

137
26

THE THEOLOGY OF THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

JUDY C. HILDEBRAND, B.S.

DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST, 1991

DEDICATION

"THE THEOLOGY OF THE DREAM OF THE ROOD" IS LOVINGLY
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF JENNIE HAYDEN QUALTROUGH IN DEEP
APPRECIATION FOR HER EXAMPLES OF COURAGE, WISDOM, AND FAITH.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"The Theology of The Dream of the Rood" was inspired by study, reflection, and the desire to understand. Because the composition and study of this poem represents a continuing search through time for truth, beauty, and wisdom, many people deserve credit for completion of this thesis.

I am deeply grateful to my professors, my mentors, my family, my friends, and my peers who sustained and encouraged my efforts. Dr. Suzanne Webb believed in me before I believed in myself, and she inspired my thoughts and guided and directed my progress. Dr. Lavon Fulwiler and Dr. Turner Kobler offered their expertise and their careful attention to every detail along the way. Dr. Joyce Thompson, the master teacher, taught me to love the process of learning and to be courageous in the face of adversity. Dr. Wilkes Berry, master rhetorician, offered countless examples of integrity and honesty in life and in work, and I am forever grateful.

My family gave me understanding and peace and quiet when I needed it, and they set wonderful examples of endurance and great strength in every endeavor. I am especially grateful to Caleb, who taught me to meet every challenge with grace and dignity, to Ryan, Ashlee, and

Doug who endured, and to Cathy who offered forgiveness in her own struggle.

I am also grateful to my peers who shared my love of knowledge and who helped me to expand my horizons with their individual and unique contributions to scholarship. I own a special debt to Betty Kay Seibt, Anne Gervasi, and Marilyn Elliott. They offered friendship and a commitment to excellence.

Finally, I am indebted to the great men and women of letters who shared their profound and timeless messages about love and life and hurt and joy. They provided the real inspiration for my work.

My sincere thanks to each and all of you. Your contributions to my life and my work are immeasurable.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

JUDY C. HILDEBRAND, B.S.

AUGUST, 1991

ABSTRACT

The Dream of the Rood, the first dream-vision poem in English, is acclaimed as one of the finest renderings in Christian literature. The purpose of this paper is to examine the work within the context of the pagan concepts of the cult of the cross and tree veneration to prove that the work accurately reflects the theology and doctrine of the period and provides a theological understanding of the cross as a religious symbol. This thesis surveys the scholarship of the work and presents relevant historical information, reviews early Christian doctrine, provides a rhetorical analysis, and presents a personal translation of the poem. Major sources of data include criticisms of The Dream poem and historical information concerning Old English poetry, Christian doctrine, and theology. Research proves that the poem combines pagan practices and early Christian symbols intricately woven together to provide an expanded theological understanding of the cross as a religious symbol of crucifixion and resurrection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
I. THE HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL NATURE OF <u>THE DREAM OF THE ROOD</u>	1
History	1
Criticism	5
II. PAGAN PRACTICES AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES IN <u>THE DREAM OF THE ROOD</u>	9
Tree Veneration	9
The Cult of the Cross	14
Doctrine and Theology	19
III. RHETORICAL COMPLEXITY IN <u>THE DREAM OF THE ROOD</u>	22
The Tools of Rhetoric in <u>The Dream of the Rood</u>	22
Theories of Organization	27
IV. SYMBOLISM, THEOLOGY, AND DOCTRINE IN <u>THE DREAM</u> <u>OF THE ROOD</u>	31
Symbolism	32
The Tree and the Cross as Symbols	33
A Summary of Theology and Doctrine	34
Another Translation of <u>The Dream of the Rood</u>	36
WORKS CONSULTED	49
PLATES	54
I. Ruthwell Cross, east face	54
II. Ruthwell Cross, Magdalene panel	55

CHAPTER I
THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL NATURE OF
THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

Praised continually for its rhetorical complexity, visual imagery, and alliterative meter, The Dream of the Rood remains one of the finest examples of poetry from the Old English period. Carol Jean Wolf describes the poem as "one of the finest religious poems in the English language" (210), and Faith H. Patten suggests that the poem is "one of the greatest monuments of English literature" (401). Rosemary Woolf extends the comparison, identifying the poem as "unique in [the] whole range of English and perhaps even western literature" (137).

Charles Wrenn suggests that The Dream of the Rood is the work of an Anglo-Saxon "poet of superb genius" (15) whose work is unique in Anglo-Saxon literature, and Michael Swanton asserts that the poem is the work of a craftsman skilled in a highly individualized style (62). Neither chronological tests nor scholarly studies have been successful in identifying the Dream poet. Although some scholars have credited the work to Caedmon and Cynewulf, Swanton proposes that recent studies fail to

indicate "stylistic interdependence" (59) that would support such attribution.

Although some details about the poem remain unknown, the doctrine and theology of the period and a review of scholarship about the poem suggest that The Dream of the Rood offers more than a theologically accurate account of the crucifixion. This poem straddles and combines the Germanic and pagan concepts of the cult of the cross and tree veneration to provide an expanded theological understanding of the cross as a religious symbol of crucifixion and the resurrection.

Unfamiliar to most people until 1822 when it was discovered by Freidrich Bluhme, The Dream of the Rood was first titled by Benjamin Thorpe in 1836, and its full text was not made public until 1869 (Swanton 4). The poem is found in Codex CXVII in the cathedral library at Vercelli in northern Italy. According to C. L. Wrenn, the entire manuscript volume contains 136 parchment folios measuring 31 x 20 cm. The poem begins on line six of folio 104 and ends at the bottom of folio 106 in the Vercelli Book, a collection of twenty-three anonymous Old English prose homilies and five poems in addition to the Dream. The Dream poem is located between the eighteenth and nineteenth homilies (244). The handwriting of the Codex is uniform, legible, and characteristic of the later 10th century West Saxon script, and despite a strong Anglian element, the linguistic character of the version found in

the Vercelli Book is consistent with the literary language of the West Saxon period (134). Swanton notes that the Vercelli manuscript was probably written between 960 and 980 but offers no speculations about the manner in which the poem was carried to Rome from England, a distance of some 700 miles (1).

Although the poet gives no indication of his identity or the reason he is prompted to compose the poem, critics and scholars speculate about the circumstances of that composition. The first and most common theory is Annemarie Mahler's assertion that the poem celebrates the arrival of a reliquary containing a piece of the "true cross" (45). These reliquaries were often beautifully decorated with jewels, and the Dream poet may have been inspired by one of these containers. The discovery of a cross was first mentioned by Cyril of Jerusalem about A. D. 350 (Swanton 43). By the end of the 4th century, tradition attributed the discovery of the "true cross" to Helena, mother of Constantine, in 326 (43). Legend has it that a Jew led Helena to the place of Christ's burial where she discovered three crosses, an inscription of the type traditionally inscribed on the cross and over the head of the criminal describing his crime, and several iron nails. Helena sent two nails to Constantinople, and the other two were supposedly made into a sword or spear for the emperor. The inscription was preserved at the basilica of St. Croce, built in Helena's palace at Rome,

and pieces of the cross were distributed to various places. Today, pieces of the cross are preserved in jeweled reliquaries not unlike the cross described by the Dream poet.

A second explanation for the composition of the poem concerns the possibility that it was written in celebration of one of two festivals of the cross. The major feast of the eastern churches, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, goes back to the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre in 335 (44). A second feast, the "Invention of the Holy Cross," appears in the calendars of Gaelic and Mozarabic service books and is celebrated on May 3 (45).

D. A. Farina suggests a third theory. Composition may be attributed to a reenactment of the Deposition Ceremony of the crucifixion in which two men place ladders against the cross and lower the body from its "heavy torture" (5). As the choir sings a dirge, people file by the body while two priests stand "at his body's head" (Pope 11) to maintain order. Farina suggests that the clothes to which the poet refers in lines 14-16 are, in reality, the clothes or sheets which comprised part of the medieval deposition ceremonies on Good Friday.

Just as authorship is undetermined, the exact date of composition also remains uncertain. T.A. Shippey and other scholars note the similarity between the Dream poem and fragments of verse inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross in

Dumfriesshire, Scotland. Michael Swanton supports this observation and notes that the inscription on the Ruthwell Cross corresponds to lines 39-42, 44-45, 48-49, 56-59, and 62-64 of the Vercelli text version of the poem. Carved in the eighth century, the Ruthwell Cross stands five feet, twenty inches high (Crossley-Holland 177). It is carved with an "inhabited vine-scroll" (Swanton 11), a middle eastern design made of "placed side-volutes" (11) which surround a bird or other animal pecking at leaves, flowers, or grapes in a design referred to as the "Tree of Life Motif." The large bottom panel of the cross contains a three-foot scene of the crucifixion. No portion of the inscription remains on this panel.

Swanton and some other scholars find connections between verses on the Ruthwell Cross and Elene and Christ III (Chase 1). Swanton suggests three possibilities to support the connection between the Dream and inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross. The first possibility is that the inscription on the Ruthwell Cross inspired the composition of the larger poem. The second credits the sculptor of the Ruthwell Cross with selecting and modifying excerpts from an extant poem. The third and most likely possibility, according to Swanton, is that the sculptor chose the central message of the poem to illustrate and celebrate the connection between Christ's suffering and the cross. Connections between The Dream of the Rood and

Elene are based on N. A. Lee's assertion that Elene is actually a poetic sequel to the Dream poem (98) while connections between Christ III and the Dream are limited to common themes of judgment present in both poems.

As a representative of dream-vision, a genre popular in the Middle Ages, the poem marks a departure "from the kind of prayer concerned with universal needs" (Raw 123) and moves toward a more personal expression of feelings. Although some scholars suggest that the poem is steeped in religious doctrine, studies reveal only small liturgical influence beyond the author's acquaintance with church doctrine and the "parts of [the] church service devoted to the celebration of the cross" (Patch 233).

In The Judgment Day Theme in Old English Poetry, Graham D. Caie suggests that the "image of the triumphant Christ in glory on the cross is a common early medieval iconographic sign" (87). His description of Christ as "the militant savior of mankind" (107) is not unlike Carol Jean Wolf's description of Christ as the "hero valiantly engaging in conflict" (208). In "Christ as Hero in The Dream of the Rood," she notes particular examples from the poem that describe Christ as a "young hero" in line 39a, a "warrior" in line 42a, a "powerful king" in line 44b, a "prince" in line 58a, and a "ruler" in 69a. Wolf further describes the crucifixion as a battle since lines 33b through 41 contain many elements characteristic of those

which Donald K. Fry refers to as "approach to battle" scenes (Wolf 206). Wolf and other critics see Christ mounting the cross with "strength, resolution, and boldness" (207), confidently and voluntarily embracing the cross. Alvin A. Lee agrees with this image of a victorious hero, but he also examines Christ as a human being who suffers at the hands of evil men. John Canuteson suggests that although Christ willingly embraces the cross, and ultimately his fate, the Dream also illustrates what happens when a man rather than a god ascends the cross (296). As Rosemary Woolf suggests, the idea of a victorious warrior stripping himself and voluntarily embracing the cross is consistent with the teachings of the early church although it is in sharp contrast to the medieval picture of a tortured and exhausted Christ slumping under the weight of the heavy burden. According to Woolf, this balance "between the effects of triumph and suffering and . . . the victorious warrior and the passive enduring cross" (137) is the most remarkable achievement of the poem.

I plan to demonstrate a connection between the poem and the religious doctrine of the time. I will review early Christian doctrine, the cult of the cross, and the significance of the tree in early Christian tradition. Myths and legends about the "cosmic tree" will be discussed in the context of the "arbor vitae" and the

"arbor crucis," and the controversy between the Monophysites and the Nestorians will explain the doctrinal patterns evident at the time.

In addition, I plan to examine the rhetorical complexity of the poem with specific references to word choice, meter, and other tools of rhetoric. I will review patterns of organization for the study, analysis, and interpretation of the poem with a commentary on the extensive work of Bernard F. Huppé. Following the rhetorical analysis, I will review the findings of this thesis and provide my own translation based on my research and understanding of the combination of pagan and Christian elements which ultimately bring theological implications to the poem.

CHAPTER 2
PAGAN PRACTICES AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES
IN THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

It is not surprising that the chief preservers of extant Old English literary documents are the clergy since

all forms of Anglo-Saxon culture, either pagan or Christian, are intimately related to religion. Anglo-Saxon theology consisted of expressing in the common language of the people the accepted ideas of the orthodox Christian Fathers including Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome. (Eliade, Images 89)

The Dream of the Rood links the pagan and Christian worlds as it describes the agony of the tree cut down in its natural state at the edge of the forest and fashioned for use by man as an instrument of death. To fully understand early Christian theology in the context of the Dream, it is necessary to examine the significance of the tree as it applied to early Christian literature and the cult of the cross.

Many myths and legends exist in which the seven branches of the "cosmic tree" (Eliade, Patterns 380) correspond to the seven heavens with a central tree or pillar holding the world. This tree symbolizes the universe and its endless power of regeneration. Vedic,

Indian, ancient Chinese, Germanic, and Indian mythology and tradition share various versions of the legend of the Cosmic tree. A Sabine tradition suggests that Plato declared man to be a plant upside down whose roots stretch to heaven and whose branches stretch to earth. In Scandinavian folklore, the sacred tree Yggdrasil, symbolizes the universe, and although the tree is shaken by a dragon which gnaws at its roots, the tree is not destroyed. Hebraic tradition and Finnish and Icelandic folklore also see the cosmos represented by an inverted tree with its roots in heaven and its branches covering the earth.

The concept of the Cosmic Tree is so widely distributed that it is apparent even in Central and North Asiatic Shamanism where the shaman climbs the tree as a symbol of his ascension to heaven. According to Eliade, sacred trees occupy a place in the mythology of many traditions (Patterns 265) and they become religious objects by virtue of the recreation of the mythical act of reproduction and regeneration. The embodiment of the Cosmic Tree and the Tree of Life in an oak tree can be traced to the Indo-Europeans who developed this myth in northern Europe. As one of the most recurrent motifs of mythology and religious iconography, the tree links the terrestrial and celestial worlds, and the images of the Arbor Vitae and the Arbor Crucis represent the major uses of the early symbols of the tree. According to Alexander

Porteous, an old belief held that trees can speak and that they do so in whispers among themselves, sighing loudly when the wind blows through their tops or when they are cut down. For this reason, the woodcutter prays to the tree for forgiveness before he cuts it down.

Primitive man gave the tree a special place of distinction as a cradle of civilization. Different nations gave "The Tree of Life" different names and attributes. One of the oldest legends involves the Glastonbury Thorn, the source of which Joseph of Arimathea used as a staff. When he thrust the staff into the ground, it took root, grew, and flowered. Joseph built a Christian Church on the spot, and the fact that the tree flowers on Christmas Day is said to suggest that it possesses supernatural power (Porteous 224). Oswald's tree became famous when Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, fought and won the battle between himself and Oswald and hanged Oswald on the tree. Another legend comes from Montevilla, who writes about the oak tree which was alive and green before the Lord suffered and which withered and died when God died on the cross. Montevilla writes:

in the vale of Mambiel, as one journeys from Ebron to Bethlehem, stands the woeful withered tree that they call Trip, but we name it Tree of Victory; 'tis an Oak tree, and thought to have stood from the beginning of the world: and before our Lord suffered, 'twas green and well-leaved, but when God died on the cross, it withered. . . 'Tis found written in prophecies, out of Netherland shall come a prince with many Christians, he shall win these lands, and let sing the mass under the dry tree, then shall it

gather green leaves again, and be fruitful, and Jew and Heathen all turn Christian. Therefore do they shew it great honor, and over it keep good word. (qtd. in Porteous 228)

Ancient tradition holds that fire first appeared on the tops of trees and that the hawthorn tree originated from lightning. From Jacob Grimm comes a report that the ancient Germans used wood from the hawthorn for funeral pyres. The ancient legend of the yule log also links trees and fire. A log is placed on the fire on Christmas Eve, and the family gathers around to sing carols. One child is sent to a corner of the house to pray that the yule log will bear sugar-plums, which are placed at either end of the log and picked up by the children, who believe the log has borne them. Other customs associated with the tree include touching the tree with a newborn child in recognition of the child's origin, placing sick people in the hollow of a tree to cure them, and burying the dead in the tree itself or encasing the body in a coffin (Reno 58).

One of the earliest forms of the symbol of the Arbor Vitae is the date palm. It forms one of the legends associated with the flight to Egypt. Erwin R. Goodenough believes the Jewish theme of the palm tree and the pagan theme of the palm as a symbol of victory were combined and added to other folk beliefs to produce themes of paradise, victory, and life-giving water. According to legend, when

the Holy Family went to Egypt, they saw a palm tree in a desert oasis, and Mary wanted to eat some of its fruit. When Joseph pointed out that they needed more than fruit, Jesus commanded the tree to bend, and it did so. (This legend bears a remarkable similarity to the medieval cherry tree carol wherein Mary craves some ripe cherries she sees on a tree. Joseph in a fit of jealousy tells Mary to ask the baby's father to get her the cherries, at which point the yet-unborn Jesus commands the tree to bend down.) Mary gathered as much fruit as she desired. When the tree resumed its normal position, Jesus blessed it and called it the "companion" of the trees and ordered it to release a stream of water from its roots. The tree did so, and the family and their animals drank the water. The following day, Jesus addressed the tree saying one of the branches would be carried away and planted in paradise, whereupon an angel came and took one of the branches to heaven.

Although legends about tree veneration abound, Mercia Eliade suggests that trees were never adored for themselves. They were always symbols. In Patterns in Comparative Religion, Eliade writes:

the tree represents--whether ritually or concretely, or in mythology and cosmology, or simply symbolically--the living cosmos, endlessly renewing itself. Since inexhaustible life is the equivalent of immortality, the tree-cosmos may therefore become, at a different level, the tree of life-undying. (267)

Thus it is not surprising that an early symbol of Christ's victory over sin and death is a living tree. The concept of the great tree as Christ embracing creation survives strongly in the seventh and eighth centuries, and theologians often comment on the significance of the tree as a link between heaven and earth.

In juxtaposition to the tree of life is the symbol of the tree as an instrument of death, since wood was taken from the tree to serve as a cross. Stephen J. Reno suggests a direct connection between the tree of life and the cross "since it [is] not without the wood of the tree that He came to our knowledge. For our life was hung on it, in order that we might believe" (107). It is in this manner that the theme of the renewal is linked with death and the eventual resurrection of Christ. According to the Syriac Book of the Cave of Treasures, there is a historical link between the tree of life planted in the Garden of Eden and the cross of Christ of Golgotha.

Eleanor Simmons Greenhill traces the tradition of the cross as a tree from the fourth to the thirteenth centuries and finds several interpretations of the meaning of the tree. In "A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition," Greenhill lists ten such interpretations:

(1) The tree links heaven and earth, and its branches provide a ladder by which ascent is possible from one

level of heaven to another.

(2) The cross-arms extend to the ends of the earth. Its branches touch heaven, and its roots penetrate the darkness below. It is the instrument by which the soul is taken to heaven.

(3) The tree of life, which is in the middle of paradise, came before the cross and is fixed in the middle of the earth.

(4) The tree is a ladder for the souls of the righteous.

(5) The tree is the ladder of Jacob.

(6) Souls pick the fruit of fruit-bearing trees on their journey to heaven.

(7) In the Old Testament, royal rulers and their kingdoms are identified with trees whose branches provide a refuge for all people.

(8) The tree, the Savior, and the church also share an identity.

(9) The tree symbolizes the attainment of virtues, since man must begin at the beginning and rise up through the virtues one after another. Man must imitate the virtues, who are ascending or sitting at intervals along the ladder. The ladder consists of the footprints of the Lord left behind to guide man until the virtues begin their work of salvation.

(10) Finally, the tree is a symbol for the universe with the divine ruler at the top.

Pre-Christian traditions regard the cross as anything that extends in space (Reno 126). At an early date in Mesopotamia, the cross is associated with the figure of a king, and it occupies a place of prominence in that country and in the Jewish tradition. In the eastern and western worlds, veneration of the cross rather than the worship of Christ is the issue; however, Constantine's conversion changes the concept, since "a thing becomes sacred insofar as it embodies (that is, reveals) something other than itself" (Eliade, Patterns 13).

The symbol of the cross, or the Arbor Crucis, in early Christianity, is significant in two ways. First, the cross is important as part of the historic data of Christ's life. Second, the cross, in the form of a "plus" or a letter X, is part of our Christian inheritance from Judaism which acquired a reinterpretation. In old Hebrew script, the last letter of the alphabet, "taw," is written as a cross mark. The taw came to be regarded as a mark or sign of the power of God. Scholars generally agree that the marked place on the foreheads of the faithful most likely takes the form of a cross as a sign of salvation.

Four forms of crosses exist, but the Latin Cross or crux imissa is recognized as the cross on which Christ was crucified. The Latin Cross as the cross of Christ is

identified with a Latin inscription above the head of the person crucified. This inscription declares the person's crime. This Latin Cross appears on the coins and columns of Constantine. The word cross is used in early Roman literature to describe any pain or suffering. As an instrument of death, tying or nailing to the cross is common; however, tying is considered a more tedious form of suffering.

It is difficult to definitely fix the time in which Christians began to use the cross as a symbol, but research indicates the presence of the cross as a symbol by pagan Roman emperors before the time of Constantine. In any case, the cross became the official standard of the Roman Empire with Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 312. The "Invention Tradition" supports the theory of the discovery of the "true cross" by Constantine's mother in 326, and four ecclesiastical historians including Socrates, Sozomen, Rufinus, and Theodoret concur. The cross is found extensively in ecclesiastical and lay contexts from the middle of the 4th century, and its appearance is eventually promoted on every object of daily use including doors, windows, posts, walls, and furniture, among others. Constantine promotes the symbols of his new faith, and the chi-rho monogram and the cross are shown independently and in other combinations on weapons and armor.

Other theories of the discovery of the real cross are supported by Michael J. Alexander, who asserts that Pope Sergius I discovered fragments of the "true cross" in 701, and Alexander believes the Dream poem is a celebration of this discovery. Sandra McEntire writes in "The Devotional Context of the Cross Before A.D. 1000" that according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Pope Marinus sent Alfred a piece of the "true cross" in 883 and another in 885.

With Constantine's conversion to Christianity and the subsequent extensive use of the symbol in the Roman Empire, the cross begins to take on symbolic meaning far beyond its original use. In Patterns in Comparative Religion, Mircea Eliade explains that symbolism appears to be a

language understood by all the members of the community and meaningless to outsiders, but certainly a language expressing at once and, equally clearly, the social, historic, and psychic condition of the symbol's wearer. (451)

According to Eliade, symbols are not mere reflections of reality; in his essay "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism," he presents six ways ideas reveal themselves through symbols. First, symbols reveal more about the world than first-hand experience allows. Few people are actually involved in the historical events of the crucifixion; however, many others understand and appreciate this event through the symbol of the cross. Second, we need to understand that "primitive symbols are

always religious because they point to something real or to a structure of the world" (98). The cosmological regeneration of the tree is an example of a continuous and predictable process in the world. A third idea which Eliade acknowledges is the capacity of a symbol to express a number of meanings at the same time. In the Dream poem, the cross represents crucifixion and death, and it also represents eternal life through the resurrection. The fourth aspect of religious symbolism is its ability to reveal the unity of the world and to comprehend its structure. In The Dream of the Rood the tree and the cross are separate symbols, yet they are intimately linked in death, in resurrection, and in regeneration. The fifth aspect of religious symbolism is "its capacity for expressing paradoxical situations" (101). The Dream poet's use of death as a prerequisite for eternal life is, indeed, a paradox. Finally, Eliade proposes that "a symbol always aims at a reality or a situation in which human existence is engaged" (102). Through the crucifixion, man is released from the earthly world of sin and death to live with his Father in Heaven.

In addition to understanding the cult of the cross and tree veneration as symbolic elements, it is important to understand the doctrine of the time. The medieval concept of God is a synthesis of Greek and Hebrew views. According to the Greek concept, interpreted by Aristotle,

Greeks saw God as intellectual and immaterial. No understanding of a personal God existed, and the emphasis was on reason. For the Hebrews, God was and is personal, holy, and righteous. The distinction between the crucifixion as a "scene of triumph or a scene of suffering is dependent on an understanding of Christ as man or Christ as God" (Woolf 138).

Late in the fourth century two theological schools at Alexandria and Antioch provided a theologically different approach to the understanding of the human and divine natures of Christ. The Monophysites and the Nestorians argued their differences until the church in Rome insisted on a compromise. In the Tome of Leo I, the Pope maintains that Christ is one person with two natures, and the person is undivided and unconfused. This statement satisfies the doctrine of two natures, but it requires an addition of the principle of communicatio idiomatum (139) which declares that since "Christ's person (is) an unity, the properties of both natures (can) be ascribed to it . . ." (140). This compromise does not end the dispute; the Ecumenical Council of 682 A. D. provided some clarification; however, the issues argued by these heretics were debated in England until as late as 725 (142).

To further complicate matters, no theory of salvation appears until the 11th century. Before that time, the

soteriology theory is based on the belief of the Eastern church that Christ's death is offered by God as bait. Through Christ's willing acceptance of death, the devil is outsmarted, and Christ is victorious. Although this doctrine of atonement is Eastern in substance, the theory is repeated by the western Fathers Leo, Augustine, and Gregory, who added that the crucifixion is an offering or sacrifice on man's behalf. The Dream of the Rood was written when this dualistic theory of redemption was in question, and the Dream poet was obviously aware of these issues as he successfully balanced the demands of the theology of the time and his personal experience.

CHAPTER 3
RHETORICAL COMPLEXITY IN
THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

Even for a reader not well-versed in the complexity of rhetoric, it is almost impossible to ignore the poet's art in The Dream of the Rood. The ability of the poet to combine and artistically describe pagan and Christian values is remarkable, and he achieves these results through the art of rhetoric. Although the influence of Latin on the Anglo-Saxon language is not great, the effects of Latin Christian culture on Anglo-Saxon thinking are profound, and these effects are obvious in the Dream. Indeed, as he seeks to proclaim the revelation he sees, the Dream poet borrows words from Greek and Hebrew and attaches new meanings to older words in a way similar to the development of Church Latin.

The Dream poet works within an oral-formulaic tradition of Anglo-Saxon poetry to present Christ as the conquering hero. The poem is characterized by the poet's remarkable use of unusual and perhaps original words, the attribution of personality to inanimate objects like the tree and the cross, half-lines which "antithetically

reveal the central paradox of the poem in the divinity and the humanity of Christ" (Calder 54), and the use of lengthened verses. Although N. A. Lee and other critics base a notion of multiple authorship upon a change of style and punctuation within the poem and the absence of the kind of visual imagery common in the first part of the poem, the rhetorical complexity of the work suggests that this concern is not well founded. Constance Hieatt ("Dream Frame and Verbal Echo in The Dream of the Rood" 251-63) indicates that the pattern of repetition of words and phrases suggests either the work of one poet or a second poet's clear understanding of the techniques in use by the poet composing the first 120 lines. Hieatt further suggests that the focus of the poem shifts abruptly. Since abrupt changes from one part of the dream to another are typical of a dream state, this rapid shift in focus should not detract from the narrative. In fact, the poet captures the essence of such a state while he clearly conveys his message to the reader.

The use of a large number of active verbs which follow one another rapidly, and the combination of elements of Germanic and Latin prosody which defines English meter, "move the narrative to a steady pace and increase the emotional intensity of the poem" (Swanton 61). "Parallel variation" (Wrenn 50), or the repetition of different words for the same referent in consecutive half-lines, is a favorite stylistic device in Old English;

however, the combination of the dream-vision with the Latin prosopopoeia, by which the cross speaks as a person, is original in Anglo-Saxon.

In addition, the central paradox of the poem is emphasized by a stylistic device, known as communicatio idiomatum, in which a very close connection of apparent opposites works to reveal the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Certainly one of the finer aspects of the poem is this existing tension between the divine nature of Christ on the cross and His humanity and suffering. According to Stanley Greenfield, this combination of secular heroic concepts and Christian tradition is "sometimes Anglo-Saxon and sometimes fused with Latin rhetorical practices" (144).

Considering the length of the poem, critics and scholars remain in general agreement that one striking achievement of The Dream of the Rood is its rhetorical complexity. Michael Swanton and Bernard Huppé provide two of the most elaborate systems of analysis of the poem. Swanton's work with regard to word choice, metre, and structure is representative of work by scholars who have studied the same aspects of the poem. His analysis is comprehensive, and discussion which follows is heavily indebted to it.

Swanton and other critics agree that the word hwaet is used as an interjection to call for silence and attention on the part of the listener, and Raw notes a

similar use of the word in Beowulf, Andreas, Juliana, Exodus, Vainglory, and Judgment Day (114). In lines 3 and 89, the word reordberend, literally interpreted as "voice-bearing ones," emphasizes the "silence that surrounds the visionary and the carelessness of those that sleep" (Swanton 99).

Like that of the Latin expression lignum arbor, the use of the word treeo as the equivalent for the cross and a reflection of the concept of the living tree appears as early as the eighth century. In line 7, the verb begeotan, meaning "to sprinkle" or "drench," is normally associated with water or blood; however, it is used in the phrase begeotan mid golde to describe the tree covered in gold. There is general agreement that the word eaxlesgespann, meaning shoulder joining, may be an original word, since it appears nowhere else in Old English. The word may refer to the center-piece of the cross or to the beams on the gallows along which Christ's arms are stretched.

In lines 18-20, the poet combines the abstract and physical aspects of the tree as it begins to bleed on the right side. Bleeding trees are significant in the early Anglo-Saxon church since they are believed to bleed at the crucifixion, and such a phenomenon is likely to signal the approach of Judgment Day. The reference to the right side is, of course, an allusion to Christ's bleeding from the

right side. The metaphor emphasizes the close connection between Christ and the cross.

There remains some dispute about the literal meaning of lines 9b and 10a. Some scholars indicate that the reference to the engel-dryhta is a reference to Christ instead of a host of angels. Swanton suggests that the use of the word dryhten, which appears eight times in the poem as a specific reference to Christ, is inconsistently used here, and that in fact the reference is to an angel of the Lord. One solution is to amend the text as suggested by Huppé, who translates the word as "angelic host." William Helder proposes the use of the engel-dryhta as Christ on the cross (73), and T. E. Pickford proposes that the reference to the word needs no emendation since it simply refers to the cross who delivers the message of salvation to the poet, and through him, to all mankind (565-68). Other unusual words include sigebeam (line 13) which also appears in Elene, and bealuware (line 19) which describes evil-doers. In line 39 haeled should be understood as meaning hero and describing Christ and the dreamer. According to Kathleen Dubs, the implied message is that the dreamer is also a heroic figure, since he is the messenger of salvation (614).

Although Swanton and other scholars view the poem as a sequential narrative, Bernard Huppé analyzes the poem within the context of a drama with four scenes held

together by an elaborate series of juxtapositions of Christ as God and man. His work, detailed in The Web of Words, is an exhaustive study of "the elaborate artifice of echo and re-echo" (76) which distinguishes the Dream from other poems of the Old English period.

According to Huppé, the poem consists of four scenes: Scene I includes lines 1-23; Scene II consists of lines 24-77; Scene III contains lines 78-121; Scene IV is made up of lines 122-156. Scene I presents the primary vision of the dreamer, the angels, the saints, and the men who see the cross as a beacon. Scene I begins with the poet's explanation that the dream came to him "at midnight when men (were) asleep" and in the dream the dreamer, and all men, gazed at the cross and its beauty contrasted with the ugliness of the sins of the dreamer. This difference, which emphasizes the cross's beauty with its alternating "colors of glory and blood" (83), provides a transition to the narrative of the cross which follows in Scene II.

Scene II encompasses the preparation of the cross as a gallows (lines 28-33), Christ's ascent of the Cross (lines 33-45), the crucifixion (lines 46-56), the descent (lines 57-62), and Christ's entombment (lines 63-77). The third scene, which focuses on the entombment and resurrection of the cross, comprises lines 78-121. The final scene culminates in the address of the cross (lines 122-156).

However one views the structure of the poem, the important events are framed by the dreamer's account and the address of the cross. The narrative falls into two parts: the first part contains the crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection of Christ which is paralleled in the second part by the entombment and resurrection of the cross. In the first part of the narrative, the cross relates how it was cut down at the edge of the forest by its enemies and transformed from a living object to an object of death. This simple action sets up the second contrast between life and death as the cross speaks for the first time. It describes the temptation to crush Christ's enemies and to symbolically satisfy man's craving for battle. This response is tempered by Christ's example of redemptive love, and the cross stands firm.

As Christ prepares himself for the ascent, He is seen as "a young hero" (line 39). The Cross describes its feelings of fear and determination to raise the King. In lines 46 through 49, the cross describes "the gaping blows of hate" (line 47) inflicted by enemies of Christ and the cross.

Blood pours from Christ's right side, and the subsequent bleeding is the final act of crucifixion. An eclipse of the sun at the hour of crucifixion is a metaphor for death which covers the Son. The implication is that although the hour of darkness covers the cross,

its radiance is hidden only momentarily (94). The quiet acceptance of death in line 56 brings an end to the crucifixion scene with mankind weeping at the sight of the sleeping King.

Next, Christ's body is removed from the cross by friends described as "men of battle" (line 61). In the same way that the cross willingly accepted its first burden, it now accepts separation from the Lord. Once lifted up to His suffering, Christ is now lifted from his suffering, and the "spiritual steps" (95) begin His redemptive journey to everlasting life. The crucifixion scene as a battle is supported by the vision of "men of battle" and wounds made by arrows.

Another reference to battle precedes the preparation of the tomb, and there is a pause as the "Ruler of Victories" (line 67) rests. As evening approaches, most of the men leave, and Christ and the cross are left with only a few friends to attend them. The cross and the dreamer are linked symbolically by their memory of the events leading to the crucifixion.

In a section which roughly parallels the entombment and resurrection of Christ, the cross is buried with the two other crosses from Golgotha and condemned to an unmarked resting place; however, after a long time, friends find the cross, remove it from its tomb (resurrect it), and cover it with gold and silver.

The address of the cross follows, and the cross commands the dreamer to reveal his story of suffering, death, and resurrection to all mankind. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven is the reward for obedient service; thus, the rood is the vehicle by which mankind enters the eternal world to join his Master.

CHAPTER 4
SYMBOLISM, THEOLOGY, AND DOCTRINE IN
THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

The Dream of the Rood challenges scholars, critics, and theologians to understand and appreciate the significant contribution the poet offers to literary and theological history. Although the identity of the poet remains unknown, most scholars agree that the poem is the work of a single poet well acquainted with pagan and Christian practices of tree veneration and the cult of the cross. If indeed the poem is a product of the eighth century, the poet is far removed from the actual events of the crucifixion, and his ability to convey these events in such a personal manner is testimony to his craftsmanship and his faith. Further, an extraordinary mixture of religious and cult beliefs existed as late as 385, and the careful blending of such practices is a major achievement of this poet.

Just as authorship and date of composition remain subjects for speculation by critics and scholars, ideas about the origin of the legend are also matters of concern. Perhaps the most widely accepted theory is the

"invention theory" attributed to St. Helena. According to Mary-Catherine Bodden, the theory is known as De inventione sanctae crucis (24). The version found in The Dream of the Rood is

classic illustration of the growth of a legend. The process was simple: details accumulated in the histories' three separate tales [the Origo Crucis, the Flagellatio Crucis, and the Exaltatio Crucis] became linked together, features from current saint's lives were borrowed, and a legend solidified" (24).

By the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, the legend was accepted as fact.

At the same time that the legend of the cross was spreading, tree veneration was also culturally important. According to Eliade, Reno, and other scholars, sacred trees occupied an important place in the history of every religion and in the history of many countries. As a perfect symbol of the constant state of life, death, and rejuvenation, the "representation of the cross as a hacked and mutilated tree seems to have arisen together with the agonised Christ" (Swanton 54). Even though fathers of the early church sought to avoid worship of the cross itself, the connection between the tree as the source of life and the cross as a symbol of death and resurrection remained; in the seventh and eighth centuries the cross was "conceived as a great tree identical at once with both Christ and the Church, and embracing all creation uniting heaven and earth" (Swanton 51).

Although research about some of these elements remains inconclusive, it is possible to draw some important conclusions about the poem. The first such conclusion is that there existed common beliefs and practices relating to the veneration of the tree; these have important implications for understanding the poem in the context of the cult of the cross. Eliade believes that since culture is transmitted in images and symbols, "The accessibility of Christianity may be attributable in great measure to symbolism and the universal images that it assumes have facilitated the diffusion of its message" (168). With regard to the tree as a symbol, Eliade suggests it is important to remember that no object was "adored for itself only, but always for what was revealed through it, for what it implied and signified" (Patterns 268). The cosmic tree represents the living cosmos in the constant process of regeneration. To primitive religious minds, the tree calls up power (Images 178). In the same manner, the cross is a symbol of life, since it is fashioned from a living tree. The cross also represents death as an instrument of torture. Although the pagan practice of tree veneration was never subsumed by Christianity, Christianity borrowed, amplified, interpreted, and mingled the symbols of the tree and the cross.

Second, there is much evidence that the cult of the cross was widespread in the theological and doctrinal concepts of the time and that it reached its peak in the

latter part of the seventh and eighth centuries in England. Thus, the assumptions that scholars and critics have made about the date of the poem are most likely correct. Research indicates that Tertullian, an early church father, encouraged the use of the sign of the cross as early as the third century when he wrote,

At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we touch upon the forehead the sign" (McEntire 347-48).

By the fourth century, crosses appeared on coins and columns and in the caves and meeting places of the early Christians.

The sign of the cross was also extended to include protection against the devil, and it is likely that this concept is a natural consequence of three theories of atonement which accompany early Christian theology (Cyclopedia 44). Alcuin and Ælfric encouraged the use of the sign, and Ælfric remarked, "Be ye not afraid at the sight of him [the devil], but mark the sign of the rood on your foreheads, and every evil shall depart from you" (McEntire 348).

Third, the absence of a clearly defined theory of salvation created difficulties in the Church until the eleventh century. Before that time, the Monophysites argued for an understanding of God within a context of the

unity of Christ. With such an understanding, they neglected to consider Christ's human nature. On the other hand, the Nestorians accepted and distinguished between the divine and human natures of Christ; however, they stressed His humanity and emphasized His physical pain and suffering. These schools of theological thought developed in the fourth century, and they led to "Christological heresy" (Woolf 138).

Tensions between the theories of Christ's divinity and humanity would not have been unfamiliar issues to the Dream poet. Not only is he able to balance two conflicting theological concepts, but also he is successful in presenting a historically and theologically accurate account of the crucifixion. The Dream poet's portrayal of Christ as a conquering hero is absolutely compatible with Biblical interpretations of the event. Rosemary Woolf's comments concerning the medieval picture of a suffering and defeated Christ are reminders that the literal gospel narrative does not support this understanding of Christ as a victim: Christ voluntarily and willingly embraces the cross, and in doing so, He gathers the sins of mankind and takes them to His Father. The poet further reconciles the "theological uneasiness" (Woolf 148) concerning Christ's death with an explanation of the Augustinian view of death as sleep. Implicit in this concept is the expectation of an awakening which

explains the resurrection. In 156 lines, the Dream poet effects an amazing resolution of doctrine, philosophy, and theology.

A fourth major finding is the manner in which the Dream poet employed the tools of rhetoric to tell the story of death and resurrection. The frequent uses of prosopopoeia, allegory, metaphor, communicatio idiomatum, verbal parallels, half-lines, and word choice combine to effect a rhetorical masterpiece. Scholars and critics agree that the work is unique in form and substance. An unusual feature of the poem is the number of original words used in the text and found nowhere else in the Old English language (hapax legomena).

The following translation and accompanying analysis are based on the research presented, and they seek to convey the meaning of the poem accurately and to remain true to the theology and doctrine of the time. The sections of the translation follow the most commonly accepted divisions proposed by scholars and critics.

The Dream of the Rood

The Vision

Lines 4-23

Hwæt! Ic swefna cyst secgan wille
 hwæt me gemætte to midre nihte
 syððan reordberend reste wunedon.

Lo, I will speak [about] the best dream that I dreamed in the middle of the night when speech-bearers remained asleep.

bowed down to [the] hands of men [in] humbleness with great zeal. They took there Almighty God, lifted him up from the heavy torture.

Forleton me þa hilderincas
standan steame bedrifenne; eall ic wæs mid strælum
forwundod.
Aledon hie ðær limwerigne, gestodon him æt his lices
heafdum;
beheoldon hie ðær heofenes dryhten. Ond he hine ðær
hwile reste
meðe æfter ðam miclan gewinne. Ongunnon him þa moldern
wyrcean
beornas on banan gesyhðe, curfon hie ðæt of beorhtan
stane,
gesetton hie ðæron sigora wealdend. Ongunnon him þa
sorghleoð galan
earme on þa æfentide þa hie woldon eft siðian
meðe from þam mæran þeodne. Reste he ðæer mæte weorode.

The warriors left me to stand, covered over with blood; I was all wounded with arrows. They laid [Him], weary of limb; stood by Him at his body's head; they beheld their heaven's Lord, and He himself there rested a while, weary after the great strife. Then in sight of the slayer's men they began for Him a sepulcher, carved [it] of bright stone; they placed therein the Lord of Victory. Then miserable in the evening-tide, they began [a] song of sorrow when they would journey afterwards, weary, away from the glorious Prince; He rested there with limited company.

Hwæðere we ðær greotende gode hwile
stodon on staðole. Syððan stefn up gewat
hilderinca. Hræw colode
fæger georgbold. þa us man fyllan ongan
ealle to eorðan. þæt wæs egeslic wyrd.
Bedealf us man on deopan seabe. Hwæðre me þær dryhtnes
pegnas freondas gefrunon,
gyredon me golde on seolfre.

Yet a good while we stood in place weeping. Voice of warriors departed. Cold [was the] corpse, fair dwelling of [the] soul. Then one was cut down to earth. That was dreadful fate. Someone buried us in [a] deep pit. Yet there the Lord's servants, friends, heard of me, adorned me with gold and silver.

The Address of the Cross

Lines 78-94

Nu ðu miht gehyran hæleð min se leofa
 Þæt ic bealuwara weorc gebiden hæbbe
 sarra sorga. Is nu sæl cumen
 Þæt me weorðiað wide ond side
 menn ofer moldan ond eall þeos mære gesceaft
 gebiddaþ him to þyssum beacne. On me bearn godes
 Þrowode hwile; forþan ic þrymfæst nu
 hlifige under heofenum, ond ic hælæn mæg
 æghwylcne anra þara þe him bið egesa to me.
 Iu ic wæs geworden wita heardost
 leodum laðost ærþan ic him lifes weg
 rihtne gerymde reordberendum.

Now you have heard, my beloved one, that I have
 endured the work of dwellers in evil, grievous
 sorrow. Now [the] time has come that far and wide,
 over earth and all this glorious creation, men honor
 me, call them to this glorious sign. On me [the] Son
 of God suffered for a while; wherefore now I rise
 under heaven and I can heal each one of them who [are
 in] awe of me. Long ago I became the most severe
 torture before I opened life's true path wider to
 speech-bearers.

Hwæt me þa geweorðode wuldres ealdor
 ofer holmwudu heofonrices weard,
 swylce swa he his modor eac Marian sylfe
 ælmihtig god for ealle menn
 geweorðode ofer eall wifa cynn.

Lo, the Lord of Glory, the Lord [of] the kingdom of
 heaven, then honored me over the trees of the forest
 just as God Almighty for all men honored his mother
 Mary herself above all woman kind.

Nu ic þe hate hæleð min se leofa
 Þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum,
 onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam
 se ðe Ælmihtig god on þroworde
 for mancynnes manegum synnum
 and Adomes ealdgewyrhtum.
 Deað he þær byrigde: hwæðere eft dryhten aras
 mid his miclan mihte mannum to helpe.
 He ða on heofenas astag. Hider eft fundaþ
 on þysne middangeard mancynn secan

on domdæge dryhten sylfa;
 ælmihtig god on his englas mid;
 þæt he þonne wile deman se ah domes geweald
 anra gehwylcum swa he him ærur her
 on þysson lænum life gearnaþ.

Now I command thou, my beloved man, to tell this vision [to] men; disclose with words that it is [a] glorious tree on which Almighty God suffered for mankind's many sins and Adam's deeds of old. There he tasted death: nevertheless, the Lord arose again with His great might to help men. Then He ascended to heaven. Thither again the Lord himself will come Almighty God and with his angels, to this middle-earth, to seek mankind on [the] day of judgment; when He who has power of judgment will pass judgment [on] each one according [to what] He merited earlier in this fleeting life.

Ne mæg ðær ænig unforht wesan
 for þam worde þe se wealdend cwyð,
 frineð he for þære mænige hwær se man sie
 se ðe for dryhtnes naman deaðes wolde
 biteres onbyrgan swa he ær on ðam beame dyde;
 ac hie þonne forhtiaþ ond fea þencaþ
 hwæt hie to Criste cweðan onginnen.
 Ne þearf ðær þonne ænig unforht wesan
 þe him ær in breostum bereð beacna selest;
 ac ðurh ða rode sceal rice gesecan
 of eorðwege æghwylc sawl
 seo þe mid wealdende wunian þenceþ.

Nor may anyone be unafraid there for the word that the Lord says who will ask the multitude where the man is who for the Lord's name sake would taste bitter death, as He formerly on the cross died; but then they will be afraid and little think of what they will begin to say to Christ. Nor need anyone be terrified there [who] formerly bore on [their] breasts the best of signs. But through that cross shall he seek the kingdom from the earthly way, each soul which thinks to dwell with the ruler.

The Dreamer's Prayer

Lines 122-156

Gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode
 elne mycle. þær ic ana wæs

ond eallum ðam halgum Þam þe on heofonum ær
wunedon on wuldre Þa heora wealdend cwom
æلميhtig god Þær his ðel wæs.

May the Lord, who here on earth suffered before on the gallows tree for mankind's sins, [be] a friend [to] me. He redeemed us and gave us life, a heavenly home. Joyous expectation was renewed with glory and bliss [for those] who endured that fire. The Son was victorious in the expedition mighty and successful when He, the Lord Almighty, came with [the] multitude of spirits, to God's kingdom, the almighty ruler with gladness [of] angels and all the saints who before dwelt in heaven in glory when their Almighty God came where his home was.

I agree with a number of critics in seeing lines one through twenty-three as setting the stage for the action that follows. The dreamer is clearly struck with awe at the beauty of the cross covered in gold and jewels. The magnificence of the vision causes the dreamer to look within himself and to examine his life, which is "stained with sins and wounded with iniquities." The tree, like the dreamer, appears beautiful at one moment, but the dreamer looks beyond that first impression to find the tree "at one time . . . bedewed with moisture, drenched with flowing blood, at one time adorned with treasure." The poet introduces the central juxtaposition of the work in his description of the tree, which changes colors as it changes "clothing or garments." The dreamer senses the glory and the humiliation of the tree as it symbolizes victory and defeat. The vision disturbs the dreamer, and he continues to lie still for what seems "a long while" as he ponders the meaning of the vision. He recognizes this

is no ordinary tree, and in line 24 he acknowledges that this tree is special because it is the Savior's tree, and he is troubled until, in a rhetorical figure otherwise unknown in early Anglo-Saxon literature, the tree speaks to him.

The narration of the cross follows as the tree explains his own agony as he is cut down at the edge of the forest, and his trunk is removed. The implication is that the tree is randomly selected, owing to its convenient physical location. It is at the same time an extraordinary and an ordinary tree. The cross tells the dreamer that enemies took him from his natural state, made a spectacle of him, and bore him to receive their criminals. From his position on a hill he sees the "Lord of mankind" as he approaches the cross. For a brief moment, the cross considers his options. It is possible to avoid the situation, and it is also possible to kill his enemies, but the image of the Lord as an unflinching and young hero demands that the cross stand firm. As the Lord embraces the cross, it trembles; however, it resolves to stand firm as it lifts the powerful King. The crucifixion follows, and the cross describes its physical and emotional wounds as the crowd mocks both the cross and the Lord. Darkness covers the earth and creation weeps at the sight of the death of the King. The suggestion is that mankind shares responsibility for this act. The

cross is stained with blood as the Savior is lifted from his torture. The body is lowered from the cross, and the Lord sleeps since he is weary after the battle. The perception of death as sleep implies an awakening, and preparations for a sepulcher begin.

The Lord is placed inside, and as people begin to leave, they sing a "song of sorrow." Few people remain with the Lord, and the cross continues to weep. After a "good while," one of the warriors cuts the cross down and buries it, along with two other crosses, in the ground. At this point, in line 76, the narration suggests that the cross is later recovered and that those who recover the wood decorate it with gold and jewels. This theory has some factual basis: it is quite possible that pieces of the "tree cross" were distributed, and elaborate containers prepared to hold them. Cross reliquaries are very common.

Line 78 begins the address of the cross as it admonishes men to honor and pray to "this glorious sign." The cross reiterates its suffering and compares itself to Mary, who, like the tree, is randomly selected to serve God. The purpose of the poem is expounded in lines 95-102 when the cross commands the dreamer to tell mankind that God suffers and dies for the sins of man and that he rises again to save man from death. The cross tells the dreamer that all men are subject to the judgment of God and that

they need not fear as long as they bear the sign of the cross, since it is only through the cross that man can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Lines 122 through 156 contain the dreamer's prayer. The dreamer remembers the heavy burden, but he joyously awaits the time when he can join his friends who have gone before him to the heavenly kingdom. He looks forward to a time of "perpetual bliss" when the Lord's people are seated together for a huge feast. The dreamer's prayer is a simple one. It is a plea for a personal relationship with a triumphant Christ.

With only minor emendations, The Dream of the Rood tells the story of the redemption through "the cross as [a] teacher of Christian life and salvation" (Patten 401). To the critic and the scholar, who understand and appreciate the rhetorical complexity of the poem, it is an imposing piece of literature. To the common man the poem identifies "the cross as a symbol of Christ's majesty and ultimately his victory" (Caie 199) over sin and death. In "Touch Wood" published in The Expository Times, David Lewis quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was arrested by the Nazi party ten days before Easter. Bonhoeffer writes:

one of the great advantages of Good Friday and Easter Day is that they take us out of ourselves and make us think of other things, of life and its meanings and its sufferings and events. It gives us such a lot to hope for (149).

Bonhoeffer's statement echoes the poet's personal story of salvation and incorporates the essence of The Dream of the Rood.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Alexander, Michael J. "The Dream of the Rood." The Earliest English Poems: A Bilingual Edition. Berkeley: California UP, 1966.
- Babcock, John A. "Aspects of the Medieval Idea of God." The London Quarterly and Holborn Review 177 (1952): 86-92.
- Bainton, Roland H. Christendom: A Short History of Christianity and Its Impact on Western Civilization. New York: Harper, 1964.
- Bodden, Mary-Catherine, ed. and trans. The Old English Finding of the True Cross. Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury, 1987.
- Burlin, Robert B. "The Ruthwell Cross, The Dream of the Rood, and the Vita Contemplativa." Studies in Philology 65 (1968): 23-43.
- Burrow, J. A. "An Approach to The Dream of the Rood." Old English Literature: Twenty-two Analytical Essays. Comp. Martin Stevens. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1968. 253-267.
- Caie, Graham D. The Judgment Day Theme in Old English Poetry. Copenhagen: Nova, 1976.
- Chase, Christopher. "Christ III, The Dream of the Rood, and Early Christian Passion Piety." Viator 11 (1980): 11-33.
- Cook, Albert Spaulding. Myth and Language. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980.
- Crossley-Holland, Kevin, ed. and trans. The Anglo-Saxon World. Totowa, NJ: Barnes, 1983.
- "Crucifixion." New Catholic Encyclopedia. 1967 ed.
- Eliade, Mircea. Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism. Trans. Philip Mairet. New York: Sheed, 1969.
- . "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism." The History of Religions. Eds. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1959. 86-107.

- . Patterns in Comparative Religion. New York: World, 1963.
- Gardner, John Champlin. Elene and the Dream of the Rood. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1975.
- Greenfield, Stanley B. A Critical History of Old English Literature. New York: New York UP, 1965.
- Greenhill, Eleanor Simmons. "A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition." Traditio 10 (1954): 323-71.
- Grose, M. W. and Deirdre McKenna. Old English Literature. Totowa: Rowman, 1973.
- Gwatkin, Henry Melvill. Early Church History to A. D. 313. London: Macmillan, 1912.
- Hall, J. R. Clark. A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1984.
- Helder, William. "The Engel Dryhtnes in The Dream of the Rood." Modern Philology 73 (1975): 148-50.
- Hieatt, Constance B. "Dream Frame and Verbal Echo in The Dream of the Rood." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 72 (1971): 251-63.
- Horgan, Dorothy M. "The Dream of the Rood and 'A Homily for Palm Sunday.'" Notes and Queries 29 (1982): 388-91.
- Huppé, Bernard F. The Web of Words. Albany: State U of New York P, 1970.
- Isaacs, Neil David. Structural Principles in Old English Poetry. Knoxville: Tennessee UP, 1968.
- Kintgen, Eugene P. "Echoic Repetition in Old English Poetry." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 75 (1974): 201-23.
- Krapp, George Philip, ed. The Dream of the Rood. The Vercelli Book. New York: Columbia UP, 1932. 61-65. Chicago UP, 1959: 61-65.
- Laistner, M. L. W. Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Ottoman Empire. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1951.
- Lee, Alvin A. "Toward a Critique of The Dream of the Rood." Anglo Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation. Ed. Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1975. 163-91.

- Lee, N. A. "The Unity of The Dream of the Rood." Neophilologus 56 (1972): 469-86.
- Leiter, Louis H. "The Dream of the Rood: Patterns of Transformation." Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays. Ed. Robert P. Creed. Providence: Brown UP, 1957. 93-127.
- Lewis, David. "Touch Wood." The Expository Times 5 (1986): 148-49.
- Mahler, Annemarie E. "Lignum Domini and the Opening Vision of The Dream of the Rood: A Viable Hypothesis." Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies 53 (1978): 441-459.
- McEntire, Sandra. "The Devotional Context of the Cross Before A.D. 1000." Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture. Eds. Paul S. Szarmach and Virginia Darrow Oggins. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1986. 345-56.
- Osborn, Eric T. "The Emergence of Christian Theology." The Princeton Seminary Bulletin 7 (1986): 244-55.
- Patch, Howard R. "Liturgical Influence in The Dream of the Rood." PMLA 34 (1919): 233-57.
- Patten, Faith H. "Structure and Meaning in The Dream of the Rood." English Studies 49 (1968): 385-401.
- Payne, Richard C. "Convention and Originality in the Vision Framework of The Dream of the Rood." Modern Philology 73 (1976): 329-41.
- Pickford, T. E. "Another Look at the engel dryhtnes in The Dream of the Rood. Neophilologische Mitteilungen 77 (1976): 565-68.
- Pope, John C. ed. Seven Old English Poems. New York: Norton, 1981.
- Porteous, Alexander. Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance. London: Allen, 1928.
- Raw, Barbara C. The Art and Background of Old English Poetry. New York: St. Martins, 1978.
- . "The Dream of the Rood and Its Connections with Early Christian Art." Medium Aevum 39 (1970): 239-56.
- Reno, Stephen J. The Sacred Tree as an Early Christian Literary Symbol: A Phenomenological Study. Saarbrücken: Druck von Rotaprint-Offset-Druckerei Klein, 1978.

- Renoir, Alain. "Oral Theme and Written Texts." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 77 (1976): 337-46.
- "Rood." Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature. Ed. Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D. and James Strong, S.T.D. New York: Harper, 1830.
- "Rood." The Oxford English Dictionary. Ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Schlauch, Margaret. "The Dream of the Rood as Prosopopoeia." Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry. Eds. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., and Stanley J. Kahrl. Hamden: Archon, 1968.
- Shippey, T. A. Old English Verse. London: Hutchinson U Library, 1972.
- Skinner, Charles M. Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, Fruits and Plants in All Ages and in All Climes. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1911.
- Swanton, Michael. The Dream of the Rood. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970.
- Taylor, P. B., "Text and Texture of The Dream of the Rood." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 75 (1974): 193-201.
- "Theological Significance of Crucifixion." The New Catholic Encyclopedia. 1967 ed.
- Tripp, Raymond P., Jr. "The Dream of the Rood: 9b and Its Contents." Modern Philology 69 (1971-72): 136-37.
- Ward, A. W., and A. R. Waller, eds. The Cambridge History of English Literature: From the Beginnings to the Cycles of Romance. 15 vols. New York: Knickerbocker, 1907.
- Watson, Paru. "The Tree of Life." Restoration Quarterly 23 (1980): 232-38.
- Westhoff, Alphonse. "Notes on the Good Friday Liturgy." Arate Frates 10 (1936): 156-62.
- Wolf, Carol Jean. "Christ as Hero in The Dream of the Rood." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 71 (1970): 202-10.
- Woolf, Rosemary. "Doctrinal Influences on The Dream of the Rood." Medium Aevum 27 (1958): 137-53.

Wrenn, Charles Leslie. A Study of Old English Literature.
London: Harrap, 1967.

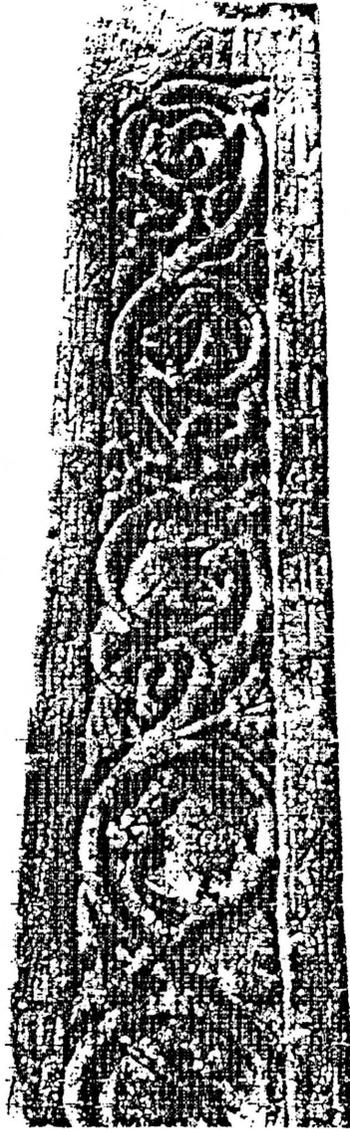


PLATE I
The Ruthwell Cross, east face
The Warburg Institute

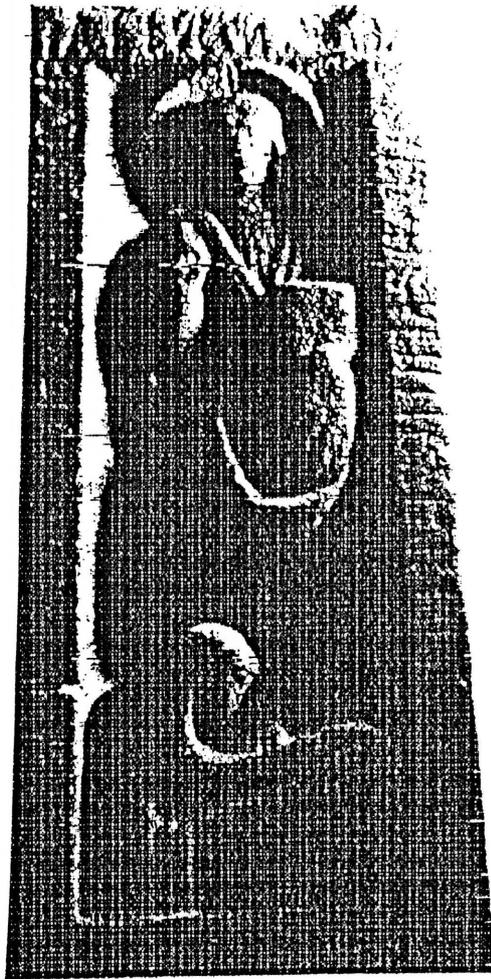


PLATE II
Magdalen Panel of the Ruthwell Cross
The Warburg Institute