on the cross of the Crucifixion. These notions of apotheosis and sacrifice associated with the Lamb are woven into the text of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments.

In Exodus 12 the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt was synonymous with the sacrifice of the lamb "without blemish, a male of the first year".¹⁸⁶ The blood of this lamb, smeared on the wooden door-posts of the houses of the Jews ensured their safety and the destruction of the first-born of the Egyptians. It was this event which was commemorated annually by the Jews at the Feast of the Passover;¹⁸⁷ it was celebrated by Jesus and his followers at The Last Supper, at the establishment

of The Eucharist.¹⁸⁸ Isaiah, recalling the image of the passover lamb, referred to the future Messiah at the time of his death as a lamb "brought...to the slaughter, [who] as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth".¹⁸⁹ Invoking this Messianic prophecy Paul, writing to the Corinthians, urged a reaffirmation of moral virtues:

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:
therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened
bread of sincerity and truth.¹⁹⁰

In this way the sacrificial and paschal lambs had become one with Jesus, the Son of God. In the Gospel of John the assimilation was made directly; seeing Jesus approach, John the Baptist proclaimed him "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world".¹⁹¹

In the Book of Revelation these Old and New Testament references were given another layer of symbolism: that of victory and adulation.

...in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain...And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the lamb...And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth...Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.¹⁹²

Here it is the triumph of the crucified but risen Christ who is celebrated in the symbol of the Lamb, and worshipped by a multitude of the blessed who include the four living beasts.¹⁹³

As Ó Carragáin has pointed out there were many ways in which the symbolism of the Lamb could be interpreted and most of them were interrelated.¹⁹⁴ In the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon Church the Lamb of God was invoked in three contexts. At The Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday the Paschal Lamb of Exodus was associated with the Crucifixion of Christ on Calvary; in the celebration of Baptism the gospel account of the Baptist hailing Christ as the Lamb of God was harmonised with the actual baptism of Jesus; and at the end of the seventh-century, Pope Sergius I had introduced the "Agnus Dei" chant, based on the Baptist's words,¹⁹⁵ into the Mass at the moment of the breaking of the bread for Communion. This innovation was practised in Anglo-Saxon England in the early years of the eighth-century where it was recognised that Christ was being addressed directly as The Lamb of God, and that his intercession with God the Father was being requested.¹⁹⁶

In Bede's Homily on John 1.29-34, designed to be read on the first Sunday after Epiphany at the commemoration of Christ's baptism, these three notions were drawn together so that the homily becomes "an extended meditation on the various meanings of the title 'Agnus Dei'".¹⁹⁷ The central theme of the Homily is, in the words of Peter, that Christians have been washed in the blood of the Lamb:

...ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.¹⁹⁸

The images of baptism, washing away man's sins, and the sacrifice of the Crucifixion for the sins of mankind are related by Bede, not only to each other, but to the daily celebration of Mass (when the "Agnus Dei" chant was used), and to the Paschal Lamb of Exodus as a figure of the Crucifixion:

Non solum autem lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo quando sanguinem suum dedit in cruce pro nobis vel quando unusquisque nostrum mysterio sacrae sanctae passionis illius baptismi aqua ablutus est verum etiam cotidie tollit peccata mundi lavatque nos a peccatis nostris cotidianis in sanguine suo cum eiusdem beatae passionis ad altare memoria replicatur.

(Not only did he wash us from our sins in his blood when he gave his blood for us on the cross, or when each one of us was washed in the water of baptism through the mystery of his sacred Passion: but indeed he daily takes away the sins of the world, and washes us from our daily sins in his blood, when the memory of his blessed passion is reenacted at the altar.)¹⁹⁹

These ideas were also found in the later writings of Aelfric in his Sermon on the Crucifixion:

Ʒaet unscaeddige lamb, Ʒe se ealda Israhel Ʒa ofsnað, haefde getacnunge, aefter gastlicum andgite, Cristes Ʒrowunge, se Ʒe unscaeddig for ure alysednysse his halige blod ageat; be Ʒam singað Godes Ʒeowas aet aelcere maessan... 'Ʒu Godes lamb, Ʒe aetbretst middaneardes synna, gemiltsa us.' Ʒaet Israhela folc weard ahredd fram Ʒam faerlican deaðe, and fram Pharaones Ʒeowte Ʒurh Ʒaes lambes offrunge, Ʒe haefde getacnunge Cristes Ʒrowunge, Ʒurh Ʒa we sind alysede fram Ʒam ecum deaðe and Ʒaes reðan deofles anwealde, gif we rihtlice gelyfað on Ʒone soðan alysend ealles middaneardes, Haelend Crist.

(The innocent lamb, which the old Israel then slaughtered, was a token, according to the spiritual sense, of Christ's passion, who innocent, shed his holy blood for our redemption; in reference to which God's ministers sing at every mass...' Thou Lamb of God,

who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.' The Israelite people were delivered from sudden death and from Pharaoh's thralldom through the offering of the lamb, which was a betokening of Christ's passion, through which we are redeemed from eternal death and the power of the cruel devil, if we rightly believe in the true Redeemer of all the world, the Saviour Christ.)²⁰⁰

In patristic writings, however, the Lamb also had an eschatological symbolism, associating it with the Apocalypse. The vision of the Book of Revelation recounts the Second Coming of Christ, promised at the time of the Ascension²⁰¹ when, it was understood, mankind would be judged according to its actions during life. In fact it is the Book of Life which only the slain and enthroned Lamb is found worthy enough to open.²⁰²

Ó Carragáin has described the eschatological relationship between the Second Advent of Christ, and the celebration of the Eucharist which Aelfric points to when emphasising that Christians must *rihtlice gelyfað* when partaking of the sacrament. In this way the Eucharist was the "symbol of the complete communion of the Church with Christ which would only be realised with the Second Coming".²⁰³ To be unworthy of the bread and wine would, wrote Paul, incur the judgement of damnation:

...whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord...For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself...[For] when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.²⁰⁴

In the ninth-century *Stowe Missal* the formula of consecration expands on this Pauline epistle so that the eschatological

association becomes even clearer:

...in mei memoriam faciatis passionem meam
predicabitis resurrectionem meam adnuntiabitis
adventum meum sperabitis donec iterum veniam ad vos de
coelis.

(You should do this in memory of me; you will proclaim my passion; you will announce my resurrection; you will hope for my coming until I come again to you from the heavens.)²⁰⁵

Thus liturgically the notions of the Eucharist, of the Crucifixion and of the Baptism were associated with the Second Coming at which time the slain Lamb would be seen enthroned in the heavens. In this way the themes articulated in the liturgy culminated in the ideas of retribution and reward accorded on the Day of Judgement when the Lamb would open The Book of Life. However there is nothing in the writings on the Apocalypse which specifically associated this visionary Lamb with the more liturgical concerns found surrounding the sacrificial Agnus Dei and the Eucharist.

The early tradition of exegetical commentary on the Apocalypse was more concerned with the later chapters of Revelation and the identification of the Anti-Christ than with the Lamb of Revelation 5. The method of interpretation followed by the Western Church of the early Middle Ages was established at the end of the fourth century by the Donatist, Tychonius.²⁰⁶ Removing his references to specific and contemporary events, writers such as Augustine interpreted the Apocalypse in more general terms as an era in the Church's history preceding the Second Coming.²⁰⁷ It was not until the later Middle Ages that

the slain Lamb of the Apocalypse began to be examined in detail, and then it was in keeping with a view point more emotive than adulatory.²⁰⁸

There is very little in the writings of the early Church which specifically refers to the Lamb of the Apocalypse in any detail.²⁰⁹ Writing in the tradition of the early Western Church Fathers when commenting on The Apocalypse however, Bede briefly identified the Lamb of Revelation 5 in terms of the Christian Church:²¹⁰

Tychonius agnum ecclesiam dicit, quae in Christo accepit omnem potestatem.

(Tychonius says the lamb is the church which has received all power in Christ.)²¹¹

Although this is a relatively unusual interpretation in that it attempts a specific symbolic reference,²¹² Bede's analogy is made in keeping with the rules of understanding the Scriptures; the Church is referred to in the Scriptures as Christ (and vice versa).²¹³ Later, drawing a distinction between the Beast of the Anti-Christ and the Lamb of Revelation 14, Bede was to emphasise the adoration and glory due to the Church through the Lamb:

Id est, Dominus Jesus Christus, Ecclesiae suae certaminum fasce desudanti exemplo virtutis et protectionis munimine praestabat. Ostenso enim corpore...ostendit Ecclesiam solito fulgore numeroque gaudentem. Notaque bestiam in arena maris Agnum in monte Sion consistere.

(That is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the painstaking example of his virtue, and by the strength of his protection, led his church as it laboured under the weight of its struggles. After the body has been made manifest...he reveals the church

with its habitual splendor and rejoicing in great numbers. And note that the beast is set in the sands of the sea and the Lamb on Mount Sion.)²¹⁴

Elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon writings references to the apocalyptic Lamb of God are rare; The Kentish Hymn, found in the late tenth-century manuscript *Cotton Vespasian D.vi*, and probably dating from the mid tenth-century mentions the Lamb in its praise of God, but it is not clear if it is the sacrificial Lamb of John 1.29, or the Lamb of the Apocalypse which is referred to:²¹⁵

Ðu eart heofenlic lioht and ðæt halige lamb,
ðe ðu manscilde middangeardes
for þinre arfestness ealle towurpe,
fiond geflaemdest...

(Thou art the heavenly light and the holy lamb, you who, cast aside all the sin of the world, for your mercy, put the fiend to flight...)²¹⁶

From the written evidence therefore we can see that there were many ideas associated with the Lamb during the early Middle Ages. It has a rich symbolic history in the bible itself, and became central in the later commentaries. It was associated in a sacrificial capacity with the liturgy of the Church in Crucifixion, Eucharistic and Baptismal contexts. It is only through the notions of Judgement and retribution afforded at the Second Advent of Christ however, that the Lamb of the Apocalypse can be associated with the multivalent liturgical interpretations of the sacrificial and paschal Lambs, and this association is not made specifically. The life of the Christian was to be guided by the thought of the Second Coming; the slain Lamb enthroned in heaven would open the Book of Life at this time. The link is

natural but unspecified. When the Lamb of the Apocalypse is referred to directly it is seen as the Church of Christ who suffered, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Having endured hardship the Lamb and the Church are afforded all honour and glory and revealed in splendor at the Second Coming.

It is in the vision of the Apocalypse that the beasts associated with the evangelists are also to be found. Steeped in the writings of the Old Testament,²¹⁷ the author of the Book of Revelation described the four living beasts round the throne of God:

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle... and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.²¹⁸

Irenaeus, in the second century, was one of the first to apply a specific symbolism to these visionary beasts, associating them with the four evangelist authors of the Gospels. The four living creatures of Ezekiel and Revelation were the "four pillars" of the church "breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh".

qualis animalium forma, talis et character Evangelii.
Quadriformia autem animalia, et quadriforme
Evangelium.

(such as was the form of the living creatures, so was also the character of the Gospel. For the living creatures are quadriform, and the gospel is quadriform.)²¹⁹

Although the actual correspondence with each evangelist that Irenaeus attributed to the four beasts was rejected by later Church Fathers,²²⁰ the idea that they represented the four evangelists was supported, first by Origen in the mid third century, and then by Jerome and Gregory the Great.²²¹

However the beasts of the apocalypse were also interpreted as attributes of the mysteries of Christ. The man denoted Christ's Incarnation and the ox his Passion, while the lion was seen as an attribute of the Resurrection, and the eagle of the Ascension.²²² It is in this tradition that Bede, writing on the First Book of Samuel, referred to the beasts as symbolic of the nature of Christ. The man and the calf represented the humility of his incarnation and sacrifice, and the lion and eagle the courage and sublimity of his resurrection and ascension.²²³ Following earlier Anglo-Saxon writers such as Bede and Aldhelm, Aelfric was to bring these diverse notions together:

Feower Cristes bec sindon be Crist sylfum awriten...
Ðas synd þa feower ean of anum wylspringe, þe gað of
paradisum ofer Godes folc wide: and þas feower god-
spelleras waeron gefyrn getacnode, swa Ezechiel hi
geseah, Matheus on mannes hiwe, Marcus on leon, Lucas
on cealfes, Iohannes on earnes, for daere getacnunges
þe hig getacnodon. Matheus awrat be Cristes
menniscnisse, and Marcus, swa swa leo hludswege,
clipode on þam wildan mancynne swilce on westene, and
Lucas be þam sacerde Zacharias ongann, þe cealf
geoffrode on Godes onsaegednisse, and Iohannes, swa
swa earn, þa upplican digolnisse mid his scearpum
eagum sceawode georne and be Cristes godcundnysse his
godspell gesette.

(There are four books written concerning Christ himself...These are the four waters from one well-spring which run from Paradise over God's people far and wide: these four evangelists were betokened of old, as Ezekiel saw them: Matthew in man's shape, Mark in a lion's, Luke in a calf's, John in an eagle's, for the

mysteries which they symbolise. Matthew wrote of Christ's incarnation, Mark, just as a roaring lion, called in the wild upon mankind as in the wilderness, Luke began with the priest Zaccharias who offered the calf to God in sacrifice, and John, just like an eagle, beheld eagerly the lofty mysteries with his sharp eyes, he set God's Deity in his Gospel.)²²⁴

The symbolism associated with the four living creatures is as varied and inter-related as that of the Lamb. Their number and their characteristics provided abundant material for exegetical examination. They symbolised the four evangelical authors by denoting a theme central in each gospel. As Christ was central to the gospels, individually and collectively, so the living creatures were also interpreted as representing the different aspects of Christ and his mysteries, recounted in those gospels. The message of these books was one of glory and salvation achieved through the cross of the Crucifixion which was also the symbol of the promised resurrection.

The cross is probably the symbol most central to Christianity. It represents not only a reminder of the Crucifixion, but also the salvation offered through that event, the way to be followed by the devout Christian, the promise of the resurrection and the life to come.²²⁵ It is a symbol which evokes both a feeling of remorse and one of glory; a dualism expressed in the opening lines of The Dream of the Rood and explored throughout the poem.²²⁶ The cross was venerated by the Church, not only on Good Friday, but also at The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (celebrated on 14. September) which was known in Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century, and the

Feast of the Invention of the Cross, established in England during the eighth century and celebrated on 3.May.²²⁷

Thus, as with the Lamb and the four living beasts the symbolic references of the cross are many. It is clear that any image composed of these details will never be completely isolated from the rich associations of each element. However it is possible to assess which aspect was intended as the primary reference. At Wirksworth the position of the lamb on the cross indicates that it is the Lamb of the Apocalypse which stood "in the midst of the throne...as it had been slain".²²⁸ The animal-headed creatures holding the books are clearly the evangelist symbols which derived from the four beasts who worshipped and glorified the enthroned Lamb. The overall image is a triumphal one; the evangelist symbols round the cross emphasise the Adoration of the Lamb of the Apocalypse and link the image to representations of Christ in Majesty common in Christian art. Although the cross alludes to the Crucifixion and therefore to the sacrificial Lamb, the position of the Lamb and the presence of the evangelist symbols transforms the cross into the source of Christ's glory.²²⁹

Although there was more written on the sacrificial role of the Lamb, the Adoration of the Lamb exalted in heaven was also known in Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh-century, as was the cross of glory. In Christian art of the early Medieval period it was this latter aspect of the Lamb and the cross which was most common. The exaltation of the cross was found both in the

liturgy and literature of Anglo-Saxon England and in art the cross was not used primarily as an emotive symbol of suffering.²³⁰ The Lamb, as a symbol of the slain but risen and ascended Christ (and the Church founded in him) was commonplace in the art of the early Christian period, and that symbolism was reproduced in the early art of the Merovingian period in Western Europe in such manuscripts as the *Laon Orosious* and the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (pls.147-9). When the sacrificial Agnus Dei was developed in Christian art, it was initially presented in contexts which expressed the victory achieved through the sacrifice of the Crucifixion. Although the sacrificial Agnus Dei was more commonly treated in Church writings than the exalted Agnus Victor, this latter aspect of it was known in Anglo-Saxon England, and it had long been the familiar image of the Lamb in Christian art generally.²³¹

The presence of the evangelist symbols, common in both the writings of the Church and its art does not detract from a primarily theophanic interpretation of the scene on the Wirksworth slab. When found together the Evangelist symbols were associated with the biblical visions of the Godhead in written explanations of their significance, and in images of the *Majestas*.²³² When found placed round the cross (whether or not the cross of the crucifixion) their symbolism was two-fold. On the one hand they were the biblical attributes of its glory, and indicate that the cross should be seen as the throne of God. As evangelist symbols, denoting the word of the Gospels, they

signified the Gospel proclaimed to the whole world in all its four corners.²³³

Overall the primary significance of the scene at Wirksworth is one of triumph and glory. The risen Lamb is enthroned on the cross, a symbol of the victory of Christ's death; the two are synonymous with the Church which is founded in Christ and his work, and recorded in the four gospels. This does not mean that the notions of sacrifice, associated with the Crucifixion and the Agnus Dei witnessed in the Gospels, and embodied in the liturgical sacraments of the church, are absent from the scene. They are, of course, present, and evoked by any image of the cross, Lamb and evangelist symbols, but these themes are secondary at Wirksworth; indeed here they seem to underline the exaltation and glory due to Christ and his Church, both in the present, and at the Second Advent.

4 & 5. The Funeral Procession of the Virgin Mary:

The Apocryphal story of the Virgin's death and assumption is recorded in Coptic texts from the fourth century, but is thought to have originated in the late second century.²³⁴ Despite this early written tradition the establishment of a Church feast commemorating the death of Mary was a comparatively late development.²³⁵ From the mid fifth-century a general feast in honour of the Virgin was celebrated in Jerusalem on 15 August, and c.600 this date was chosen for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout the Eastern Empire.²³⁶ It

was only at the end of the seventh century that the feast was introduced into the Roman church by Pope Sergius I (687-701 A.D.), but its title was changed to "Dormitio" or "Sollemnia de Pausatione Sanctae Mariae",²³⁷ and the doctrine of the corporeal assumption took even longer to gain acceptance in the West.

During the sixth century the commemoration of the Virgin's death had been introduced into the Gallican calendar, but it was held in January.²³⁸ A number of eighth-century insular manuscripts attest to the celebration of this feast in the British Isles, all according to the Gallican calendar, on 18. January.²³⁹ These manuscripts also indicate however, that prior to the introduction of the Roman Feast of the Dormition, the Gallican church had also celebrated another Marian feast in mid August, probably as an early introduction from the East, although there was some confusion as to its status. In some cases two days in August were set aside for the Mother of God, one for her general honour and the other for her Nativity.²⁴⁰ There is also evidence from the eighth-century that an August feast, specifically commemorating the death of the Virgin, was known in Anglo-Saxon England. A late eighth-century Alcuinian copy of an antiphony used at York between 680 and 735 A.D. assigns the Feast of the Assumption to its Roman date in August, as does the *Metrical Calendar of York*, dated to the second half of the eighth century.²⁴¹ Elsewhere, the early ninth-century Northumbrian poem *De Abbatibus*, composed by Aedelwulf in a dependency of Lindisfarne, mentions the introduction of the

Feast of the Assumption by Abbot Sigbald who died in 771 A.D.²⁴²

This suggests that there was some initial confusion concerning the adoption of the feast commemorating the death of the Virgin in England after its establishment in the Roman calendar at the end of the seventh century. This hesitation was possibly due to the theological debate surrounding the belief in the corporeal assumption of the Virgin. This is reflected in the initial entitlement of the Roman feast as the Dormition instead of the Assumption. It was only in the ninth century that the August Marian feast was officially recognised as the Assumption in the West as well as the East.²⁴³

There is evidence of an ambiguous attitude towards the Assumption among Anglo-Saxon writers of the seventh- and eighth-centuries. Arculf, the Bishop of Gaul, and Adamnan of Iona to whom he gave an account of his travels in the Holy Land (c.670) seem to have been ignorant of the doctrine of the Assumption, and assume that the Virgin's body was awaiting resurrection. Mary's tomb was described as:

...saxeum inest vacuum sepulchrum, in quo aliquando sepulta pausavit. Sed de eodem sepulchro quomodo vel quo tempore aut a quibus personis sanctum corpusculum eius sit sublatum, vel quo loco resurrectionem exspectat, nullus, ut fertur, pro certo scire potest.

(...an empty stone sepulchre, in which for a time she rested after her burial. But how or when or by whom her sacred body was raised from that sepulchre, or where it awaits the Resurrection, it is said that no one knows certainly.)²⁴⁴

However, Willibald, in the Hodoeporicon transcribed by the nun Huneberc of Heidenheim (c.725), knew of the Apocryphal legends concerning not only the Virgin's death and funeral procession but also the assumption:

Sancta Maria in illo loco in medio Hierusalem exivit de seculo, qui nominatur Sancta Sion; et tunc apostoli 11 portaverunt illum, sicut prius dixi, et tunc angeli venientes tulerunt illum de manibus apostolorum et portaverunt in paradiso...et in illa valle est aecclesia sancte Maria, et in aecclesia est sepulchrum eius, non de eo quod corpus eius ibi requiescat, sed ad memoriam eius.

(Our Lady passed from this world in that very spot in the centre of Jerusalem which is called Holy Sion. And then the eleven apostles bore her, as I have already said, and finally the angels came and took her away from the hands of the apostles and carried her to Paradise...In the valley [of Josaphat] there is a church of our Lady and in the church is her tomb (not that her body lies at rest there, but is a memorial to her.)²⁴⁵

Significantly, there is a comparative hesitation on Willibald's part to fully accept, and describe, the corporeal assumption of the Virgin, given that the incident of the funeral procession, as already cited, is presented in such detail.²⁴⁶

This apparent lack of initial enthusiasm or doubt as to the correct stance to adopt over the doctrine of corporeal assumption seems in keeping with the initial confusion over the Feasts of the Dormition and Assumption in the church calendar of Anglo-Saxon England prior to the mid eighth-century. However, even in this early period there was an awareness of Mary's death and a readiness to recognise the event officially within the Church. Bede is credited with three homilies on Mary, one to be read on the Day of the Assumption based on the text of Luke 10, and two

commemorating the Virgin.²⁴⁷ One of these celebrates her divinity using the text of Luke 11,²⁴⁸ but the other, entitled De Sancta Maria Virgine, mentions the translation of the body into heaven:

Hodie, fratres charissimi, celebramus festivitatem sanctae Mariae, Dei Genitricis quae hodie translata est in coelum de mundo.

(Today, beloved brothers, we celebrate the feast of the blessed Mary, the Mother of God, who today was translated from this world, into heaven.)²⁴⁹

While not describing the event in detail, the homily expresses the honour and glory rightfully due Mary, the Mother of God, for her obedience to God and her humility and chastity.

It is these themes which are found in later homilies on the Assumption of the Virgin. Aelfric's De Virginitate, designed to be read on The Feast of the Assumption, speaks of virginity as the estate most pleasing to God, the blessings of which are multiplied a hundred-fold in heaven; chastity is described as an offering made to God, all of which are exemplified by the Virgin.²⁵⁰

The earlier Blickling Homily XIII on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which may have been read by Aelfric,²⁵¹ describes the Apocryphal events surrounding the death of Mary, and then draws the lesson to be learnt from the example. As Mary, with all humility and obedience, accepted the duty imposed on her by God at the Annunciation, so was she blessed. The words of The Magnificat are used to glorify God through the Virgin:

...and þa waes Sancta Maria cweþende þæt Drihten ealle þa gefylde on heofona wuldres faegernesse þa þe hie on eorþan leton hingrian and þyrstan for his naman.

(Then St. Mary said that the Lord had filled with the beauty of heaven's glory all those who on earth suffered hunger and thirst for his name.)²⁵²

This was in keeping with the teachings of Christ himself:

...and he þa laerde his apostolas, him saegde þurh hwaet seo saul eadegust gewurde and þus cwaep, 'Eadige beoþ þearfena gastas and hie restað on heofena rice, and eadige beoð þa þe þissa eorþwelena ne gymað.

(And then he taught his apostles and told them through what things the soul might become most blessed, and thus said, 'Blessed are the spirits of the poor, for they shall rest in heaven's kingdom; and blessed are those who care not for the world's riches.)²⁵³

Thus, although there is an ambiguity in the doctrinal and liturgical considerations associated with the death of the Virgin Mary, the lessons drawn from the event seem to have been consistent: that Mary was an exemplary figure of obedience, humility and chastity, who was duly rewarded in death. The scene shown at Wirksworth of the Apocryphal funeral procession does not depict either the Dormition or the Assumption which were events associated with specifically theological and liturgical matters. It does however call to mind both these events and the miracle performed during the procession, and was described in detail by an early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon pilgrim to the Holy Land in a manner which also played down the Dormition and the Assumption. If the scene was chosen with a specifically liturgical reference in mind, to commemorate the Feast of the Assumption, it would

have been perfectly possible that a scene of the Assumption (which was based iconographically on the Ascension), might have been used. There is evidence for the existence of this scheme both on the Continent and in Anglo-Saxon England during the eighth-century. If on the other hand it was intended to recall the Dormition, then equally there is no reason why the sculptor could not have produced this scene; the evidence for its existence is slight, but it was known during the pre-iconoclastic period in the East and West, and it seems that the Wirksworth scene may well be related to an early version of The Dormition. If, however, the intention was to express a more general theme of the glory and reward awaiting the obedient and humble Christian in death, as exemplified by Mary, any of the scenes associated with her death may have been relevant. But the funeral procession, which is depicted at Wirksworth, has fewer associations with the specific Feasts of the Assumption and the Dormition, and with the doctrine of corporeal assumption, and is therefore better suited to the more general and widely applicable message. Its inclusion must cast doubt on a specifically liturgical interpretation of this scene.

The ideas associated with the death of the Virgin were all present in Anglo-Saxon England. The feast of the Assumption was celebrated in the Gallican Church calendar before the eighth-century, and the feast of the Dormition established by the mid eight-century according to the Roman calendar. By the ninth-century this August feast had again become the Feast of the Assumption as the doctrine of the corporeal assumption of the

Virgin was accepted. The more general lessons drawn from the event were articulated in Anglo-Saxon England at the turn of the eighth-century and were still present in the tenth-century. Given the choice of scene, the initial confusion over the Church Feasts, and the relatively consistent lessons drawn from the death of Mary, it seems less likely that the scene at Wirksworth is intended to commemorate the specifically liturgical aspect of the event, and is more likely to recall the general lessons commonly drawn from it.

7. The Descent into Hell:

The description of Christ's descent into Hell before rising from the dead on Easter Morning is not a scriptural event, although Christ was believed to have referred to it by analogy when speaking of Jonah spending three days in the belly of the whale.²⁵⁴ The full story is contained in the apocryphal book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle, and The Gospel of Nicodemus in The Acts of Pilate.²⁵⁵ The earliest surviving texts are Coptic and date to the fifth- or sixth-century, but there are numerous references to the story in the writings of the Eastern Church Fathers from the second century onwards.²⁵⁶

The story was also popular in the West and even formed part of the daily liturgy of the Church, being remembered at Matins and recited in the Creed. The late tenth-century Old English

Benedictine Office, compiled and revised by Aelfric and Wulfstan, depends for much of its text on the work of earlier Carolingian liturgical reformers, such as Alcuin.²⁵⁷ It describes how at Matins the congregation was to remember that:

...on daegred hit gewearð þæt Crist of deaþe aras and of helle gelaedde ealle þa ðe he wolde; and his widerwinnan, þæt is deofol sylfne, he besencte and eall his gegenge on hell-susle. Þy we sculon on daegred God georne herian and him a þancian ðære mildheortnysse þe he on mancynne þa geworhte þa þa he hit alysde of helle-wite and of deofles gewearde and gerymde þananford rihte weg to heofona rice aelcum þara þe his willan gewyrçð her on life.

(...in the early morning it was that Christ arose from death and led all those whom he desired from hell; and his enemies, that is the devil himself, and all his troops, he burnt in hell-brimstone. Thus we must praise God eagerly in the early morning and always thank him for the compassion which he then worked for mankind when he loosed it from the torment of hell and from the devil's power, and from thenceforth made the right way to heaven's kingdom for each one who does his will here in this life.)²⁵⁸

The Creed did not become part of the Papal liturgy until the eleventh century, but it had been recognised as part of the Western church service since the eighth century when it was introduced into the Franco-German liturgy of the Mass during the Adoptionist controversy. At that time it was compiled by the Anglo-Saxon monk Alcuin from an Irish text, derived ultimately from Eastern sources, but there is mention of versions of the Creed in Anglo-Saxon England from the late sixth-century.²⁵⁹ In the later Old English text the Creed, declaring belief in Christ, the only Son of God the Father, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, includes a reference to The Descent. After being placed in the sepulchre, Christ:

...of helle huđe gefette, of pam susl-hofe, sawla manega, het đa uplicne epel secan.

(...quickly fetched from hell, from the torment, many souls, commanded them to seek the lofty-homeland.)²⁶⁰

Although the Creed as such was not recited in the Papal liturgy of the Mass, the notion that Christ died, was buried, and descended into hell before rising again on the third day, was a tenet of faith articulated by the early Church Fathers. In the early fifth century, Augustine declared:

Quamobrem teneamus firmissime, quod fides habet fundatissima auctoritate firmata, 'Quia Christus mortuus est secundum Scripturas, et quia sepultus est, et quia resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturae' ...in quibus etiam hoc est, quod apud inferos fuit, solutisque eorum doloribus quibus eum erat impossibile teneri, a quibus etiam recte intelligitur solvisse et liberasse quos voluit, corpus quod in cruce reliquerat in sepulcro positum recepisse.

(Let us most firmly hold that which faith, resting on authority established beyond all question, maintains: 'That Christ died according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third Day according to the Scriptures'...Among these doctrines we include the doctrine that he was in hell and, having loosed the pains of hell, in which it was impossible for Him to be holden, from which also He is with good ground believed to have loosed and delivered whom He would, He took again to himself that body which he had left on the cross and which had been laid in the tomb.)²⁶¹

The Descent was also referred to in the liturgy of the Baptism. The act of Christian initiation was interpreted as a descent into the font and a return into the Church, commemorating on the one hand Christ's descent into death, his resurrection and ascension, but also symbolising for the catechumen the death of his sinful life and his future spiritual ascent into eternal life.²⁶² Explaining the significance of Baptism Augustine wrote:

Quod et vos nunc simili forma Baptisma salvos facit...
per resurrectionem Jesu Christi, qui est in dextera
Dei, deglutiens mortem, ut vitae aeternae haeredes
efficeremur. . . Propter hoc enim et mortuis
evangelizatum est.

(Baptism now by a like figure saves you...by the resurrection of
Jesus Christ who is on the right hand of God, having swallowed up
death that we might be made heirs of eternal life...For this
cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead.)²⁶³

The buildings erected for baptismal purposes after the sixth
century, in both East and West, were viewed as sites symbolic of
death and resurrection. In the East they were used for services
celebrating The Anastasis, and after the growth of the cult of
the Virgin, when many churches previously dedicated to The
Anastasis were rededicated to Mary, the commemoration of the
Anastasis was removed to the Baptistry.²⁶⁴ In Jerusalem in the
seventh century, the church adjoining the Church of The Holy
Sepulchre had already been rededicated to St.Mary, but it was
still, according to Arculf, "quae et Anastasis, hoc est
resurrectio, vocitatur" (also called The Anastasis, that is The
Resurrection).²⁶⁵

Thus, as reflected in the liturgy of the church, The Descent
of Christ into Hell formed part of the basic tenets of Christian
belief familiar both in everyday worship, and in the initiation
ritual of Baptism. It also became a major festival in the East;
in the later Byzantine period the Descent was enshrined as one of
the twelve liturgical feasts which were also re-enacted during
the celebration of Mass. Together with the Entry to Jerusalem,
the Crucifixion, the Ascension, Pentecost and The Dormition, The

Anastasis was symbolically celebrated in the Anachora, that part of the Mass which culminated in the Communion.²⁶⁶

Such elaborate symbolic ritual and the position of The Anastasis as a major liturgical feast, however, was not favoured in the Church of the West, either in Rome or elsewhere. During Matins on Holy Saturday, the Descent was nevertheless remembered with the death and burial of Christ in the elaboration of the services of Holy Week developed in the Western Church during the seventh and eighth centuries.²⁶⁷ It also had its place in the history of salvation rehearsed in readings and songs during the Vigil of Easter Eve which culminated in the Baptism of the catechumens and the Eucharist on Easter Morning, but there was no specific liturgical festival commemorating The Anastasis in the Western Church calendar.²⁶⁸ In the West its position in the Church liturgy was more intimately woven into the fabric of everyday worship and the celebration of Christianity.²⁶⁹

In the more general writings of the Church Fathers the ideas constantly repeated concerning The Descent are its demonstration of Christ's obedient humility in death, and the salvation it offered in the future Resurrection, of which the Descent was both a proof and a prefiguring.²⁷⁰ Writing on the Resurrection in the fourth century, Ambrose declared that Christ had died and descended into hell as a man:

Nam etsi secundum hominem mortuus, in ipsis tamen erat liber infernis...Et bene liber, qui alios descenderat redempturus. Factus est autem sicut homo,

non specie utique, sed veritate formatus...Et enim 'in similitudinem hominum factus, et specie inventus ut homo, humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem' ut per illam scilicet obedientiam eius gloriam videremus, 'gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patri'.

(For though he died as a man, yet was he free in hell itself... And well is he called free, who had descended to rescue others. For he was made as man, not indeed in appearance only, but so fashioned in truth...For 'being made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even into death', in order that through obedience we might see his glory; 'the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father.')

In the fifth century, Jerome was to repeat these sentiments. Explaining Jonah as a figure of the descent, the equation made by Christ himself, Jerome declared that:

Ille humilitate dejectus est in profundum, ut... gloriosus resurgeret.

(He in his humility was thrown into the deep that he might rise again in glory.)

The notions of the humble obedience exemplified by Christ at The Descent and the promise of resurrection held in that action, were repeated by Augustine and Gregory the Great,²⁷³ and found their way into Anglo-Saxon literature, to be preserved in the late tenth-century by Aelfric.²⁷⁴

However, in Old English literature, the most common theme associated with Christ's Descent into Hell was the glory he achieved through thus demonstrating Man's future resurrection. This is the emphasis placed on the event in the eighth century by Cynewulf in Christ, it is repeated in the later poem Christ and Satan, and in the sermons of Aelfric.²⁷⁵ Referring to Gregory's letters, and echoing Augustine's Commentary on Psalm

66, Aelfric described The Descent as a miracle:

Mare miht waes þaet he ðone deað mid his aeriste tobraec, þonne he his lif geheolde of ðaere rode astigende... hit gelamp swa þaet of ðam deaðe asprang his nama geond ealne middangeard...for þon þe ure Haelend Crist tobraec helle-gatu, and generode Adam and Evan and his gecorenan of heora cynne, and freolice of deaðe aras, and hi samod, and astah to heofonum. Þa manfullan he let baeftan to ðam ecum witum. And is nu helle-geat belocen rihtwisum mannum, and aefre open unrihtwisum.

(A greater miracle it was that he brake death in pieces, through his resurrection, than that he should have preserved his life by descending from the cross...it so fell out that from death his name sprang forth over the whole earth...for our Saviour Christ brake the gates of hell, and delivered Adam and Eve and his chosen of their kin, and joyfully arose from death, and they with him, and ascended into heaven. The wicked he left behind to eternal torments. And now the gate of hell is locked to righteous men, and ever open to the unrighteous.)²⁷⁶

The ideas associated with the apocryphal story of The Descent of Christ into Hell both in the liturgy and in the more general writings of the Western Church follow a common theme: that Christ died, descended into hell, and rose again from the dead; that this both demonstrated and proved the possibility of the future resurrection awaiting the true Christian; and that although this was performed by Christ in his humility as a man, it demonstrated the glory of his victory over death. The ideas are found at a fundamental level and in writings of ecclesiastics widely separated by time and place, but they were known in pre-Viking England, and even expressed by Anglo-Saxon writers. Thus, even though the iconography of The Descent found on the Wirksworth slab may be eccentric, it contains the pictorial elements pointing towards the central ideas associated

with the event. Christ in his humility descended into hell and released from bondage Adam and his kin. As the dead (in their coffins) were resurrected and led into heaven by Christ, so too will faithful Christians be rewarded with eternal bliss at the time of the Final Resurrection.

8. The Ascension:

As argued at Rothbury, the Ascension of Christ into heaven had a double importance. On the one hand it commemorated the last words of Christ to his disciples; words which instructed them to bear witness to him throughout the world. It was also the event which demonstrated the divine power of the risen Christ and foreshadowed his Second Coming in glory to judge the quick and the dead:

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth...And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he was taken up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said...This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.²⁷⁷

Both these themes were explored by the early writers in the Churches of both East and West. In the East in the late fourth century John Chrysostom wrote about the event to demonstrate the glory of the risen Christ:

Nonne satis erat superare caelos? nonne satis erat cum angelis consistere? an non esset etiam hic honos

ineffabilis? At ascendit super angelos, praeterivit archangelos, superavit Cherubim, ascendit supra Seraphim, praetergressus est Potestates, nec prius substitit quam thronum ipsum Domini comprehendit.

(But did he not so raise [his body] above the heavens? Did he not upraise it to stand amid the angels? Was not his honour without measure? It ascended above the heavens, it ascended above the angels, it passed upwards beyond the archangels, above the Cherubim, it soared above the Seraphim, higher than all the Powers of Heaven, and came to rest only before the Throne of the Lord.)²⁷⁸

In the late sixth century Gregory the Great, writing in Rome, made a similar point in a homily on The Ascension; by ascending into heaven Christ was returning to reassume his rightful state of divinity. But near the end of his homily Gregory expanded the theme to draw a parallel between the glory of the ascending Christ and his earthly Church of true Christians. It was a point which had been made by others before him, such as Augustine in the fourth century, and Leo the Great in the fifth century.²⁷⁹

This theme of apotheosis and glory, which was reflected in the Church of Christ on earth as a result of the Ascension, was also found in the poetry and church writings of Anglo-Saxon England. In the late eighth-century poem Christ attributed to Cynewulf, which shows some knowledge of Augustine's writings, the event is described in terms of an apotheosis:²⁸⁰

He waes upp hafen engla faedmum in his þa miclan
meahta spede, heah ond halig, ofer heofona þrym.

(He was lifted up in the arms of angels in the bounteous fullness of his might, high and holy, over the majesty of heaven.)²⁸¹

In the tenth century, Aelfric put a similar emphasis on the Ascension:

ðaða he to heofonum astah...he stiðode mid þam wolcne
of manna gesihðum...mid micelre blisse and mid micclum
ðrymme...and on his upstige waes seo menniscnys ahafen
and gemaersod.

(When he ascended into heaven...he passed with the cloud from the sight of men...with great joy and with great majesty...and at his ascension was humanity exalted and magnified.)²⁸²

It is this aspect of the event which the iconography of the scene at Wirksworth is apparently emphasising. It is primarily composed of the risen Christ holding the cross of the resurrection, standing within a mandorla of glory held by four angels. The witnessing figures below have been reduced to a bare minimum, functioning only to identify the scene as The Ascension rather than the closely related Christ in Majesty.

On the Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft at Rothbury in Northumberland the iconography of the Ascension scene illustrates, by its differences, the point which is being made at Wirksworth. At Rothbury the apostles are assembled at the ascension and comprise nearly half the scene. Their role as witnesses and preachers of the Word is emphasised by the prominence given to the four gospel books held by the Evangelists. The Ascending Christ is not merely the risen Christ, but the Judge who will come at the Second Advent; the mandorla and the position of the two angels also point to this future event. At Rothbury the emphasis is on the theme more often associated with the Ascension, that of the apostles as witnesses to Christ, his salvation, and the life

eternal which will be reinstated at the Last Judgement.²⁸³ It was this aspect which was also familiar in the liturgy of the Church, where it was claimed that at the ascension Christ had sent the apostles out, indeed had ordained them, as preachers.²⁸⁴

The Feast of the Ascension, however, which was established in both East and West as a festival day separate from the Feast of Pentecost in the second half of the fourth century, does seem to have celebrated the event, not only as a commemoration of Christ's instructions to his apostles, but also as the glorious and final proof of Christ's divinity, and therefore of his salvation.²⁸⁵ As a man Christ had been born of a Virgin, had died on the cross and descended into hell; he had risen from the dead, again in human form, and in this same body had ascended into heaven where he was reinstated as the son of God, in which manner he would appear at the Second Coming. It is this point which Aelfric (echoing Gregory's Homily on the Ascension), makes towards the end of his own Sermon for Ascension Day:

Drihten ða on ðam feowerteogoðan daege his aeristes
astah to heofenum, aetforan heora ealra gesihðe, mid
þam ylcan lichaman þe he on þrowode, and sitt on ða
swiðran his Faeder, and ealra gesceafta gewylt.

(Then on the fortieth day of his resurrection the Lord ascended into heaven, before the sight of them all, with the same body that he suffered in, and he sits by the side of his Father, and governs all creation.)²⁸⁶

This seems to be the import of the scene at Wirksworth; the glory of the Son of God is revealed at the Ascension. This significance is present not only in the general literature on the subject but also in the sermons and homilies composed

specifically for the Feast Day of The Ascension, both in the early Churches of East and West, and in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁸⁷ The fact that the two angels are present, and address the two figures flanking the mandorla does indicate a reference to the future judgement, and the witnessing of the event by the apostles, but the relative size and position of these four figures makes these themes secondary to the primary iconographic significance which emphasises the event as the apotheosis of Christ.

9. The Annunciation to Mary:

The Feast of the Annunciation appeared in the early fifth century in the calendar of the Eastern Church, but the actual date of its celebration (25.March) was not established until the sixth century.²⁸⁸ In the West, acceptance of the feast took longer because of its coincidence with Lent; it was celebrated more commonly as a moveable feast held in the period before Christmas . The celebration of The Annunciation in March was not officially instituted in the Roman calendar until the mid seventh century when it was introduced as "Adnuntiatio Domini", as a Christological rather than a Marian feast. It was only towards the end of the seventh century that Pope Sergius I (687-701 A.D.) emphasised the Marian character of the festival and changed the title of the feast to "Conceptio Sanctae Mariae".²⁸⁹

Bede's works testify that the Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin was known in England in the early eighth century,²⁹⁰ but other contemporary evidence suggests that it was not firmly established in the calendar of the Anglo-Saxon Church generally until the second half of the eighth century. The Antiphony used at York between 680 and 735 A.D. indicates that the feast was not held in March, but in the period before Christmas and had a more Christological than Marian character.²⁹¹ But the early ninth-century Northumbrian poem De Abbatibus indicates that the feast had, by the time of Abbot Sigbald (d.771 A.D.) been accepted as a Marian feast and was being celebrated in March.²⁹²

As demonstrated at Hovingham, there were two slightly differing approaches taken towards the Annunciation generally, which probably reflect the ambivalent attitude towards the feast itself. In keeping with the earlier Western notion of the Christological importance of the feast, the event was viewed as the moment of Christ's conception. According to the angel, Mary would conceive "and bring forth a son" through the power of the Holy Ghost:

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end...Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.²⁹³

From the second century onwards the Annunciation was seen as proof that the Son of God was to be born as a man; the

conception of Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and proved that:

Unum et eundem esse Jesum Christum, unigenitum Dei
Filius, verum Deum ac verum hominem.

(Jesus Christ was one and the same, the only begotten Son of God, Perfect God and Perfect Man.)²⁹⁴

For Augustine in the fourth century Christ's birth as man had important implications for his redemption of mankind. That Christ was the Son of God was proved by the Annunciation, and being born of a woman, albeit a virgin, meant that he was born a man. This birth proved the fact of his death; as it was impossible to feign his birth, so it was impossible to feign his death. It was this death which was to save mankind of their sins, as promised by the angel at the Annunciation.²⁹⁵

However, with the increasing emphasis placed on the role of the Virgin at the conception and birth of the Son of God, the Annunciation (as reflected in the changing nature of the feast), also came to be viewed, first as one of the moments which demonstrated Mary's obedience, and then, as is demonstrated at Hovingham, as one of the moments which established her as the Mother of God.²⁹⁶ Initially however, it was emphasised that her response to the angel's news was one of humble acceptance:

And Mary said, Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be
it unto me according to thy Word.²⁹⁷

For Ambrose in the fourth century the Virgin at the Annunciation was to be viewed as an example of modesty accompanying purity;

qualities manifested by her humble reaction to the appearance of the angel, and qualities for which she was to become an object worthy of honour:

Sic Maria intendebat omnibus, quasi a pluribus moneretur: sic omnia implebat virtutis officia, ut non tam disceret, quam doceret. Talem hanc Evangelista monstravit, talem angelus reperit, talem Spiritus sanctus elegit...quae digna fuit ex qua Dei Filius nasceretur. Haec ad ipsos ingressus angeli inventa domi in penetralibus...Denique et Gabriel eam ubi revisere solebat, invenit: et angelum Maria quasi virum specie mota trepidavit, quasi non incognitum audito nomine recognovit...Denique salutata obmutuit, et appellata respondit: sed quae primo turbaverat affectum postea promisit obsequium.

(Mary attended to everything as though she were warned by many, and fulfilled every obligation of virtue as though she were teaching rather than learning. Such has the Evangelist shown her, such did the angel find her, such did the Holy Spirit choose her...how worthy she was that the Son of God should be born of her. She when the angel entered was found at home in privacy...and so too when Gabriel visited her, did he find her, and Mary trembled being disturbed, as though at the form of a man, but on hearing his name recognised him as one not unknown to her...Then when saluted she kept silence, and when addressed she answered, and she whose feelings were first troubled, afterwards promised obedience.)²⁹⁸

These sentiments were repeated by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century. The Virgin was not only the humble handmaiden but also the Mother of the Redeemer, through the power of the Holy Spirit:

Ecce eadem Virgo et ancilla Domini dicitur et mater. Ancilla enim Domini, quia Verbum ante saecula unigenitus aequalis est Patri; Mater vero, quia in eius visceribus ex sancto Spiritu de eiusque carne factus est homo. Nec alterius ancilla, alterius mater, quia dum unigenitus Dei existens ante saecula ex eius utero natus est homo, investigabili miraculo facta est ancilla hominis per divinitatem, et mater Verbi per carnem.

(The same Virgin is called both handmaiden and the Mother of the Lord. For she is the handmaiden of the Lord, because the Word before the Ages, the Only-Begotten, is equal to the father; but the mother, because in her womb from the Holy Spirit and of her flesh, he was made man. Nor is she the handmaiden of one and the mother of another, because, when the Only-Begotten of God, existing before the ages, of her womb was made man, by an inscrutable miracle she became both the handmaiden of man by reason of the divinity and the mother of the word by reason of the flesh.)²⁹⁹

The event was not greatly elaborated upon by the early writers of Anglo-Saxon England, but in the first of the tenth-century Blickling Homilies (on the Annunciation), it is Mary's humble response that is the example to be praised:

Maria forhtode, and bi figendre stefne eadmodlice ondsvarode, and þus cwaep: 'Ic eom Drihtnes þeowen, geweorþe me aefter þinum wordum.' Eala hwaet þær waes faeger eadmodnes gemeted on þære a clænan faemnan. Se engel hire saegde þæt heo sceolde modor beon hire Scyppendes, and heo hie sylfe to ðeowene genemde.

(Mary was frightened, and with trembling voice humbly answered, and said thus: 'I am the Lord's handmaiden, let it be unto me according to thy words.' O what beautiful humility was found there in the ever pure virgin. The angel said to her that she was to be the mother of her creator, and she called herself a handmaiden.)³⁰⁰

This was the emphasis that Aelfric also placed on the event in his slightly later Homily on The Annunciation:

Ða cwaed Maria to ðam engle: 'Ic eom Godes ðinen: getimige me aefter ðinum worde.' Micel eadmodnys wunode on hyre mode, þa þa heo ðus cleopode. Ne cwaed heo na, Ic eom Godes moder, oððe, Ic eom cwen ealles middangeardes, ac cwaed: 'Ic eom Godes þinen'... Heo cwaed to ðam engle 'Getimige me aefter ðinum worde'. Þæt is, Gewurde hit swa ðu segst, þæt ðæs aelmihtigan Godes sunu becume on minne innoð, and mennisce edwiste of me genime, and to alysednysse middangeardes forðstaeppe of me.

(Then Mary said to the angel: 'I am God's handmaiden, let it betide me according to thy word.' Great humility dwelt in her mind when she thus cried. She did not say, I am the mother of God, nor, I am queen of the whole world, but she said; 'I am God's servant'...She said to the angel, 'let it befall me according to thy word.' That is, Be it as thou sayest, that the Son of the Almighty God enter my womb and receive human substance from me and proceed from me, for the redemption of the world.)³⁰¹

The importance of the Annunciation as part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind was not forgotten, but the most immediate lesson to be drawn from the event, was the example provided by Mary's humble obedience; it was an example worthy of praise and honour, but not one that was limited to women. In his treatise De Virginitate, Aelfric spoke of virginity as an example to all of the importance for obedience to God's will:

For ðam mot seo eadmodnes beon mid þære claennesse
þæt se maegðhad mage þa miclan gepincðe habban þæs
hundfealdan waestmes, swa swa se Haelend cwaed. And
aefre to Godes bebodum man sceal beon gehyrsum, [and]
þam gastlican ealdre þe him for Gode wissað...Betere
is soðlice seo gehyrsumnes þonne seo onsaegednes, þæt
syndon offrunga; and betere is to heorcniene þæs
Haelendes willan þonne him to offrigenne aenige oðre
lac.

(Therefore humility must accompany purity, that her maidenhead may have great dignity, reproduced a hundred-fold, just as the Saviour said. And according to God's command shall man be obedient...Truly : obedience is better than the sacrifice. It offers, and it is better to harken to the Saviour's will than to offer him any other gift.)³⁰²

The writings on the Annunciation indicate that the event was important, not only as the initial event of Christ's redemptive mission, but also as an example to the individual Christian of humble obedience to the will of God. These notions were widespread in the Churches of both East and West, and were found

in Anglo-Saxon England. The Feast of the Annunciation had, by the mid eighth century taken on a specifically Marian character in England which would have encouraged the promotion of the exemplary attitude towards the event found in the Church writings.

The scene at Wirksworth depicts the angel greeting Mary who holds up her hand to receive the message and submit herself to God's will. The power of the holy spirit to effect the conception is signified by the scroll held in the angel's hand; the position of Mary's hand at her waist, pulling her robes round her, not only emphasises her purity, but may also point to the reception of God within her:

Gewurde hit swa ðu segst, þæt ðæs aelmihtigan Godes
sunu becume on minne innoð, and mennisce edwiste of me
genime.

(Be it as thou sayest, that the Son of Almighty God enter my womb and receive human substance from me.)³⁰³

The iconography of the scene signifies the obedient humility of the Virgin Mary at the moment of the conception of the Son of God; "an inscrutable miracle" worked through the Holy Spirit.

This aspect of the event depicted at Wirksworth thus differentiates it from the other instances of the scene in pre-Viking sculpture, such as that at Hovingham (Yks; pl.3), where the iconographic details point to the message itself, establishing Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind. Here Mary, who with proper humility receives the task laid upon

her, is elevated as the Mother of God, an object of honour and praise. At Sandbach in Cheshire (pl.34) the scene is very damaged and it is not clear if the significance of the scene lies in the initial greeting of the angel and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (as at Wirksworth), or in the conversation which establishes the redemptive nature of the event, as at Hovingham and Ruthwell (Dumfries; pl.70).

It is clear that any depiction of The Annunciation will have references to Christ, the Son of God made Man, and so to the future salvation of Mankind; it will also refer to Mary's obedient humility in accepting, without question, the task laid upon her by God, and by implication it will refer to the honour due her for this exemplary behaviour. However, at Wirksworth the iconography points to the initial greeting of the angel, to Mary's bewildered acceptance, and to the moment of the conception; the reference is clear if compared with the iconography of the Hovingham scene. Thus the scene on the Mercian monument can be understood to express the notions of exemplary obedience and humility displayed by the Virgin at the Annunciation, and long associated with the event by patristic writers.

10. The Presentation:

The description of The Presentation of Christ in the temple found in Luke³⁰⁴ combines two very different Jewish ceremonies: the presentation of the first-born male in the temple which,

according to tradition, took place thirty days after the birth,³⁰⁵ and the purification of the mother which occurred forty days after childbirth.³⁰⁶

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord.³⁰⁷

Initially the event was celebrated in the Eastern Church with a feast commemorating the purification of the virgin mother. The earliest account is a late fourth-century description by the pilgrim Abbess ^gAetheria Silvia who speaks of the festival celebrated in Jerusalem on the fortieth day after Epiphany, on the anniversary of the purification.³⁰⁸ During the fifth and sixth centuries the feast spread through the Eastern Empire, and under Justinian changed its emphasis to the meeting between Simeon and Christ (The Hypapante), and changed its date to 2. February. This placed it forty days after the new Christmas which had been moved to 25. December in the early fifth-century.³⁰⁹

In the West the event was established in the Roman liturgy by the late fifth century as the feast of The Purification, held on 2. February,³¹⁰ but in the first half of the seventh century some churches in Rome had begun to celebrate the festival under the Eastern title of The Hypapante.³¹¹ In an attempt to combat this Pope Theodore I (642-9 A.D.) solemnised the Papal feast of

the Purification with a procession of candles, but in the late seventh-century Pope Sergius I (687-701 A.D.) changed the feast to The Presentation of Christ in an attempt to create a succession of feasts charting the life of Christ in the Christian calendar.³¹²

Elsewhere in the West the candlelight procession of The Purification was described by Bede in the early eighth century,³¹³ and the slightly later eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary mentions the feast under the title of The Purification, indicating that the change from the Marian to Christological importance of the feast outside the papal church of Rome was not immediate. Indeed the feast, whether Marian or Christological, does not seem to have been firmly established in England generally before the second half of the eighth-century.³¹⁴

In the *Metrical Calendar of York*, dating from the later eighth-century, the feast of 2. February is described as commemorating The Presentation of Christ in the Temple,³¹⁵ and in Aedelwulf's *De Abbatibus* the feast was not included among his list of the Marian feasts introduced by Abbot Sigbald (d.771), implying that he viewed it as the Christological feast of The Presentation or The Hypapante; it was still known by this latter title in the ninth-century.³¹⁶ By the late tenth-century Aelfric, in keeping with the general trend of the Western Church at that time, was describing the feast as that of The

Purification of St.Mary.³¹⁷

Thus if the scene at Wirksworth has a liturgical reference to a church festival it is unclear whether this would have been the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin (as is most likely before the end of the eighth-century), the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or The Hypapante, commemorating the meeting of Christ and Simeon. The iconography indicates that the model, if it were feast-connected, may well have depicted the originally Eastern feast of the Hypapante (which was also known in the Western church and in Anglo-Saxon England), but this does not mean that the reproduction of a scene depicting The Hypapante in Mercia necessarily had the same reference; the picture could have been used to refer to other important issues associated by the Church with the event described in the Gospel of Luke.

The significance of the event most commonly pointed to was the revelation of Christ to Man. The words of Simeon (and Anna) were believed to demonstrate that at The Presentation God had manifested both himself and the dispensation of the New Law of salvation through the advent of his son.³¹⁸

Arculf, having visited Simeon's tomb outside Jerusalem (c.670) described it to Adamnan of Iona as:

...illius Symeonis iusti viri est, qui infantulum dominum Iesum in templo ambis amplexus manibus de ipso prophetavit.

(...that of Simeon, the just man, who, having embraced the little infant, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the temple in both his hands, prophesied about him.)³¹⁹

Simeon had borne witness to Christ as the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles,³²⁰ but he had also foretold the coming Crucifixion:

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.³²¹

It was these words which linked the event, not only to the revelation of the promised salvation, but also to the sorrow which would befall Mary, the mother of God, at the Crucifixion; it was to be part of the tribulation she would suffer for her obedience to God. Augustine, writing on the Psalms, recalled these words and explained them as referring to the Passion.³²² His explanation was that the sorrow of the mother at the Crucifixion of the Son of God was to be the sentiment properly felt by others at the thought of Christ's passion; it was an interpretation followed by later writers. Cassiodorus in his Commentary on the Psalms, echoed the words of Augustine by invoking the gospel passage on the Presentation when explaining Psalm 104.18,³²³ and Bede, in his exegesis on Luke, was to explain Simeon's prophecy in a manner similar to Augustine.³²⁴ In the later Anglo-Saxon period Aelfric explained the import of the gospel account of Simeon's prophecy with more emotive language:

...heo geseh niman hyre cild, and adrifan isene
naeglas þurh þa handa and þurh ða fet.

(...she saw her child taken, and iron nails driven through the
hands and through the feet.)³²⁵

The interpretation of the event most commonly made however,
concerned the chastity of Mary and Anna, both present at the
presentation of the Christ Child in the temple. As Mary was the
supreme example of virginity, so Anna was taken to be an example
of widowed chastity, examples to be honoured and gloried on earth
and in heaven.³²⁶ Following such writers as Augustine and
Jerome, Aelfric described Anna:

Þaða se Symeon hæfde gewitegod þas witegunge be
Criste, þa com þær sum wuduwe, seo waes Anna gehaten.
'Seo leofode mid hire were seofon gear, and syððan heo
waes wuduwe feower and hund-æhtatig geara, and
þeowode Gode on faestenum, and on gebedum, and on
claennysse; and waes on eallum þam fyrste wunigende
binnan þam Godes temple; and com ða to þam cilde, and
witegode be him, and andette Gode.' Rihtlice swa
halig wif waes þaes wyrðe þæt heo moste witigian embe
Criste, ðaða heo swa lange on claennesse Gode þeowode.

(When Simeon had prophesied this prophecy concerning Christ, then
came there a widow, who was called Anna. 'She had lived with her
husband seven years, and had afterwards been a widow for eighty-
four years, and had served God with fasting and prayers, and with
chastity; and was in all that time dwelling in God's temple; and
she came then to the child, and prophesied concerning him, and
confessed to God'. Rightly was so holy a woman worthy to prophecy
concerning Christ, since she had so long served God in
chastity.)³²⁷

Thus the themes most prevalent in the writings of the early
medieval church generally, which were reflected in the works of
Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, emphasised The Presentation as a
moment of Christological importance; God was recognised by
Simeon as having manifested both himself in Christ and his

salvation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Related to this future event was the effect it would have on Mary who, through her humble obedience, had accepted the duty imposed upon her by God to be the mother of his son; she would suffer for her exemplary obedience, and this suffering was instructive. Not too far removed from these notions was the tendency to emphasise the role of Anna, also present in the temple at the time of the Presentation. As Mary was an exemplary virgin, so was Anna an example of chaste widowhood, whose devotion to God through her chastity and fasting was worthy of honour and praise.

The scene at Wirksworth shows Joseph and Anna watching Christ being handed by Mary to Simeon. The moment depicted is the meeting between Christ and Simeon (The Hypapante) which indicates that, whether or not this particular iconographical scheme was chosen to depict a specific feast, the emphasis of the scene is on the prophecy made by Simeon to Mary personally after his recital of the Nunc Dimitis.³²⁸ The iconography refers to the future passion of Christ and the effect of that event on Mary. The added presence of Anna may indicate a wider reference for the scene. Mary was a particular example of virginity who would suffer for her obedience, but Anna was a further example of obedience in her widowed chastity. She did not remarry after her husband's death, but dedicated her life to serving God in chastity and fasting in the temple. Her reward was to witness the presentation of the Christ child, and to have knowledge of the future salvation of mankind, possibly symbolised by the

scroll held in Christ's hand: the New Law which was established by his incarnation, death and resurrection.

It would seem therefore, that it is these more general themes which are expressed by the scene at Wirksworth, rather than a specifically liturgical reference. Indeed the confused status in Anglo-Saxon England of the church festival commemorating the event described in Luke 2, makes it difficult to decide which feast it could have referred to. What is clear is the general message associated with the event, whether that event is to be seen as specifically liturgical or simply biblical. The words of Simeon prophesied the future passion of Christ and the pain to be suffered by Mary; her suffering was a result of her obedience to God, and this obedience was also exemplified by the widowhood of Anna whose chastity and fasting were rewarded by her presence at The Presentation.

II

The preceding discussion of the significance of the scenes has shown that an exceedingly complex and multivalent set of themes is operating through the figural iconography of the Wirksworth slab. It has also provided some indication of the themes most probably controlling the selection and arrangement of the figures on the monument.

In most of the scenes there is a reference, at some level, to Christ's redemption of mankind and so to the resurrection. It

is foreshadowed in the Pedilavum, demonstrated in the Anastasis, promised at the Ascension, and looked forward to in the apocalyptic vision of the Lamb; it is also referred to in the Annunciation and the Presentation. In all these scenes the promised redemption operates through associations made both in the liturgy of the Church, and in the patristic writings of the Church Fathers. In many the link is made through the central sacraments of the Church: Baptism and the Eucharist.

The more pervading theme however, is that of humility rewarded, and it is this theme which may well have controlled the selection and arrangement of the scenes. Cockerton, in discounting an historical narrative cycle, argued that the rationale behind the scenes was a liturgical cycle related to the main festivals of the Church,³²⁹ and there is no doubt that some scenes may well be interpreted as having a festal significance. The Burial Procession of the Virgin may have been intended to represent the feast which commemorated the death of Mary, while The Annunciation to Mary, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and The Ascension were all feast days in the Anglo-Saxon Church calendar. However, in some cases the status of these feasts was relatively unsettled, while other scenes on the slab are less open to a festal interpretation. There was, for instance, no specific feast dedicated to The Washing of the Disciples' Feet, The Anastasis Resurrection, or The Lamb of God, although these scenes did clearly have a general liturgical significance. A festal interpretation therefore, cannot be

argued consistently for all the scenes surviving on the slab.

However, the theme that is carried throughout those scenes remaining on the stone, is one of obedience and humility rewarded in death and in the life everlasting as exemplified by Christ and his mother. It is a theme articulated by Paul in his letter to the Church at Philippi:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.³³⁰

In his life Christ humbled himself to wash the feet of his followers, and by doing so gave them an example to emulate:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.³³¹

The practice was observed throughout the early Medieval Church, particularly within a monastic environment. In death Christ humbled himself by descending into hell to release Adam and his kin from the bonds of sin and the devil. This was seen as one of the last demeaning acts performed by Christ in his human form; it was an act which promised the future resurrection, itself confirmed by the ascension of the man, Jesus Christ, who would return again on the Last Day. At that time the slain Lamb would appear in the heavens with the Book of Life, and mankind would be judged accordingly. Having completed the will of his father on earth, having performed the acts ensuring the salvation of

mankind, Christ returned to heaven where he resumed his place at the right hand of God the Father. This relationship between the Ascension and the Day of Judgement is one also found in Anglo-Saxon sculpture on the Rothbury cross in Northumberland (pl.20) where it is conflated into the one scene, instead of being depicted in two scenes (the Ascension and Majestas Agni) found at Wirksworth.

These notions applied to Christ, are, on the right-hand side of the slab, given a wider application through the biblical and apocryphal events associated with Mary. Her conscious act of submission to the will of God is exemplified at The Annunciation. This event established her both as the humble handmaiden of the Lord, and as an example of devotion to God to be emulated by others through the dedication of their lives to God in chastity and fasting; it was a way of life adopted by the widow Anna, and one which could bring pain and hardship. This was the sacrifice made by Mary who lived to see her son crucified on the cross. However, the reward for this life of self-abnegation, as exemplified by Mary, lies in death. For her obedience Mary was taken into heaven by Christ and the angels, and a miracle of saving grace was performed during her funeral.

This reading of the iconography of the Wirksworth slab is consistent with the scenes which have survived and which form the majority of what once existed. At most, two scenes have been lost, and there is no reason to assume that they did not express themes compatible with what remains. Although there is no way of

knowing precisely what these two lost scenes actually depicted, it is possible that they portrayed scenes from the life of Christ. The Nativity would not have been inappropriate as the first scene, and the remains of the figure holding the staff mean it is iconographically possible. The Birth of Christ was the moment of the descent of the Son of God into earthly life, and the event was much written about, and was celebrated as a liturgical feast in Anglo-Saxon England. It is a scene which was well established in early Christian art, and it is found elsewhere in the pre-Viking sculpture of Mercia at Sandbach in Cheshire (pl.28). The identity of the sixth scene cannot be speculated upon. It may have depicted Christ's humility, or it may have been a scene which hinted at his coming glory and the future salvation of mankind; the scenes open to such interpretations are too many feasibly to consider any particular one.

This method of reading the iconography of the Wirksworth slab is also consistent with that established for the early Christian sarcophagi of Gaul and Italy from the fifth century onwards,³³² but comparisons with other Anglo-Saxon or Western European sarcophagi, of the seventh to ninth centuries, cannot be made as their iconography is not a well researched subject; very few of these monuments remain.³³³ The focus of attention of the early Christian sarcophagi lay in the central scene(s) while the events, sometimes in two registers, radiated out from them, with each side referring to the other across the centre. At

Wirksworth the central motif is the glory of the risen Christ whose victory over death promises the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting, to be confirmed at the Second Coming. Christ made this possible through his humble obedience to his father during his life and death on earth as a man. This supreme example was also emulated by his mother; the Virgin Mary, having dedicated her life to God with the humble obedience of a handmaiden, was rewarded in death. As such Christ and Mary were examples, not just to be followed, but also of God's saving grace available to the faithful.

Thus the symbolism is consistent with what is known about the iconography of sarcophagus art. In addition the notion of humility in life rewarded by immortality is not an inappropriate theme in the context of a Christian tomb. The concern with immortality is a notion commonly associated with death, not just in the Christian world,³³⁴ and if the carving was monastic, the symbolism is even more appropriate, as the dedication of one's life to God through chastity, fasting, prayer and humble obedience, was the very basis of the monastic life.³³⁵

CONCLUSIONS:

The preceding description, identification and discussion of the figural scenes on the Wirksworth slab have provided much information regarding the iconography, style and date of the carving, and raised some questions concerning the milieu in which the monument may have been produced.

I

It is clear that the iconographic types used for most of the scenes on the Wirksworth slab have their origin in Eastern art, particularly in the work of the Syro-Palestinian provinces. In some cases these types were present in Western centres, but it also seems that they were types which were never subsumed into the Western repertoire.

The Wirksworth Pedilavum for instance (pl.50), finds its closest parallels with works of sixth-century date produced either in Syrian scriptoria, such as the *Rossano Gospels* (pl.143), or in Western works produced under Syrian influence; the *Augustine Gospels* for example (pl.142), produced in southern Italy, is thought to have been based on a Syrian prototype.³³⁶

The Ascension scene (pl.55) also betrays the presence of very archaic Eastern details; the angels grasping the thin outline of the oval mandorla, and the image of Christ with the

staff-cross of the resurrection held across his body are two such motifs. This latter detail is found in a sixth-century context in Italy, but except for its appearance in the insular *Turin Gospel Book* (pl.135), it is not found in mainstream art of the West outside works produced under the patronage of Eastern churchmen.³³⁷

The Annunciation (pl.57) shows certain features in common with other Anglo-Saxon versions of the scene, but its closest parallels again lie in sixth-century Eastern works which feature the wicker chair (pls.158-9), and in the eight-century Palestinian enamel cross (pl.74) which repeats the position of Mary's body and hands. The chair is found very occasionally in Italy, but again it is limited to works produced at centres which operated under strong Eastern influence.³³⁸

Similarly, details of the Wirksworth Presentation scene (pl.56) are most closely echoed in the decoration of the later Farfa Casket (pl.160), produced in Italy by Syrian craftsmen and thought to reveal the iconography of pre-iconoclastic Eastern art. Some elements of the scene are found in Roman works of the early eighth-century Pope, John VII, but once more these mosaics and frescoes are noted for what they reveal of Eastern iconographic practices of the time.³³⁹ The same, strongly Eastern influences can be seen in the Anastasis, although here again, some details are found in the early eighth-century papal productions at Sta.Maria Antiqua.³⁴⁰

The iconographic source of The Funeral Procession of the Virgin (pls.52-3) is less clear in that no other example of this scene has survived from the early Medieval period.

However, the seried arrangement with the Handing Over of the Soul, and the potentially unchronological presentation, may point again to Eastern provincial art of the pre-iconoclastic period.³⁴¹

It is only the image of the Majestas Agni (pl.51) which does not betray a strongly early Eastern iconography. Here the best analogies are found with early Italian works, and early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon and mid eight^h-century Merovingian works, although individual details, such as the zooanthropomorphic, book-bearing evangelist symbols are found in Western centres open to Eastern influence.³⁴²

Overall, the iconography of the Wirksworth slab thus implies the presence of models which were based extremely closely on Eastern works of the sixth-century, but which themselves were probably produced in Western centres, possibly during the eighth century. Whether these centres were located in Italy or Gaul, the iconography of the Eastern prototype was not too radically altered in the model(s) which provided the actual inspiration for the Wirksworth figural scenes.

II

The figural style of the Wirksworth carving points to similar sources of influence as the iconography has done. It is a remarkably distinctive style which is characterised by the use of oval shaped heads with broad foreheads and full rounded cheeks, eyes which have been drilled, and a fringe of hair around the forehead. The hands and feet are not well formed, but their positioning is not random. The clothing tends towards a repeated pattern of regular ribbed pleats, but an attempt has been made to give some coherence to the falling folds of the over-garments. Although there is not much suggestion of a body within the clothing, the tubular full-length robes do provide a three-dimensional quality.

These facial features, the clumsy hands and feet, and the preponderance of regular pleating are details characteristic of the art which originated in the Eastern Empire during the fourth and sixth centuries. The use of wig-like curly hair cut round the forehead to form a fringe, and the carving of the drapery with regular incised lines, are features characteristic of the treatment of the human figure in Constantinopolitan art of the fourth to sixth centuries,³⁴³ of Syrian art of the fourth and fifth centuries,³⁴⁴ and Egyptian art of the fifth and sixth centuries, by which time the tendency was towards an increased schematisation of detail, and a stricter frontality of the figures.³⁴⁵

It was this figural style which was also picked up on the fifth-century sarcophagi of Gaul and northern Italy as a result of the orientalisation of Western workshops by carvers from Syria. On the sarcophagi the figural carving was characterised by drilled eyes, hair which was cut over the brow in a scalloped fringe, heads depicted with a wide cranium and pointed chin, and a *pallium* draped across the body and above one knee with a tunic underneath; the drapery was carved with regular incised lines.³⁴⁶

In Western Europe this figural style seems to have survived into the seventh-century in Gaul, particularly in areas round the Midi towns which had continuous trade contacts with Syria, Egypt and Constantinople; it is reflected in ivories thought to have been produced in this area during the sixth and seventh centuries.³⁴⁷ Eastern stylistic influences were also felt further afield in Gaul; they are reflected for instance, in the decorative motifs employed by Merovingian artists in works such as the Jouarre sarcophagi whose ornament is based on Byzantine work of the sixth century.³⁴⁸

Thus the distinctive style employed on the Wirksworth slab, like the iconography, demonstrates the influence of a figural art which had firm origins in the art of the Eastern Mediterranean in the sixth century, and which was being produced, at least in the late seventh century, in Western European centres.

III

The iconography and the figural style of the Wirksworth slab thus indicate that the model(s) on which the majority of the scenes were based could have reached Mercia by the eighth century. It is only the iconography of the *Majestas Agni* which is not closely paralleled before the mid eighth century, although separately, the crouched position of the Lamb, its association with a cross, and with the evangelist symbols, are found in Christian art well before this. However, the eighth-century manuscript illustrations do suggest that a date within this century provides the most reasonable *terminus a quo* for the production of the Wirksworth slab. The significant absence of any signs of the iconographic developments associated with Carolingian art of the late eighth and ninth centuries further suggests that the carving probably pre-dates the influence of these Continental developments on Anglo-Saxon art during the ninth century. Thus the iconography of the Wirksworth slab suggests that it was produced in the latter decades of the eighth century.

It could of course be argued that because most of the figural iconography at Wirksworth is so closely based on rather archaic forms, its reproduction on the slab could have taken place at any time. However, the figural carving of other Anglo-Saxon monuments, even when based on archaic iconographic types, does reveal attempts to adapt those types in the light of more recent developments. Thus the use of a fifth- or sixth-century

version of the Virgin on a cross-legged stool in the Hovingham Annunciation (pl.3) has been adapted to portray her as the Mother of God with all the trappings of her rank. The complete absence of such iconographic manipulations at Wirksworth thus suggests that the slab is best seen within a late eighth-century context.

IV

Apart from providing indications of the date and provenance of the model(s) for the Wirksworth scenes, the figural style may also provide some indication of the type of artefact(s) which carried the figural scenes reproduced on the slab. Not only is the distinctive figural style characteristic of Eastern-influenced works of the fourth to sixth centuries, it is also a style which is specifically associated with Italo-Gallic sarcophagus art, and with smaller carved artefacts inspired by the early Christian sarcophagi.³⁴⁹ It may well be that it was the decoration of such portable objects which inspired the carving at Wirksworth.

It has already been noted that the Wirksworth slab has much in common with the decoration of early Christian sarcophagi in its arrangement into two registers with a central motif, the use of a series of tightly packed and ill-proportioned figures with no immediately apparent scene divisions, and of scenes composed largely of two to four figures.³⁵⁰ These similarities, in style and organisation, may well imply that the figural decoration of

the Wirksworth slab was, as Kurth argued, based ultimately on the decoration of early Christian sarcophagi. It has also been argued, by scholars such as Webster, that it was these early Christian sarcophagi which inspired the decoration of smaller portable reliquaries, such as the fourth-century Italian Brescia casket, and which in Anglo-Saxon England provided the ultimate inspiration for the late seventh- or early eighth-century Franks Casket.³⁵¹

Thus, the Wirksworth scenes and their lay-out may well have been inspired by sarcophagus art through the intermediate means of a smaller portable artefact, such as a reliquary casket which reproduced the decoration and form of the sarcophagi.

V

With the possible inspiration of sarcophagus art in mind, it is worth returning to view the Wirksworth slab as part of an Anglo-Saxon sarcophagus. It was argued at the beginning of this chapter that the stone originally formed the lid of a tomb, whose sides may, or may not have been decorated. As such, it provides an interesting addition to our knowledge of these funerary monuments in pre-Viking England, and may have some bearing on the rationale behind their use during that period in northern England.

There is documentary evidence that earlier Roman sarcophagi were available in Anglo-Saxon England and were reused during the seventh century for the burial of eminent ecclesiastics in the north and south of England. At the beginning of the seventh century, for instance, in accordance with Merovingian practices, Augustine's remains were translated into the north chapel of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul at Canterbury; at this second interment a Roman sarcophagus was used.³⁵² At the end of that century Bede describes how Sebba of the East Saxons (d. 694 A.D.) was provided with a stone coffin which proved to be too short for his body. If it had been made especially for him, it is unlikely that this oversight would have occurred. After chipping away a further two inches from inside the sarcophagus, it was still found to be too short:

...unde facta difficultate tumulandi, cogitabant aut aliud quaerere loculum, aut ipsum corpus, si possent, in genibus inflectendo breviare, donec ipso loculo caperetur.

(So in view of the difficulty of burying him they debated whether they should look for another coffin, or by bending the knees shorten the body so that it would fit the coffin.)³⁵³

This suggests that there was a relatively good supply of such coffins. Indeed, when sent out by Sexburga (c. 696) to find a block of stone suitable for making a coffin for the translated remains of her sister Aethelthryth, the monks of Ely travelled to Cambridge where they were lucky enough to stumble across a ready-made sarcophagus, which was fortunately found to be a perfect fit for the saintly abbess's body.³⁵⁴ Another reference is found in Bede's account of the life and miracles of the Northumbrian

saint, Cuthbert, who at the time of his death, instructed his followers to bury him in the sarcophagus given to him by Abbot Cudda, which he had set aside for this purpose.³⁵⁵ After the translation of the saint's body in 698 A.D. this same sarcophagus was reused yet again for the earthly remains of his successor Bishop Eadbert.³⁵⁶

The documented reuse of sarcophagi dating from the Romano-British period³⁵⁷ may argue against the local production of sarcophagi in Anglo-Saxon England. However, while Roman sarcophagi were being reused in Merovingian Gaul, sculptors, at Jouarre for instance, were also employed in making their own sarcophagi at the end of the seventh century.³⁵⁸ In England, it would seem that earlier sarcophagi were reused during the seventh century, but during the eighth century, in Mercia at least, new monuments were made by local craftsmen;³⁵⁹ the monument at St. Alkmund, Derby has already been mentioned, and the remains of similar coped stone monuments, which may have been sarcophagi, also survive from Bakewell (Derbys.). At Breedon (Leics.) and Peterborough (Cambs.) there are other large coped shrines dating from the end of the eighth century.³⁶⁰ It may well be that the Wirksworth slab should be seen within this nexus of prestigious coped monuments which seems to have flourished in Mercia during the last half of the eighth century.

VI

Another factor which must be borne in mind concerns the rationale which lay behind the re-use of the earlier sarcophagi. The documentary evidence suggests that they were employed for prestige burials during the establishment of a cult centred on the dead ecclesiastic; Cuthbert was aware of this tendency and tried to take precautions against it.³⁶¹ The use of stone sarcophagi for the remains of Augustine and Aethelthryth both represented secondary interments, and a stone coffin was considered the suitable resting place for Sebbi, a king venerated as a holy man during his lifetime.³⁶² It is possible that this burial, achieved after such trouble, and only with the aid of a miracle, demonstrates a certain amount of foresight by his family; there were economic advantages to be reaped by a church and its patrons in the establishment of a cult.³⁶³

At Wirksworth a Roman sarcophagus was not used for the burial, but instead a locally-made coffin was provided. While this is probably explained to a certain extent by the current Mercian fashion for sarcophagus-like funerary monuments, and while the quality of the carving and the number of scenes on its lid imply that it was, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, a prestige item, the rich and complex iconography of those scenes does provide some indication of the context in which such a monument may have been commissioned.

It has been noted that the iconography of the slab expresses a general theme of humility and obedience rewarded in death by eternal life with the blessed, and that such a message would have had particular relevance in a monastic environment. The exemplary figures demonstrating this lesson are placed on either side of the central motifs of Christ's Ascension and the apotheosis of the Lamb of the Apocalypse. On the left-hand side are the examples given by Christ, on the right are those given by his mother - the one a man, the other a woman. The scenes of Mary and her son have been arranged so that they comment and reflect on each other across the centre, but there is an added effect which serves to emphasise the two characters as separate individuals; Mary is highlighted as a specific example in her own right. She is the example of female virginity dedicated to God with humility and obedience. While these virtues would have been relevant in a male monastic community, they would have had an added importance in a female, or double monastic community, and the arrangement of the scenes on the Wirksworth slab emphasises such a relevance.

What little is known about the church at Wirksworth in the pre-Viking period suggests strongly that it was a dependency of, or at least formed part of the estates of the double monastery at Repton (Deryshire), fifteen miles south of Wirksworth. That there was some monastic activity at Wirksworth in the pre-Viking period is indicated not only by the presence of the Wirksworth slab but also by the remains of the badly worn cross-shaft which stands in the church-yard to the north-west of the present church

(pl.58).³⁶⁴ It is very likely therefore that there was some form of monastic establishment founded at Wirksworth on estate lands belonging to Repton.

Repton itself was a rich monastery, established before the end of the seventh-century (c.675-700) and ruled by an abbess. It was associated with the royal house of Mercia, and flourished well into the ninth-century when it fell into disuse after the Viking army wintered there in 873-4 A.D. From 714 A.D. there is evidence that it owned lead mines round Wirksworth from which a lead coffin was sent to contain the remains of St.Guthlac of Croxland.³⁶⁵ At Repton there is evidence for the production of high quality stone carving from the mid eighth-century.³⁶⁶

This background and the iconography of the Wirksworth slab which emphasises the role of Mary as a humble and obedient virgin who had dedicated her life to God, suggests that the coffin was produced by or for a community which had strong links with, if it was not itself, a double monastery. In other words, the person originally buried in the coffin for which the Wirksworth slab was the cover, was a fairly prominent ecclesiastic who was judged sufficiently worthy to qualify for a prestigious tomb. They were in all likelihood a member of a foundation at Wirksworth dependent on the double monastery at Repton, which was flourishing politically and economically during the eighth and ninth centuries, and with which Wirksworth seems to have been inextricably linked. It may be that the person for whom the

coffin was originally made was a female member of the community, given the deliberate use of scenes from the life of Mary to decorate at least one half of the lid, but equally these scenes may have been chosen for their relevance to the audience, rather than the deceased.

Whatever the identity of the person for whom the sarcophagus was made, the iconography of the slab, in both its detail and its unified thematic presentation, implies a centre of relative theological sophistication. Individually the scenes do not express anything very extraordinary, but the control, the choice, and the manipulation of their iconography implies a level of sophistication that requires a settled and economically flourishing ecclesiastical establishment, supported by a political system which was also relatively settled and economically stable. These pre-conditions were provided by the kingdom of Mercia in the second half of the eighth-century under Offa, and are reflected elsewhere in such Mercian monasteries as Repton and Medeshamstead (Peterborough) with which Wirksworth has been associated, during the eighth and ninth centuries.³⁶⁷

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

A number of issues have emerged in the course of this thesis which have, for the most part, been summarised in the preceding chapters, where their implications for the individual monuments were discussed. Thus the figural style of the Rothbury cross has been shown to display the influence of a variety of models, which have, in part, been concealed by the sculptor's ability to impose a sense of unity on the different scenes. This has produced an apparent coherence throughout the cross-shaft and drawn the iconography of the disparate and fragmented scenes into a closer relationship (pp.137-245). At Wirksworth on the other hand, the identification of the individual scenes on the sarcophagus cover has contributed to an understanding of the nature of the ecclesiastical foundation responsible for the production of the sarcophagus. The controlling theme of obedience and humility in life rewarded by eternal life in death is well suited to a monastic environment, and the balancing of Christ's exemplary life and death with that of the Virgin, indicates that the monastery may well have been a double one (pp.566-85).

There are however, more wide-ranging points which now require further examination, and some inferences about the production of the sculpture must also be explored. My initial concern is with the models on which the sculptured figural scenes were based: their range of subject matter and iconographic type,

their dates of origin, the routes of their transmission into England, and the nature of the artefacts they once decorated. A second, more hypothetical, point concerns those who were involved in reproducing and adapting these iconographic models on the sculpture itself.

I

To examine first of all the range of subject matter and iconographic types found on the sculpture, it must be noted, at the outset, that twenty-six different subjects have been identified among the figural carvings on the six monuments discussed in this thesis. If the scenes of Bewcastle and Ruthwell are added to this list then it is clear that even such a relatively small number of near-complete monuments provides an impressive range of iconographic subjects.¹ Some of these, of course, depict the same event but it is a further measure of the richness of early Anglo-Saxon Christian iconography that the same event is rarely shown in an identical form; rather they demonstrate that different versions of the same subject were available for the decoration of the different monuments.²

Thus the Annunciations found at Hovingham, Sandbach, Wirksworth and Ruthwell can be traced back to four separate iconographic types. That used at Wirksworth (pl.57) originated in the Eastern provinces of the pre-Iconoclastic period and shows the Virgin sitting in a high-backed wicker chair (see above

pp.504-8), while that at Sandbach (pl.34) shows Mary seated on a high-backed throne (see pp.360-2). The scene at Hovingham (pl.3) depends on another Eastern type which depicted the handmaiden of the Lord seated on a cross-legged stool (pp.56-61), and the Ruthwell scene (pl.70) shows the influence of an iconographic type which featured the standing Virgin.³ Similarly the Ascensions found at Rothbury and Wirksworth derive from different models. The Northumbrian monument reveals the influence of an Eastern iconographic type which was probably transmitted through the Italian West in the eighth century (see pl.20); in origin this type was an Apocalyptic scene of the Second Coming (pp.168-84). The Mercian carving, on the other hand (pl.55), seems to have been based on a pre-Iconoclastic Eastern scheme which depicted the risen and victorious Christ, a completely different concept to the Judge figure of Rothbury (see above pp.494-504). A similar conclusion can be drawn from the carved depictions of the Raising of Lazarus. One version, found at Rothbury (pl.18), reveals the presence of a fourth- or fifth-century Italian model which showed Martha kneeling at the feet of Christ (see pp.199-209). Against this should be set the variation on this iconographic type found at Gt.Glen, Leicestershire (pl.62), which shows Christ performing the miracle with a short rod. The carving at Heysham (Lancs), on the other hand (pl.113), reflects a totally different Lazarus type; its swathed figure standing before a sepulchre in a scene from which Christ is absent finds its closest parallel among Roman catacomb and gold glass decoration of the fourth century.⁴

Thus, although approximately fifteen schemes are found more than once in Anglo-Saxon sculpture,⁵ the majority of these do not tend to be dependent either on each other, or on common models.

Most of the surviving subjects discussed in the earlier chapters are not, however, duplicated either in the sculpture or elsewhere in the extant corpus of pre-Viking art; indeed some of these carved representations are the only examples of these scenes surviving in the art of the pre-Norman period.⁶ Thus while the subjects that are repeated demonstrate the variety of model-types available in Anglo-Saxon England, the occurrence of single scenes unique to Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and even to pre-Conquest art, further argues that the range of representations was once much wider than is evidenced by surviving pieces.

Scenes such as the Three Women at the Sepulchre (Hovingham; pl.2) and The Harrowing of Hell (Wirksworth; pl.54), for example, taken in conjunction with scenes found in other media which illustrate events from Christ's Passion and Resurrection, suggest that there was available a wide range of iconographic models depicting Passion and Resurrection narratives (see below pp.592-4). The Burial of the Virgin and the Crucifixion of St. Andrew, featured uniquely in early Christian art at Wirksworth (pls.52-3) and St. Andrew Auckland respectively, indicate that the range of apocryphal iconography must also have been somewhat larger than the surviving material would otherwise suggest.⁷ This impression of a once-existing wealth of subject matter is increased further by the survival of other, non-narrative, and

more symbolically hierarchic images featured in England only on the early sculpture: namely The Majestas Agni, The Traditio Legis cum Clavis and the Adorations of Christ and the Virgin.⁸ However, the unique survival of scenes such as those illustrating the Apocryphal narratives raises the probability that other material may once have existed which has now been lost. The Sufferings of St. Paul illustrated in the manuscript brought to England in the eighth century by Bishop Cuðwine offers a salutary reminder of just such a lost body of iconographic material.⁹

A close study of some of the individual scenes identified in this thesis provides some insights into the possible range of this material. I begin with a possible Old Testament sequence suggested by the Samson "Gates of Gaza" scene at Masham (and Cundall) which is the only instance of Samson iconography surviving in Anglo-Saxon art (see pl.9 & above pp.111-14). Elsewhere in the British Isles depictions of Samson are limited to the two crudely rendered Pictish scenes found at Inchbrayock where Samson is shown with Delilah, and slaying the Philistine.¹⁰ As well as these two scenes, the Masham carving not only provides us with another Samson type, but also increases our recognition of the range of figural iconography potentially available to insular artists, because in Christian art generally, both in the British Isles and elsewhere, Samson iconography seems to have existed only in typological and narrative cycles (see pp.111-14). The Pictish examples for instance, formed part of a dual iconographic programme of salvation where they are shown in

conjunction with comparable events from the New Testament,¹¹ while the Byzantine manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus contains an illustrated narrative of Samson's life.¹² Thus the survival of the Samson scene at Masham may imply a greater presence of Samson (and indeed other Old Testament) scenes in Anglo-Saxon England. Although these speculations should not be carried too far, the Masham scene may suggest the presence of a Bible, as fully illustrated as some of the later Carolingian Bibles,¹³ or perhaps an illustrated Commentary on the Book of Judges.¹⁴

Whatever the validity of these speculations, the fact remains that the Samson scene at Masham suggests that there was, at least potentially, a body of Old Testament iconography which extended far beyond that represented by the extant Davidic material which forms the greatest single subject area of Old Testament figural iconography in Anglo-Saxon art generally.¹⁵

Turning from the Old Testament material and still pursuing the same theme of a possibly wider range of available iconographic types, it is worth considering whether some of the New Testament and Apocrypha scenes, unique to the sculpture, might not also represent the chance survivals of a once greater corpus of pictorial material. Although the figural scenes in Anglo-Saxon art are not generally presented in terms of cycles of scenes, and it has been argued that the carved art of the time did not favour such narrative arrangements (see above pp.45-55), there is no reason to assume that some of the individual scenes

were not copied from a context in which they formed part of a sequence of scenes, especially since this may have been the case with the Samson scene at Masham. It must of course be stressed that the copying of individual scenes from a cycle may not necessarily have taken place within the workshop responsible for the production of the monument in question, but in some cases this may actually have happened.

Three New Testament sequences (the Infancy, Passion or Resurrection, and Christ's Miracles) are worth considering in this context. The evidence they provide, as we will see, is not identical. Beginning with the Infancy cycles, it is probable that, if they were present in Anglo-Saxon England, they could have included illustrations of the Journey to Bethlehem, the Magi before Herod, and Christ before the Doctors in the Temple,¹⁶ none of which have survived in insular art of the pre-Viking period.¹⁷ Overall we have sculptural evidence of The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Nativity, The Presentation and The Adoration of the Magi. At Sandbach we have The Annunciation (pl.34), Nativity and Adoration of the Magi (pl.28); the Annunciation and Adoration scenes, found together on a single monument, derive from iconographic types of similar date and provenance, and so may indicate the former existence in England of a larger repertoire of Infancy scenes (see pp.416-20). Likewise the Presentation and Annunciation found at Wirksworth (pls.56-7) are both derived from comparable model-types, and might be held to imply the presence of another series of scenes

related to the Infancy of Christ (pp.504-14). The Visitation and the Annunciation at Hovingham, however (pls.3-4), are less open to this supposition; The Visitation was always depicted next to the Annunciation in early Christian art, whether or not it was part of a cycle, and the occurrence of the two scenes (as they survive at Hovingham on one panel of a composite shrine), need not therefore necessarily imply the presence of yet another collection of iconographic material related to Christ's Infancy (pp.43-5).

A series of Passion or Resurrection scenes may also have been available, providing the individual instances of the Raising of Lazarus (which prefigures Christ's Resurrection), The Pedilavum, The Road to Calvary, The Crucifixion, The Harrowing of Hell, The Resurrection of Christ (illustrated by the three women at the sepulchre) and The Ascension, and even possibly The Transfiguration and The Traditio Legis which sometimes began and ended a Passion and Resurrection cycle. At Rothbury it has been suggested that the Crucifixion (pl.15) may have derived from a late antique Italian type, while the Raising of Lazarus (pl.10) found elsewhere on the cross-shaft can be traced back to a model of similar date and provenance; these two scenes may represent individual survivals of a larger Passion sequence (pp.234-6). The Pedilavum, The Harrowing, The Ascension and possibly The Majestas Agni, all appearing together on the Wirksworth sarcophagus cover (pl.49), and all deriving from iconographic types of Eastern origin and early, sixth-century dates, also argue strongly for the availability of a fairly complex Passion and Resurrection

cycle - and one distinct from that lying behind Rothbury (pp.572-6). At Sandbach there is the early iconographic type of the crucified figure of Christ (pl.28), as well as the two scenes of the Road to Calvary (pl.34). The serial arrangement of these last two scenes with the remnants of the foliate motifs which once separated them, suggest the presence of a detailed Passion cycle (such as is found in the *Augustine Gospels*) which may also have included The Transfiguration and Traditio Legis (pp.353-60).

Following this line of argument the possible range of Infancy and Passion material available for the Anglo-Saxon artists and sculptors might seem almost unlimited. But it must be stressed that the one place where such a potentially wide range can be strongly argued is at Sandbach where the evidence before us certainly indicates the availability of a Passion cycle, and probably an Infancy sequence. Elsewhere the evidence is less clear, and at Wirksworth may be more indicative of the nature of the artefact providing the figural iconography for the sarcophagus cover, than the range of subjects possibly available in late eighth-century Mercia (see further below p.599).

Study of the miracle scenes suggests, initially, a contrast with the deductions which might be made from the surviving Infancy and Passion or Resurrection scenes. There is first, a surprisingly narrow range of miracle narrative on the sculpture; the carved scenes of Christ's Ministry are limited to the Raising of Lazarus (at Heysham, Gt.Glen and Rothbury; pls.18,62,113), The

Feeding of the Five Thousand (or the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes found at Dewsbury and Hornby; pls.66-7), the Miracle at Cana (at Dewsbury; pl.67) and The Healing of the Blind Man (at Ruthwell).¹⁸ Thus, the carved miracle scenes would seem to imply a virtual absence from Anglo-Saxon England of sequences of pictorial material related to Christ's ministry on earth; on a broader insular canvas, such a conclusion might be supported by the even greater lack of variety in the miracle scenes depicted on Irish sculpture where only the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Miracle at Cana are found, albeit with more frequency;¹⁹ no miracle scenes occur in Pictish sculpture and they are also absent from the insular carved media of ivory, metal and wood.²⁰

However, in insular manuscript art, the miracles of Christ are relatively common,²¹ indicating that knowledge of the iconography of miracle scenes was not so limited as would be implied by the sculptural material; the manuscript evidence suggests therefore that what survives on the sculpture is not, in this case, representative of the total range of model-types once available. Set against the miracle iconography of the manuscripts the comparative restriction of the New Testament Ministry scenes on the sculpture may reflect the function of the monuments and the type of audience involved as being different to that of the manuscripts. As Dodwell has pointed out, even within the scope of Christian painting, different subjects were used for different purposes, and the subjects found in one medium tended not to be reproduced in another. Thus the iconography of frescoes, which were a public art for the uneducated masses, was

different to the iconography of the manuscript miniature, the private art of the educated individual.²² In sculptural terms, the relative absence of the miracle scenes from the sculpture may actually be due to the function of the monuments and the motives which lay behind the selection of subjects to be illustrated on them.

If this is the case it is worth examining the significance of the few carved miracle scenes in more detail. The Raising of Lazarus has been shown to incorporate an analogical reference to the Resurrection, both of Christ and of the general resurrection of the Dead (pp.226-31). The miracles of Cana and the Loaves and Fishes are also analogical events, alluding to the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and in the case of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, to Christ as the bread of life.²³ Thus, three of the four miracle scenes which appear on the sculpture are strongly typological and have clear and direct references to Christ's salvation, made available through his life and death to all practising Christians. Of these three scenes, only the Raising of Lazarus is found in the manuscript art; the Eucharistic scenes of the Loaves and Fishes and the Miracle at Cana are unique to the sculpture.²⁴

The healing miracles, on the other hand, which occur frequently in the manuscripts, stress Christ's confrontation with individual people, demonstrating his forgiveness and the instilling of faith into the person concerned; this seems to have

been the import of the iconography of The Healing of the Blind Man at Ruthwell which is the only sculptural example of this more narrative type of miracle scene.²⁵

It would seem, therefore, that the restricted use of miracle iconography on the sculpture may well reflect the function of the monument and the needs of the audience. It is clear that there were comparatively few miracle scenes carved on the stone cross-shafts; when they were depicted the miracles chosen were those which presented clear allegories of the central themes of Christianity, such as Christ's Salvation, the Eucharist and the Resurrection. This selection is in keeping with the other scenes most commonly featured on the sculpture which tend to depict the central events of Christ's Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection; the more hierarchic and symbolic images serve to emphasise the salvation promised in the Incarnation and Death of Christ.²⁶ This implies that there was a need or desire to depict relatively clear references to Christ's salvation resulting in fewer narrative healing scenes. The comparative lack of miracle scenes and the restricted use of those scenes on the sculpture does not therefore reflect a narrow range of iconographic material available to the sculptors, but rather the function of the monuments and what were seen to be the needs of the audience involved.

II

So far the discussion has been concerned with the evidence for a wide range of figural iconography available to the Anglo-Saxon sculptors as seen in individual scenes possibly derived from cyclic contexts. However, discussion of the miracle scenes has led to a consideration of the restrictions possibly operating in the selection of scenes caused by the monuments' function. Closely related to this discussion is the question of the precise form or medium on which the sculptors were drawing for their models. It should not be too easily assumed that because both emerged from the same milieu, that there was a general system of inter-copying between manuscript and sculptural art. We have already noticed that very different deductions would be drawn about the extent of the miracle iconography from the evidence of the sculpture and the evidence of the manuscripts; evangelist portraits, found exclusively in the manuscripts, provide a further instance. This suggests that sculptors did not necessarily, as has often been assumed, copy their material from easily portable manuscripts. Rather, the evidence seems to point to the use of *three-dimensional* art forms which had been introduced into Anglo-Saxon England with a limited amount of associated figural iconography. The implication is that the decoration of the stone monuments was more likely to have been inspired by the scenes decorating other carved artefacts than those associated with the illustrated manuscripts, painted boards or walls, or woven and embroidered textiles; the figural iconography of the Anglian sculpture may not represent a

transference of decoration from two-dimensional forms, but a maintenance of certain iconographic types within the three-dimensional decorated media. This acted as an in-built limitation on the range of iconographic material available to the sculptors.

Looking at the individual monuments, this can in fact be seen quite clearly in some cases. The layout and the scenes on the cross-shafts at Sandbach for instance, appear to have been based on open metalwork model(s). Thus the rivets of the original medium have been translated into the small pellets and bosses which cover the sides of both crosses, while the figures themselves are continuous with the surrounding frames in a manner that would have been functional in the metalwork; on the sculpture these features are structurally redundant and have become distinctive stylistic motifs linking the two crosses (see pls.27-48; pp.427-29). At Wirksworth the figural style, and the layout of the scenes in two registers without dividing frames (pl.49), is remarkably similar to features characteristic of the early Italo-Gallic sarcophagi. Such features also appear on smaller carved ivory caskets, such as the Brescia casket, themselves based on the larger sarcophagi. It is probable that such an artefact inspired at least the layout and figural style of the Wirksworth sarcochagus, and may well have carried with it the iconography of the scenes (see pp.579f.).

The Rothbury cross also shows the influence of a number of carved models, such as the good quality carved model not too far

removed from a late antique or early Christian prototype which provided the distinctive figural style. The presence of a sixth-century consular diptych has already been shown to lie behind the symbols held by the figures adoring Christ in the cross-head (pl.16), and such an artefact may well have provided the inspiration for the figural style used throughout the cross-shaft. Similarly, the best parallels for the Lazarus scene (pl.18) are found on carved stone sarcophagi which may have been copied onto a carved portable artefact. Other, insular motifs, such as the beasts entwined with the Damned in Hell at the base of the shaft (pl.23), and the distinctively deep dishd haloes are also best paralleled in carved insular models of both stone and ivory. The hell scene, although unique in its actual representation, is one of three of the earliest attempts to portray the Damned in Hell, all of which are insular, and all of which are carved.²⁷ Thus carved artefacts, possibly in the form of book-covers or caskets, provided the figural style and some of the iconographic details of the Rothbury scenes (see pp.234-45).

The evidence for the media form of the models of the Hovingham panel (pl.1) and the Masham column (pl.68) is less clear given the greater deterioration of their carving. However the gestures and arrangement of the three women at the sepulchre on the Hovingham piece (pl.2) are remarkably similar to those found carved on Roman sarcophagi; the Annunciation angel (pl.3) has features in common with other carved insular examples such as the Genoels-Elderen Diptych (pl.69) and the angel with his arms

crossed found on the Wirksworth slab (pl.57). Again the worn condition of the carving makes any real comparisons difficult to make, but the deepness of the carving and the delicacy of the drapery does indicate that a carved model may well have lain behind the figural scenes of that monument (see pp.26-79).

It does seem on the whole, therefore, that carved or embossed, two-dimensional scenes, decorating a variety of portable artefacts, provided the models for much of the figural iconography of the stone sculpture. This does not mean the sculptors were inspired only by non-linear art forms, but that the carved decoration of ivory (or wooden) artefacts, whether caskets, book-covers or diptychs, or the embossed decoration of metal (or terra cotta) objects such as caskets, dishes, situlae, medallions or ampullae, were more likely to be reproduced on the sculptured stone monuments than the decoration of textiles, manuscripts, painted boards and murals.²⁸ It must of course be recognised that the decoration found on the carved media could well be found also on the painted and woven artefacts, and where no evidence is available for the media form inspiring the iconography of the carved scenes a painted or textile model cannot be ruled out, but this source does appear to be less likely.

While this may mean that certain iconographic schemes were more usually associated with certain media, the surface of the object, and therefore its decorative potential must also have played some part in deciding which scenes appeared on the

artefacts, and it may well have been easier to copy from a model already "carved" than from a more linear representation of any one scene. However, the sculptors of the Anglo-Saxon cross-shafts were in many cases extremely innovative, and copying from one medium to another cannot be assumed to have been beyond their technical abilities. Nevertheless the possibility that the figural iconography was in some way more likely to be influenced by the iconography of other two-dimensional media must, at the very least, be considered.

This rather long excursus has revealed that there are certain difficulties involved in making deductions from the extant sculptural material of Anglo-Saxon England, but some general conclusions can be drawn from the last two sections. It is clear that there was a surprising range of subject matter available, even on the few monuments which have survived. There was also an impressive range of iconographic types available across the whole of England in the early period, but the Anglo-Saxon sculptors apparently did not draw on this entire range. This restriction was a result, not only of the function of the monuments they were creating, but was due, more importantly, to the nature of the decorated artefacts they chose to use as models.

As a footnote to this, and as evidence of the richness of the figural iconography found on the Anglian sculpture, it is important to remember that some of the sculptors were not only

recording a large variety of iconographic types on the carved monuments, but were at the same time generating fresh material. At Rothbury for example, the accumulated iconographic evidence of the Ascension, the figures adoring Christ in the cross-head, and the crowd of the Blessed (pls.16,19-20), suggests the probable creation of new iconographic types, separate from the scene of the Second Coming from which they were probably derived. The unique version of the Ascension knits together the associated themes of Ascension, the establishment of the Church throughout the world, and the Last Judgement in a remarkably sophisticated, but coherent manner. The figures adoring Christ on the Rothbury cross-head derive in part from the iconography of the Second Coming, but they were also strongly influenced by the imperial symbolism of early consular diptychs (see eg. pls.109-110); the motifs from the two sources have been combined to create a third, and totally new scene, suited to the shape and position of the cross-head, which celebrates Christ's divine authority as the Son of God and Man. Similarly, The Damned in Hell at the base of the cross-shaft (pl.23) are compiled from a number of early Christian and insular motifs, put together to create a new and unique iconographic type of Hell and Damnation (see pp.212-18). Elsewhere, Samson with the Gates of Gaza at Masham (pl.9) represents the creation of a new scene derived from an illustration of Samson Destroying the Temple (pl.84). The Masham scene demonstrates the existence of a scene otherwise unknown in Anglo-Saxon art, and the creation of an additional scene unique both to insular art, and to Christian art generally at this time (see pp.111-14). Thus our picture of the range of subject matter

once available should not be seen solely as the sum of the models available to the Anglo-Saxon sculptor, as he was clearly capable of generating his own. The range was probably much greater, and was in some cases extended, taking on a dynamic of its own in the course of the production of the sculpture.²⁹

III

In the preceding chapters it has become apparent that many of the iconographic models on which the figural scenes were based were of an early type. For instance the crucified figure of Christ and the abbreviated Nativity below it (pl.28) on the ninth-century Sandbach cross-shaft (Cross 1) are very close copies of the iconographic types developed in the West between the fourth and sixth centuries (see pp.303-21). The Crucifixion and Lazarus scenes on the Rothbury cross-shaft (pls.15,18), though in an eighth-century context, also demonstrate the presence of iconographic types from an early, fourth- or fifth-century date (pp.151-62, 199-209), while the gestures of the three women at the sepulchre (pl.2), and their arrangement in procession along the Hovingham panel at the turn of the ninth century, show remarkably little alteration from the third- and fourth-century iconographic types of mourning female figures commonly associated with funerary art of the late antique West (see pp.45-55). Similarly the figural scenes on the Wirksworth sarcophagus cover (pl.49) are largely unchanged from those produced in the Eastern provinces of the fifth and sixth

centuries (pp.577-8). In most of these cases any discrepancies between the Anglo-Saxon version and the earlier type appear to have been the result of the English sculptor's attempts to adapt the iconography of his early model to the context of the monument he was carving. Thus the early Western type of Crucifixion on the Sandbach cross (pl.28) has been amplified by the four Evangelist symbols to form a statement about the role of the Evangelists and their Gospels in the witnessing and spreading of Christ's salvation to the far corners of the world (see above pp.302-12).

The relative antiquity of much of the figural iconography appearing on the pre-Viking sculpture is emphasised in a slightly different way by the fact that in some cases the Anglo-Saxon examples of the scenes represent the earliest surviving instance of that type. Thus The Presentation in the Temple found at Wirksworth (pl.56) provides evidence for the existence of the Hypapante with the figures standing behind a wall, as found on the Farfa casket (pl.160), at least two centuries before the South Italian artefact was commissioned, and provides the only record in this period of the iconography of the Hypapante in the West outside the now lost (but documented) instance produced in eighth-century Rome under Pope John VII (see pp.508-14).

Similarly The Burial of the Virgin Mary, also featured at Wirksworth (pls.52-3), provides a unique instance in ^{early} Christian art of that apocryphal event. As already discussed, it indicates

that a pictorial tradition of the Death of the Virgin was originally much greater in its scope than is otherwise indicated by existing representations of the Assumption and the Dormition (pp.478-87). It may also provide additional information regarding the decoration which once adorned the *Loca Sancta* of Palestine, and the reproductions of those decorations which reached the West through souvenirs brought back by pilgrims; the scenes were embossed on the silver and terra-cotta ampullae for holy oil, on silver medallions, or embossed or painted on small reliquaries.³⁰

Again, although only found fully developed in later Ottonian art, and in embryonic form in early Christian art, The Road to Calvary illustrated as two scenes at Sandbach (Christ bound and led to Calvary being separated from that of Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross; pl.34), provides the earliest instance of a seried iconographic type. From the frame surrounding the Mercian scenes it appears that the sculptor may well have copied the figures from a model which showed them divided as they are on the cross-shaft. The existence of this arrangement in the ninth-century has hitherto been only surmised from the evidence of later art; the seried depictions found in Ottonian manuscripts are thought to have been inspired from near-contemporary Byzantine iconography which had preserved, or developed, a pre-Iconoclastic type presumed to have existed on the basis of scenes such as appear in the *Augustine Gospels*.³¹ At Sandbach it is possible that we are seeing the "missing link" (see pp.353-60).

While some of the carved figural scenes show a fairly consistent use of early model types throughout the pre-Viking period, others clearly reveal a process of iconographic innovation, comparable to developments in Carolingian art. The Transfiguration and the Traditio Legis cum Clavis (pl.29), featured at Sandbach, are not scenes unique to Christian art, but they do provide additional examples of iconographic types which were not common at this period. Both scenes show that the sculptor was attempting to create his own image in keeping with types which were being developed in the West during the early years of the ninth century, and which achieved a recognisable set form in the tenth century. In this respect the Mercian scenes provide valuable insights into the formation of the iconography of these two events (see pp.321-40, 431-4). It is possible that within this wider context, Anglo-Saxon art should in fact be considered as a potential source of fruitful information concerning the overall development of early Christian figural iconography.

IV

Closely related to the relative antiquity of the model types reflected in the figural scenes found on Anglian sculpture, is the question of their transmission to England. If the model was of Eastern type, the problem arises as to whether it reached England directly, or indirectly through Western areas under Eastern influence; if the model was of Roman origin, it may have

reached England directly, or indirectly through other provincial workshops in areas such as Gaul or North Italy. Here a distinction must be made between the ultimate provenance of the prototype, and how its iconography may have been affected in the course of any reworkings undertaken during its transmission to England.³²

What has emerged from earlier chapters is that on any single monument different scenes represent a number of iconographic model-types of varying dates and places of origin. For instance the Rothbury Lazarus (pl.18) scene shows the influence of an early, fourth- or fifth-century Italo-Gallic model, the figures adoring Christ in the cross-head (pl.16) derive in part from a sixth-century consular diptych, while the Ascension (pl.20) and other related scenes depend on eighth-century Roman iconography. It could be argued that these iconographic elements were transmitted together from Rome, but The Damned in Hell (pl.23) and other decorative motifs on the cross-shaft indicate a more complex situation whereby the sculptor also had access to insular, even local, artefacts and iconographic types, which in turn derived ultimately from Eastern prototypes, and which could be combined with the more recently "imported" forms (see pp.234-45).

The iconography of the Hovingham panel (pl.1) also shows the influence of a variety of sources; thus The Annunciation (pl.3) depends ultimately on an Eastern iconographic type of fifth-century date, which was adapted, probably in England, to

correspond with later iconographic developments which had taken place in both Eastern and Western art between the fifth and ninth centuries. By contrast the mourning women at the sepulchre (pl.2) are almost purely Western and antique in their arrangement and gestures, although similar details were featured in Continental Resurrection scenes of the ninth and tenth centuries. Here it is possible that Carolingian France may have acted as a staging-post for the transmission of the models, both from Italy and from the East (possibly through Italy), but it is not clear what part iconographic developments in Carolingian art played in the actual figural iconography found on the Northumbrian shrine (see pp.73-9).

A simple explanation for the appearance of such varied models on any one monument would be to assume that those iconographic types which were derived ultimately from the Eastern Mediterranean represent types that were adopted by, or used in, Rome during the seventh and eighth centuries where, it has been shown, contemporary Byzantine politics and culture were strongly influential; it is these "Romanised Eastern" types which then made their way to England to appear on the Anglo-Saxon monuments.³³

There are certain difficulties with this solution, however, as is well illustrated by the iconography of the Wirksworth sarcophagus cover (pl.49). Here various iconographic types are depicted which are clearly Eastern in origin, and which although

found as isolated examples in Italy, do not feature predominantly in Western art. The Pedilavum (pl.50), for instance, has its closest parallel in the sixth-century *Augustine Gospels* (pl.142), a South Italian manuscript copied from an earlier Syrian prototype; the type is not featured at all elsewhere in Roman, Italian or Carolingian art. The Annunciation (pl.57) which shows Mary seated in a high-backed wicker chair on the right is found on a Ravennate medallion (pl.159), but apart from this one north Italian instance the Wirksworth scene represents an iconographic type featured only in Syro-Palestinian and Byzantine art, and does not appear elsewhere in Italian or North European art. The Hypapante type of The Presentation (pl.56) was featured in Roman art of the early eighth century, but the type which placed the figures behind a low wall is not found outside Wirksworth except on the later Farfa Casket (pl.160) produced by a Syrian craftsman in southern Italy. The Burial of The Virgin (pls.52-3) is a scene unique to ^{early} Christian art, but the most likely explanation for its existence at Wirksworth is that it represents a copy of a scene which once adorned souvenirs from, or a pilgrim site in, the Holy Land (see pp.478-87).

It is probable therefore that the Wirksworth iconography represents types which were known, but not widespread in Italian art, and at Wirksworth are thus to be seen as one step removed (or at least not very far removed) from their Eastern prototypes; they cannot be described easily as "Italo-Byzantine" or "Romanised Eastern" iconographic types. An alternative, but less likely, suggestion is that they represent iconographic types

which were transmitted directly to Mercia from the East during the eighth century. It is obviously not possible to determine which is the "correct" alternative; there have been strong arguments for the direct transmission of art to Anglo-Saxon England from the East (omitting the Italian "stop-over") since Brøndsted was writing in the 1920's.³⁴ More acceptable now however, is the argument proposed by scholars such as Nordhagen, that the Eastern elements in Anglo-Saxon art are derived from the Byzantine-influenced art of Rome.³⁵ What is clear, given the extreme iconographic archaism of many of the Wirksworth scenes, is that any reworking of their model(s) undertaken in the West could not have been extensive. It has also to be remembered that Eastern pilgrim material was available in England and Gaul throughout the pre-Viking period, as were gifts of State, and so such direct routes cannot be completely ruled out.³⁶

At Sandbach a further question arises concerning the role of other Western centres, outside Italy, in the transmission of the figural iconography. With some scenes (namely the crucified figure of Christ and The Nativity; pl.28) Italian art was certainly influential, and The Road to Calvary scenes (pl.34) may have been transmitted through Western reworkings of Eastern prototypes. However, with other scenes the evidence is less clear. As already argued, the sculptor seems to have had knowledge of contemporary Carolingian versions of The Traditio Legis cum Clavis and The Transfiguration (pl.29), but this knowledge was not accompanied by access to actual models

illustrating the scenes; hence the need to create his own iconography from a limited amount of material derived from various Western model-types, sixth-century Eastern model-types and some insular motifs (see p.321-41). Thus, at Sandbach a slightly different process of transmission seems to be indicated; this involved not only the importation of actual iconographic models, influenced by the art of the Italian West, but also the transmission of contemporary Carolingian artistic developments in a manner which did not involve the presence of the actual model. Scenes such as *The Traditio Legis cum Clavis* and *The Transfiguration* imply a possible process of transmission through verbal or written accounts of iconographic developments which did not include relevant or accompanying visual examples.

There are therefore, a variety of possibilities for the transmission of the different model-types which appear on the individual stone monuments of Anglo-Saxon England and in reality the situation, as seen at Wirksworth and Sandbach, was probably rather complex. What is interesting to note is that such variety existed, not only in the iconographic source material for the individual monuments, but in the contacts the centres must have had in order to acquire such diverse model types, particularly when some of these centres co-existed within the same kingdom and even the same diocese. It would seem for example that the Northumbrian centre responsible for the production of the Rothbury cross in the late eighth-century must have had fairly direct access to artefacts from Italy, while the slightly later, ninth-century Masham and Hovingham monuments reveal closer

contacts with Carolingian Gaul. This may be a reflex of the different contacts fostered by the Northumbrian dioceses centred on Lindisfarne and Hexham, and the southern diocese based at York; or it may be no more than a reflection of a gradual shift southwards of ecclesiastical power in Northumbria during the course of the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Within Mercia, the centre from which the Wirksworth sarcophagus emerged, at roughly the same time as the Rothbury cross, probably had contact with Italy, but may have had quite far-flung contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean. By contrast, that which produced the Sandbach crosses in the first half of the ninth century seems to have had closer, and more up-to-date contact with Carolingian Gaul; yet both Mercian centres were probably within the same diocese of Lichfield.³⁷

It should be noted, however, that while the iconography of the cross-shafts and stone monuments of Anglo-Saxon England provides some indication of the wide and varied cultural contacts which existed with the centres which produced them, both within England and further afield on the Continent, the scenes as they exist do not represent direct copies of their models, but demonstrate the process of adaptation and alteration under the influence of insular art and the meeting of Eastern and Western traditions within English workshops.³⁸

Having considered the models on which the carved figural scenes were based, I shall now turn to the more hypothetical questions surrounding the actual production of the sculpture; questions which primarily concern the identity of those responsible for creating the monuments, rather than the centres from which they emerged.

As far as these centres are concerned, it is apparent from the preceding discussion that there was great variety and diversity in the models lying behind the iconography of the stone sculpture, both in their date and place of origin, and in their form. This variety is found both in the decoration of individual monuments, and in that of monuments at different sites within the same political or ecclesiastical area. Such diversity indicates that the centres which were responsible for the production of the sculpture were places with wide cultural and economic contacts, both within the British Isles and further afield on the Continent. There were two social institutions in Northumbria and Mercia of the eighth and ninth centuries which could have had access to such wide-ranging contacts: the royal courts and the Church.

It has been pointed out by historians such as Wood and Campbell that, like the royal courts, the ecclesiastical establishments, whether cathedral networks or monasteries, were institutions which had both wealth and the means of exchange;

they had landed estates and labour to produce commodities, and through their access to, or control of, the means of long-distance transportation, the wherewithal to realise the value of these commodities.³⁹ It is within such a context that the diversity of what were essentially luxury items (the decorated ivory and metalwork models lying behind the sculptured monuments) could be found. Taken in conjunction with these facts therefore, the find-sites and subject-matter of the monuments examined in this thesis indicate that the sculpture emerged, as Bailey has argued,⁴⁰ from an ecclesiastical context, be it a monastic foundation as is suggested by the iconography of the Wirksworth sarcophagus cover, or a cathedral foundation as indicated by the carved remains at Otley.⁴¹

Study of the iconography of the sculpture however, would be greatly facilitated if more information was available about those who were involved in its actual production. Because we know so little about this process any examination of the figural iconography must be based on certain assumptions concerning the varying degrees of iconographic literacy among the "patrons" (be they individuals or communities), the sculptors and the audiences. These assumptions therefore concern the identity of those who commissioned or designed the monuments, the extent to which they were responsible for the choice of scenes, and so the extent to which they understood their iconographic significance. The identity of the sculptors is also unclear; we do not know whether they were literate ecclesiastics, educated (some more than others) in theological concerns as well as in the craft of

stone carving, or whether they were secular craftsmen who lived on the ecclesiastical estates and were employed within the church or monastic complexes. In addition to this, further assumptions are sometimes made regarding the literacy of the intended audiences.⁴² Possibly recognising this incomplete basis of the study of the iconography of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, Collingwood noted in 1927 that those working on the subject should remember "the conditions of the stone-cutter's craft, the human circumstances which make it necessary to take that craft on its own terms".⁴³ With this in mind it is worth examining what evidence there is for those who were involved in the production of the sculpture.

The evidence about patronage is, at first sight, relatively encouraging. We have clear documentary references to ecclesiastics, such as Biscop, Ceolfrid and Wilfrid using, and controlling the movement of, builders, stone workers and glaziers during the late seventh and early eighth centuries, between Gaul, southern England, Northumbria and Pictland.⁴⁴ A fairly close and dependent relationship is indicated between these patrons and artisans, and the churches they built have yielded sculptural material associated with the first stages of their building activities.⁴⁵ Thus the ecclesiastical patronage of stone sculpture is probable, certainly as part of the early stages of stone church building in Northumbria. From this it is generally assumed that a pattern of church patronage continued throughout the pre-Viking period.

However, as a note of caution, it must be said that the monastic founders cited by Bede and Eddius should possibly not be regarded as behaving in a fashion comparable with their successors. They were, and are, considered as remarkable and noteworthy innovators who were concerned with creating prestigious ecclesiastical foundations in Northumbria in the late seventh century which were clearly out of the ordinary. Thus their patronage of the arts, and particularly of sculpture, should not automatically be assumed to indicate a common pattern which continued for the next two hundred years. Also to be borne in mind are Higgitt's remarks concerning the widely varying functions of the stone carvings produced in England between the seventh and ninth centuries.⁴⁶ These imply that in some cases at least a secular patron may have been involved in the production of religious monuments, such as that at Bewcastle. Thus a purely, or even primarily, ecclesiastical input cannot always be assumed.

As far as the sculptors of the pre-Viking stone monuments are concerned, there is almost no known documentary evidence for their identity or existence. There is however some indication that in certain cases they may have been regarded as craftsmen distinct from the stone masons employed by Biscop and Wilfrid at Jarrow, Monkwearmouth and Hexham.⁴⁷ In his account of Benedict Biscop obtaining artisans from Gaul, Bede refers to the "cementarios" who were to build a church in the Roman style.⁴⁸ These *cementarii* are identified by scholars such as Meyvaert, as "masons who could work in stone".⁴⁹ *Cementarii* are also

referred to in Eddius' account of Wilfrid bringing masons and artisans from Canterbury to establish the church at Hexham.⁵⁰ These well known, and often cited, accounts should, however, be set alongside Bede's treatise on the Temple of Solomon where he describes "sculpturas historiatas" (historiated sculptures);⁵¹ it is far from clear that the *cementarii* were the men who produced these carvings, and it is possible that a distinction was, and should be, made between the stone builders and the stone carvers of the period, particularly as McKitterick's research indicates that this distinction may have operated in eighth-century Gaul.⁵²

Set against the implication offered by this distinction, that the sculptors were, in some cases, craftsmen employed in religious centres, but not necessarily ecclesiastics, there is also an indication, as Higgitt has pointed out, that some of the sculptors were literate.⁵³ Given that illiteracy seems to have been the norm in secular Anglo-Saxon society during the pre-Viking period,⁵⁴ the literacy of these few sculptors indicates that they were, in all probability, ecclesiastics of some kind, despite the fact that the stones bearing their names at Urswick (Lancs.) and Kirkheaton (Yks.) were found on sites not known to have been associated with ecclesiastical centres,⁵⁵ and despite the fact that the degree of literacy indicated by these few inscribed stones is fairly rudimentary; it does not seem to have been of the standard found in Lombardic Italy for instance, where, during the eighth and ninth centuries, there is some evidence that ecclesiastical sculptors produced stone carvings

for clients both religious and secular.⁵⁶

The evidence, such as it is, thus suggests that in some cases we can perhaps locate the sculptors within an ecclesiastical context as secular craftsmen who were distinct from the stone masons, while in other cases they may have been literate, possibly sufficiently literate to understand the iconographic significance of the figural scenes they were carving. Beyond these few vague hints at their identity, and accepting an ecclesiastical role in the patronage of stone carving, most arguments about the figural iconography of Anglo-Saxon sculpture will continue to be based on fairly broad assumptions regarding the factors involved in its actual production. It does seem likely however, that the mode of production varied between one centre and another, and may even have varied between one monument and another.

Compared with the evidence for the patrons and sculptors, our understanding of the audiences is, fortunately, based on assumptions which are becoming less vague. Higgitt, for example, has recently drawn attention to the varied responses invoked by the different functions of the stone monuments.⁵⁷ It is also fairly clear from the figural iconography of these sculptures that just as the methods of production probably varied widely from workshop to workshop, so too the audience responses may have differed. Ó Carragáin has shown for instance, that the multivalency of the decoration of the Ruthwell cross lends itself to various interpretations on individual and communal levels.⁵⁸

The Rothbury cross is probably open to similar varied responses; at one level the iconography demands a highly literate audience full of theological understanding, and yet placed within a church, possibly illuminated, painted and set with paste and pieces of glass, the images of the Damned in Hell or the Blessed in Heaven, of Christ ascending with the angels, and being venerated with symbols of his majesty would have an impressive effect at a very immediate level (see pp.219-33). In a comparable way the Hovingham panel may have recalled specific doctrinal tracts on the Incarnation, Resurrection and Salvation of mankind through faith; at the same time it shows in a simple and clear way that the Son of God came down to earth, died and rose again from the dead (see pp.56-72). At Wirksworth the iconography of the sarcophagus cover lends itself to a commemoration of the dead showing events from the life and death of Christ and the Virgin; it is also applicable to a monastic audience, exemplifying as it does, the monastic virtues of humility and obedience in life, rewarded by eternal life in death (see above pp.514-71). In these cases literate and illiterate responses may have been catered for.

Given the assumptions involved in our understanding of those engaged in producing the sculpture, and the apparently varied nature of the audience responses, there are a number of potential models which can be proposed for the actual production of the sculpture. One possibility may well have included a patron who dictated the layout and details of the scenes on the monument in much the same way as did the wife of the Bishop of Clermont, in

fifth-century Gaul, who oversaw the decoration of the church built and endowed by her:

Quam cum fucis colorum adornare vellet, tenebat librum in sinu suo, legens historias actionum antiquorum, pictoribus indicans quae in parietibus fingere deberent.

(Wanting it to be adorned with coloured frescoes she used to hold in her lap a book from which she would read the histories of events which happened long ago and tell the workmen what she wanted painted on the walls.)⁵⁹

In this instance the patron also acted as the designer; she clearly understood and had close control over the selection and iconographic detail of the scenes decorating the church, which at the same time implies that the painters may have been theologically uneducated and dependent on the patron's guidance. Other models are available, however, and one must take care not to assume too easily that because monuments such as the Sandbach crosses or the Wirksworth slab betray some iconographical incoherence, that this can necessarily be blamed on the sculptor's incompetence; it may also be due to the "patron", to misunderstandings between the patron(s) and the sculptor(s), and of course, it may reflect the iconographic model(s) or the process of adapting that iconography to the different monuments involved, or indeed to the differing needs of the intended audience.

VI

It is evident that the figural decoration of the pre-Viking sculptures which have survived in northern England was the result of a complex and varied situation, both in its production and its intended appeal. It also remains clear that these monuments were highly prestigious objects involving the investment of a great deal of time, training, intellectual and technical ability, money and labour. At Rothbury the cross was probably raised within the church as an impressive and integral part of the building and its service to God.⁶⁰ At Wirksworth and Hovingham the investment was made to commemorate the dead, with presumably, the additional attraction of pilgrims to the shrines. At Masham and Sandbach the original purpose of the monuments is unclear, but they are, even in their present fragmentary and worn condition, the impressive memorials of an established church; they are monumental statements of a faith which was firmly implanted and flourishing in the society of pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England.