

## **The Dream of the Rood**

1 Listen, I will tell the best of visions,  
 what came to me in the middle of the night,  
 when voice-bearers dwelled in rest.  
 It seemed to me that I saw a more wonderful tree  
 5 lifted in the air, wound round with light,  
 the brightest of beams. That beacon was entirely  
 cased in gold; beautiful gems stood  
 at the corners of the earth, likewise there were five  
 upon the cross-beam. All those fair through creation  
 10 gazed on the angel of the Lord there. There was certainly no gallows of the wicked;  
 but the holy spirits beheld it there,  
 men over the earth and all this glorious creation.  
 Wondrous was the victory-tree, and I stained with sins,  
 wounded with guilts. I saw the tree of glory,  
 15 honoured with garments, shining with joys,  
 covered with gold; gems had  
 covered magnificently the tree of the forest.  
 Nevertheless, I was able to perceive through that gold  
 the ancient hostility of wretches, so that it first began  
 20 to bleed on the right side. I was all drenched with sorrows.  
 I was frightened by the beautiful vision; I saw that urgent beacon  
 change its covering and colours: sometimes it was soaked with wetness,  
 stained with the coursing of blood; sometimes adorned with treasure.  
 Yet as I lay there a long while  
 25 I beheld sorrowful the tree of the Saviour,  
 until I heard it utter a sound;  
 it began to speak words, the best of wood:  
 « That was very long ago, I remember it still,  
 that I was cut down from the edge of the wood,  
 30 ripped up by my roots. They seized me there, strong enemies,  
 made me a spectacle for themselves there, commanded me to raise up their criminals.  
 Men carried me there on their shoulders, until they set me on a hill,

enemies enough fastened me there. I saw then the Saviour of mankind  
hasten with great zeal, as if he wanted to climb up on me.

- 35 There I did not dare, against the word of the Lord,  
bow or break, when I saw the  
corners of the earth tremble. I might have  
felled all the enemies; even so, I stood fast.  
He stripped himself then, young hero - that was God almighty -  
40 strong and resolute; he ascended on the high gallows,  
brave in the sight of many, when he wanted to ransom mankind.  
I trembled when the warrior embraced me; even then I did not dare to bow to earth,  
fall to the corners of the earth, but I had to stand fast.  
I was reared a cross. I raised up the powerful King,  
45 the Lord of heaven; I did not dare to bend.  
They pierced me with dark nails; on me are the wounds visible,  
the open wounds of malice; I did not dare to injure any of them.  
They mocked us both together. I was all drenched with blood  
poured out from that man's side after he had sent forth his spirit.  
50 I have experienced on that hillside many  
cruelties of fate. I saw the God of hosts  
violently stretched out. Darkness had  
covered with clouds the Ruler's corpse,  
the gleaming light. Shadows went forth  
55 dark under the clouds. All creation wept,  
lamented the King's fall. Christ was on the cross.  
Yet there eager ones came from afar  
to that noble one; I beheld all that.  
I was all drenched with sorrow; nevertheless I bowed down to the hands of the men,  
60 humble, with great eagerness. There they took almighty God,  
lifted him from that oppressive torment. The warriors forsook me then  
standing covered with moisture; I was all wounded with arrows.  
They laid the weary-limbed one down there, they stood at the head of his body,  
they beheld the Lord of heaven there, and he himself rested there a while,  
65 weary after the great battle. They began to fashion a tomb for him,  
warriors in the sight of the slayer; they carved that from bright stone,

they set the Lord of victories in there. They began to sing the sorrow-song for him,  
wretched in the evening-time; then they wanted to travel again,  
weary from the glorious Lord. He rested there with little company.

70 Nevertheless, weeping, we stood there a good while  
in a fixed position, after the voice departed up  
of the warriors. The corpse grew cold,  
the fair live-dwelling. Then men began to fell us  
all to the ground: that was a terrible fate.

75 Men buried us in a deep pit; nevertheless the Lord's thanes,  
friends, discovered me there,  
adorned me with gold and silver.  
Now you might hear, my beloved hero,  
that I have experienced the work of evil-doers,

80 grievous sorrows. Now the time has come  
that I will be honoured far and wide  
by men over the earth and all this glorious creation;  
they will pray to this beacon. On me the Son of God  
suffered for a while; because of that I am glorious now,

85 towering under the heavens, and I am able to heal  
each one of those who is in awe of me.  
Formerly I was made the hardest of punishments,  
most hateful to the people, before I opened for them,  
for the voice-bearers, the true way of life.

90 Listen, the Lord of glory, the Guardian of the kingdom of heaven,  
then honoured me over the forest trees,  
just as he, almighty God, also honoured  
his mother, Mary herself, for all men,  
over all womankind.

95 Now I urge you, my beloved man,  
that you tell men about this vision:  
reveal with words that it is the tree of glory  
on which almighty God suffered  
for mankind's many sins

100 and Adam's ancient deeds.

Death he tasted there; nevertheless, the Lord rose again  
 with his great might to help mankind.  
 He ascended into heaven. He will come again  
 to this earth to seek mankind.

105 on doomsday, the Lord himself,  
 almighty God, and his angels with him,  
 so that he will then judge, he who has the power of judgement,  
 each one of them, for what they themselves have  
 earned here earlier in this transitory life.

110 Nor may any of them be unafraid there  
 because of the words which the Saviour will speak:  
 he will ask in front of the multitude where the person might be  
 who for the Lord's name would  
 taste bitter death, just as he did before on that tree.

115 But then they will be fearful and little think  
 what they might begin to say to Christ.  
 Then there will be no need for any of those to be very afraid  
 who bear before them in the breast the best of trees.  
 But by means of the rood each soul

120 who thinks to dwell with the Ruler  
 must seek the kingdom from the earthly way.  
 I prayed to the tree with a happy spirit then,  
 with great zeal, there where I was alone  
 with little company. My spirit was

125 inspired with longing for the way forward; I experienced in all  
 many periods of longing. It is now my life's hope  
 that I might seek the tree of victory  
 alone more often than all men,  
 to honour it well. My desire for that is

130 great in my mind, and my protection is  
 directed to the cross. I do not have many wealthy  
 friends on earth; but they have gone forward from here,  
 passed from the joys of this world, sought for themselves the King of glory;  
 they live now in heaven with the High Father,

135 they dwell in glory. And I myself hope  
each day for when the Lord's cross,  
that I looked at here on earth,  
will fetch me from this transitory life,  
and then bring me where there is great bliss,  
140 joy in heaven, where the Lord's people  
are set in feasting, where there is unceasing bliss;  
and then will set me where I might afterwards  
dwell in glory fully with the saints  
to partake of joy. May the Lord be a friend to me,  
145 he who here on earth suffered previously  
on the gallows-tree for the sins of man.  
He redeemed us, and gave us life,  
a heavenly home. Hope was renewed  
with dignity and with joy for those who suffered burning there.  
150 The Son was victorious in that undertaking,  
powerful and successful, when he came with the multitudes,  
a troop of souls, into God's kingdom,  
the one Ruler almighty, to the delight of angels  
and all the saints who were in heaven before,  
155 who dwelled in glory, when their Ruler came,  
almighty God, to where his native land was.