

The Cup of Dom – the Identity of a Small Figure on the Franks Casket

Dustin McKinley Frazier
University of Saint Andrews



Figure 1: The rear panel of the Franks Casket, ©The Trustees of the British Museum

Since its discovery in 1857, the Franks Casket has become a byword for scholarly puzzles amongst Anglo-Saxonists. The casket's complex interweaving of images from pagan and Christian sources alongside inscriptions in runic and Roman letters poses countless questions to modern viewers. Academic debate over the presence of a programme uniting the casket's various elements continues, largely as a result of the apparent incongruity of those elements' diverse cultural influences. Hundreds of studies have revealed an intricate web of symbols linking panels and the narratives from which they derive.¹ However, one important figure on the casket's rear panel remains unidentified by scholars: a small human figure whose presence underscores one of the panel's primary themes.

¹ For recent studies of the Franks Casket, and examples of various programmes for reading the casket's many narratives, see: Leslie Webster, 'Stylistic Aspects of the Franks Casket' in *The Vikings* ed. by R. T. Farrell (London: Phillimore Press, 1982); Jennifer Lang, 'The Imagery of the Franks Casket: Another Approach' and Leslie Webster, 'The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket' in *Northumbria's Golden Age* ed. by Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 227-46; Alfred Becker, 'Franks Casket Revisited' *Asterisk*, 12 (2003) 83-128.



Figure 2: The unidentified figure ©The Trustees of the British Museum

The rear panel depicts the conquest of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD as recorded by Flavius Josephus in *De bello Iudaico* 6:4-6.² Josephus emphasises the Jews' responsibility for their own downfall and begins his account of the conquest by attributing the downfall of Jerusalem to the willingness of many Jews to follow false prophets and the leaders of three different seditious factions.³ On the casket, the Roman conquest appears as a series of four scenes with corresponding textual captions, arranged in upper and lower registers around a stylised Temple.⁴

² *De bello Iudaico* was known in Anglo-Saxon England primarily or perhaps exclusively in a fourth-century abbreviated Latin translation by Hegesippus, which is used here. For manuscripts extant in England and on the Continent, see: Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001) pp. 50, 83, 86, 127; Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006) pp. 218, 317; Rosalind Love, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede' in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, forthcoming 2011).

³ Carolus Fridericus Weber, ed. *Hegesippus qui dicitur sive Egesippus De Bello Iudaico ope codicis cassellani recognitus* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1864) pp. 276-371. For the translations used herein, see: Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume II* trans. Henry St John Thackeray (London: Heinemann, 1926). It is interesting to note that Hegesippus follows Josephus's Greek text quite closely in his description of the young boy and priests. Subsequent references to this passage contain a reference both the Hegesippus's Latin and to Thackeray's facing translation of the original Greek text, as *Hegesippus* and *Josephus*, respectively.

⁴ Why the carver chooses to use the Roman alphabet for three words and an Anglicized version of the Latin *habitatores* for the caption of the upper right-hand scene is uncertain, the subject of debate and conjecture. In Webster's opinion, 'The casket's unique use of Latin and the roman alphabet at this point in the text emphasises the pictorial message of a new world order' [Leslie Webster, 'Stylistic Aspects of the Franks Casket' in *The Vikings* (London: Phillimore, 1982)]. Neuman de Vegvar suggests that 'the use of Latin here may...be [an] example of the Anglo-Saxon use of euphemism and other methods for avoiding the transference of disaster by sympathetic magic from written word to reality' [Carol Neuman de Vegvar, *Northumbrian Renaissance* (Susquehanna: Susquehanna University, 1987) p. 266]. In support of his theory of visual cues, Laing says that 'the change in both script and language...reinforces the impression that this caption refers only to the upper right panel' and goes on to suggest that the upper and lower registers of the panel contain references to separate story lines. [Jennifer Laing, *Early English Art and Architecture* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 1996) p. 249].



Figure 3: Detail of lower left scene of the rear panel ©The Trustees of the British Museum

The upper register depicts Titus at the head of the advancing Roman army and the flight of the Jewish populace. The lower register deals with Titus' actions as *imperator*, a title granted him by his soldiers after taking the city. Given this shift and Josephus' view that the Romans delivered a 'just vengeance', the two scenes of the lower register unsurprisingly deal with the concepts of judgment and justice. On the lower left, Titus appears enthroned with a cup in his hand as deliverer of judgment; on the right, a group of Jews depart for Rome 'as hostages for their country's fidelity to Rome'.⁵

The unidentified figure appears in the panel's lower left scene, in which Titus faces a hooded figure and a soldier. Behind him, another figure holds a captive by the hood or hair. The unidentified figure sits beneath Titus' throne, a cup held in his outstretched hand. A single runic Old English word appears in the border at the scene's lower left corner: *dom*.

Logically, because the scenes depicted on the panel derive from just three chapters of *De bello Iudaico*, and Titus exercises *imperium* in only one of those, the label *dom* - and the unidentified figure - must correlate with an instance within that chapter. In the text, Titus judges three groups of Jews: the priests who desecrated their own temple during the fighting, the leaders of the sedition that

⁵ *Hegesippus*, p. 371. As *imperator*, Titus displays precisely those qualities which according to Bede define good kingship: *prudencia*, *fortitudo*, *iustitia* and *temperantia*. Of these, all but *fortitudo* seem implicit in the narrative moment depicted in the lower left-hand scene. Though no clear connection between the casket and Bede can be made, it is perhaps not inappropriate to assume that the personal and administrative characteristics exhibited by Titus would have resonated positively with Anglo-Saxon royal, noble and ecclesiastical viewers of the casket. For a more complete discussion, see: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).



Figure 4: Detail of boy seated below the throne (rear panel) ©The Trustees of the British Museum

destroyed the city, and a group of nobles who beg for peace. Only the first instance corresponds visually to the panel scene: ‘...the priests...were brought to Titus by the guards, they begged for their lives; but he replied, that the time of pardon was over as to them...and that it was agreeable to their office that priests should perish with the house itself to which they belonged. So he ordered them to be put to death.’⁶ On the panel, a soldier stands behind a cloaked man who faces Titus. Behind Titus’s throne another cloaked figure is dragged away by his hood and arm.⁷ Such striking similarity between text and image seems to me to indicate that this particular *dom* represents that of the dishonourable temple priests.

Having identified the priests visually and textually, it makes sense to return to the text for clues as to the identity of the unidentified figure below the throne. Immediately preceding the passage in which the priests receive their death sentence, Josephus recounts the following story of a boy who had been hiding with the temple priests following the temple’s destruction:

There was a boy that...desired some of the Roman guards to give him their right hands as a security for his life, and confessed he was very thirsty. These guards commiserated his age, and the distress

⁶ ‘...nec multo post Sacerdotes confecti fame & siti vitam rogarunt, quos Titus iussit occidi degeneris animi esse respondens, ut templo et muneri cuperent superuiuere’. *Hegesippus*, p. 367; *Josephus*, p. 471.

⁷ The use of sub-scenes also occurs on the front and right side panels. Though in those cases plant ornaments separate sub-scenes, the scrolls of Titus’ throne and the general arrangement of figures creates a clear visual parallel. Additionally, the use of three visual units (priest and guard on right, Titus in centre, and priest and guard on left) mirrors the arrangement of the Weland scene and reinforces the visual link between the two scenes.

he was in, and gave him their right hands accordingly. So he came down himself, and drank some water, and filled the vessel he had with him...and then went off, and fled away to his own friends; nor could any of the guards overtake him; but still they reproached him for his perfidiousness. To which he made this answer: "I have not broken the agreement; for the security I had given me was not in order to my staying with you, but only in order to my coming down safely, and taking up some water; both which things I have performed, and thereupon think myself to have been faithful to my engagement". Hereupon those whom the child had imposed upon admired at his cunning, and that on account of his age.⁸

In contrast to the priests, who betray their duty and receive death sentences, the boy keeps his word and wins the admiration of the Roman guards. The boy lives, while the priests die.

I suggest that the small figure seated below Titus represents this boy. The cup he holds represents the vessel he fills with water and mirrors the one held by Titus, and links the two figures visually and perhaps symbolically.⁹ The centrality of the temple and the overtly Judaeo-Christian context of the scene brings to mind Old Testament references to cups as symbols of both wrath and salvation. If the cup in Titus's hand suggests that of Isaiah 51:17 and the priests the representatives of the people of Jerusalem, 'who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering', the boy's cup more seems more closely related to a sort of 'cup of salvation', as in Psalms 116:13.¹⁰ The contrasting judgment passed on the boy and priests also

⁸ 'Interea puer quidam eo loci, ubi etiam Sacerdotes erant, quos et inopia aquae, et aestus finitimi incendii commacerabat siti, rogavit unum de custodibus Romanis dexteram sibi dare, potum offerre. Porrexit ilico, aetatem pariter miseratus ac necessitatem, bibit puerulus et quia sedulo innoxiae creditum fuerat aetati, rapuit aquae vas, et cursu sese proripuit, ut etiam Sacerdotibus bibendi copiam ministraret. Voluit sequi miles sed non potuit comprehendere. Ille periculo suo Sacerdotum sitim levavit. Bona fraus, quae neminem laederet, subueniret necessitati. Denique miles ipse miratus est magis affectum pueri, quam dolum detestatus, quod in illa aetate atque excidio totius urbis, et communi periculo, quid deberetur reverentiae sacerdotibus, quod potuit ministerium, non inexpressum reliquit'. *Hegesippus*, pp. 366-7; *Josephus*, pp. 468-71.

⁹ It seems likely that the cups held by Titus and the boy are part of one programmatic approach to casket in which objects link panels visually, symbolically and metaphorically. Cups appear in the *dom* scene, the left and right scenes of the front panel, and on the right-hand end panel.

¹⁰ Isaiah 51:17. 'Elevare elevare consurge Hierusalem quae bibisti de manu Domini calicem irae eius usque ad fundum calicis soporis bibisti et epotasti usque ad feces' (Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.). Psalms 115: 13 'Calicem salutis accipiam et nomen Domini invocabo' (I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord). Other examples of the dual nature of cups as symbols of wrath and/or salvation include Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, 1 Corinthians 10:16. It is also possible that the cups that appear on the casket would have carried symbolic weight in a more culturally specific sense, as they could also have suggested to an Anglo-Saxon viewer a shared cup such as the one from which Beowulf drinks before pledging his service to Hrothgar. For a recent discussion of the use of cups as im-



Figure 5: Detail of Welund offering the cup to Beaduhild (front panel) ©The Trustees of the British Museum

appears in their arrangement within the scene. The boy's confinement below the throne suggests his relevance to the priests' condemnation while maintaining his independence from it. As in the narrative, he appears visually in contrast to the priests who surround him. In a scene emphasising the just consequences of dishonourable behaviour, the boy appears as a reminder of the rewards of oath keeping and quick thinking.

The appearance of Josephus's thirsty, cunning boy also establishes a symbolic connection beyond the scene in which he appears. The cup in the boy's hand links the casket's front and rear panels visually and thematically. The traits that characterise the boy also characterise Welund, who appears on the casket's front panel and who also holds a cup in his outstretched hand. Like the boy, Welund secures his freedom through cunning, and appears in the act of offering a cup of drugged beer to Beaduhild, daughter of the unjust Niðhad.¹¹ Like the priests, Niðhad pays for his dishonourable behaviour in a space outside the confines of the scene.

ages of both wrath and death, and salvation, in Biblical and medieval literature, especially *Beowulf*, see: Joanna Bellis 'The Dregs of the Cup of Trembling: The Ambivalent Symbolism of the Cup in Medieval Literature' *Journal of Medieval Studies*, 2011 (forthcoming).

¹¹ For a recent edition of the *Völundarkviða*, including a discussion of the Weland panel of the Franks Casket, see: Ursula Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda Volume II: The Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) pp. 239-329. Weland also appears in the Old English poem 'Deor' and is mentioned in 'Waldere II'. For an analysis of his role in an Old English elegaic context, see: Anne Klinck, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition & Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) pp. 43-6, 90-91 and 158-68.

Identifying the small figure of the back panel's lower left-hand scene with the cunning boy of Josephus' narrative thus reinforces the scene's key themes of justice and honour. It also establishes a clear symbolic connection between the casket's front and rear panels. The cups of Titus and the boy, symbolic of vengeance and life respectively, mirror the cup of Welund, which symbolises both salvation (his own) and vengeance (delivered upon Niðhad via the rape of Beaduhild). Though at first glance unrelated, the boy and smith are in fact linked by the narrative moments in which they are depicted and in the cups they hold, and by the suggestion they represent, that the nature of *dom* includes of both life and death, freedom and damnation. For the smith as for the boy, it is the moment of justice - and the cup of *dom* - that matters most.

The Apocalyptic Vision on the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba

Nienke Van Etten
University College, Dublin.

The greater part of the Irish scripture crosses¹ has been dated to the 9th and 10th centuries. This date has often led scholars to believe that the Irish high crosses were erected in response to the Viking raids on many of the monasteries in the country. Scholars have argued that due to the nature of the material of the stone crosses, these monuments would have been nearly impossible to move or destroy. While the portable treasures of many monasteries were carried away by the raiders and other valuables were destroyed, the free-standing stone crosses could not be so treated by the Scandinavians.² This argument, however, is not substantiated by the archaeological and historical record. Free-standing crosses are mentioned in seventh-century sources, and thus clearly predate the Viking Age, which is further supported by the fact that the stone crosses appear to have been based on wooden predecessors.³ The Ahenny Crosses, erected entirely of stone, are stylistically dated to the eighth century.⁴ Thus, it seems that the tradition of erecting stone crosses was already in place prior to the arrival of the Vikings in Ireland. One cannot deny, however, that the Viking raids had an impact on the worldview of the medieval person. Many medieval sources describe these Viking raids as the 'end of civilization', and clearly see these events as a foretoken for the emerging and inescapable Apocalypse. The community of Columba at Iona was certainly not spared, and was subjected to two recorded attacks at the start of the ninth century.⁵

During the attack of 806 sixty-eight members of the Columban community were killed. The Annals of Ulster record the start of the construction of a new monastery at Kells, Co. Meath under the supervision of Cellach, abbot of Iona, a

¹NB The following abbreviations have been used: AU: *The Annals of Ulster to 1131AD*, ed. by Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin: 1983); Rv: 'The Revelation of St John the Apostle' in *Douay Rheims Bible* translated from the Latin Vulgate.

²High crosses portraying biblical scenes are so named.

Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin, Volume I* (Dublin/New Jersey: Templekieran/Humanities Press, 1979) 290; Roger Stalley, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin: Townhouse, 1996) p. 38.

³Dorothy Kelly, 'The Heart of the Matter: Models for Irish High Crosses' in *Journal for the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 121 (1991), 105-145, (p. 105-7).

⁴Françoise Henry, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin: Three Candles Ltd. For the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland, 1964) p. 59.

⁵AU 802.9; AU 806.8.

year later.⁶ The new monastery was completed in 814 and Cellach retired as superior of the Columban monastery, only to die a year later.⁷

The inscription on the Tower Cross at Kells, *S. Patricii et Columbe Cr(ux)*, in conjunction with the iconography of the cross, which is remarkably similar to that of the Book of Kells, has allowed scholars to suggest an early ninth century date for the cross.⁸

The cross has been regarded as apocalyptic.⁹ The *Majestas Domini* scene depicted on this cross presents Christ in Glory surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists. The winged symbols of Mark and Luke, holding their Gospels, are carved on either side of Christ, while above Christ the symbol of Matthew, raising the Lamb, is depicted. John, the eagle, is located below the figure of Christ.¹⁰

And in the sight of the throne was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal,

And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third living creature, having the face, as it were, of a man, and the fourth living creature was like an eagle flying.¹¹

As can be deduced from the quote above, the four symbols of the evangelists¹² are present in the Apocalyptic prophesy of St. John the Divine. And they

⁶ AU 807.4.

⁷ AU 814.9; AU 815.6.

⁸ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 28; Hilary Richardson, 'Visual Arts and Society' in *A New History of Ireland, Volume I: Prehistoric and early medieval Ireland*, ed. by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 680-713 (p. 710).

⁹ Charles Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland: A Review' in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. by H.B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998) pp. 288-330, (p. 311).

¹⁰ Arthur Kingsley Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* (New York: Arno Press, 1979) p. 74; Hilary Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery and the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh and the Book of Kells' in *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: Texts and transmission*, ed. by Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) pp. 205-14, (p. 206-7); Kees Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha: Eschatological Theophanies and Irish High Crosses* (Amsterdam: Stichting Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, 1997) pp. 64-66, 118: Though he argues that the eagle below the *Majestas Domini* scene is a symbol of the resurrection; Kees Veelenturf, 'Irish High Crosses and Continental Art' in *From Ireland Coming*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) pp. 83-102, (p. 86). He argues that the eagle is located between the *Majestas Domini* panel and the crucifixion panel below it. Thus, he argues, it is possible that the eagle, which is also a symbol of the resurrection, belongs to the crucifixion scene below. This difficulty in the analysis of the iconography is, he argues, indicative of the ambiguous nature of the Irish biblical scenes found on the crosses.

¹¹ Rv 4:6 - Rv 4:7.

¹² Mark the Lion, Luke the Ox, Matthew the Man, and John the Eagle.



Figure 1: *Majestas Domini* scene, Cross of St. Patrick and St. Columba, picture: Nienke Van Etten.

are portrayed here exactly like they are described in the Revelation, surrounding the throne of Christ.

The Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba is also unusual in the organization of the panels. While the Last Judgment is often represented on the Irish high crosses, the scene is normally found on the east side of the cross-head, while the crucifixion is located on the west side. In this way, the paradoxical nature of Christ, as sacrificial Lamb and powerful Judge, was emphasised.¹³ Thus, the presentation of the Last Judgment in conjunction with the crucifixion represented the dual nature of the merciful, and at the same time, unforgiving God. In the case of the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, the respective scenes of the crucifixion and the Last Judgment are not situated at opposing cross heads; in-

¹³ Hilary Richardson, 'The Cross Triumphant' in *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, ed. by Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) pp. 112-7 (p. 116); Richardson, 'Visual Arts', p. 709; Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha*, p. 122-5; Veelenturf, 'Irish High Crosses', p. 84.



Figure 2: *Majestas Domini* scene tops the scene of crucifixion.

Picture: Nienke Van Etten

stead the Last Judgment is situated on the cross head on the west side of the cross, while the crucifixion is depicted on a panel below it.¹⁴

On the opposing (east) cross head the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes is represented, flanked by the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac (l) and St Paul and St Anthony breaking bread in the desert (r).¹⁵ Thus, it is not only the unusual depiction of the *Majestas Domini*, but also the organization of the panels that makes the cross unique. The way in which these Biblical scenes are ordered is just as important as the images themselves. The scenes can be arranged differently, and thus take on another meaning. The way the panels are arranged on the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, with its dramatic conclusion in the *Majestas Domini*, would emphasise the impending Day of Judgment.¹⁶ The capstone of the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba is missing, but this was likely in the shape of shrine, similar to capstones that have survived. Hilary Richard-

¹⁴ Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha*, pp. 124-5: Veelenturf argues that despite the unusual placement of the panels here -the Last Judgment topping the Crucifixion, rather than their respective placement at opposing crossheads- the paradoxical nature is still emphasised.

¹⁵ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 35.

son has suggested that in this instance, and perhaps in others too, the capstone, in the shape of a church-building, represented the Heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁷

Why was the Apocalyptic Vision displayed here? What was the intention of the Columban community of Kells? The symbolism of the cross has often seemed to indicate that the cross was erected in response to the brutality of the Viking raids. The pagan Vikings, who attacked the innocent monastic communities of Europe were surely a foretoken of imminent Doom. It is not hard to understand how the brutality of the Viking raids and their apparent disregard for the sanctity of Christian churches were understood by the ecclesiastical communities to point to imminent Apocalypse. While one could imagine the horrors of the Apocalypse, the Last Days 'would also herald the building of a New Jerusalem'.¹⁸ Was Kells indeed to represent, at least symbolically, the 'New Jerusalem' as envisioned by St. John the Divine? It is interesting to note here, that according to Hilary Richardson 'the four symbols of the Evangelists are part of the Apocalyptic Vision and they are a constant feature of both the Book of Armagh and the Book of Kells.'¹⁹ The ninth-century manuscript of Armagh has an extensive drawing of the heavenly Jerusalem concluding the text of the Apocalypse.²⁰ The evident stylistic similarities between the Books of Kells and Armagh seem to highlight the likely extensive communication between the two communities. Cellach, the abbot of Iona, is commemorated next to Book 13 of the Gospel of Mark on folio 65v of the Book of Armagh.²¹ This would further support the extensive links that may have existed between the Patrician and Columban monasteries. It is a possibility that the Book of Kells was at least begun in the eighth century.²² The similarity in the 'Apocalyptic Vision' of the Patrician and Columban communities might have found its culmination in the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, its inscription commemorating both saints.

While one can easily assume that the 'Apocalyptic Vision' is a result of the Viking attacks, it is also in line with the eschatological writing of the late eighth century, which became increasingly concerned with the impending Doomsday.²³ The early Irish Church seems to have had a great interest in collective es-

¹⁷ Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 207.

¹⁸ Francis John Byrne, 'Church and Politics, c.750-1100' in *A New History of Ireland, Volume I: Prehistoric and early medieval Ireland*, ed. by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 656-79, (p. 662); Rv 3:12; Rv 21:2 - Rv 21:4.

¹⁹ Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 206.

²⁰ Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland', pp. 310-1.

²¹ Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland', p. 311; Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', pp. 205-6.

²² Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 205.

²³ St. John Seymour, 'The Eschatology of the Early Irish Church' in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 14 (1923), 179-211, (p. 198).

chatology, and its literature seems particularly apocalyptic. In contrast, the European ecclesiastical culture of the sixth and seventh centuries was 'overwhelmingly directed to moral issues' and was primarily concerned with individual eschatology.²⁴ St. Patrick, popularly accredited with the conversion of Ireland, writing after the collapse of Roman administration in Britain, believed that the world was about to end.²⁵ The Irish saint Columbanus repeated this sentiment in his writings in the sixth century. In the eighth and ninth centuries the inevitable Doomsday became increasingly popular. By the second half of the tenth century this eschatological theme had gained such popularity that a plethora of texts were devoted to the Day of the Last Judgment.²⁶ The rise of the Céli Dé movement in the second half of the eighth century had a large influence on all aspects of Irish religious literature and art. The movement, which sought to live a more severe ascetic life than the monastic brethren in other houses, managed to gain influence in the monastic powerhouses such as Armagh and Clonmacnoise by the eleventh century.²⁷ Biblical images became increasingly popular and the texts of the eighth and ninth centuries became increasingly pre-occupied with the fate of the soul of the common Christian.²⁸ While one can surely find many Irish causes for this increasing concern, possible Continental influences need to be considered too. After the seventh century the previous discussions surrounding the patristic literature culminated in a greater emphasis on 'issues of merit, sin and identity' on the European Continent 'and so (the Church) found itself in need of a different imaginative world'.²⁹ The close cooperation of religious scholars in the Carolingian Empire in the late eighth century would surely have heightened Irish interest in the matter of eschatology. In fact, Françoise Henry has suggested that the inspiration for the scenes on the cross was perhaps taken from Carolingian carved ivories already in possession of the Columban monks.³⁰ These would certainly have predated the Viking attacks. It

²⁴ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* 2nd Edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) pp. 236-7.

²⁵ Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Patrick on the Margins of Space and Time' in *Eklogai: Studies in Honour of Thomas Finan and Gerard Watson*, ed. by Kieran McGroarty (Maynooth: NUI Maynooth, 2001) pp. 44-59, (p. 54).

²⁶ Benjamin Hudson, 'Time is Short: The Eschatology of the Early Gaelic Church' in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) pp. 101-23, (pp. 103-5, 109-10, 121).

²⁷ Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006) pp. 3, 212.

²⁸ Richardson, 'Visual Arts', p. 708; Seymour, 'The Eschatology', pp. 198-9.

²⁹ Peter Brown, 'The Decline of the Empire of God: Amnesty, Penance and Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages' in *Last things*, ed. by Bynum and Freedman (Philadelphia: 2000) pp. 41-59, (p. 59).

³⁰ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 29.

thus seems plausible that the iconography of the cross is not a product of the Viking raids, but that it was rather the culmination of earlier eschatological writings. While it has long been considered that the cross and its iconography were a response to the brutal attacks of the early Viking Age, it remains certainly a possibility that the inspiration for the scenes was to be found in the literature of earlier centuries.