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THE SYMBOLIC GREEN STREET TO PARADISE IN OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

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The Old English poems of MS. Junius XI contain three particularly curious occurrences of the colour green: Moses's rod is "grene tacne" (*Exodus* 281), the Israelites pass through the Red Sea "ofer grenne grund"(*Exodus* 312), and the way to heaven is "grene straete"(*Christ and Satan* 286). Little attention has been paid, to date, to the meaning or origin of the green collocation apart from Hugh T. Keenan's suggestion that the latter occurrences are exegetical and symbolic in origin, and Alger N. Doane's argument that the green nexus is derived from oral-formulaic tradition and is only secondarily exegetical.

This thesis will show that, although the green collocation is indeed often used as an alliterative formula, the argument of its oral-formulaic origin does not adequately explain its occurrence or application in Anglo-Saxon poetry and prose. It is in medieval biblical exegesis that the significance of the green collocation is found. By pursuing Keenan's identification of the passage through the sea ("ofer grenne grund") with the *via* of Christian salvation ("grene straete"), in light of the association of Moses's rod ("grene tacne") with the holy cross, it will be shown that the green way to heaven is the way of Christian faith, symbolized by the cross.

The symbolic "green street" is the straight path of the faithful, imitative of the life of Christ and signified by the cross upon which Christ ascends for man's salvation. Through its association with the tree of Jesse, the tree of life, the ladder of Jacob, and the mast of the ship which is the church, the cross comes to signify redemption through

the Virgin Mary, the promise of immortality, and the true way and means of man's salvation through faith.

As the blossoming branch of the tree of Jesse and the living wood of the tree of life, the cross embraces virtually all aspects of the tree and leaf, vine and fruit imagery of Judeo-Christian tradition. In medieval architecture and manuscript illumination, the cross is found entwined with vines, occasionally in full bloom of fruit and flower, or as the traditional carpentered cross, but painted green. Distinct from the red cross, symbolizing the Passion, or the gold cross of the Resurrection, the green cross of faith is the token of the foundation of Christian salvation, true belief. It is as both the sign and the means of salvation that the greenness of the cross comes to represent, in itself, a *tacn* of salvation.

The image of the verdant cross as the sign of the way to heaven, to Paradise, and eternal life is found in early patristic exegesis, Old and Middle English poetry and prose, hymns and homilies. It will be the burden of this thesis to explain how the *grenehede* of the cross, symbolic of salvation through true faith, is applied to the "grene tacne," "grenne grund," and "grene straete" of MS. Junius XI.

PREFACE

Quotations from the Old English poetic corpus are from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, edited by George P. Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia U. Press), unless otherwise noted. Biblical references are to the Vulgate and the Revised Version of the Authorized (King James, 1911) Bible.

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CHAPTER I THE GREEN STREET: FORMULAIC OR SYMBOLIC

An English lapidary of the early fifteenth century tells us that the emerald "signifieth þe grettist grenehede of hym þat is þe grete grenehede of the feith of þe Trinite."[1] Some four hundred years earlier, an Old English version of the Vulgate Psalm 141 transforms the *via hac qua ambulam* into "þyssum grenan wege."[2] Centuries before that, the way to the kingdom of the angels is "grene straete."[3] There is, to date, no thorough analysis of the significance of these peculiar applications of the colour green in Old and Middle English literature perhaps because, apart from its obvious use as a symbol of the natural world and its association with the realm of faerie, green has retained no special symbolic significance to the modern reader.

The limitations imposed by our unfamiliarity with the symbolic use of green are exemplified in one of the first studies published on colour in Old English literature, William E. Mead's "Color in Old English Poetry,"[4] where the peculiarity, but not the significance, of the occurrence of green is recognized: "If we take the entire body of Old English verse we find that the most frequent of the genuine colors is green"; "But singularly enough, the examples in Old English poetry are found almost wholly in the religious poems, one-third in the Genesis alone. Yet not a single example occurs in the Beowulf or in any other heroic poem."[5] What Mead overlooks in this imbalanced distribution of the occurrences of green is the possibility that there is some special application of that colour in the allegorical exegesis of a Christian paraphrase of Genesis not found in Anglo-Saxon

heroic poetry. Mead's remarks are, however, worth repeating at length for they typify how much is lost when an image is passed unrecognized:

> In the religious poems the word is commonly used in a somewhat conventional way, and seldom with a keen appreciation of the color. The earth, the fields, the grass, the trees, the hills, and other objects are mentioned, but the color-word appears to be added in many cases as a mere epithet. Now and then, however, the color-word seems to be used in order to make the passage more vivid. Thus the rod of Moses is called a *grēne tāne* [*sic*] (*Exod.* 281). Green streets [*sic*] leading to the home of the angels are once mentioned (*C. and S.* 287). Two instances of the deliberate use of green for descriptive purposes are found in the Phoenix . . . . Yet in no passage do we find anything like the easy mastery of color-phrases that is so marked in Tennyson and Shelley and Keats.[6]

The excellence of poetic imagery is easily misjudged when the image itself has passed out of use for centuries and, by the end of the fifteenth century, much of the symbolic significance of green appears to have been forgotten. What can be found in the poetry and illuminations of old religious manuscripts and in the odd green or foliate crosses of art and architecture are but remnants of the connecting link of one of the most pervasive and all-embracing themes of Christian eschatology. The colour green, as I intend to show, is symbolic of Christian faith signified in the cross of Christ as the sign and vehicle of salvation.

The first published attempt to attach symbolic meaning to the use of green in Old English poetry is Hugh T. Keenan's brief article "*Exodus* 312: 'The Green Street of Paradise'."[7] In comparing the "grenne grund"(*Exo* 312) of the Junius XI poem with similar collocations in the *Paris Psalter* (141.4), the *Cursor Mundi* (9989-90), and the *Poema Morale* (Part II, 179), Keenan suggests that the addition of the

grene detail should be neither dismissed as an inappropriate attempt at realism nor emended.[8] Rather, he identifies the occurrences of these unconventional uses of green in reference to "the way of salvation for all Christians" and "the way to Paradise"[9] with the eschatological association of the Israelites' passage through the sea, a type of baptism, the *via* of Psalm 141 and "þene narewe wei, and þene wei grene" of the *Poema Morale*.

But Keenan offers no clear explanation why the colour green should be applied to the narrow way, the *via* of salvation. Quoting from the *Glossa Ordinaria* commentary on Psalm 141.4, that "the way is Charity", Keenan assumes that "the green colour associated with Charity" accounts for the "grenan wege" of the *Paris Psalter*. But he does not explain this assumption. Nor does he interpret the so-called explanation he quotes from the *Cursor Mundi* for the green colour of the foundation of the castle which represents Mary "as the protector of the faithful".[10] In fact, Keenan's explanations seem little more enlightening than the "uneasy"[11] explanation he cites of Robert E. Diamond on the peculiarity of the "grenan wege." In *The Diction of the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Psalms*, Diamond suggests that the occurrence of *grenan* in Psalm 141.4 of the *Paris Psalter*,

> On þyssum grenan wege, þe ic gange on,
> me oferhydige aeghwaer setton
> gearwe grine;

is due to its alliterative function with *gange*, "since a 'path' *can* be green; but it seems certain that the adjective was not chosen for its content but for its metrical and alliterative utility."[12]

A similar argument, in response to Keenan, is presented by Alger N. Doane in "'The Green Street of Paradise': A Note on Lexis and Meaning in Old English Poetry."[13] Doane's remarks demand some close scrutiny for if, as he argues, the occurrences of the *grene* collocation are formulaic in origin and only secondarily exegetical, then Keenan may well be assigning exaggerated significance to the coincidences of alliterative necessity. It is essential therefore to examine Doane's assertion and evidence that "the actual origins of *grene* as a common thematic and compositional element in Old English poetry are not to be found by a search of patristic and ecclesiastical sources. . . . The poetic nexus of which *grene* is only a part surely goes back to early Germanic formulaic poetry which is pre-Christian and continental in its origins."[14]

Presumably to demonstrate that "we can still see the origins of the *green* nexus illustrated by the parallel traditions of it evident in Old Norse, Old Saxon and Old English alliterative poetry," Doane cites two occurrences of "green street" from the Poetic Edda:

> Ár qváđo ganga groenar brautir ("Rígsþula" 1.1)
> Liggia til Giúca groenar brautir ("Fáfnismál" 41.4)[15]

The latter example, "Green paths to Gjúki's Hall,"[16] is from "The Lay of Fáfnir," a poem Lee M. Hollander describes as "both in matter and manner, unquestionably a continuation of the preceeding lay,"[17] that is, "Reginsmál" which he ascribes to "the heathen period (before 1000)."[18] It may be assumed, therefore, that *groenar brautir* of "Fáfnismál" 41.4 is merely an alliterative formula and that it contains

no special symbolic significance. The other example, "In old times, they say, [Ríg] went [on] green paths," is from "The Lay of Ríg," a poem "in vindication of the divine origin of kingship" that explains mythologically the origins of the three orders of society: slaves, freemen, and nobles.[19] That this poem is not entirely typical of the pre-Christian heroic lay is noted by Hollander: "God as the progenitor of all three estates definitely is a medieval Christian conception."[20]

But even disregarding the possibility of Christian influence in "The Lay of Ríg," there is no reason to suppose that the occurrence of *groenar brautir* in both a didactic poem and a pagan heroic lay is evidence of the formulaic origin of the green collocation. In fact, perhaps the reverse of Diamond's suggestion should be considered: that is, it may be that *ganga* was chosen for the first line of "Rígsþula" specifically because it alliterates with a collocation traditionally associated with the ways of God on earth, just as *gange* may occur in the *Paris Psalter* 141.4 for its convenient alliteration with "grenan wege." It is even possible that Gjúki's name is specifically mentioned at line 41.4 of "Fáfnismál" because it alliterates with *groenar brautir*, the way upon which the hero is tested. Though the latter suggestion obviously conflicts with Hollander's note on *groenar* "green" as "pleasant,"[21] it is certainly possible that there is some symbolic significance to the green of the way leading to Sigurth's destiny ("fate doth further the fearless man" (41.2)), his death by treachery. The point at hand is that the mere occurrence of the green collocation in Old Norse alliterative poetry does not preclude its possible symbolic origin and significance.

In fact, there are numerous other occurrences of green in Scandinavian poetry which rather suggest a symbolic origin for the use of the word. In "Hákonarmál," for example, Skogul says to Hákon: "now we must ride (quoth the mighty Skogul) to the green city of the Gods [*gróenna heima goða*] , to tell Woden that a mighty king is coming thither to see him."[22] Doane makes no mention of green as the cölour of the city of the gods but, since cities are less likely to be green than paths are, the occurrence of "gróenna heima" must be due either to the alliteration of *gróenna* with *goða* or to some symbolism inherent in the colour-word itself. In regard to the former, there are a multitude of words which alliterate with *goða* and which have the added advantage of making sense, literally, as descriptive of the gods' city. They include many of the names of Othin, Gagnráth, Gangleri, Gaut, Gestumblindi, Glapsvith, Gondlir, Grím, and Grímnir; the name of Othin's dwelling place, Gladhome; and, especially, the very name of the abode of the gods, Gimlé.[23]

The greenness of the celestial city of the gods in the pagan lay "Hákonarmál" and of Ríg's earthpath in the eleventh or twelfth century "Rígsþula," clearly reoccurs in other Skaldic lays,[24] including the early thirteenth century "Alvissmál." In this poem, Allwise the Dwarf lists the names of that which men call earth: the Aesir (Anses, Othin and his kin) call it "Land" or "Field;"[25] the Vanir (Wanes, an older race of gods) "Ways" or "Way;" the etins (giants) call it "All-Green," "Ever-green;" and the alfs (elves) "Burgeoning," "Growing." What is most interesting is that this last name, *Groandi*, which Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell translate "Growing," Hollander renders more figuratively as "Burgeoning": the earth, situated near one of the

three roots of the world-tree Yggdrasil, itself buds, sprouts, and puts forth shoots as branches of the "evergreen"[26] and "heaven-touching holy world-tree."[27] The image is similar to that of the world-tree as the Christian cross.

This association of the world-tree with the cross is apparent in the didactic so-called "Rune Poem" contained in "Hávamál." On this image, Hollander remarks: "Othin sacrificed himself by hanging himself on the World-Ash and wounding himself with his spear. Hence the world-tree is called Yggdrasil, that is Ygg's ("the Terrible One's," Othin's) Horse ("the gallows"). . . . It is difficult . . . to avoid the conclusion that the conception of the first two stanzas [of "The Rune Poem"] (see also St. 145) is ultimately derived from the crucifixion scene of the Bible."[28] Doane does not consider this Christian influence in later Old Norse poetry at all. Instead, he cites an example of the alliteration of "grass" and "green" in "The Second Lay of Guthrún" where the reference is, according to Hollander's translation, to the fact that garlic grows taller than grass.[29]

On the "habitual collocation of *grôni/grene* and *uuang/wong*" in Old Saxon and Old English poetry, Doane quotes two examples from the *Heliand* where "green has developed spiritual connotations parallel to those in Old English poetry." But despite the fact that both of his examples occur in contexts full of exegetical symbolism, one in the Transfiguration where the shining light makes the "green" place like Paradise and the other describing the "green" land to which the Holy family is led,[30] he dismisses their possible symbolic significance without explaining why "it seems that the nexus has not originated within either historical tradition."[31] Similarly, other occurrences

of green in the *Heliand* and in Old English poetry are attributed variously to rhyme, literal translation, or some odd form of poetic licence. There are only two instances in Old English where Doane admits detecting some "semantical necessity in the occurrence of *grene*"; otherwise, his general conclusion is that green "alliterates and cooperates in meaning without determining it."[32]

To be sure, some of Doane's speculations on the formulaic use of green in Anglo-Saxon poetry are useful, especially his suggestion that "graes ungrene" (*Genesis* 116) is a variation on the formula, where "'ungrene' in this context means 'not having the presence of God'."[33] But he does not consider the possibility that, by the same token, *grene* in certain contexts means "having the presence of God" and is symbolic in function and exegetical in origin.

The essential problem with Doane's argument is that the mere demonstration of the formulaic use of the green collocation is not proof of its alliterative origin. What it does prove is that Old English poets knew precisely how to use the collocation in alliterative verse. There are two major points at which Doane fails to show the formulaic origin of "the *green* nexus illustrated by the parallel traditions of it evident in Old Norse, Old Saxon and Old English." In the first place, it is obvious that in Old Norse poetry green occurs not only in habitual collocations but also in highly specific contexts, such as the green city of the gods and the straight and green earth-paths of Rígr the progenitor. Secondly, Doane's examples from the Old Saxon *Heliand* do not at all illustrate a parallel tradition of alliterative poetry "pre-Christian and continental in its origins," unless by "continental" Doane means classical. For, according to Winfred P.

Lehmann in "The Alliteration of Old Saxon Poetry,"[34] one should look neither to Old Norse poetry for clues to the alliterative style of Old Saxon, nor to Old Saxon for an understanding of Old English poetic forms: "it is now generally agreed that the practices of epic alliterative poetry differed considerably from those of the terse northern verse. . . . There is little doubt that the West Germanic alliterative epic was developed in England from elements of earlier alliterative verse, such as the song of praise, and the classical epics, such as the *Aeneid*." The resulting modification in style is reflected in "a departure in alliterative practice. Although both the Skaldic poetry . . . and the verse of the *Heliand* are in one historical tradition, we cannot assume that each was written, and is to be judged by the same standards."[35] Lehmann points out that because the alliterative principles at work in the *Heliand* "differ considerably from those of Old Norse, Old High German, and early Old English verse, and presumably from the earlier Germanic verse"[36] due to the possible influence of Latin rhymed poetry, "we cannot draw conclusions from the *Heliand* about early Germanic alliterative techniques."[37]

Thus, Doane's examples from Old Norse and Old Saxon serve to return the problem to Keenan and his suggestion that the occurrences of green in unconventional collocations in Old English poetry are derived from some underlying symbolism of that colour in medieval Christian tradition.

In "*Exodus* 312a: Further Notes on the Eschatological 'Green Ground'," [38] Keenan cites support in the Apocrypha and medieval Jewish legends and commentaries for his argument that the "grenne grund" of *Exodus* is exegetical and symbolic: "God's miraculous provision of

food in the wilderness (the manna, quail, and water from the rock) was fulfilled in the sea depths too" and the green passage through the sea "is a remnant of the idea that *campus germinans* [Wisdom 19.7] a 'green' or 'springing field' once bordered it in the fulfillment of Jewish eschatological desires."[39]

The relationship between this green ground and the green way to Paradise is enlarged upon by Kari Sajavaara in "The Withered Footprints on the Green Street of Paradise."[40] In the Seth legend of the *Cursor Mundi*, the way to Paradise is a "grene wege" (Trinity 1252)[41] upon which the footprints of Adam and Eve are permanently marked: "the dry footprints . . . are symbols of death and sin," the green grass "represents life and salvation."[42] Significantly, Sajavaara shows that in the Anglo-Norman original of the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Chateau d'Amour*, as in other Middle English translations of the text, the green colour of the foundation of the castle-Mary (*CM* 9987-90) is an attribute of *fey*, faith, rather than of charity as Keenan suggests. But in this identification of green with faith and its association with rebirth, spiritual initiation, and immortality,[43] the only connection Sajavaara makes between the green foundation of faith and the green path to Paradise is that they are both ever-lasting.[44] What is missed is the recognition of the most fundamental connecting link between Christian initiation and salvation, the symbol of both the faith and the redemption promised by the crucifixion. The foremost token and reminder that "being accepted as a member of the religious community meant salvation, and through salvation comes eternal life"[45] is the cross of Christ.

The association of the colour green with the symbolic represen-

tation of the sign of the cross is touched upon by John P. Hermann in "The Green Rod of Moses in the Old English *Exodus*."[46] But where Sajavaara overlooks the significance of the cross as the sign of the way of faith, symbolized by the colour green, Hermann misses the connection between the greenness of Moses's rod, "grene tacne" (*Exo* 281), which by exegetical tradition "betokens the cross of Christ,"[47] and its significance as the sign and vehicle of the salvation of the faithful.

Clearly there is much that has been overlooked or only partially understood in the symbolic significance of green in Old and Middle English literature. A large part of what remains to be explained is how the sign of the way and the reward of faith is symbolized, literally and figuratively, by the green cross. But to understand the essential link between the green way, the green foundation, and the green rod it must be shown how the colour comes to be used as "grene tacne" of the cross, the way of faith.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

[1] Joan Evans and Mary S. Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 190, 1933), p. 20; from *The London Lapidary of King Philip*, a translation of a French version (1325-1350) of a Latin Original.

[2] George P. Krapp, *The Paris Psalter* and *the Meters of Boethius* (New York: Columbia U. Press, ASPR V, 1932), p. 139. Unless otherwise specificed, all references to the Old English poetic corpus are to the ASPR series, edited by Krapp and/or Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie.

[3] George P. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript* (New York: Columbia U. Press, ASPR I, 1931, rpt. 1969), *Christ and Satan* 286.

[4] William E. Mead, "Color in Old English Poetry," *PMLA XIV, 2* (1899), 169-206.

[5] Ibid., 172 and 200, respectively.

[6] Ibid., 200-201.

[7] High T. Keenan, "*Exodus* 312: 'The Green Street of Paradise'," NM, 71 (1970), 455-60. Hereafter referred to as Keenan, "The Green Street."

[8] Ibid., 455. Keenan rejects Krapp's suggestion to emend the text to *ofer grinne grund* "over the wide abyss" (*Junius Manuscript*, p. 210) since "this would belie the context, placing the saved in the broad path which leads to hell" and notes that other editors offer no comment on the phrase. Most recently, however, Peter J. Lucas's edition of *Exodus* (London: Methuen & Co., 1977) recognizes the symbolic significance of the green collocation, see pp. 117-19, notes to 11. 310-16. Likewise, Keenan's association of green with the way of salvation, the "grene straete" (*XSt* 286) to Paradise, is noted by Robert Emmett Finnegan in *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier U. Press, 1977), p. 103, n. to l. 286b.

[9] Keenan, "The Green Street," 458.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 457.

[12] Robert E. Diamond, *The Diction of the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Psalms* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963), p. 54.

[13] Alger N. Doane, "'The Green Street of Paradise': A Note on Lexis and Meaning in Old English Poetry," *NM*, 74 (1973), 456-65.

[14] Ibid., 459.

[15] Ibid., from Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn, eds., *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius* . . . (4th ed., Heidelberg, 1962).

[16] Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda* (2nd ed., 1962; rpt. Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1969), p. 231.

[17] Ibid., 223.

[18] Ibid., 216.

[19] Ibid., 120 and 2 n. 2. See also Henry A. Bellows, *The Poetic Edda* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1936), p. 201.

[20] Hollander, 120. In footnote (n. 2) Hollander remarks that "Rígsþula" is unique for the use of the name Rígr for the progenitor, Heimdall, and suggests that the name is from the Celtic rī(g), "king" (cf. Bellows, 201), or from Graeco-Latin *rēx*.

[21] Ibid., 231 n. 30. It is interesting to note that Merrel D. Clubb, ed., *Christ and Satan: An Old English Poem* (New Haven, 1925), suggests that *grene* of *XSt* 286 is synonymous with "beautiful" or "pleasant" (87). Keenan ("The Green Street," 455, n. 2) rejects this older meaning of the word, quoting L. D. Lerner, "Colour Words in Anglo-Saxon" (*MLR* 46 (1951), 246-49): "Some words, like *grene*, seem to have taken on their modern meanings in the Old English period" (248).

[22] Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, eds., *Corpvs Poeticvm Boreale* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), p. 264, ll. 34-37.

[23] Hollander, 332-33. It is worth mention that the use of green in "Hákonar-mál" could hardly be attributed to the originality of the poet for, as Vigfusson and Powell point out, the nickname of Eywind (the poet) was Skalda-spillir, the Poet-spoiler: "'spillir' means simply 'robber,' that is, in this case, 'plagiarist'. . . . Even if we had not this name, or any express record (as we have, clear and distinct as possible), the fact would still remain visible, that Hákonar-mál was a copy of Eriks-mál . . . so close and unmistakeable is . . . [the] imitation" (262). Unfortunately, only a fragment of "Eriks-mál" remains (259-61) and it begins with Woden already awaiting the hero at Walhall.

[24] See Hollander: "Vǫluspá," 3.4, 19.4, 58.1 (green creation and green released from the flood); "Vafþrúðnismál," 45 (green foliage of the world-tree, tree of life); "Hárbarzljóð," 16.2 (earth "Algroen"); and Hamðismál," 5 and n. 5.

[25] Two versions are given here: that of Hollander (112) and that of Vigfusson and Powell (83), respectively.

[26] Hollander, 4, 19.4.

[27] Ibid., 5, 27.2.

[28] Ibid., 36 n. 67. See stanzas 138-39: "I wot that I hung on the wind-tossed tree," "wounded by spear, bespoken to Othin,/ bespoken myself to myself," "Neither drinking horn they upheld nor handed me bread;/ I looked below me--/ aloud I cried--." In stanza 145.5, Othin returns to life: "up he rose in after time."

[29] Doane, 460. The analogy is that the hero, Sigurth, compared to the sons of Gjúki is like the garlic to the grass; Hollander, 269 and cf. 249.

[30] Ibid. Doane quotes from Otto Behagel, ed., *Heliand und Genesis* (6th ed.; Halle, 1948): the Transfiguration, ll. 3134-36; and Egypt, ll. 754-58.

[31] Doane, 460.

[32] Ibid., 461.

[33] Ibid., 463.

[34] Winfred P. Lehmann, "The Alliteration of Old Saxon Poetry," *Norsk Tidsskift for Sprogvidenskap*, Supp. Bd. III, 1953; rpt. in J. Eichhoff and I. Rauch, eds., *Der Heliand* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaft liche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 144-76.

[35] Ibid., 155.

[36] Ibid., 168.

[37] Ibid., 161.

[38] Hugh T. Keenan, "*Exodus* 312a: Further Notes on the Eschatological 'Green Ground', "*NM*, 74 (1973), 217-19. Hereafter referred to as Keenan, "Further Notes."

[39] Ibid., 218. That Christian homilists were familiar with this idea is suggested by the miracle in a twelfth century homily where a bishop, grieving over the bloodshed involving a certain fishery, prayed God for a remedy, "$_7$ þ water sonae wende of þam fixnoðe, $_7$ waes ðeo mere awend to brade feldae, swa þ mon erode alne ðone fixnoð; $_7$ þer weox corn aeffre wunsumlice syðdaen." A. O. Belfour, ed., *Twelfth-Century Homilies*, Part I (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 137, 1909, rpt. 1962), p. 16.

[40] Kari Sajavaara, "The Withered Footprints on the Green Street of Paradise," *NM*, 76 (1975), 34-38.

[41] Richard Morris, ed., *The Early English Version of the "Cursor Mundi"*, Part I (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 57, 1874).

[42] Sajavaara, 36.

[43] Ibid., 37.

[44] Ibid., 38.

[45] Ibid., 37.

[46] John P. Hermann, "The Green Rod of Moses in the Old English *Exodus*," *ELN*, 12 (1975), 241-53.

[47] Ibid., 242.

CHAPTER II THE WAY OF FAITH: GRENE STRAETE

Three particularly curious applications of the colour green occur in the poems of the Junius XI manuscript: in *Exodus*, Moses's rod is referred to as "grene tacne"(281), the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea is "ofer grenne grund"(312); and in *Christ and Satan*, the way to heaven is called "grene straete"(286). It seems obvious, I think, to observe that the green collocation--*grene tacn*, *grenne grund*, and *grene straet*-- is an alliterative formula, in keeping with the formulaic structure of the poems themselves. But it is a mistake to confuse structure with origin and meaning and that, I suggest, is precisely where the argument for the oral-formulaic origin of the green collocation errs. The alliterative structure of the green collocation, as with numerous other alliterative formulas, may indeed be derived originally from some older oral-formulaic tradition but that tells us little of its meaning, function, or ultimate origin. By attributing the occurrence of the green collocation to some netherland of unrecorded poetic tradition, the formulaic approach entirely avoids explaining why the *tacn*, *grund*, and *straet* are green or what that greenness may signify. On the other hand, by pursuing Keenan's identification of the "grenne grund" with the *via* of Christian salvation, keeping in mind the suggestion that the green of Moses's *tacn* and the *straet* to heaven may signify "having the presence of God," I intend to show that the green collocation is derived from medieval biblical exegesis and is symbolic of salvation through true faith. To establish that argument, however, requires some examination of the medieval Christian tradition of faith, most particularly the definition of

"rihte bileue" in the Anglo-Saxon *credo*.

When Augustine advises that the Creed, "our faith and our rule of salvation,"[1] must be memorized, often repeated, and thoroughly understood he says that, most of all, the Creed must be believed, for that is the first step to salvation: "Believe so that you may understand. For, unless you believe, you will not understand. As a result of this faith, hope for grace by which all your sins will be forgiven. Only in this way and not by your own efforts will you be saved, for [salvation] is a gift of God."[2] Similarly, the homilist of the Old English *Credo*,[3] naming three things necessary for Christian life, "rihte bileue," "fulohtninge," and "faire liflode"(15), asserts that faith is the first necessity, for each man "ogh to cunnen his bileue ar he fulcninge underfo"(17): "Þe man þe ne haueð rihte bileue on him. he beð dempd to þolie wowe mid deflen on helle"(15). But learning the *credo* and *pater noster* is only the beginning of acquiring "rihte bileue": "Alle cunne ower crede þaste ich wene. þeih ge alle nuten hwat hit biqueðe. Ac lusteð nu and undernimeð hit"(17). The homilist explains that *Credo in deum*, "Ic bileue on god," means more than "Ich leue gode" or "Ich ileue þat god is"; this any heathen may claim. He who is "god cristene. *Qui credit in deum*. þat is he þe bileueð in god"(19) is "in god" with true belief, having entered the body of the faithful, the church, through Christ (John 10.9), been made member of that body through baptism (Eph. 4.4-5), and, nourished by and through that body (1Cor. 10.16-17), has prepared himself for eternal life (John 6.40).

By faith the Christian trusts in the gift of rebirth through baptism and the promise of reward for "faire liflode." But not all faith is "rihte bileue" and salvific. There is a kind of faith that

"mortua est in semetipsa"(James 2.17), belief without love or good deeds. Even devils have such faith, believing that there is one God and that his Son is their judge (Matt. 8.29). In *Christ and Satan* 163-88, the lamentations of "godes andsaca"(190) are the statement of precisely this kind of dead faith: "Eala meotodes miht"(164), "Wat ic nu þa/ þaet biđ alles leas ecan dreamas/ se đe heofencyninge heran ne þenceđ,/ meotode cweman"(180-83). This faith, no more than the grudging acknowledgement of manifest truths, is belief without understanding. It is, in effect, "Ich leue gode" and "Ich ileue þat god is." Not believing "in god," Satan has no comprehension of God's justice: "Ne maeg ic þaet gehicgan hu ic in đaem becwom,/ in þis neowle genip, niđsynnum fah,/ aworpen of worulde"(178-80). Eternally "asceaden"(176) and "goda bedaeled"(185), banned from the ways of God, of light, and of salvation, God's enemy "sceal nu wreclastas/ settan sorhgcearig, siđas wide"(187-88). Those paths of exile and wide ways lead the damned to the gaping gate of hell: "lata porta, et spatiosa via est, quae ducit ad perditionem, et multi sunt qui intrant per eam. Quam angusta porta, et arcta via, quae ducit ad vitam! et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam"(Matt. 7.13-14).

In a homily on Luke 3.4, for the feast of *St. John the Baptist*,[4] the many who are lost upon the wide way are called *deserto*: "al þat folc þat . . . turneđ fro gode. and forleteđ his hersumnesse. is cleped westren. for þat þe he ne wuneđ noht on hem: ne he on him"(129). But those few who, "in god" with "rihte bileue," are prepared for the difficult way are able to find and enter the narrow gate into eternal life:

> turne we to ure drihten on rihte bileue. and nehtleche him on clene liflode. and maken us wei to him. on soðe luue to gode and to mannen. . . . ac þat is arueð forþe ani eorðlich man. and þerfore do we alse seint iohan baptiste us minegeð þus queðinde. *Rectas facite semitas dei nostri.* Makeð rihte godes peðes. *Semite dei quibus facile peruenitur ad eum sunt opera bona.* Godes paðes ben ure gode dedes. on elmes. and on oðre þinge þe us shule leden to eche liue. . . . gif we don. and queðen. and ðenchen wel for þat we god luuen. and us longeð to him. and we þeron halden to ure lifes ende. þenne beo we on rihte weie. þe ledeð us to eche life. alse dide þe louerd Seint iohan baptiste. . . . bihaueded on herodes prisone. for he nolde noht turnen ut of þe hege weie. ne of þe rihte paðes. (129-31)

In doing as St. John the Baptist, the faithful make their "weie" to God through faith, good deeds, and righteous life. The Christians who dwell "in god" and in whom God dwells, who are members of the body which is the church, and who with faith and understanding pattern their lives upon that of the Saviour and the saints, are upon "þe hege weie" of salvation:

> Gemunan symle on mode meotodes strengðo;
> gearwian us togenes grene straete
> up to englum, þaer is se aelmihtiga god.
> And us befaeðman wile freobearn godes,
> gif we þaet on eorðan aer geþencað,
> and us to þam halgan helpe gelefað.
> Ðonne he us no forlaeteð, ah lif syleð
> uppe mid englum, eadigne dream. (*XSt*, 285-92)

That this way "up to englum," the *arcta via* that leads to *angusta porta*, is "grene straete" has occasioned some argument but little adequate explanation. Attention has been focused exclusively on the peculiarity of the "grene" epithet, its source and application. But a better understanding of the text may be possible by first examining the meaning of

straet in this context and then, knowing what it is, suggesting why it should be green.

The Old English word *straet*, glossed "street" or "high road," is derived from the Latin *strata*, a pavement or paved way, and occurs with precisely this meaning in *Beowulf*: "Straet waes stanfah"(320).[5] Derived ultimately from *sternere*, to spread a thing (that is, with something else) as is done when a road is made "stanfah," the Old English *straet* may conceivably retain more of this original and highly specific meaning than is implied by its translation into our modern word "street". That is, the "high road" of the faithful, "up to englum," may signify not a street or path but a figuratively "stanfah" and extraordinary road, a pavement or paved way deliberately and carefully constructed. The architectonic allusion suggested by this interpretation of *straet* as a high, stone-paved road to heaven, recalls that foremost image of building and builder, Christ the cornerstone[6] and foundation of the church, "a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation"(Is. 28.16). The poet of *Christ I* uses this image of building and builder:

> Đu eart se weallstan þe đa wyrhtan iu
> wiđwurpon to weorce. Wel þe geriseđ
> þaet þu heafod sie healle maerre,
> ond gesomnige side weallas
> faeste gefoge, flint unbraecne,
> . . . . . .
> Gesweotula nu þurh searocraeft þin sylfes weorc,
> sođfaest, sigorbeorht, ond sona forlaet
> weall wiđ wealle. (2-11)

This tradition of Christ the stone and true foundation of faith is united with the image of the stone-paved way to heaven in the

fourteenth century devotional treatise known as *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena,[7] the early fifteenth century English translation of which "makeþ mencyoun of a brigge, how God made a brigge of his sone whanne þe wey of goynge to heuene was broke by inobedience of Adam, by þe which brigge alle trewe cristen men mowen ouerepasse"(61). It is a bridge constructed, "wallid wiþ stoon"(70) to withstand and pass over the fierce waters of wickedness and grief, "Which flood is a feruent see of þis wrecchid liif"(62). The stones of the bridge "ben soþfaste vertues. But þo stoones weren nat leid ne þe wal maad tofore my sones passyoun. They weren so greetly lett tofore þat no man myht come to þe eende by whateuere wey of vertues he wente. Heuene was not til þat tyme vndo wiþ þe keye of his precious blood"(70). In other words, the essential event through which Christ the true foundation (1Cor. 3.11) becomes Christ the way of salvation is the crucifixion and resurrection of his body: "þe stoones weren sett and leyd upon þe body of myn holy sone, he made up þe wal of stoones, and medlid it with chalk, and foorgide and foormede it vp wiþ his precious blood"(70-71). This mystical bridge of Christ, which leads to the gate which is also Christ, recalls the *arcta via* to the *angusta porta* of Matt. 7.14: "whanne a man is passid ouer þe brigge, þanne comeþ he to þe gate, which gate is þat same brigge, by þe which gate all ȝee musten entre. Therfore my sone seyde: 'I am þe wey, soothfastnesse, and liif. Who þat gooþ by me, gooþ not in derknes, but by liȝt.' Also he seyde in anoþir place: 'Þere may no man come to my fadir, but by me.' And þat is sooþ. . . . And now I haue schewid þee which is þe wey, in liknes of a brigge"(71).

That both the way, *arcta via*, and the entrance, *angusta porta*, to heaven are embodied in Christ is a familiar enough tenet of Christian

exegesis, but what is emphasized in *The Dialogue* is the special significance of the crucifixion as the event and sign of the way of salvation opened to man. That significance is symbolized in the way of the faithful upon the bridge by three degrees or "þre staatis of þe soule," represented as three ladders of that bridge, "of þe whiche þre laddris, tweyne weren maad in þe tre of þe holy cros"(68), and the third of the bitter gall that Christ was given to drink. The mystical ascent of the devout upon these ladders, obviously imitative of Christ's ascent upon the cross, also represents a true verbal icon of the crucifixion: the first ladder, at the feet, lifts the soul up from vice, "The feet naylid ben maad laddris to þee þat þou atteyne or reche up to þe wounde of þe syde"(68); the second, at the wounded heart, leads to perfect and virtuous love; and the third ladder, at "þe holy mouþ"(69), enables the soul to taste the blessedness of perfect peace. The contemplation of these spiritual steps or ladders is, in effect, the comtemplation of the crucifix. As the inner "eye" is drawn upward, past the nailed feet and wounded side to the face, so the soul is uplifted in imitation of Christ's upward journey, upon the cross and into heaven. But, as with every other way in which the Christian would imitate Christ, this upward journey demands devotion and endurance. The poet of *Christ and Satan*, exhorting the faithful "Gemunan symle on mode meotodes strengđo," warns that all must prepare, "gearwian," strengthening body and soul for the hardships of the way and the judgement that awaits upon "grene straete/ up to englum." This *grene straete* which leads "up," like the mystical ladder representing the crucifix, is an image of the cross as the way of man's salvation.

It is important, at this point, to note the distinction between

the cross as the sign of salvation, symbolizing Christ, Christian, and church, and the cross as the way of salvation. More than simply a sign of the way, the cross is occasionally seen as the way itself, the vehicle of man's own ascent into heaven. On this, R. E. Kaske explains that "in the voluminous literature of the Cross produced during the first Christian millenium, one of the great seminal concepts is that of the Cross itself as a cosmic mystery embracing and binding into unity all creation, with particular emphasis on its joining heaven and earth."[8] From this is derived the image of the cross as the means by which man himself may journey heavenward. Frequently portrayed "as a mighty tree (the *lignum vitae*) extending from earth to heaven, and serving as a ladder for the souls of the baptized," this cross figure is "pictured as actually extending from earth to heaven, sometimes with a typological comparison to Jacob's Ladder."[9] In a homily on Psalm 92, Jerome explains: "I think the cross of the Saviour was the ladder that Jacob saw. On that ladder, angels were descending and ascending; on that ladder, that is, the cross, the Jews were descending and the Gentiles ascending."[10]

Moreover, as Arthur Watson demonstrates in *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, a close association developed between Jacob's ladder and the *virga Jesse* (or the tree of Jesse), both figures of the Virgin Mary, and between the tree of Jesse and the tree of the cross where the former "like the Tree of the Cross was a *salutifera arbor*, a Tree of Salvation": "The *uirga Iesse* and the *uirga crucis* were brought into relationship both in literature and in art. Peter Damian, in the XIth century, followed his homily *In natiuitate Beatissimae Virginis Mariae* by a homily *De exaltatione Sanctae Crucis* and wrote at

the beginning of the latter, *De uirga Iesse deuenimis ad uirgam crucis, et principium redemptionis fine concludimus*. The Tree of Jesse is the beginning of salvation, the Tree of the Cross its attainment."[11] Because Mary is the vessel, the ark, the ship which is the church--she says of herself, "ic his tempel eam" (*Chr* I.206)-- she bears for all men redemption from the sin of Adam and eternal salvation through the mystery of the divine conception and birth (*Chr* I.423-25). She is the gate of heaven, "wealldor" (*Chr* I.328), the gate only Christ could unlock. She is the one to whom the faithful may pray for help from God. But, while Mary *mediatrix* represents salvation made open by Christ, the *virga Jesse*, though always a figure of the Virgin, represents also a type of the promise and means of salvation.[12] From the prophecy in Isaish 11.1 *Et egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet*, arose the identification of the *virga* with *virgo*, Mary, and the *flos* with Christ. According to Watson, this association "is asserted by Tertullian about the beginning of the third century. The *uirga* which proceeds from the *radix* is Mary, descended from David. The *flos* which proceeds from the *uirga* is the Son of Mary. Before the beginning of the XIIth century the association is reasserted by Ambrose, Jerome, Leo Magnus . . . The same idea occurs in hymnology."[13] The identification of the tree of Jesse with the tree of the cross and Jacob's ladder came to focus largely on the cross itself as the symoblic ladder joining earth and heaven.

The symbolic ascension of Jacob's ladder-cum-holy cross is presented in some detail in Eleanor Greenhill's "The Child in the Tree: A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition."[14] Greenhill traces the motif, known from early Greek patristic writings, "of the

Cross as the instrument, or 'machine,' by which the soul is taken heavenwards," and the Semitic tradition of Jacob's ladder in association with "the cosmological tree as ladder to heaven."[15] That cosmological tree-ladder as the cross is "to be found in orthodox as well as apocryphal texts from the opening centuries of the Christian era": at times the "form of a cross is retained. But the scope of its dimensions is immeasurable. Its arms extend to the ends of the earth; its top touches the heavens"; or at times the cross is described as "a great, fruit-bearing tree, whose top touches the heavens, whose branches cover the earth . . . In the twelfth century these two concepts exist side by side . . . the first is Greek; the second, Semitic and Biblical."[16] Further, Greenhill shows that the association of the ladder of Jacob and the tree of the cross (and, by extension, the cross itself) is far older than Watson suggests: "A long series of important Christian writers from the early third century to the late twelfth are unanimous in their view that the Cross, whether as tree or as ladder, provides for the soul at death an ascent to heaven."[17]

Greenhill's analysis of the tree-cross-ladder association more than adequately proves the very early identification of the cross with the way of salvation; it is the way to heaven patterned upon the virtuous, disciplined, and persecuted life and death of Christ on earth. It is a hard, straight, and narrow road represented as, quite literally, an uphill battle in imitation of Christ's ascent upon the cross. And the faithful who aspire to follow that way must accept and withstand the hardships of that most difficult road, the high way to heaven. In a twelfth century homily there is the reminder that "We sceolan ȝemunaen þ Crist saede þ þe waeȝ is swiđe heah ⁊ swiđe

staeȝer þe laedeþ us to heofenae,"[18] concerning which Aelfric, centuries earlier, had explained:

> Se weig, seđe laet to heofenan rice, is forđi nearu and sticol, forđi þaet we sceolan mid earfođnysse geearnian urne eđel. Gif we hine habban willađ, we sceolan lufian mildheortnysee, and claennysse, and sođfaestnysse . . . and gehwilce ođere halige đing began. Đas đing we ne magon don butan earfođnyssum; ac gif we hi dođ, þonne mage we mid þam geswincum, đurh Godes fultum, astigan đone sticolan weg þe us gelaet to đam ecan life. Se weg seđe laet to forwyrde is forđi brad and smeđe, forđi þe unlustas gebringađ þone man to forwyrde. . . . Dysig biđ se wegferenda man seđe nimđ þone smeđan weg þe hine mislaet, and forlaet þone sticolan þe hine gebrincđ to đaere byrig. . . . Ac uton niman þone earfođran weg, þaet we her sume hwile swincon, to đy þaet we ecelice beon butan geswince. Eađe mihte Crist, gif he wolde, on þisum life wunian butan earfođnyssum, and faran to his ecan rice butan đrowunge, and butan deađe; ac he nolde. Be đam cwaeđ Petrus se apostol, "Crist đrowode for us, and sealde us bysne, þaet we sceolan fyligan his fotswađum;" þaet is, þaet we sceolan sum đing þrowian for Cristes lufon, and for urum synnum.[19]

It is this suffering for Christ which the poet of the *Dream of the Rood* so skillfully portrays in the anguish of the cross and of the dreamer who beholds it. The transfiguration of the cross from the object of suffering into the sign and banner of victory, "beacna selest"(118), shows the faithful both the way and the means to salvation. Bernard Huppé remarks upon this transformation of the cross and how it "has become the means by which man may also be transfigured."[20] Its changing appearance, "hwilum hit waes mid waetan bestemed/ beswyled mid swates gange, hwilum mid since gegyrwed"(22-23), as it transcends its role as the instrument of crucifixion, "gealgtreowe"(146), to become "sigebeam"(127), represents to the faithful "the cross of death as the way of life, 'ac đurh đa rode sceal rice gesecan/ of eorđwege aeghwylc sawl, ' 119-120, echoing . . . the address of the cross, 'ic him lifes

weg/ rihtne gerymde reordberendum,' 88-89. The metaphor derives from an analogy basic to the poem: Christ made the journey through death on the cross to the heavenly home; man by adopting the way of the cross may gain the heavenly home."[21]

The close association between the image of the bridge or ladder to heaven, the vessel of salvation, and the way of Christian life is worth noting. The way of the cross, the way to heaven, is dependent upon "rihte bileue" *and* "faire liflode" in this life upon earth; "the metaphor relates to the most pervasive of all Christian metaphors, that of man's life as a pilgrimage. . . . For the story which the cross tells is of a journey. Torn from its woods, the cross is carried to Golgotha where it participates in the Passion; it is buried, and it is resurrected; finally . . . it ascended to the heavens, where it gleams as an emblem of man's true way of life, the pilgrimage to heaven."[22] But, at the same time that the cross signifies man's true way of life, the very movement of the cross "from earth to heaven marks the emblematic value of the cross as a vessel of salvation,"[23] that is, the means to heaven. The cross and Mary share this double significance, both as vessels of salvation and as symbols of "faire liflode": "the way of the cross is the way of penance and atonement, of humility and obedience, a way of life revealed both by the Cross and Mary."[24]

However, another distinction should be made here: Mary is a vessel of salvation not as the church but as the *virga de radice Jesse*, so closely identified with the cross. Though the church is the ship which carries the Christian safely through life, it is protection only in this life, being of this world. As the congregation of the faithful, the church is the body which is saved but it is not the salvation. It

is only through "rihte bileue" in Christ, his life by Mary and death by the cross, that the bridge becomes open to man. That deliberately constructed way, paved with virtue and strong faith, is the only way to heaven. It is a narrow and difficult way, fraught with snares and stumbling blocks for the unwary or ill-prepared. But it is the way of Christ and, therefore, the way of every Christian: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"(Matt. 16.24), "And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me"(Matt. 10.38). The way to heaven is the way of Christ prophecied by Isaiah(40.3): "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God."

The significance of that "high way,"[25] *semitas Dei nostri*, is often overlooked for its very familiarity. Often translated "a straight path," *semita* also denotes "a narrow way, a footpath." It is with all these meanings in mind that the narrow way, the straight way, becomes identified most specifically with the cross, symbolic of Christ as the way and bridge between man and God, earth and heaven. The straight and narrow way is also the ladder, or the tree whose lateral branches make of it a ladder, upon which those who believe and understand may ascend as Christ had ascended. That way, bridge, ladder, tree are all identified with the cross, the way of faith. And it is with specific reference to the cross as the wood of the quickened *salutifera arbor* and the sign of the living *flos* of the rod of Jesse, that the greenness which, as shall be shown, was attributed to the cross of salvation becomes itself a sign of the way to heaven, the symbolic "grene straete" to Paradise.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

[1] Sister Mary Sarah Muldowney, tr., *Saint Augustine: Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 38, p. 143.

[2] Ibid., 119-20.

[3] R. Morris, *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, Second Series* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 53, 1873), pp. 15-23.

[4] Ibid., 125-31.

[5] Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg* (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1922, 3rd ed. 1950).

[6] As a note of interest, cf. Christ, the stumbling block of the faithless, Luke 20.18 and 1Pet. 2.8; and the stone the builders had rejected, Psalm 118.22, Matt. 21.42, Mark 12.10, etc.

[7] Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, ed., *The Orcherd of Syon* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 258, 1966).

[8] R. E. Kaske, "A Poem of the Cross in the Exeter Book: 'Riddle 60' and 'The Husband's Message,'" *Traditio*, 23 (1967), 41-71; p. 47. The cosmic nature of the cross is also remarked upon by Bernard Huppé in reference to the c. tenth century poem *Dream of the Rood*, where the four extensions of the cross represent its universality, "its participation in the quadripartite creation, with its four dimensions, four directions, four seasons and four elements." Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words: Structural Analysis of the Old English Poems Vainglory, The Wonder of Creation, The Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany: State U. of New York Press, 1970), p. 78 and n. 5.

[9] Kaske, 48-49.

[10] Sister Marie Liguori Ewald, tr., *The Homilies of Saint Jerome*, Vol. I (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic U. of America Press, 1964), *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 48, pp. 170-71.

[11] Arthur Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1934), pp. 52-53. For the relevant homilies of Peter Damian, see *PL*. 144, 761.

[12] For a discussion of the distinction between that which is saved and the means to salvation, see Jean Daniélou, *Primitive Christian Symbols*, tr. by Donald Attwater (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1964), pp. 58-70. That it is the cross, as a ship, rather than the ship of the church, which is the means of salvation and, therefore, symbolic of hope, see especially pp. 65-66.

[13] Watson, 3.

[14] Eleanor Greenhill, "The Child in the Tree: A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition," *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 323-71. For the history of the 'machine' motif see 331-34, 357-60.

[15] Ibid., 334 and 337, respectively.

[16] Ibid., 331.

[17] Ibid., 349.

[18] A. O. Belfour, ed., *Twelfth-Century Homilies*, Part I (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 137, 1909, rpt. 1962), p. 110.

[19] Benjamin Thorpe, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Aelfric*, Vol. I (London: The Aelfric Society, 1844), pp. 162-64; Phil. 1.29: "because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf."

[20] Huppé, 76.

[21] Ibid., 107

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 101. For the cross as ship of salvation, see note 12 above. On the cross as ladder from the church-ship to heaven, Daniélou cites Hippolytus of Rome: "The sea is the world. The Church is like a ship . . . she has with her her experienced pilot, Christ. Amidships she has the trophy of victory over death, for she carries Christ's cross with her . . . For her double rudder she has the two Testaments. Her rigging is stretched out like the charity of Christ, embracing the Church . . . The ladder rising upwards to the sailyard is an image of the sign of Christ's passion leading the faithful to climb up into Heaven." *De Christo et Antichristo, PG.* 10, 778-79 (LIX).

[24] Huppé, 103.

[25] Note that the "high way" is the Revised Authorized Version rendering of the Vulgate *semitas*. Other versions of Isaiah 40.3, The Revised Standard Version and The New English Bible, for examples, translate *semitas* as "a highway" for God.

CHAPTER III THE WAY TO PARADISE: GRENAN WEGE

As infrequently as the occurrence of green in Old English literature has been recognized as symbolic in function, the interpretation of its symbolic significance has been disappointingly incomplete and, on occasion, even inaccurate. An example is Keenan's attempt to explain the "grenan wege" of the Old English Psalm 141.4 by citing the *Glossa Ordinaria*, where the *via* is identified as "charitatem."[1] Without explaining why the colour green should be associated with Christian charity, nor even whether such an association may be found elsewhere, Keenan's reference to the commentary is, to say the least, misleading. Fortunately, Sajavaara corrects this error, as has been pointed out, by referring to the Anglo-Norman *Chateau d'Armour*, from which the passage concerning the castle-Mary in the *Cursor Mundi* was translated, and remarks: "The green colour in the *Chateau d'Armour* represents faith, not charity."[2] It is, in fact, the colour red which is most often used to symbolize charity, as is made clear in the same passage of the *Cursor Mundi*, describing the appearance of the castle-Mary: the green foundation supports a blue-hued middle portion, symbolizing Mary's "Trouþe studfaste & tendernes"(T 9994), which, in turn, is surmounted by

> þe þridde colour of hem alle
> hit couereþ al aboute þe walle
> And hit is reed as any blode
> Of alle þese oþere is noon so gode
> þat is þe holy charite
> was kyndeled in þat lady fre (T 9997-10002)[3]

Symbolic of sacrifice and pious action, the colour red is an attribute of Christ and the saints, as well as of Mary. Thus Mary, Christ, and many saints are often represented in red or blue robes, the latter symbolizing truth and righteousness, the former, sacrifice, suffering, and charity.

Although charity, the *via* of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, is held to be the greatest of all the virtues (1Cor. 13.13), inherent in it are all the other virtues of Christian life, including humility, perseverence, patience, hope, and faith: in short, charity "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"(1Cor. 13.7). Thus the *via* symbolic of "charitatem" is the way of the highest virtue: Mary, robed traditionally in blue for her truth and steadfast purity, held that road; Christ, whose special hue is the red of the sacrifice of his holy blood, set the example for all men upon that *via*; and the cross, the green cross of true faith, shows the way of faith upon that road. Therefore, simply because the *via* "est charitatem" does not at all explain why green is added to the Old English translation of Psalm 141.4 any more than if the added colour had been blue or, even more suitably, red. All three colours are symbolic of virtuous life, and charity embraces all virtues.

More to the point of Keenan's argument is his reference to the green foundation of the castle representing Mary in the *Cursor Mundi*. Unfortunately, however, Keenan does not comment on the "explanation . . . offered for the green foundation"[4] which he quotes. But interesting references are made to the nature of the greenness of the castle's foundation in that explanation, and earlier in the long description of the castle-Mary.

þis castell es nogh for to hide,
es painted a-bute þe vtter side
O thre colurs o sun-dri heu,
þe grund neist þar es ful tru,
Metand wit þat rochen stan,
O gret suetnes þar wantes nan.
For suet *grennes* wel der i sai
His heu he halds *lastand ai*. (C 9911-18) [Italics mine.]

þe fundement þat first es laid
Neisthand þe roche, als it es said,
þat painted es wit *grene* heu
þat *lastes euer* ilik neu,
þat es end o þat mayden clene,
Lightand hir hali hert sua scene.
þe *grennes lastand euer in an*
Bitakens end o þat maiden,
For *god ending of al* and all,
Of al vertus is es grund-wald. (C 9981-90) [Italics mine.]

The "grene heu" of the castle's foundation symbolizes the true faith of one who believes "in god" and in whom his metaphorical presence, the gift of grace, is found. But more than this, the enduring "grennes" that "lastes euer"--it is "lastand ai," "grennes lastand euer in an"--signifies the salvific "rihte bileue" that leads to eternal life, for it is the faith of Mary, the chosen "herbergeri" (C 9876) of Christ's presence on earth for the salvation of man. And the immutable greenness that "Bitakens end o þat maiden," "god ending of al and all," is the sign of Mary's own eternal salvation, her everlasting reward for "rihte bileue" and "faire liflode."

The castle-Mary represents both fortress and haven, its strength is the fortitude of the Virgin's perfect virtue and its comfort is the blessedness of the Virgin's state of grace.

þis castel es o luue and grace,
Bath o sucur and o solace,
A-pon þe mathe it standes traist,
O fede ne dredes it na fraist;
It es hei sett a-pon be crag,
Grai and hard, wit-vten hag (C 9881-86)

According to Morris, the "mathe" upon which the castle stands should be read "marche" as in the later Fairfax (Laud), Göttingen, and Trinity versions. But the Cotton "mathe," though admittedly more difficult to render into modern English, is particularly applicable in this context and should not, I think, be emended. The word is derived from the Old English *maeþ* meaning honour, respect, reverence; what is meet, right, virtue, goodness; lot, state, rank; and, literally, a cutting of grass.[5] The modern English verb "mow," that is to cut (grass) is similarly derived, and "mathe" persists in its original meaning in "aftermath," properly, the crop (of grass) which springs up after (the first) mowing. It is fitting, I think, that the castle-Mary should stand upon this sign of the Virgin's honour, reverence, rank, and metaphorical green grass (inseparable from its cognates "green," "grain," and "grow"), the harvest of her virtue and birthright. The greenness of this image may seem at first inconsistent with the description of the castle set upon a "crag,/ Grai and hard." But more than one level of imagery may be at work in what Morris sub-titles "The Parable of the Castle of Love and Grace."[6] Rather than a description of place, the physical reality which is seen, the symbolic "mathe" may signify the spiritual reality which is hoped for, believed in, and understood only by faith. This separation of literal description from spiritual symbolism will be

discussed below in reference to *Exodus*, where the path of the Israelites through the sea is both "sand"(291) and "grenne grund"(312). The apparent inconsistency is irrelevant; the greenness of the "grund" and the harvest image of the "mathe" have nothing whatever to do with "sand" or "crag." The greenness is a *tacn* of that which is perceived not by the eye but by faith, and the harvest of this true faith is the salvation of the soul (1Pet. 8-9). Thus the "mathe" of Mary may signify the harvest of her "rihte bileue," most especially, the honour of bearing the *flos*, Christ, and the Virgin's ultimate ascension and glorification as Christ's Mother and Bride. The castle-Mary stands upon this reward, this harvest of and for her grace and virtue. As she sowed, so she reaped, in accordance with the parable of the sower, Matt. 13.23: "And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold." Jerome makes mention of this harvest in his homily on Psalm 85, which he begins with reference to the tree of Jesse (Mary), recalling that the land "that before brought forth thorns, hears in Isaia the blessing: 'a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.' 'You have turned away the captivity of Jacob.'"[7] At the end of this homily, Jerome explains "the fulfillment of the promise" of Psalm 85.12: "Our land yields its harvest when it is cultivated by the plow of justice, when by fasts, abstinence, and the other virtues, its ancient vices are uprooted that it may yield a hundredfold the grain of the Gospel seed which it has received. Because Peter and the other apostles have cultivated their land with labours of all sorts, they truthfully can say: Our land has yielded its increase. Martyrs, too, when they are being slaughtered,

when they are being crucified, are yielding the harvest of their land."[8]

This image of the fruitful harvest of faith suggests that the "mathe" of the Cotton version need not be emended. Further, the association of this word with things growing (OE *maeþ*, harvest, crop) and things green (OE *maeþ*, cutting of grass; *maed*, meadow) suggests that the "grennes" of Mary's faith and the "mathe" of her virtue make it difficult, not to say unnecessary, to tell where the one ends and the other begins. In other words, the castle-Mary is established upon virtue and constructed of virtue; the Virgin's red charity, supported by her blue truth and steadfastness, is in turn supported by and founded upon her green faith. For these virtues, Mary is not only rewarded with a bountiful harvest (the Fruit of her womb, her glory on earth and in heaven) but the harvest remains with her, inseparable from her (as the church she is the bride of Christ) to support and grace her metaphoric body (the castle) and her spiritual body (the church).[9]

By her salvific "rihte bileue" in God and by her "faire liflode," Mary is shown to be worthy of the gift of grace that Augustine says only the faithful may hope to receive. That presence of God with and "in" the faithful, those who truly believe "in" God, is presented in a different manner, but with a similar symbolic *grenehede*, earlier in the *Cursor Mundi*. It is curious that, while Keenan refers to the description of the castle-Mary, he does not remark upon lines 1251-64 of the same poem where Adam describes to Seth the green way to Paradise:

Towards þe eest ende of þe ȝondur vale
A grene weye fynde þou shale
In þat weye shal þou fynde & se
þe steppes of þi modir & me
For welewed in þat gres grene
þat euer siþþen haþ ben sene
þere we coom goynge as vnwise
Whenne we were put fro paradise
Into þis ilke wrecched slade
þere my self first was made
For þe greetnes of oure synne
Miȝt siþþen no gras growe þerynne
þat same wol þe lede þi gate
Fro hennes to paradis ȝate (T 1251-64)[10]

Despite some confusion as to certain details in the four parallel versions of these lines, there is an initial important point of agreement: the entrance, a "grene gate"(1252 Cotton, Fairfax (Laud), Göttingen), or the way before the entrance, a "grene weye"(Trinity), to Paradise is green.

What follows in the Trinity(1253-54), quoted above, reads similarly in the reconstructed Fairfax (Laud), "In þat way sal þou finde for-soþ./ þi moders and Myne our baþer sloþ," that is "the tracks of both of us, your mother's and mine." However, the Cotton (earliest of the four versions) reads *slogh*, "slough," rather than *sloþ*, "tracks," and thus reads, "the marsh/bog of both of us, your mother's and mine," referring presumably to the tract of land upon which Adam and Eve had walked upon their expulsion from the Garden. The Göttingen version's obscure line, "þi moþer and myn oþer broþer sloth," seems due to a confusion of some form of *baþer*, "both of us"/*broþer*, "brother" and *sloþ*, "tracks"/*slogh*, "marsh"/*sloh*, "slew," a preterite form of *slean*. The corruption may have been caused by a confusion with the story of Cain and Abel but, in any event, seems merely a scribal error.

The Trinity and Fairfax (Laud) versions then go on to describe how the "tracks" or "steps" of Adam and Eve are still visible: in the former, the green grass *welewed*(1255), "withered," where the sinful pair had stepped; in the latter, the grass became *falow*, yellow or brown, marking their path. The apparent contradiction to this in the Cotton and Göttingen versions, the greenness of the grass "þat euer has siþen ben gren" (C 1256) or "þat euer has ben syden sene"(G 1256), is quickly resolved by the assertion, similar to that in the Trinity and Fairfax (Laud), that "Thoru þe gretnes of our sin/ Moght na gres groue siþen þar-in"(C 1261-62).

Regardless of certain variations in detail, it is clear that the way to and from Paradise was green at the time of Adam's and Eve's expulsion, that the way to Paradise has remained as green ever since, and that the passage of sinful feet over the greenness of the way left a track, a scar which has never healed. That the grass of the way to Paradise became withered or fallow at the touch of the faithless and disobedient illustrates its symbolic nature: it is the way to the eternal plantation of God where the seed of faith was sown; it is the way which, because of sin, has been closed to man except through faith in the Saviour.[11]

Perhaps the most familiar image of the closed way which becomes opened to the faithful through "rihte bileue" is the path of the Israelites through the Red Sea. That the poet of the Old English *Exodus* describes this way as "grenne grund"(312), Peter J. Lucas relates to "an allegorical interpretation whereby the path through the Red Sea is equated with the Green Street of Paradise: both are roads to salvation."[12] The analogy between the "grene heu" of Mary's faith, Seth's "grene weye"

to Paradise, and the "grenne grund" of the Israelites' salvation suggests that each can be seen to represent as aspect of the *grenehede* of "rihte bileue" and "faire liflode." The significance, not only of the greenness of each of these signs but of the role of each as a *tacn* of salvation through faith, helps explain the remarkable frequency of the green collocation in another poem of the Junius XI manuscript, *Genesis*.

In *Exodus* the Israelites, passing through the parted sea, "wod on waegstream"(311) but "ofer grenne grund"(312) despite the fact that, earlier, the poet says that the sea bottom, bared by the receding waters, is "sand"(291). This is no inconsistency. The "grenne" of the way of salvation is to be understood not as a description of sand or ground but as the sign of the way of faith, "the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen"(Heb. 11.1). The question that Keenan asks, "How did the green way of salvation come to be embedded in *Exodus* 312a?", he himself well answers: "It can be seen as the result of the poet's consciousness of a well-established typological interpretation of the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. Through biblical and patristic literature, this passage became even in the ordinary homily a familiar type for the Passage to Paradise, the Entry into the New Jerusalem."[13] And he refers, in footnote, to relevant passages of Jean Daniélou's *From Shadows to Reality*.[14] The same association, so clearly outlined in the latter work, is derived above along a different route in the identification of the tree of Jesse, the ladder of Jacob, Seth's path to Paradise, the green foundation of the castle-Mary, and the path through the Red Sea, with the way (the road and the means) of salvation, the way of faith.

The evidence that Keenan brings forth in his later article, "*Exodus* 312a: Further Notes on the Eschatological 'Green Ground'," complements both his explanation and that presented above: the sustenance which the wilderness provides for the Israelites, even that wilderness of the way within the sea, shows that the path is the way of those whom God would protect, sustain, and deliver on their journey into the heavenly Jerusalem. Yet, the very path upon which the Israelites walk in the sea is more than a type of the passage to Paradise, it itself prefigures the church of God. Having proclaimed to his people how with "grene tacne" the sea has been parted, Moses goes on to describe the towering "foreweallas faegre gestepte"(297), the "wraetlicu waegfaru" (298) lying before them and, over their heads, "wolcna hrof"(298). The heavenly vault overhead, the high walls of miraculously frozen water,[15] the green floor beneath their feet, these are made into a sanctuary by the power of God for the salvation of his people. This is God's temple, the church, Mary the vessel of salvation.

However, within this prefiguration of the church occurs another interesting image: the ramparts of water, "faegre gestepte" upon either side of the Israelites, form a "wondrous wave-road" referring to the path between the parted waves or, equally, the height of the ramparts themselves. In other words, the "waeġfaru" opened to the Israelites can be seen as both the path through the sea and the upward road "faegre gestepte,/ wraetlicu waegfaru, oð wolcna hrof"(297-98). Clearly this path, "uncuð"(313) to man and fraught with danger (the figurative battle of the faithful, 313, 323-30), is the way to Paradise, the way of salvation through symbolic death and rebirth, and the baptism of the faithful.

By faith Moses leads the Israelites through the sea and by faith the way is green and dry, just as by faith the initiate, through baptism, enters the protection of the church upon the way to eternal salvation. That the righteous are saved through faith is the gift of God(Eph. 2.8) but, more than the mere acceptance of revealed truths, the faith that saves(Luke 7.50) is based not upon that which is shown to be but upon that which is hoped to be, things hoped for, things not seen (Heb. 11.1). Because it relies on the truth of a promise, its attainment is dependent upon the understanding of the mystery of the promise, "onlucan mid listum locen waldendes,/ ongeotan gastlice!"(*XSt* 299-300) and it is often only through "gastlic" understanding that the promises are seen to be fulfilled. Thus the poet of *Genesis A* knows, given that "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain"(Heb. 11.4), that the fitting punishment for Cain's ensuing offense against "halge" is that "hroðra oftihð,/ glaemes grene folde"(1017-18). On the other hand, because "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark"(Heb. 11.7), it is right that his reward should be that "him wlitebeorhte waestmas brohte,/ geartorhte gife, grene folde"(1560-61).

That the fruits of the earth, the harvest of the plantation, are made the reward for "rihte bileue" and "faire liflode" is the birthright of Adam's children: having created the garden out of "graes ungrene" (117), earth, God made it his gift to Adam and Eve, "Temað nu and wexað, tudre fyllað/ eorðan aelgrene"(196-97). But with disobedience comes the withdrawal of God's presence from man and the banishment of sinners from the "treow," the tree and the trust, of God in the garden.

It is indeed odd that the suggestion that the "graes ungrene"

collocation of *Genesis* 117 means "not having the presence of God" is made by Doane in an article attempting to prove that green has no special symbolic significance in Old English poetry.[16] What the presence or absence of God represents is, of course, a state of grace manifest in man by faith and charity, and manifest by God in the fulfillment of his word. This reliance on trust and faith, "treowe," "geleaf"--the tree and leaf imagery should always be kept in mind--represents also a covenant by which God protects man from his divine justice and wrath: earth's greenness is a covenant like the rainbow, symbolizing God's promise of life in this world and after.

The faith of the Israelites that they shall possess the promised land and that, in time, the Messiah shall come bringing eternal life, like the faith of the Christians that they shall dwell in the heavenly city because the Saviour has come and will return bringing eternal life, is trust in God's promise symbolized in the Ark of the Covenant, the temple which is the church. To the Anglo-Saxon Christian, the very hope in God's *treow*, the promise, is itself *treow*, truth, faith, tree, and cross. This intimate association of God's promise and man's faith can be seen throughout the poem *Genesis* where each divine blessing is also a reminder to have faith, to believe earnestly, to act obediently despite temptation. Thus Adam and Eve need only obey God to enjoy eternal life in the plantation, the all-green earth. But so too the sly messenger of Satan tries speaking the "grene" password of faith to convince that his message is truly from God: "Brade synd on worulde/ grene geardas, and god siteđ/ on þam hehstan heofna rice,/ ufan alwalda"(510-13). Though he fails in this deceit, his eventual success results in Adam and Eve fleeing to what seems a suitable place for

repentance, "Hwurfon hie ba twa,/ togengdon gnorngende on þone grenan weald"(840-41). But the green hiding place they turn to in exchange for their lost green world is no sanctuary from God's wrath. It becomes, in fact, their place of judgement. In concealing themselves in "grenan weald," "leafum beþeahton"(845), they expose themselves in all their sin, and exchange the greenness signifying the presence of God, their state of grace "in god," for a greenness signifying their fallen condition, their need for salvation. And the leaves with which they seek to hide their shame, like the knowledge stolen from the "treow" (faith, covenant, and tree), signify the loss of "treow" for they are all dead things apart from "treow," signs of mortality.

But throughout the poem, the green of the earth is the fitting reward of the faithful: because Noah faithfully offers suitable sacrifice to God for salvation, he is blessed with the fruits of the all-green earth(1514-17); the dove which brings the token of salvation, "grene blaedae"(1474), to the ark is rewarded with a home in "grene bearwas"(1480); the land "aelgrene"(1751) given to Abraham in reward for his obedience is made the inheritance of his heirs, "þis is seo eorðe þe ic aelgrene/ tudre þinum torhte wille/ waestmum gewlo on geweald don"(1787-89); to the "leofum mannum"(1656) is given the joy of "grene wongas,/ faegre foldan"(1657-58); and the home Lot earns is "grene eorðan"(1921), "gelic godes/ neorxnawange"(1923-24). Each of these green gifts is like a glimpse of Paradise, that which faithlessness had lost but which faithfulness may eventually regain.

By the same token that the green of the earth is the reward of the faithful, the punishment of the faithless is the withdrawal or even utter destruction of that same greenness: the earth must withhold her

green from Cain and, in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, "Lig eall fornam/ þaet he grenes fond"(2550-51). The curse of Cain in especial, his exile from God, man, and green earth, recalls the banishment of Satan, "asceaden"(*XSt* 176) to "siđas wide"(*XSt* 188), and the *spatiosa via* of the damned.

Although the withholding of the green from Cain, the fire consuming the green of Sodom, and the flood covering the green of the earth are all signs of the symbolic death which follows the withdrawal of God's grace, his presence, they are mere intimations of the final cleansing of all faithlessness from the world on the Day of Judgement. After its first days when "Folde waes þa gyta/ graes ungrene"(*Gen* 116-17), God's presence was manifest on earth in the garden, the plantation, where Adam was meant to live "in god." But with man's expulsion from the garden came the loss of God's presence, his grace, and the *grenehede* of faith, once the "treow" (tree, covenant, faith) entrusted to man's care, becomes the token of his need for salvation and his only hope for redemption. But on the Day of Judgement God's presence will once again be made manifest to man but not, then, by gifts or blessings of *grenehede*: on that day, those who have been faithful shall have their reward but the faithless shall find no mercy, no way of atonement. Then, the last remnant of green on earth shall be destroyed signifying the end of the *grenehede* of mortal faith, on which Aeflric explains: "We gelyfađ nu on God, and we hopiađ to him: eft þonne we becumađ to his rice, swa swa he us behet, þonne biđ se geleafa geendod, forđan đe we geseođ þonne þaet we nu gelyfađ."[17]

NOTES: CHAPTER III

[1] Keenan, "The Green Street," 458.

[2] Sajavaara, 34.

[3] R. Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, II (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 59, 1875).

[4] Keenan, "The Green Street," 458.

[5] See John R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, with suppl. by H. D. Meritt (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1894; 4th ed., 1960, rpt. 1970).

[6] Morris, *CM* II, p. 568.

[7] Ewald, 50.

[8] Ibid., 54. Recall Gal. 6.7-8: "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." Note also the harvest images in John 4.35 and Matt. 9.37.

[9] For a useful survey of the occurrences of these images in early patristic literature see, for example, Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol. I: *From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). As points of interest, note especially: Mary, the first of the redeemed, "the first to draw the fruit of salvation from her Son" (Ambrose and Bede), pp. 82 and 163, respectively; and Mary, "the ark of those to be saved, the bridge and ladder by which they ascend to heaven" (an anonymous Greek homily of the tenth century, apparently the source of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*), p. 202.

[10] Morris, *Cursor Mundi* I.

[11] On this image of man's "exile" from Paradise, Aelfric explains: "Ure eard soðlice is neorxna-wang, to ðam we ne magon gecyrran þaes weges ðe we comon. Se frumsceapena man and eall his ofspring wearð adraefed of neorxena-wanges myrhðe, þurh ungehyrsumnysse, and for ðigene þaes forbodenan bigleofan, and ðurh modignysse, ðaða he wolde beon betera ðonne hine se Aelmihtiga Scyppend gesceop. Ac us is micel neod þaet we ðurh oðerne weg þone swicolan deofol forbugan, þaet we moton gesaeliglice to urum eðele becuman, þe we to gesceapene waeron." Thorpe, 118.

[12] Peter J. Lucas, *Exodus* (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), p. 118.

[13] Keenan, "The Green Street," 459.

[14] Ibid., n. 2. Keenan cites Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*, tr. by Wulstan Hibberd (Westminister, Md., 1960), pp. 154-57, 164-65, and 175-200.

[15] Cf. Aelfric, "On the Old and New Testament," in S. J. Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 160, 1922, rpt. 1969), p. 30, ll. 348-50: "þaet waeter him stod swilce stanweallas bufan heora heafdum." Note also that in Aelfric's Ex. xiv.21, the way of the saved is "an drige straet đurh đa sae" and recall the significance of *straet* as the paved road, the constructed way or "bridge" in Chapter II above.

[16] Doane, 463.

[17] Thorpe, 250.

CHAPTER IV THE GREEN CROSS: GRENE TACNE

The "grenne grund" of the Israelites' passage through the sea closely follows another "green" sign or token of salvation in the Old English *Exodus*. This is the "grene tacne"(281) of Moses which, Lucas says, represents "Moses's rod of living wood, a symbol of salvation." Moreover, Lucas notes that since "Moses's rod was conventionally interpreted as the Cross, the term *grene tacn* could also refer to the 'green' Cross."[1] Although admittedly rare in literature, the green cross is by no means unusual in early Christian art. In medieval manuscript illuminations, enamels, and stained glass the cross is, in fact, represented "in a variety of textures, sometimes quite literally as a rough tree with bark upon it, more frequently as rounded and smooth, or of carpentered wood squared with a plane. The Passion Cross is most often coloured as natural wood, but occasionally red to recall the blood of Christ, or green to symbolize the Tree of Life, or gold to signify glory."[2]

Red and gold crosses may likewise be found in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The former appears as a sign of the Day of Judgement: "ðonne sio reade rod ofer ealle/ swegle scineð on þaere sunnan gyld"(*Christ* III.1101-1102). The gold cross is the cross the dreamer first sees in the *Dream of the Rood*: "Ealle þaet beacen waes/ begoten mid golde"(6-7). But the green cross is conspicuous in its abscence. In fact, to my knowledge, it is never specifically mentioned in Old English poetry or prose.[3] The source, application, and symbolic significance of the green cross can be clearly found, however, in early patristic writings. Adolphe N. Didron examines the occurrence and symbolism of the green cross in medieval art and architecture with some reference to its patristic origins in his

exhaustive study, *Christian Iconography: The History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*. Didron's comments on the green cross are worth quoting at length for they refer to motifs applicable to the significance of the green collocation in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

> In the liturgy and the writings of the fathers, we meet continually with invocations to the cross as a divine tree, a noble tree, the likeness of which no earthly forest could produce, a brilliant and precious tree, a tree covered with leaves, sparkling with flowers and loaded with fruit.[4]

This living tree, the *salutifera arbor* or cosmological tree of Watson and of Greenhill, occurs frequently in Old English poetry: in the *Dream of the Rood* it is "syllicre treow"(4); in *Elene* it is "wuldres treo"(89). But when it appears in the visual arts with branches lopped and leafless, that tree would usually be unrecognizable as such were it not often still green:

> The historical cross, that which the Saviour bore upon his shoulders to Calvary, and upon which he was crucified, is a tree, and consequently its colour is green. On the painted window in St. Etienne de Bourges, on those of Notre-Dame de Chartres, and of Rheims, on those in the Ste. Chapelle at Paris, and in the miniatures of our illuminated manscripts, the cross is a tree with the branches lopped off, but still covered with a greenish bark. Sculptures themselves confirm this fact; the colouring now has generally disappeared from those which have been painted, but the round tree covered with bark, and stripped of its branches, is still very apparent, as in the west porch of Notre-Dame de Rheims.[5]

The cross with lopped branches or cross raguly, most common in manuscript illuminations of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, is occasionally replaced by a cross bedecked with leaves or blossoms, as in the early

thirteenth century Psalter of Robert of Lindeseye.[6] But the carpentered cross is by far the most characteristic form of the cross, and on this Didron remarks:

> The green colour was retained even after the cross had been squared and stripped of its bark, in order to be transformed into an actual cross by the axe of the carpenter. It was no longer a tree, but a thick plank or beam; and yet it is still green. Upon that squared beam, green or blackish branches were traced, making the cross appear like a support, or thick trellis to which the vine is attached, and over which it spreads itself. The grape which yields its juice to nourish man, is the perpetual symbol of Christ, who shed his blood to redeem the world. Vine branches are therefore represented clinging to, and spreading their tendrils over, the cross on which the Saviour is suspended, in the painted windows in our cathedrals.[7]

The image of Christ as the vine, associated with the early catechetical image of the church as a plantation,[8] represents of course the mystical vine bearing the wine of the eucharist and recalls John 15.1 & 5: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman"; "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And just as Christ embraces the Passion Cross "þa he wolde mancyn lysan"(*DotR* 41), so too the members of his church, the faithful who with him constitute the vine and the body, may figuratively embrace the salvific cross of faith, for support and guidance in life and in death.[9]

But the presence of green plant motifs in medieval art and architecture does not explain the curious green colour of the cross itself, especially that of the carpentered beam. It is only more evidence of an underlying symbolism, assumed by Didron in his assertion that the cross upon which Christ was crucified is green because it is, in fact, a tree. Certain legends of that tree of the cross, however,

do offer some traditional sources for this peculiar greenness. Three episodes of those legends closely concern the green cross as the sign of the way to heaven. The first episode, part of which we have already examined, describes how Seth is sent, by the dying Adam, upon the green way to Paradise to acquire the oil of mercy promised man by God. But Seth is given, instead, three seeds of the tree, fruit of which Adam and Eve had eaten in their disobedience, and he plants these seeds in Adam's mouth upon the father's death.[10] This episode suggests why Adam, or a skull or bones representing Adam, so frequently appears at the foot of the cross in medieval art.[11] In the second episode, the three seeds grow into three rods which Moses recognizes as symbolic of the Trinity and, by God's command, he removes and saves them.[12] The third episode describes how the wood of the cross, cut from the great tree grown from Moses's rods, comes to life during the crucifixion, blossoming from noon until evening.[13] Just as Adam, the sinful man, prefigures Christ, the sinless second Adam, so too the green path from Paradise, the way of man's exile to mortality, can be seen to prefigure the green cross of salvation, the way of man's return to God's eternal plantation. And the blossoming cross itself can be seen as a reversed symbol of Seth's "grene weye" to Paradise: the path to Paradise, though green with growing grass, withers when touched by the sinful and becomes forever lifeless and ungreen; the cross of the crucifixion, though of dead carpentered wood, quickens at the embrace of the sinless, blooms, and is exalted to glory in heaven.

According to the History of the Holy Roodtree, as in various other legends of the cross, the rod of Moses and the wood of the cross are both of the tree in the midst of Paradise.[14] From the seeds Seth had received

at the gate of Paradise and planted at his father's death grow three rods which, in time, become the tree from which the wood of the cross is cut. But, in the interim, those rods miraculously appear to Moses in the wilderness: "Ða he þa ðet iseah þa witegode he 7 þus cwaeð . Soðlice þas 3yrdaen tacniaeð faeder . 7 sune . 7 þone hal3a gast."[15] Taken out of the earth by Moses and carried with him, the rods become the "branch" with which he sweetens the bitter water (Ex. 15.25). In the Latin *Legend*, the same rods are identified with the rod(s) with which Moses strikes the rock to bring forth water (Ex. 17.6).[16] And it is of interest that, in the Book of Exodus, the rod(s) of these miracles is the same as that with which Moses divides the sea for the salvation of his people.

At the parting of the sea, in the Junius *Exodus*, Moses proclaims:

> "Hwaet, ge nu eagum to on lociaþ,
> folca leofost, faerwundra sum,
> hu ic sylfa sloh and þeos swiðre hand
> grene tacne garsecges deop."(278-81)

Like the three rods that "tacniaeð" the Trinity, destined to grow into the tree of the cross, the "grene tacne" of Moses betokens the cross of faith, the sign of salvation. Each represents the promise of the presence and power of God to his faithful: the rod of Moses, by the power of the Father, allows the chosen people to pass through death into the new life of their journey to the promised Jerusalem; the cross of Christ, by the power of the Son, allows the faithful to pass through death on their journey into the eternal life of the heavenly Jerusalem. The greenness of these signs signifies the hope and faith by which the

promise of salvation and eternal life is made possible to the obedient and faithful.

That promise of salvation is fulfilled for Mary in the story of her Assumption, which appears in its most complete form in the thirteenth century *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine. The story is drawn, says Jacobus, from "an apocryphal book which is attributed to John the Evangelist."[17] That a similar legend, if not the same one, was known centuries earlier in Anglo-Saxon England is attested to by the tenth century *Blickling Homilies*. The similarities between the Old English homily "Assumptio S. Mariae Virginis"[18] and Jacobus's version of the same is of interest here, especially in regard to the events concerning the victory token, a palm branch, presented to Mary and the significance of that token as symbolic of her faith.

According to the homily, "Drihtnes engel" appears to Mary, saying: "Aris þu Maria & onfoh þissum palmtwige þe ic þe nu brohte, for þam þu bist soþlice aer þrim dagum genumen of þinum lichoman, & ealle Drihtnes apostolas beoþ sende to bebyrgene"(137). In Jacobus's version of the story, the angel salutes the Virgin with blessings from her Son: "receive now the blessing of Him Who sent His salvation to Jacob! Behold I have brought unto thee, my Lady, a branch of the palm of Paradise! This thou must cause to be carried before thy bier; for three days hence thou shalt be called forth from the body, because thy Son awaits thee, His venerable mother!"[19] This benediction, that Christ who previously had sent a vision of the way of ascension to Jacob now sends a token of that salvation to Mary, can be seen to be represented by the symbolism of the token itself, the palm branch. Just as the ladder Jacob saw in his dream prefigures the cross by which the chosen

could win to heaven, so the palm branch may be construed as a figure of the cross, the promise of salvation and the way to eternal life. The parallel between the two blessings, that of Israel and that of Mary, recalls the very words of Jacob who, awakening from his dream, says: "this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"(Gen. 28.17). In the *Blickling Homilies*, as in Old English verse, Mary is identified with both these images: she is the house of God, "þu eart lifes faet, & þu eart þaet heofenlice templ"(157), and through her the gate of heaven is open to man, "þurh þe sceal beon se ingang eft geopenod."[20] Mary's branch of palm, like Jacob's dream of the ladder, may thus be seen as a symbol of her ascension, the way of the cross.

The symbolic significance of the palm branch is commented upon by Jean Daniélou in his discussion of the Judaic feast of Tabernacles, "a very special occasion of messianic expectation." He refers to Psalm 118, "a psalm of clearly messianic character which has a place in the post-exilic liturgy of the feast" and from which were drawn such popular motifs of salvation as the gate through which the righteous shall enter (v. 20) and the stone the builders had rejected (v. 22), Christ "se weallstan"(*Chr* I.2) who makes of each man a fit temple for God's habitation. This psalm "was sung during the procession on the eighth day, when the Jews went around the altar carrying the *lulab*,"[21] a nose-gay of willow, myrtle, and palm carried in the right hand of each person.[22] The eschatological and messianic symbolism of the *lulab* and the *ethrog* (a citron, carried in the left hand) "in the Judaism of Christ's day is certain . . . In the first place one notices their association with the messianic hope." And the special significance of the palm as the token

of the victory of the Messiah is associated "with the appearing of Christ on the Mount of Olives at the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem."[23] It is worth noting that, in the *Blickling Homilies*, Mary, upon receiving the palm branch and blessing, immediately "astah heo on þone munt þe waes nemned Oliuete. & þaet waes soþlice swiþe scinende palmtwig & hit waes þa swa leoht swa se mergenlica steorra, þe heo þaer onfeng of þaes engles handa"(137). Here the palm is certainly the token of the victory of Mary, the chosen of the Messiah, and of her forthcoming triumphal entry into the heavenly Jerusalem with her symbolic and imitative ascension of the Mount of Olives.

The shining of the palm branch, "swa leoht swa se mergenlica steorra," analogous to the brilliance of the "leohte bewunden,/ beama beorhtost"(*DotR* 5-6), the tree-cross of Christian faith, signifes the salvation and resurrection brought by Christ, "the bright, the morning star"(Rev. 22.16) who "þurh his tocyme þysne middangeard onlyhte, & eallum geleaffulum monnum heora gong gestaþelade to lifes wege, þaet hie magon þurh þa lustfulnesse heora modes, mid godum daedum, geearnian leoht þaes ecan lifes."[24] The palm branch also seems to assume some of the salvific attributes of the cross by symbolizing, according to Daniélou, "the eschatological hope in the after life. It is this that accounts for the very frequent presence of the *lulab* and the *ethrog* on Jewish funerary monuments . . . Here the symbolism is not of victory but of resurrection . . . This is the context that gives its meaning to the palms carried by martyrs, men who have overcome death; the idea is found already in the Apocalypse(7.9)."[25] Thus, the branch of palm presented to Mary is a token of more than victory in life, it symbolizes her eternal salvation and bodily resurrection. Although, in this

instance, the token is the palm alone, the symbolism of the *lulab* may be understood, "for the palm was its most characteristic and representative part and came to stand for the whole."[26]

Further, the special significance of the palm branch to Mary is revealed, in both versions of the Assumption, in the episode of the townsfolk who attack the procession in order to slay the apostles and burn the body. Immediately, the sinful people are stricken blind "& feollan to eorþan, & heora heafdu slogan on þa wagas & hie grapodan mid heora handum on þa eorþan, & nystan hwyder hie eodan"(151). The leader of these people, "gegripan þaet palmtwig & hit þonne to eorþan afyllan, & forsearedum him begen daelas forbrecan & forbaernan," suffers such pain that he cries out for mercy. The apostle Peter tells him that only by believing in Christ can his pain be relieved, "& þa waes hraþe geworden þaet he gelyfde on his heortan. & þa cwaeþ Petrus eft to him,"

> "Aris nu & onfoh þysum palmtwige þe her is beforan þisse halgan Marian baere, & þonne gang to þissa Iudea ceastre to þaem þe þaer ofslegene syndon mid blindnesse, ond sprec to him & cweþ, 'Swa hwylc swa ne gelyfeþ on Haelend Crist þaet he sy Godes Sunu þaes lifgendan, þonne þeob þaes eagan betynede;' & þonne gif hwylc gelyfe on God, þonne aethrin þu heora eagan mid þysum palmtwige þe þu her onfenge on þine hand, þonne onfoþ hie raþe gesyhþe. Se þonne witodlice ne gelyfeþ on God þonne ne gesyhþ se naefre on ecnesse." (153)

It appears that this "scinende palmtwig," imparted with a virtue that gives a blind man sight, an unbeliever faith, and mortal man immortality, is a symbol of the cross. Both the palm branch and the cross are symbolic of hope in the afterlife, the immortality hitherto denied man by the expulsion of Adam from the garden, the tree of life, and its fruit of immortality. The palm and the cross alike glow with the heavenly light

that Christ brought to earth to illuminate for man the way of salvation: "oþon leohte is fulfremednesse weg þe we on feran sceolan, þaet is se rihta geleafa."[27] Again, according to Jacobus, the token given Mary was itself "a branch of the palm of Paradise" and it "indeed shone with a great brightness, and for its greenness was like to a new branch, but its leaves gleamed like the morning star."[28]

The palm branch carried before Mary's bier, with its greenness symbolic of life and regeneration, is analogous to the green foundation of the castle-Mary and the "mathe" of her divine harvest. These images, the palm representing hope in the afterlife, the stone foundation symbolic of the strength of true faith, and the harvest of the faithful's everlasting reward and glorification, contribute to the *grenehede* of Mary, the "rihte bileue" and "faire liflode" by which the devout may reach eternal life in heaven: "Forđon we sceolan eall ure lif on eaþmodnesse healdan, aefter þaere bysne þaere halgan Godes cyningan,"[29] Mary. And each can also be seen to represent an aspect of the *grenehede* of the way of the cross, the way of salvation established upon faith, illuminated by hope, and rewarded with the eternal harvest of divine grace.

Because of her virtues--most especially her faith, hope, and grace--Mary dies "gesigefaestan" and, when Peter brings the palm branch to her bier, "þa cwaeþ se eadiga Iohannes . . . 'þu eart se claenoste faemne, & þe gedafenaþ þaet þu leore on þine baere, & we beran þis palmtwig & cweþan godes lof',"

> & þa arison þa apostolas, & hie hofan þa baere & hie baeron mid heora handum; & Petrus þa soþlice onhof his stefne & waes cweþende, "*In exitu Israhel ex Egypto. Alleluia.*"

> "Israhel waes ut gangende of Aegyptum, & waes singende 'Alleluia!' & Drihten is soþlice þisse baere fultumiende." (149)

As God had guided and supported the Israelites in their flight from Egypt, so Christ is "fultumiende" Mary's bier. The journey of God's people, carrying the Ark of the Covenant (the vessel of the promise of salvation) through their symbolic death and rebirth, their baptism in the Red Sea, is recalled by this procession of Christ's apostles, carrying the Temple of the Lord (the vessel of the fulfillment of redemption) at the time of Mary's bodily death, to the appointed place of her resurrection and ascension into the eternal life of Paradise. Like the green token of Moses preserving the Israelites upon the green road through the sea, Mary's shining palm branch represents the salvation of those who please God.[30] The promise of salvation made through Moses and through Mary is symbolized in each case by a green token, a *grene tacn* of the presence of God's grace in the faithful and the faithful's *rihte bileue* "in god."

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

[1] Lucas, 114.

[2] Heather Child and Dorothy Colles, *Christian Symbols* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1971), p. 202.

[3] An interesting, though admittedly debatable, use of green in the c. 1250 hymn on the crucifixion, *On leome is in þis world ilist*, in the Trinity Coll. Camb. MS 323, reads:

> His bodi þat wes feir & gent
> & his neb suo scene
> Wes bi-spit & al to-rend,
> His rude wes worþen grene.

Although the translation of ME *rude* is "face, complexion," note that Brown glosses *rude* also as a variant spelling of *rode* (see p. 284), meaning also "rood, cross." However, even assuming some intentional word-play here between *rude* "face" and *rode* "cross," the double meaning may represent nothing more than a remnant, used without symbolic intent, of the "grene" collocation. Carlton Brown, ed., *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1932, rpt. 1950), p. 37, ll. 41-44.

[4] Adolphe N. Didron, *Christian Iconography: The History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*, tr. by E. J. Millington (New York: Frederick Ungar Publ. Co., 1965 from 1st ed. 1851, rpt. 1968), I, p. 412. For the foliate tree, see J. Eric Hunt, *English and Welsh Crucifixes 670-1550* (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), Pls. 14 and 17 (twelfth century).

[5] Didron, 412. For the cross with lopped branches, the cross raguly, in MS illuminations and altar reredos, see Hunt, Pls. 10 and 11 (eleventh century), 23 and 24 (thirteenth century); and Cyril E. Pocknee, *Cross and Crucifix in Christian Worship and Devotion* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1962), Pl. 17 (an illumination of the New Minster Psalter). As a point of interest, cf. the sixteenth century Spanish processional cross on which the stumps of lopped branches point right and left upon the horizontal arms of the crucifix, indicating the three parts of the cross representing the Trinity, Pl. 27.

[6] Andrew Martindale, *Gothic Art: From the Twelfth to Fifteenth Century* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967, rpt. 1974), Illus. 51. See also Illus. 56 where leafy blossoms adorn a cross from the c. 1216 Weingarten Missal. An interesting alternative to the foliate cross is the lily crucifix, see Pocknee, Pl. 20.

[7] Didron, 412-13. For the green carpentered cross, see Martindale, Illus. 52 (a thirteenth century crucifixion) and Illus. 101 (the thirteenth century Alfonso Psalter), where a female saint holds a green cross. Cf. the symbol of St. John from an early eighth century gospel where green crosses point in all directions, signifying the spread of the gospel throughout the world, Hans Holländer, *Early Christian Art*, tr. by Caroline Hillier (New York: Universe Books, 1974), Illus. 8. Cf. also Child and Colles, figures pp. 196 and 208.

[8] Luke 13.18-19 and John 15.1-6, on which cf. Augustine, Sermon 246, "For the Easter Season," "we are His plants, Christ is the Gardener"; and Sermon 214, "Converts and the Creed," "we are cherished as a field . . . He cultivates us . . . Because we believe in God." Muldowney, 292 and 130, respectively.

[9] Likewise, the cross embraced by Christ must stand fast despite its terrible burden, as an example to the faithful: "Bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte. Ne dorste ic hwaeðre bugan to eorðan,/ feallan to foldan sceatum, ac ic sceolde faeste standan./ Rod waes ic araered . . . hyldan me ne dorste" (*DotR* 42-45).

[10] Arthur S. Napier, *History of the Holy Rood-tree, A Twelfth Century Version of the Cross Legend* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 103, 1894), p. xxxi (the Latin *Legend*) and p. xxiii (*Cursor Mundi* I.1237-82, which are based on the Latin *Legend*).

[11] Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France in the Thirteenth Century*, tr. by Dora Nussey (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958, from 1913 ed.), p. 153. The late date of the Seth episode, in the fourteenth century *Cursor Mundi* and the thirteenth century MSS (in England) of the Latin *Legend* (see Napier, xxxi), does not preclude the possibility that the tradition was popular much earlier. On the contrary, see for examples of the skull (and bones) at the foot of the cross: D. Talbot Rice, *The Beginnings of Christian Art* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), Pl. 33(b), the c. 1100 crucifixion in Daphni, Attica; and Alphonse Labitte, *Les Manuscrits et l'Art de les Orner* (Paris: Charles Mendel, 1893), 148, Fig. 127, a crucifixion miniature from the twelfth century *Hortus Deliciarum*.

[12] Napier, xic-xv (the Cambridge and Harleian Latin prose versions), xxv-xxvi (*Cursor Mundi* 6301-68), xxxii (the Latin *Legend*), and xxv (History of the Holy Rood-tree, pp. 3-29).

[13] R. Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, III (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 62, 1876), ll. 16859-68. Note that the Cotton and Göttingen MSS give this episode but not the parallel Fairfax (Laud) and Trinity versions.

[14] Napier, xiv-xv and xxv-xxvi.

[15] Ibid., 2.

[16] Ibid., xxxvi; the bitter water episode occurs in the Rood-tree group, the water from the rock in the Latin *Legend*.

[17] Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 449.

[18] R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 58, 1874; 63, 1876; 73, 1880), pp. 136-59. References throughout are made to page numbers of this edition of the homilies. That the similarities between the *Legenda Aurea* and the Old English homily may be due to a common source, that is, the anonymous tenth century Greek homily referred to by Graef, 202, or some version (or translation) of it, is an interesting speculation.

[19] Ryan and Ripperger, 449-50.

[20] Morris, *BH*, 9. Cf. *Christ* I. 301-31.

[21] Daniélou, 4.

[22] Ibid., and 2.

[23] Ibid., 12.

[24] Morris, *BH*, 17.

[25] Daniélou, 12-13.

[26] Ibid., 13. Cf. Aelfric's homily, "The Nativity of the Innocents," which he ends with a description of the martyrs: "Hi sind ða ðe Criste folgiað on hwitum gyrlum, swa hwider swa he gaeð; and hi standað aetforan his ðrymsetle, butan aelcere gewemmednysse, haebbende heora palmtwigu on handa, and singað þone niwan lofsang, þam Aelmihtigan to wurðmynte, seþe leofað and rixað a butan ende. Amen." Thorpe, 88-90.

[27] Morris, *BH*, 21.

[28] Ryan and Ripperger, 450.

[29] Morris, *BH*, 11-13.

[30] Cf. also the "grene bleda"(*Daniel* 517) sprouting from the hewn tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

CHAPTER V THE GRENEHEDE OF FAITH: GREEN ROD, ROOD, ROAD

The way to heaven, the way of faith symbolized by the cross, is a green way. Its *grenehede* signifies the presence and protection of God, his covenant with the faithful, exemplified by the safe passage of the Israelites, through symbolic baptism in the sea, upon "grenne grund." As represented by the "grene tacne" of Moses and the shining palm branch of Mary's resurrection, the cross is the sign of the hope of the faithful in that promise of salvation, its greenness signifying the regenerative and fruitful wood of the tree of life that blossoms at the crucifixion as the *virga* had blossomed with the *flos* of man's redemption. That fruitful rod, Mary, and blossoming cross of Christ may have derived some part of their *grenehede* from one of the most sacred tokens of Judaic tradition, the rod of Aaron.

The blossoming cross, analogous to the *virga* bearing the *flos* of redemption, bears the flower and the fruit of salvation, Christ's blood and body. These, as the wine and bread of the Eucharist, are closely associated with the manna, the hidden food (Rev. 2.17) of the faithful.[1] The manna itself and the blossoming rod are intimately connected, as Moses Gaster points out, with the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies, "wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded" (Heb. 9.4).[2] The special significance of the blossoming rod of Aaron, by which token it is shown that Aaron is God's chosen priest (Num. 17.8-11), is inherent in its development, along with the pot of manna, as a Messianic symbol, "for he who would bring back the manna and the rod of Aaron would thereby show that he was the true Messiah."[3] Gaster distinguishes these from other symbols of divine intercession and

miraculous salvation in that the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna are specifically "symbols of that hope for resurrection and the Messiah together with that happiness contained in Apocalyptic vision and in popular legends."[4] Most to the point here is that the blossoming rod, though sometimes interpreted as a palm,[5] is a distinct Old Testament type; rather than a mere sign of hope, it is "the rod which is to lead and to be a symbol of power"[6] and, as such, a sign of the Messiah's victory.

It is a small step to make the association, similar to that which Gaster suggests concerning the pot of manna and the Eucharist chalice,[7] between Aaron's rod which budded and the blossoming symbol of Christ's power and victory, the cross. Further, the blossoming of Aaron's rod, the rod of Joseph,[8] and the *virga de radice Jesse*, by which each is signified to be the chosen of God, all contribute to the *grenehede* of the blossoming cross of Christ by which it is shown that the Messiah has truly come, bringing the living rod of God's covenant with his chosen. As the wood of the tree of life, the tree grown from the rods of Moses, and the sign of the Messiah's divine birth, death, and resurrection, the cross could hardly fail to bloom at the time of the crucifixion.[9]

> þe rode it was wit leif and barc
> florist ful selcuthli,
> Fra þe middai to complin,
> þat mani thoght gret ferli;
> Bot þof þe Iuus þat it sagh
> thoght selcut noght for-þi,
> Noiþer þai gaf man, ne tok
> ensample gode þar-bi;
> Bot on þe morn o þat grening,
> þe tre als ar was dri. (C 16859-68)[10]

As the token of the promise of victory to those who, through faith, "tok/ ensample gode þar-bi," the *grening* of the cross is the fulfillment of the covenant, the *treow* of *bileue*. And, though "on þe morn o þat grening,/ þe tre als ar was dri," that *bileue* is evergreen until the day of judgement when the faithful shall no longer need that belief, seeing what they had long cherished only by faith.[11]

However, this motif of the blossoming cross of the crucifixion should not be confused with that of the sympathy of nature (heaven, earth, and hell) at the moment of Christ's death (*DotR* 52-56, *Chr* III. 1127-86). That latter motif is full of sorrow and cateclysmic upheaval, foreshadowing the great destruction of the day of judgement when not the sinless, Christ, but the sinful, man, shall suffer great agonies. It is the blood-stained red cross, "beswyled mid swates gange"(*DotR* 23) which prefigures the eschatological "reade rod," shining "on þaere sunnan gyld"(*Chr* III.1101-1102) on the final day. On the other hand, the verdure of the blossoming cross is the *grenehede* of salvation from that day of destruction, the *grene tacn* of the faithful who achieve salvation by "rihte bileue" in the sign, and by "faire liflode" upon the way, of the cross.

Analogous to the *virga* which bears the *flos* of man's redemption, the blossoming cross is also itself symbolic of the tree of life bearing the imperishable fruit of immortality. When, in the *Cursor Mundi*, Seth approaches the gate of Paradise seeking the oil of mercy for his dying father, the angel guarding the entrance allows him three glimpses into the garden. With the first, Seth "sagh þar stand a mikel tre,/ Wit braunches fel, o bark al bare,/ Was þar na leue on, less na mare"(C 1320-23).[12] Wondering why "þis tre bi-com sua dri"(C 1324), Seth recalls

the footsteps of his parents "þat welud war for sin of man"(C 1326) and realizes that the tree he sees "was dri for adam sin"(C 1328). The second time he looks in, Seth sees that upon the tree "A neddur hit hade al vmbilaid"(C 1336). This tree, withered by Adam's sin and entwined with the serpent of temptation and death, signifies the mortality man had seized by his disobedience, the betrayal of the *treow*, tree and trust, placed in his care. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is, in effect, Adam's tree of death for, by its violation, the first man suffers exile from the garden and banishment upon the road to death. But that same tree, through the miracle of God's mercy, also becomes the means of man's redemption from Adam's sin. Seth's last glimpse into Paradise is a vision of that salvation:

> þis tre was of a mikel heght,
> Him thoght þan, at þe thrid sight,
> þat to þe sky it raght þe toppe;
> A new born barn lay in þe croppe (C 1339-42)

This towering tree, its top reaching to heaven, its roots reaching to hell(1347), is clearly the cosmological tree symbolizing the union and reunion of heaven, earth, and hell in God's great design. And it is the tree of life and *salutifera arbor* for, as the angel explains to Seth, the infant it bears is "goddes sun"(C 1356):

> þi fader sin now wepes he
> þat he sal clens sum time sal be.
> Quen þe plenteȝ sal cum o time;
> þis is þe oile þat was hight him;
> Til him and til his progeni,
> Wit pite sal [he] sceu his merci. (C 1357-62)

The infant in the tree is the promised oil of mercy, Christ, borne upon the quickened rod-cross-tree of life. That living tree, like the miraculously blossoming rods of Aaron and Joseph, the "grene tacne" of Moses, and the shining palm branch of Mary, represents the immutable and regenerative *treow* of God. It is the vehicle of the fall, the redemption, and the exaltation of man: the *arbor scientiae*, bearing the fruit of temptation and disobedience, is symbolically reborn as the *arbor sanctae crucis* which bears the *flos* of virtue, becoming in fact the *arbor vitae* with its imperishable fruit of wisdom and purity. In this way, the seeds from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which are planted in the mouth of Adam upon his death, like the seed of his own paternity, represent a covenant, *treow*, of Creator to creation: the *virga Jesse* of the tree of the generations of Adam and the holy cross of the tree in the midst of Paradise each, in turn, bear the promised *flos* for the sake of man's redemption. The promise is fulfilled, "Quen þe plente$_3$ sal cum o time," in the *flos* borne by the *virga*. All these images are signs of the new *grening* of the tree of life in the blossoming cross of Christ.

But the eschatological symbolism of the blossoming cross as the living tree is signified not so much by its mere *grening* as by its fruit, the *flos*, the source of and reason for its quickening. It is by the fruit, Christ, that the terrible "gealgtreowe"(*DotR* 146) of death blossoms into the sign of life and token of salvation. Likewise, it is by its fruit that every branch of the vine, Christ,[13] is judged; the fruitless are cut away and burned (John 15.5-6). As Christ had cursed the fig-tree that yielded him no fruit (Matt. 21.19), so every fruitless plant is accursed. According to Aelfric: "Andsaete biđ þaet treow . þe aefre

grewð . on leafum ./ and naefre naenne waestm . his scyppende . ne bringð ./ swa synd we cristene . gif ure cristen-dom . ne bið acunnod."[14] That is, it is not enough that the plant *geleaf*, each of the faithful must act upon that belief: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"(Matt. 7.19). On this aspect of the symbolism of the tree, the *Ormulum* explains that "þe treo bitacneþþ all mannkinn"(9971):

> 7 illc an treo þatt i þiss lif
> Ne bereþþ nan god wasstme,
> Shall bi þe grund beon haewenn upp,
> 7 i þe fir beon worrpenn.
> Forr illc an mann þatt i þiss lif
> Ne doþ nan allmess dede,
> Beoþ demmd þurrh Crist o Domess da33
> Inn helle fir to baernenn. (9963-70)[15]

Furthermore, of the many branches of that "mikell treo"(9973), some of which are entirely dry (9976) and some of which "berenn wasstme swet 7 god"(10039), there are some which, though "grene"(9985), nonetheless "Ne berenn naefre wasstme"(9986). Those branches, "All cwike 7 grene"(10002) but fruitless, are those who appear to do good deeds but do so for the praise of men and for earthly love rather than for the sake and love of God. And there are even some that seem to bear fruit but that fruit is "full off atterr"(10018), being heresies that mislead others "Ut off þe rihhte we33e"(10022). The apparent "grene" of those branches is the green of *geleaf* without love or good deeds, the kind of belief that "mortua est in semetipsa."

The distinction between the fruitful *grenehede* acquired through "rihte bileue" and "faire liflode," as compared to the fruitless "grene"

of faith without charity, may in part explain what appears to be the gradual dissociation of *grene* from the way to heaven and its eventual association, more frequent with the passing centuries, with the profane and the way to hell. An apparent illustration of this shift is the variation in the versions of the *Poema Morale*, where an interesting reversal appears to take place in the description of the way to heaven and the way to hell. In the Lambeth MS, the faithful are advised, "Laete we þe brode stret. and þe wei bene/ . . . Go we þene narewe wei. and þene wei grene";[16] and similarly in the slightly later Trinity MS version, "[L]ate we be þrode strate and þane weg bene/ . . . Go we þane narewe paƀ and þene wei grene."[17] But in the mid-thirteenth century Jesus College MS, the latest of the three versions, the warning is altered: "Lete we þeo brode stret. and þene wey grene./ . . . Go we þene narewe way. þene wey so schene."[18] Here, though the hortatory message is the same, that is, avoid the wide way to hell and stay with the narrow way to salvation, the application of *grene* appears to be completely reversed.

This reversal may, of course, be attributed merely to scribal error.[19] Or, on the other hand, it may be representative of an intentional alteration derived, however mistakenly, from such special cases of the use of "grene" as in the *Ormulum* where fruitless branches, though green, are symbolic of dead faith and sinfulness. The problem is a difficult one for, even where the shift appears to be most obvious, its occurrence is defined by a highly specific context. An example of this occurs in an early fourteenth century version of the *Ancrene Riwle* which describes "a grene waye toward helle."[20] The reference, in this case, is to "ypocrites and fals prophetes," the heretics represented by green

branches bearing fruit "full off atterr" in the *Ormulum*. And their "grene waye" is reminiscent of the deceitful use of the "grene" password by Satan's messenger in *Genesis* 510-13. It is against the "faire speche" of similar flatterers and deceivers that the faithful are warned in the *Ancrene Riwle*: "Now beþ war of alle swiche I rede. for gregori seiþ þat swiche men & wymmen þorouȝ her faire speche leden þe folk in a grene waye toward helle. For grene waie is soft & fair & so ben her wordes."[21]

Whether the occurrence of the use of "grene" in such contexts is a sign of an actual reversal of the symbolic significance of the colour-word in religious writings and explains the odd application of the word in the Jesus College MS version of the *Poema Morale* is incidental here. What is worth remarking upon is that elsewhere *grene*, as the symbol of faith and righteousness, persists true to form well into the fifteenth century, particularly in the lapidaries so popular in medieval England.[22] In *The London Lapidary of King Philip*, for example, the first twelve stones described are those which God named to be set in the breastplate of Aaron, the first priest of the Israelites (Ex. 28.17-20). According to this lapidary, Saint John saw eleven of these stones in "þe foundement of þe heuenly kyngdome" when, because of his love of Christ, he was led by an angel "to se þe priuities of paradys."[23] Although the actual order of only five of the eleven stones is mentioned in this lapidary, with sardes (red) and crisolide (clear white) vying for the sixth position, one fact is clear and never contradicted: "þe first stone vnder þe veray kyngdome"[24] is green, either emerald or jasper. The significance of the green colour of these stones recalls the "grenan wege" of Psalm 141.4, the green of

the foundation of the castle-Mary, and the green palm branch of the Virgin's resurrection:

> Seint Iohn seith vs in þe Appocalipce þat [in] þe fundement of þe heuenly kyngdome of Ierusalem þe Iaspe is first, and þerfore hit signifieth thre vertues þt shulde be in euery gode man. Iaspe is þat stone þat is cleped feith, the second hope, & þe thridde charite, & he þat grene Iaspe beholdeth ayeins day, of þe feith of Ihesu Xrist he shulde haue mynde.[25]

And jasper "is ful gode ayeins temptacion of fendes"[26] recalling the virtuous *grene* of the *via* of Psalm 141.4 upon which the supplicant, armed only with his faith, hope, and charity, must hold his way against the afflictions of his enemies. Likewise, concerning the emerald, the "aropiles" who must battle the "gryffons" for possession of that gem are "veray cristen men; the gryffons signifien þe deueles to whom thei feighten ayeins."[27]

That the green colour of these stones symbolizes the faith that saves recalls the description of the structure of the castle-Mary in which faith, though not the highest virtue, must ever be the strong foundation that never weakens, lest the others fail. This is the *grene* of the *via* in Psalm 141.4: faith must prevail, withstanding the traps and deceits of God's enemies, for without faith there is no charity and no hope. Similarly, in *The North Midland Lapidary of King Philip* (also fifteenth century), jasper is the first stone of the foundation of the kingdom of heaven: "yerfor be-tokenes ye Iaspe yes iij vertuys yt suld be on euery gud man: fayth, hope and charyte; for he yt lukes appon a Iaspe agayns ye day, of ye fayth of Ihesu criste he most

remembre hym."[28] And, though here the emerald is "ye iiij ston in ye fundement of ye varay kyngdom," its significance is unchanged: "Ye fyn emeraud & gentil is ryght gren, & he be-tokenes ye grennes of gud fayth, for ye patriarkes & ye gud profettes wer so fynly gretly grennhed, yerfor yai haue gret Ioy of heuen."[29] Likewise, according to *The London Lapidary*, of the "clene & gentile" emerald, "þe grenes signifieth þe grete grenehed þt may not flitten, þt þe gode patriarches & prophetes haden so grete blisse of heuene all þei þt ben in þis grenehede in þe feith as seynt Iohn was."[30] That is the *grenehede* of faith; it is what earned Saint John his vision of Paradise and is what may enable each man to share the same delight for eternity.

The "grene straete" to that delight is the straight and narrow way patterned on *semitas Dei*. As the *arcta via, quae ducit ad vitam,* it is "sticolan weg," imitative of Christ's ascension of the cross and prefigured by the ladder of Jacob's dream. And it is "eorfoðran weg," the difficult way, representing the life-long struggle of the faithful against temptation and sin. This steep, narrow, and difficult way up to heaven, the bridge-ladder of virtue built by and of Christ by means of his crucifixion in order to open for man a new way back to the garden, is symbolized by the vehicle of that great sacrifice, the cross. As the sign of the way, *rad*, "road," of life and of faith, the cross, *rod*, "rood," signifies both church and Christ, the ship that carries the Christian safely through life until death and the vessel that carries the faithful away from death into eternal life.

That the "gastlic" understanding required to associate the *rodd*, "rod," of Moses and of Aaron as branches of the tree of life revived through the *virga Jesse*, with the *rod*, "rood," of Christ and the *rad*,

"road," to everlasting life is dependent upon a certain amount of spiritual *rad*, "wisdom," is the sort of multi-layered word association that often passes unnoticed simply because it is so obvious. Perhaps it is for that very reason, medieval writers seem to have felt no need to explain the "grene straete," "grene tacne," or "grening" cross of their literature. But surely, even without an explicit "proof" of that intimate association in medieval English poetry and prose, the modern reader need only witness the budding of a single leaf in spring to recognize in that small miracle a sign of life reborn and a token of life eternal.

NOTES: CHAPTER V

[1] See John 6.35-51, especially: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

[2] Moses Gaster, "Jewish Coins and Messianic Traditions," (*The Expositor*, n.d.), rpt. in *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology* V.II, coll. and rptd. by Moses Gaster (New York: Ktav Publ. House, 1928, rpt. 1971), 660-78. The food of the angels and the blessed in Paradise, the manna is also the special food for the time of the Messiah, the time of the resurrection, 675.

[3] Ibid., 670.

[4] Ibid., 676.

[5] Ibid., 674.

[6] Ibid., 676.

[7] Ibid., 677.

[8] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), *Ante-Nicene Christian Library : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, XVI, "The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary," p. 58.

[9] The motif of the blossoming cross can be seen as just one more fulfillment of the many prophecies established by Old Testament types: "for since the first man had brought death into the world by means of a wooden object, namely the tree of good and evil, it was necessary that the Son of Man should banish death by dying on an object of wood; . . . since Adam had stretched forth his greedy hands toward the forbidden fruit, it was necessary that the second Adam should stretch out His pure hands on the Cross" etc., St. Andrew on the mystery of the cross in the *Legenda Aurea*, Ryan and Ripperger, 11-12.

[10] Morris, *Cursor Mundi* III. The Göttingen version agrees entirely with the Cotton in this passage, allowing for slight differences in spelling and a few words altered (ie., "wele" for "ful," 16860) or omitted (ie., "gret" 16862), while the Fairfax(Laud) and Trinity versions omit the entire passage with no gap in the MSS. This appears to be the earliest occurrence of the blossoming cross extant in English. Napier considers this episode an addition peculiar to the author of the Old English version (of the fourteenth century) from which the English version was drawn; xxiii ff., xxix, xlv.

[11] Recall Aelfric: "We gelyfaƀ nu on God, and we hopiaƀ to him: eft þonne we becumaƀ to his rice, swa swa he us behet, þonne biƀ se geleafa geendod, forðan ðe we geseoƀ þonne þaet we nu gelyfaƀ," Thorpe, 250.

[12] Morris, *Cursor Mundi* I.

[13] Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians*, XI (first century) in which the faithful are warned to avoid all that are "not the plants of the Father. If they were, they would appear as branches of the Cross and their fruit would be immortal. It is by the Cross, by His passion, that He invites you who are His members"; Gerald G. Walsh, tr., *The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic U. of America Press, 1947, rpt. 1969), *The Fathers of the Church*, I, p. 105.

[14] Aelfric, "Passion of St. Julian and His Wife Basilissa," in Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, I (London: Oxford U. Press EETS 76 (1881) and 82 (1885), rpt. one vol. 1966), p. 104, ll. 246-47.

[15] Robert Holt, ed., *The Ormulum : With the Notes and Glossary of Dr. R. M. White*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), p. 346 ff.

[16] R. Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises . . . of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, First Series* (London: N. Trübner & Co., EETS 29 (1867) and 34 (1868) in one vol.), p. 179, ll. 337 and 339.

[17] Morris, *Old English Homilies, Second Series*, 230, ll. 341 and 343.

[18] R. Morris, ed., *An Old English Miscellany* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 49, 1872, rpt. 1927), p. 70, ll. 335 and 337.

[19] That the Egerton MS version of approximately the same date (about 1250) agrees entirely with the earlier Lambeth and Trinity versions ("Laete we þe brode stret. & þe wei bene/ . . . Go we þene narewe wei. & þene wei grene") seems to suggest that the Jesus Coll. version is, in fact, a corrupt reading and not representative of an actual alteration in the symbolic application of the *grene* collocation in the thirteenth century. The alternative, however, is still worth considering at least for argument's sake. For the Egerton version see F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints. Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1858, Part II, p. 32, ll. 170 and 171.

[20] A. Zettersten, ed., *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle . . . MS. Pepys 2498* (London: Oxford U. Press, EETS 274, 1976), p. 85.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, xi: "The remarkable popularity of lapidaries in England during the Middle Ages remains one of the curiosities of mediaeval literature. The earliest known vernacular lapidary of Western Europe is the Old English . . .; thirteen Anglo-Norman lapidaries have come down to us in a complete or

fragmentary state, of which three at least go back to the first half of the twelfth century; and we have found six lapidaries of the fifteenth century and one of the sixteenth written in English. Further, a considerable number of the surviving manuscripts of the Latin lapidaries of the Middle Ages appear to have been written in England." This fact alone would justify a close examination of the symbolism of the colour green in the lapidaries but that the *grenehede* associated with the jasper and the emerald so complements the symbolic significance of the "grene tacne" of earlier centuries clearly illustrates how little that symbolism had changed, in some contexts at least, over the centuries.

[23] Ibid., 18.

[24] Ibid., 20.

[25] Ibid., 24.

[26] Ibid. That the symbolism of the jasper is a reminder of faith in Christ recalls the cross which likewise is a constant reminder of Christ and the need for faith. That both are effective against fiends and their temptations is worth noting: "þeah þe man wafige wundorlice mid handa ne biđ hit þeah bletsung buta he wyrce tacn þaere halgan rode. 7 se ređa feond biþ sona afyrht for đam sige-faestan tacne," Richard Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems* (London: N. Trübner & Co., EETS 46, 1871), p. 105.

[27] Evans and Serjeantson, 21.

[28] Ibid., 44. The unquestioning trust of the faithful, the blind faith much maligned in later centuries, is symbolized by the grenehede of jasper: "ye buk telles yt gud Iaspe is gren of grace & of grennes, it betokenes ye syght of ye trew pepyll ye whiche takes hed to ye fader, ye son & ye holy gost; & if any clerke appose yam yai can awnswer no nother, bot yai / er trew pepyll; & suche maner of pepyll betokenes Iaspe," pp. 43-44. Similarly, in *The London Lapidary*, the emerald "signifieth þe grettist grenehedė of hym þat is þe grete grenehede of the feith of þe Trinite," p. 20, and the jasper "signifieth þe trewe peple of men þat ben of þe lesse vnderstandyng in þe ffader & þe sonne & the hōly gost," pp. 23-24.

[29] Ibid., 41.

[30] Ibid., 21. It is interesting to note that, according to Evans and Serjeantson, these two English lapidaries are independent translations of their mutual French source, 38.

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APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH

First occurrences only, of words and phrases not explained in the text, are translated unless the context or difficulty requires repetition. Variations of translation and my additions (in *italics*) are indicated by square brackets; variations alone by a slash. The references at left are to page number.

1 "signifies the greatest greenhood of that which is the great greenhood of the faith of the Trinity"

"this green way"

"green street"

2 "green token"

"green ground"

3 "the narrow way and the green way"

"On this green way, that I am going on, the proud everywhere surely set a snare for me"

7 "green and field"

8 "grass ungreen"

"green ground"

10 "green way"

14 n. 39 "and the water soon went from that fishery, and the mere was turned to broad fields, so that men ploughed all that fishery, and corn grew there pleasantly ever after"

16 "over green ground"

"green street"

17 "right belief/righteous faith"

"baptism"

"clean living/virtuous conduct"

"ought to know his belief before he undertakes baptism"

"The man who has not right belief in him, he is damned to suffer misery with devils in hell"

"All know our Creed, that I expect, though you all do not know what it means. But listen now and understand it."

"I believe in God"

"I believe God"

"I believe that God is"

"good Christian . . . that is he who believes in God"

18 "God's enemy"

"Alas the Creator's might"

"That I know now, that he is bereft of all eternal joys who thinks not to obey, to please, the King of Heaven, the Creator."

"Nor can I imagine how I came to this, in this deep abyss, stained with sins, cast from the world"

"expelled/exiled"

"bereft of all good"

"must now abide sorrowful paths of exile, wide wanderings"

"all that folk that . . . turn from God and neglect his service are called 'desert/deserted' because he dwells not in them, nor they in him"

19 "turn we to our Lord in right belief, and be like him in clean living, and make us [*our*] way to him in true love to God and to man . . . but that is a constant labour to any earthly man and therefore we do as Saint John the Baptist reminds us, thus saying . . . Make straight God's paths . . . God's paths are our good deeds, in alms and in other things which shall lead us to eternal life . . . if we do and say and think well because we love God, and long for him, and thereon hold to our life's end, then we are on the right way which leads us to eternal life, as did the lord Saint John the Baptist . . . beheaded in Herod's prison because he would not turn from the high way, nor from the right/straight paths."

"Let us keep in mind the Creator's strength, let us prepare ourselves toward a green street up to the angels where the Almighty God is. And the noble Son of God will embrace us if we, on earth, think of that before, and trust ourselves to that holy help. Then he abandons us not, but gives life, the joy of the blessed, up with the angels."

20 "Street was stone-paven"

"You are the wall-stone which the builders once [of old] rejected from the work. Well it befits you that you should be the head of the great temple, and unite the wide walls with fast joint, unbreakable rock . . . Manifest now, through skill, your own work, true, triumphant; and forthwith leave wall against wall."

21 "makes mention of a bridge, how God made a bridge of his Son when the way of going to heaven was broken by the disobedience of Adam, by the which bridge all true Christian men may overpass"

"walled with stones"

"which flood is a fervent sea of this wretched life"

"are truthful virtues. But those stones were not laid nor the wall made before my Son's Passion. They were so greatly forsaken before, that no man might come to the end by whatever way of virtues he went. Heaven was not until that time unlocked with the key of his precious blood"

"The stones were set and laid upon the body of my holy Son, he made up the wall of stones and joined it with lime, and forged and formed it up with his precious blood"

"when a man has passed over the bridge, then he comes to the gate, which gate is that same bridge, by the which gate all you must enter. Therefore my Son said: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. Who that goeth by me, goeth not in darkness, but by light.' Also he said in another place: 'There may no man come to my Father, but by me.' And that is truth . . . And now I have shown you which is the way, in likeness of a bridge."

22 "three states of the soul"

"of the which three ladders, two were made in the tree of the holy cross"

"The nailed feet are made ladders to you so that you attain or reach up to the wound of the side"

"the holy mouth"

24 "I am his temple"

"wall-door"

25 "We must remember that Christ said that the way is very
26 high and very steep that leads us to heaven"

"The way, that which leads us to the kingdom of heaven, is therefore narrow and steep, wherefore we must with difficulty labour to our homeland. If we wish to have it, we must love mercy, and cleanness, and truthfulness . . . and care for every other holy thing. These

things we cannot do except with difficulty; but if we do them, then we may with that labour, through God's help, climb that steep way that allows us to that eternal life. The way that lets to ruin is therefore broad and smooth, because evil desires bring the man to destruction . . . Foolish is the wayfaring man who takes the smooth way that misleads him, and abandons the steep which brings him to the city . . . But let us take the difficult way, so that we toil here a little while so that we are eternally without labour. Easily might Christ, if he would, live in this life without difficulties, and go to his eternal kingdom without suffering, and without death; but he would not. On that, Peter the Apostle said, 'Christ suffered for us, and gave us example, so that we must follow his footsteps;' that is, that we must suffer some things for love of Christ, and for our sins."

"best of beacons"

"at times it was with moisture wetted, drenched with flowing blood, at times adorned with treasures"

"gallows-tree"

"victory-beam"

"but by means of the rood each soul, seeking the kingdom, shall from earthways"

27 "I opened up to them, the speechbearers [*men*], life's way, righteousness"

31 "steadfast truth and tenderness"

"The third colour of them all, it covers all about the wall, and it is red as any blood. Of all these others is none so good. That is the holy charity, [*that*] was kindled in that lady free."

33 "This castle is not [*meant*] for to hide, (is) painted about the outer side of three colours of sundry hue. The ground nearest these is full true, meeting with that rock stone. Of great sweetness, there wants none; for sweet greenness, well dare I say, its hue it holds lasting forever."

"The foundation that first is laid nearest the rock, as it is said, that is painted with green hue that lasts forever like new, that is the end of that clean maiden, lighting her holy heart so bright. The greenness lasting ever and ever betokens the end of that maiden. For good ending of all and all, of all virtues it is the ground-wall."

"lodgings"

34 "This castle is of love and grace, both of help and of comfort; upon the 'math' it stands secure, it fears no assault of foe. It is set high upon the crag, gray and hard, without a crack."
(See text for translation of "math.")

"boundary"

35 "sand"

"green ground"

37 "Toward the east end of that yonder vale, you shall find a green way. In that way you shall find and see the steps of your mother and me (for, withered in that green grass, that [*the steps*] ever since has been seen) where we came, going when unwise, when we were put from Paradise into this same wretched valley where myself was first made. For the greatness of our sin, no grass since may grow therein. That same will lead you by the way from hence to Paradise gate."

"green gate/path"

"In that way you shall find in truth, the track of both of us, your mother's and mine"

"Your mother and my other brother slain"

38 "that ever has since been green"

"that ever has been since seen"

"Through the greatness of our sin, no grass may grow since therein"

39 "waded in sea-ways"

"over green ground"

40 "ramparts beautifully built up"

"wondrous wave-road"

"heaven's roof"

"beautifully built up, a wondrous wave-road up to heaven's roof"

"unknown"

41 "let us unlock with skill the covenant/mystery of God, let us understand spiritually"

"spiritual"

"the holy"

"green earth withholds benefits, splendours"

"to him the green earth brought forth beauteous abundance, everbright gifts"

"grass ungreen"

"Be fruitful now and multiply, fill the all-green earth with offspring"

42 "Broad are the green lands in the world, and God, the All-Ruler from above, sits on the high throne of the kingdom of heaven"

43 "They turned, both of the two, separated, lamenting in the green grove"

"covered with leaves"

"a green branch"

"green groves"

"this is the all-green land which I will give into the rule of your issue, spendid, adorned with abundance, a wide kingdom"

"beloved men"

"green fields, fair earth"

"green earth"

"like God's Paradise"

44 "Fire took all the greenness it found"

"exiled"

"wide wanderings"

"Earth was they yet [*with*] grass ungreen"

"We believe now in God and we hope in him; after, when we come to his kingdom, as he promised us, then the belief is ended, because then we will see what we now believe"

45 n.11 "Our homeland truly is Paradise, to which we may not return by the way that we came. The first-created man and all his offspring were driven from the joy of Paradise through disobedience and for eating/ receiving the forbidden fruit [belief?] and through pride, because he would be better than the Almighty Creator had shaped him. But it is greatly needful to us that we, through another way, avoid the deceitful devil, so that we may happily come to our homeland, which we were created to."

46 n.15 "that water stood for them like stone walls above their heads"

"a dry street through the sea"

47 "when the red rood brightly shines over all in place of the sun"

"All that beacon was covered with gold"

48 "most wondrous of trees"

"tree of glory"

49 "when he would redeem mankind"

51 "When he then saw that, then he prophesied and thus said, 'Truly these rods betoken Father, and Son, and the Holy Ghost'"

"Lo, you now behold with eyes, most beloved of people, a great marvel, how I myself and with this right hand, a green token, struck the deep of the sea"

52 "God's angel"

"Arise, Mary, and take this palmtwig which I now brought to you, because you shall truly be taken from your body before three days and all the Lord's apostles are sent to the funeral"

53 "you are the vessel of life and you are the heavenly temple"

"through you the way in shall be opened"

"the wall-stone"

54 "she went up on the mount that was named Olivet, and that was truly a greatly shining palmtwig which she there received from the angel's hand, and it was then as bright as the morning star"

"light encircled, brightest of beams"

"through his coming, lit this middle-earth and established, to all faithful men, their going upon the way of life, so that they may through the desires of their hearts, with good deeds, earn the light of the eternal life"

55 "and fell to earth, and hit their heads on the road, and they felt with their hands on the earth, and knew not whither they went"

"seizing that palmtwig and throwing it down to the earth, and it seared him both ways, bruising and burning"

"and then quickly it happened that he believed in his heart, and after that Peter said to him, 'Arise now and take this palmtwig that is here before this bier of holy Mary, and then go to the city of Judea to those who there are smitten with blindness, and speak to them and say, "Whomsoever who does not believe in Christ Saviour, that he is God's Son the Life-giver, then their eyes shall be shut;" and then if each believes in God, then touch their eyes with this palmtwig which you receive here in your hand, then they will quickly regain sight. Who then verily believes not in God, then never will have sight forever.'"

56 "the light is the way of perfection which we should fare upon, that is the true faith"

"Therefore we should hold in humility all our life, after the example of that holy kinswoman of God"

"triumphant"

"then the blessed John said . . . 'You are the purest of maidens and it is befitting that you depart upon your bier and that we carry this palmtwig and proclaim God's praise,' and then the apostles arose and they lifted the bier and they bore it with their hands; and Peter then truly raised his voice and was thus proclaiming . . .
57 'Israel was going out of Egypt and was singing "Hallelujah" and God is truly supporting this bier.'"

58 n.3 "His body that was fair and noble, and his face so bright, were all spattered and all torn, his complexion was become green."

59 n.9 "I trembled when the Hero embraced me. However, I dared not bend to earth, fall to earth's surface; but I needed to stand fast. Rood was I set up . . . I dared not bow."

60 n.26 "They are those who follow Christ in white garments, wheresoever he goes; and they stand before his throne, without any stain, holding their palmtwig in their hands, and they sing the new song of love, to honour the Almighty who loves and rules ever without end. Amen."

n.30 "green shoots/blossoms/leaves"

62 "the rood it was flowered full rarely with leaf and bark, from the midday to compline, that many thought a great marvel; but of that the Jews that saw it thought nothing unusual of it. They neither gave nor took good example thereby. But on the morn of that greening, the tree as before was dry."

63 "tree/trust"

"belief"

"drenched with flowing blood"

"red rood"

"in place of the sun"

"saw there stand a great tree, with many branches, all bare of bark. There was no leaf on [*it*], [*not*] less nor more"

"this tree [*had*] become so dry"

64 "that withered were for sin of man"

"was dry for Adam's sin"

"An adder had all-entwined it"

"This tree was of a great height. He thought then, at the third sight, that the top reached to the sky. A new born babe lay in the crop"

"God's Son"

"Now he weeps for the sin of your father that shall be cleansed some time by him, when the plant shall come of time. This is the oil that was named to him, to him and to his progeny. With pity shall he show his mercy"

65 "gallows-tree"

66 "Hateful is that tree that ever grows in leaf and never brings fruit for his Creator, as are we Christians if our Christianity is not known."

"[*bring forth*] leaf/believe"

"the tree betokens all mankind"

"and every tree that in this life bears no good fruit shall be hewn up from the ground and be thrown in the fire. For, every man that in this life does no deed of alms is damned by Christ on doomsday, to burn in hell fire."

"great tree"

"bear fruit, sweet and good"

"Never bear fruit"

"all quick and green"

"full of poison"

"Out of the right way"

67 "Let us leave the broad street and the easy way . . . Let us go the narrow way and the green way"

"Let us leave the broad street and the easy way . . . Let us go the narrow path and the green way"

"Let us leave the broad street and the green way . . . Let us go the narrow way, the way so bright"

"a green way toward hell"

"hypocrites and false prophets"

68 "fair speech"

"Now beware of all such, I advise, for Gregory says that such men and women, by their fair speech, lead the folk in a green way toward hell. For the green way is soft and fair and so are their words."

"the foundation of the heavenly kingdom"

"to see the privates of Paradise"

"the first stone under the true kingdom"

69 "Saint John tells us in the Apocalypse that, in the foundation of the heavenly kingdom of Jerusalem, the jasper is first and therefore it signifies three virtues that should be in every good man. Jasper is that stone that is called faith, the second hope, and the third charity, and he that beholds green jasper against day shall be mindful of the faith of Jesus Christ."

"is full good against temptation of fiends"

"aropiles"

"griffons"

"true Christian men; the griffons signify the devils whom they fight against"

"therefore the jasper betokens the three virtues that should be in every good man: faith, hope, and charity; for he that looks upon
70 a jasper against the day must remind himself of the faith of Jesus Christ."

"the fourth stone in the foundation of the true kingdom"

"The fine and gentle emerald is right green, and it betokens the greenness of good faith, for the patriarchs and the good prophets were so finely, greatly, [in] greenhood, therefore they have great joy of heaven."

"pure and gentle"

"The greenness signifies the great greenhood that may not fail, that the good patriarchs and prophets had as great bliss of heaven, all they that are in this greenhood in the faith as Saint John was."

"the steep way"

72 n.10 "well" for "full"

"great"

73 n.11 (See 44 above: "We believe now in God" etc.)

n.19 "Let us leave the broad street and the easy way . . . Let us go the narrow way and the green way"

74 n.26 "Though the man wave strangely with his hands it is no blessing unless he makes the sign of the holy rood. And the terrible fiend is immediately afraid for that triumphant token."

n.28 "the book tells that good jasper is green of grace and of greenness, it betokens the sight of the true people, the which take heed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and if any clerk [*educated person*] oppose them they can not answer otherwise, but they are true people: and jasper betokens such manner of people."

"signifies the greatest greenhood of that which is the great greenhood of the faith of the Trinity"

"signifies the true people of man that are of the less understanding in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost"