

**THE LEGACY OF CONSTANTINE  
IN THE ANGLO-SAXON POEM *ELENE***

*Introduction*

1.1 Angles, Jutes and Saxons, three Germanic tribes, landed in Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and formed a nation called English nation.

1.2. Anglo-Saxon poetry, while not as strict as more modern forms such as the sonnet, does follow a few general rules. The verse form for Old English poetry is an alliterative line of four stressed syllables and an unfixed number of unstressed syllables broken by a caesura and arranged in one of several patterns. Lines are conventionally end-stopped and unrhymed. The form lends itself to narrative; there is no lyric poetry in Old English. A stylistic feature in this heroic poetry is the kenning, a figurative phrase, often a metaphorical compound, used as a synonym for a simple noun.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the Old English Christian poetry is marked by the simple belief of a Christianity and the names of two authors (poet) are known. Cædmon Cædmon (kād'mən), English poet, and Cynewulf Cynewulf (kīn'əwlf"), a later poet, who signed the poems *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*. No more is known of him.

1.3. The Old English text of the poem *Elene* was discovered by a German scholar, Dr. F. Blume, at Vercelli, Italy, in 1822, and the manuscript has since become well known as the Vercelli Book. English translations have been made by Kemble, in his edition of the *Codex Vercellensis* (1856), and very recently by Dr. R.F. Weymouth, Acton, England, after Zupitza's text (privately printed, 1888).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg, Blackwell publishing, 2001; Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology*, OUP, Oxford 1984; Damico, Helena and Leyerle, John (eds), *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period*, Western Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo 1993; G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (6 vol., 1932–53); Bradley, S A J, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Everyman, 1982; G. K. Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons* (1949, repr. 1962); S. B. Greenfield, *A Critical History of Old English Literature* (1965); C. L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (1967); J. D. Niles, *Old English Literature in Context* (1981).

1.4. Our work about Constantine's legacy in Anglo-saxon poetry, especially in the poem *Elene*, gives us opportunity to tell something about Constantine and Helena in Britain. The important exploration about Helena in Britain gave us Graham Jones.<sup>2</sup> "So the Greek coincidence between the zones of Helena and Holy Cross churches is the opposite of what is found in Britain. Nevertheless it seems to offer the same message: Helena owes her importance first to her discovery of the Holy Cross, and secondly to her association with Constantine."<sup>3</sup> Later, G. Jones emphasizes that "attention has been drawn to the concentration of dedications honouring Helen north of line across the island of Britain: essentially within Northumbria and the Celtic west, including Wales."<sup>4</sup> Our attention will be drawn to Helen's exposition of Christian faith and to the fact is that 233 locations in the British Isles are or have been in connection with Helen, and more than half (137) are churches and the rest are wells and pools.<sup>5</sup> Graham Jones told the truth about Constantine in Britain: "The longevity of Constantine's memory was no accident."<sup>6</sup>

### CYNEWULF'S *ELENE*

2.1. The *Elene* is a poem about the expedition of the mother of Constantine, the Great Empress Helena to Palestine in search of the Holy Cross. The mediæval legend of the *Finding of the Holy Cross* is given in the *Acta Sanctorum* under date of May 4, assigned by the Orthodox Church to the commemoration of St. Helena's important discovery.

Most scholars believed that *The Elene* is to be Cynewulf's best poem because Cynewulf entirely fulfilled the task he had set himself in consequence of his vision of the Cross. Hence he recalls, at the close of the poem, the greatest moment of his life, and praises the divine grace that gave him deeper knowledge, and revealed to him the art of song.

2.2. Structure – The structure of poem *Elene* has never received any detailed attention, although some critics have claimed to be dealing with structure while actually analyzing theme. John Gardner,<sup>7</sup> for instance, is content with an analogy between *Elene* and homiletic structure: the first fourteen chapters comprise an *exemplum*, to which the last chapter is a moralizing epilogue, as a prayer. On the other side, Thomas D. Hill told that *Elene* is „a clearly segmented

<sup>2</sup> Graham Jones, *Aspects of Helen: Byzantine and other influences on the reading of Constantine's mother in the West*, Nis and Byzantium, II symposium, ed. Misa Rakocija, Nis, 2004, pp. 13-27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Graham Jones, *Aspects of Helen: Byzantine and other influences on the reading of Constantine's mother in the West*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Jones, *Proclaimed at York: the impact of Constantine, Saint and Emperor, on collective British memories*, Nis and Byzantium, V symposium, ed. Misa Rakocija, Nis, 2006, 527.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John Gardner, "Cynewulf's *Elene*: Sources and Structure," *Neophilologus* 54 (1970), 66.

poem“ resembling „a series of panels on a church wall,“<sup>8</sup> but he says nothing about the specific structural divisions or their significance. Apart from these observations, all that can be gleaned from *Elene* criticism is an assumption that the poem divided into three parts — an introduction, body, and epilogue — dealing, respectively, with Constantine, Judas, and Cynewulf. Finally, the most important structural problem, the possible significance of the manuscript divisions, remains unresolved.

The key to structural design lies not in the broad outlines of narrative development, with its succession of main protagonists, but in the manuscript divisions, which split *Elene* into fifteen chapters. The chapters range in length from 62 verses to 104 verses, but length is relatively uniform: the average length is 88 verses, and only four chapters deviate from this average by more than 10 verses.

2.3. The main details - The relationship between the first two chapters is obvious from their common interest in Constantine’s warfare with the barbarians. Chapters XIII and XIV similarly share a common interest in the discovery and disposition of the nails of the Cross. The same chapters, furthermore, reflect themes and images in the first two chapters: the baptism of Constantine at the end of second chapter (*Elene* 189-93) and the baptism of Judas at the beginning of chapter XIII (1043-46; cf. 1032-35); the companion portraits of Constantine as an ideal king (11-18) and Judas Cyriacus as an ideal bishop (1201-17); speeches by strange messengers — the angel of Constantine’s vision (69-85) bringing prophetic news relating to Constantine’s military career. All these details confirm the firm relationship between true, historical stories about Constantine and legacy of Constantine in the Anglo-saxon poetry from the Medieval.

In chapters III and XII of the poem *Elene* appear the motifs of sea travel and of Helena’s obedience to Constantine, and the religious zeal experienced by Judas after his conversion (1035-42) reflects the zeal earlier felt by Constantine after conversion.

Chapters IV and V are linked by Helena’s three addresses to the Jewish multitude with full expression of Christian theology. Less closely related are the events of chapter X — the discovery of the crosses and the miraculous resurrection of a young man from the dead and chapter XI Judas’s flyting with the devil, but together these events show us the triumph of the Holy Cross over the powers of death and darkness. Long Helena’s and Judas’s speeches establish a historical context for the events of the poem: the address to the Jews deals with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the martyrdom of Stephen, and the conversion of Paul; the prayer at Calvary tells of the creation of the world, the fall of Lucifer and his angels, the majesty of God, and His rulership over the universe. Together Judas’s speeches suggest that Christ’s crucifixion is the central event of whole world history. Chapters VII and VIII comprise a triptych, as it were, depicting in sequence the structural center of the story: Judas singled out from among the Jews; his debate with Helena; Judas crying from the pit for

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Thomas D. Hill, “Sapiential Structure and Figural Narrative in the Old English *Elene*“ *Tradition* (1971), 162.

his salvation. The architectonic prominence given these chapters, which represent the turning point in Helena's quest for the Cross, supports Hill's thesis that it is Helena as a type of the Church of Christ, and Judas as a type of the Synagogue, who debate here.

Finally, it may be observed that the overall design is supported by the three explicit references to the date of the finding the Cross, which are distributed symmetrically at the beginning, middle, and end of the poem. The first ten lines date the action 233 years after the birth of Christ, in a sentence which through grammatical parallelism suggests a special relationship between the King of Heaven and the Emperor of Rome. Cynewulf depicted that special relation as a good poet. Judas, in his debate with Helena at the center of the poem, attempts to obscure the historical date as part of his general appeal to the imperfections of oral tradition.

2.4. Step by step – The first 113 lines of the poem *Elene*, preliminaries to the Hunnish-Roman war, contain three instances of the same type-scene that depict battle. In the poem the first 113 verses contain three battle type-scenes, in verses 19-41, 41-68, and 105-113. Verses 1-19 depicted Constantine's earlier reign and 69-104 described his dream the night before the battle, neither passage being a type-scene.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the poem Cynewulf gave us a historical limitation of the theme of the poem. "When had elapsed in course of years; Two hundred and three, reckoned by number, And thirty also, in measure of time, Of winters for th' world, since mighty God Became incarnate, of kings the Glory, Upon mid-earth in human form, Light of the righteous; then sixth was the year Of Constantine's imperial sway, Since he o'er the realm of the Roman people, The battle-prince, as ruler was raised" (*Elene* 1-10).

After introduction the poet wrote about Constantine: "He was true king, War-keeper of men. God him strengthened With honor and might, that to many became he." (*Elene*, 14-15). In these words we may see the importance role of Constantine in Anglo-saxon tradition. He is *true king, war-keeper of men*, etc. Knowing what Constantine done in Britain in early days of his reign, these words about him aren't accidental. His bravery is perceived in the verses: "Throughout this earth to men a joy, To nations a vengeance, when weapon he raised, Against his foes. Him battle was offered, Tumult of war. A host was assembled, Folk of the Huns and fame-loving Goths; War-brave they went, the Franks and the Hugs. (*Elene* 15-20). His battles with the Barbarians are described with warmth and excitement, as the poet took part in the battles and walked side-by-side with the Emperor. In the several verses Cynewulf talked about the Romans: "The heroes 'neath heavens. The Romans were, Men famed for victory, quickly prepared, With weapons for war, though lesser army Had they for the battle than king of the Huns" (*Elene* 45-50). Because of that, we know what was the opinion of the British people about the Romans and Roman Emperors. These verses suggest that Constantine measures up to an ideal of kingship; like Scyld in *Beowulf* - he

<sup>9</sup> Donald K. Fry, Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1-113, *Speculum*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), Medieval Academy of America 38.

is a terror to his enemies and a comfort to his people, thereby inspiring, through the exercise of kingly virtues and the same concept of continuing importance in English and Continental poetry and history.

For us it is very important to say something about conversion of the Emperor Constantine. There are two main versions of the story of the conversion of Constantine. One version attributes his conversion to Pope Sylvester or to Eusebius of Nicomedia. This is the story in Bede, for example, and in Isidore of Seville. The other version attributes the conversion of Constantine to a vision (or visions) of the Cross. Sometimes this tradition appears in a framework of historical fact. Eusebius appears to place the vision in Gaul although the exact location is far from clear; Lactantius attributes the creation of the *labarum*, a related theme, to the Battle of Saxa Rubra; Prudentius tells substantially the same tale as Lactantius. Later versions, however, probably influenced by the legend of Constantine as a great Christian hero, represent the heavenly vision as saving him from destruction at the hands not of his Roman enemies, but of the barbarians. The campaign against the Goths at the end of Constantine's reign is probably responsible for the localization of the legend on the banks of the Danube, a site which tradition also adopted for the battle between Chosroe and Heraclius within the same cycle of legends. The legend of the 'Invention of the Cross', which is intimately connected with the legends of Constantine's conversion, is widespread in Europe and the Near East and appears in Syriac, Greek and Latin versions. In all these versions there are three constant elements, the battle against the barbarians, the vision of the Cross, and the River Danube.

All these versions clearly regard the enemy of the Emperor Constantine as heathen, but none mentions the tribes of Cynewulf. As far as we know then, the passage from *Elene* is not taken from any of the legendary sources nor can it well be taken from an historical source since, although we have records of a campaign of Constantine against the Franks, we have no record of the presence of the Huns in Europe until after 370.<sup>10</sup>

Constantine, in the poem *Elene*, was very emotional and after the verse about his barbery and battles, we can find him "affrighted, with terror disturbed after the strangers, the Huns' and Hreths' host they observed" (*Elene*, 56-58), and especially: "Heart-sorrow bore The Romans' ruler, of realm he hoped not For want of force; had warriors too few, Trusty comrades, 'gainst th' overnight Of the brave for battle." (*Elene* 59-60) Finally, Cynewulf told a messenger words: „To thee, Constantine, bade King of the angels, Wielder of fates, his favor grant, The Lord of Hosts. Fear not for thyself, Though thee the strangers threaten with terror, With battle severe. Look thou to heaven, To the Lord of glory: there help wilt thou find, A token of victory.“ (*Elene* 85-90) Constantine dream was depicted with opening words in the second chapter of the poem: "Bade then a likeness defender of aethelings, Ring-giver of heroes, to that beacon he saw, Leader of armies, that in heaven before To him had appeared, with greatest haste [Bade] Constantine [like] the rood of Christ, The glorious king, a token make." (*Elene* 95-100) His actions after the dream were: "He bade then at dawn with break

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pamela Gradon, Constantine and the Barbarians. A Note on the Old English "Elene", *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Apr., 1947), 163.

of day, His warriors rouse and onset of battle, The standard raise, and that holy tree Before him carry, 'mid host of foes God's beacon bear. The trumpets sang Aloud 'fore the hosts. The raven rejoiced, The dew-feathered eagle beheld the march, Fight of the fierce cries, the wolf raised his howl, The wood's frequenter. War-terror arose. There was shattering of shields and mingling of men, Heavy handstroke and felling of foes, After in arrow-flight first they had met..." (Elene 105-116) and "The strong-hearted stepped, pressed onwards at once, Broke the shield-covers, thrust in their swords, Battle-brave hastened. Then standard was raised, Sign 'fore the host, song of victory sung. The golden helmet, the spear-points glistened On field of battle. The heathen perished, Peaceless they fell. Forthwith they fled, The folk of the Huns, when that holy tree The king of the Romans bade raise on high, Fierce in the fight. The warriors became Widely dispersed. Some war took away; Some with labor their lives preserved Upon that march; some half-alive Fled to the fastness and life protected Behind the stone-cliffs, held their abode Around the Danube; some drowning took off In the stream of the river at the end of their life." (Elene 121-135)

Victory over Huns is concluded with verses: "To Constantine the King Almighty, In the work of that day, glorious honor, Might 'neath the heavens, through the tree of his rood." (Elene 145-147)

Depicted themes can only underlie narrative structures, such as scenes about battle and heroism, and provide a framework into which the poet may weave enriching details. The two devices together, however, furnish the formulaic poet with rich sources of association, structure, and unity. Many Anglo-Saxon poems could be cited which incorporate various aspects of the two; in the poem *Elene* (1-113), *Cynewulf* uses them all, in a brilliant *tour de force* of formulaic art.

Heroic in Anglo-saxon poetry is presented in the phrases that describe Constantine: *War-renowned king*, *Victory-famed king* and his faith in the verses: "Clearly declare of that victory-sign...The gift of the gospel, how the spirits' Defence, In form of the Trinity worshipped in glory, Incarnate became, Brightness of kings, And how on the cross was God's own Son Hanged 'fore the hosts with hardest pains; The Son men saved from the bonds of devils, Sorrowful spirits, and a gift to them gave Through that same sign that appeared to him Before his own eyes the token of victory 'Gainst onset of nations; and how the third day From out of the tomb the Glory of heroes, From death, arose, the Lord of all The race of mankind, and to Heaven ascended." (Elene 175-190) These verses are exposition of Christian faith which is elaborated in other works of the Holy Fathers of the Church. It indicates that the author knew Trinitarian dogmas and orthodox view on Holy Trinity and Incarnate Son. That fact is very important for understanding of Constantine's legacy in poetry in Anglo-Saxon England because of later interpolation of *flioque*.

The end of the second part of poem lead us to baptism: "From him the folk-chief Baptism received, and continued to hold it For the time of his days at the will of the Lord." (Elene 191-192)

Constantine followed the Christian way of life: "Then gan he God's law by day and by night, Through gift of the Spirit with zeal proclaim, And truly himself devoted he eagerly, Gold-friend of men, to the service of God,... Defense of

his folk, through learned men, War-brave, spear-bold, in books of God, Where had been hanged with shouts of the host On tree of the rood the Ruler of heaven Through envy and hate, just as the old fiend Mised with his lies, the people deceived, The race of the Jews, so that God himself They hanged, Lord of hosts: hence in misery shall they For ever and ever punishment suffer. Then praise of Christ by the Caesar was In the thoughts of his mind always remembered (Elene 200-215)

The Holy Cross is presented as great tree and tree of glory in the poem *Elene*. In the third part of poem is described trip to Holy Land: "For that great tree, and his mother he bade Go on a journey with a band of men To [land of] the Jews, earnestly seek With host of warriors where that tree of glory Holy 'neath earth hidden might be, The noble King's rood." (Elene 216-218)

Relation between son and mother – Emperor Constantine and Helena is depicted in the verses in which is for the first time named Helena: "Helena would not On that expedition be slow to start, Nor that joy-giver's command neglect, Her own [dear] son's, but soon she was ready For the wished-for journey, as the helmet of men, Of mail-clad warriors, her had commanded." (Elene 219-225) Significant is, also, to say about description of Helena in the poem: "[Then] was the blessed Helena mindful, Bold in her thought, of the prince's will, Eager in mind, in that she of the Jews, O'er the army-fields with tested band Of warriors-with-shields, the land was seeking, With host of men; so it after befell In little while that that force of men, War-famed heroes, to *Hierusalem* Came to the city the greatest of crowds, Spear-famed earls, with the noble queen. (Elene 268-275).

In Jerusalem Helena is: "Among the Jews, each one of men, For council-talk in meeting to come, Who most deeply the secrets of God By righteous law were able to tell. Then was assembled from distant ways No little crowd who Moses' law Were able to tell. In number there were. Of thousands three of those [learned] men Chosen for lore. (Elene 282-286). The most important thing in the fourth part of poem for our theme is the speech of Helena: "I that most surely have learnt to know Through secret words of prophets [of old] In the books of God, that in days of yore Ye worthy were of the glorious King, Dear to the Lord and daring in deed. Lo! ye that wisdom unwisely, Wrongly, rejected, when him ye condemned Who you from the curse through might of his glory, From torment of fire, thought to redeem, From fetters' force. Ye filthily spat On his fair face who light of the eyes From blindness, a remedy brought To you anew by that noble spittle, And often preserved you from the unclean Spirits of devils. This one to death Ye gan adjudge, who self from death Many awakened 'mong host of men Of your own race to the former life. So blinded in mind ye gan conjoin Lying with truth, light with darkness, Hatred with mercy, with evil thoughts Ye wickedness wove; therefore the curse You guilty oppresses. The purest Might Ye gan condemn, and have lived in error, In thoughts benighted, until this day. Go ye now quickly, with prudence select Men firm in wisdom, crafty in word, Who your own law, with excellence skilled, In thoughts of their minds most thoroughly have, Who to me truly are able to say, Answer to tell for you henceforth Of each one of tokens that I from thee seek." (Elene 300-320)

She won the battle in faith and defend Christian faith in Holy Trinity and Incarnate Son of God. The Jew “went then away sorry-in-mind, oppressed with fear, sad in their grief, earnestly sought the wisest men in secrets of words, that they to the queen might answer well both of good and of ill, as she from them sought.” (Elene 320-325)

Helena spoke to the earls: „Hear, clever in mind, the holy secret, Word and wisdom. Lo! ye the prophets’ Teaching received, how the Life-giver In form of a child incarnate became, Ruler of might. Of him Moses sang And spake this [word], warden of Israel: ‘To you shall be born a child in secret Renowned in might, though his mother shall not Be filled with fruit through love of a man.’ Of him David the king a kingly psalm sang, The wise old sage, father of Solomon.” (Elene 336-344)

Helena spoke about the prophets in Old Testament that had prophecy about Incarnate Son of God: “The God of creation before me I saw, Lord of victories. He was in my sight, Ruler of hosts, upon my right hand, Guardian of glory. Thence turn I not Ever in life my countenance from him. So it again of you Isaiah ‘Fore the people, the prophet, foretold in words, Thinking profoundly by spirit of the Lord: ‘I raised upon high sons young in years, And children begat, to whom glory I gave, Heart-comfort holy: but they me rejected, With enmity hated, forethought possessed not, Wisdom of mind, and the wretched cattle, That on each day one drives and strikes, Their well-doer know, not at all with revenge Bear hate to their friends who give them fodder. And the folk of Israel never were willing Me to acknowledge, though many for them, In worldly course, of wonders I wrought.” (Elene 350-363) In the whole fifth part of poem Helena is presented as someone who knew Old Testament and the biblical interpretation about Christ as a child: “That in Bethlehem the child of the Ruler, The only-born King, incarnate was, The Prince of princes. Though the law ye knew, Words of the prophets, ye were not then willing, Workers of sin, the truth to confess.” (Elene, 390-395). After all that Helena wanted to know where is The Holy Cross: “That she will seek of the victor-tree.” (Elene 420) And she depicted the Cross: “On which once suffered the Ruler of nations Free from all faults, own Son of God, Whom though guiltless of every sin Through hatred hanged upon the high tree In days of old our own fathers.” (Elene 421-425)

In the beginning of sixth chapter Helena exposed Nicene Christology: “That he was Christ, the King in heaven, True son of Creator, Saviour of souls. Then to me mine elder answer returned, Wise in his mind my father replied: ‘Perceive, young man, the might of God, The name of the Saviour. That is to each man Unutterable. Him may no one Upon this earth find out.’” (Elene 460-466) In the next verses Cynewulf told about Christ as “Victor-child of God. Then afterwards was raised from the rood the Ruler of heavens, Glory of all glories, three nights after Within the tomb was he abiding Under the darkness, and then on third day, Light of all light, he living arose, Prince of angels, and he to his thanes, True Lord of victories, himself revealed, Bright in his fame. Then did thy brother In time receive the bath of baptism, Enlightening belief.” (Elene 480-495)



Helena spoke with Judas in the next chapter and she exposed true faith in God, but Judas didn't understand what Helena had wanted to tell him. "I know not the place Nor aught of the plain, nor the thing do I know." (Elene 684)

"Helena spake with angry mind: „This do I swear through the Son of the Maker The hanged God, that with hunger thou shalt Before thy kinsmen be put to death, Unless thou forsake these lying tales And plainly to me the truth make known." (Elene 685-690)

In the ninth chapter of the poem Helena found "the place, the firm-in-mind, Upon the hill on which the Lord Before was hanged, heaven-kingdom's Ward, God's child, on the cross, and yet knew he not well, Weakened by hunger, where the holy rood Through cunning of foe enclosed in earth, Long firm in its bed concealed from men, Remained in its grave. (Elene 710-720)

„Saviour Lord, thou hast power of rule, And thou didst create through the might of thy glory Heaven and earth and the boisterous sea, The ocean's wide bosom, all creatures alike, And thou didst measure with thine own hands All the globe of the earth and the heaven above, And thou thyself sittest, Wielder of victories, Above the noblest order of angels, That fly through the air encircled with light, Great might of glory." (Elene 720-730)

Of these are four who ever in flight Exposition of faith in these verse is almost how it is in Nicene creed, so because of that important fact we have to emphasize these words: "And who through Mary upon the mid-earth Incarnate became in form of a child, Prince of the angels (if he had not been Thy Son free from sin, never so many True wonders in world would he have wrought In number of days." (Elene, 774-780)

After finding The Cross: "They set there in sight three victor-trees The firm-minded earls 'fore Helena's feet, Courageous in heart. The queen rejoiced In the depth of her soul, and then gan ask On which of those trees the Son of the Ruler, Joy-giver of heroes, hanged had been. (Elene 845-852); Helena prayed in the heart and thanked "the Shepherd of glory."

After finding they testified which was the Holy Cross: "Deprived of life the corpse on the earth, The lifeless one, and up he raised, Declarer of truth, two of the crosses, The wise, in his arms o'er that fated house, Plunged deep in thought. It was dead as before, Corpse fast on its bier: the limbs were cold, Clad in distress. Then was the third Holy upraised. (Elene 876-884) "Soon he arose Ready in spirit, both together Body and soul." (Elene 886-889)

In the beginning of the eleventh chapter of the poem, there is, again and again, depiction of the Helena's faith in "Lord, The Teacher of life, Saviour, King..." So, that repetition tells us what was Cynewulf's intention about emphasis on Nicene faith. After that we have to conclude that Constantine's and Helena's legacy in Anglo-saxon poetry is Christian legacy which stands in British people from 4<sup>th</sup> century.

It may be that the poet wanted to emphasize as much as possible Constantine's longing to recover the Cross, because he had already planned to include in chapter XII a detail not found in the Latin source: Constantine's rejoicing at the news of Helena's successful mission in Jerusalem (988-998). The quest for the Cross is as much Constantine's as it is Helena's.

At the end of the XII chapter Cynewulf repeats the story about the Emperor Constantine from the *Vita Constantini*, just “Judas received After fixed time the bath of baptism, And cleansed became, trustful in Christ, Dear to the Life-warden. His faith became Firm in his heart, when the Spirit of comfort Made his abode in the breast of the man, To repentance him urged. The better he chose, The joy of glory, and the worse he refused, The service of idols, and error rejected, Unlawful belief. To him King eternal, The Creator, was mild, God, Ruler of might.” (Elene 1032-1044) It is another sign of the legacy of Constantine in English people.

There is one outstanding piece of onomastics in the *Elene*: it occurs roughly three-quarters of the way through the poem, at lines 1058-62. After Judas has unearthed the True Cross for Helen and successfully rebuked an angry devil, he formalizes his conversion from Judaism to Christianity and is baptized (1032 ff.). Helen, in the meantime, has sent for Bishop of Rome Eusebius and he consecrates Judas for bishop of Jerusalem. It is Eusebius who then has the idea of giving the new bishop a new name, *Cyriacus*. In his treatment of this particular section of the story, Cynewulf follows the Latin version of the legend quite closely.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of poem, in XV chapter, Cynewulf tells us some kind of prayer or glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, and especially tells us: “In course of events, in writings declared Of that beacon of victory. Every one there Of speech-bearing men the truth shall hear Of every deed through mouth of the Judge, And likewise of words the penalty pay Of all that with folly were spoken before, Of daring thoughts. Then parts into three Into clutch of fire each one of folk, Of those that have dwelt in course of time Upon the broad earth... Hence in beauty they shine now Like to the angels, the heritage have Of the King of glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

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#### КОНСТАНТИНОВО НАСЛЕЂЕ У АНГЛО-САКСОНСКОЈ ПОЕМИ ЈЕЛЕНА

Пошто је Цар Константин почео да влада у Јорку, где је започео своје реформе које ће касније пренети на цело Царство, много је утицао на Британију. Да је био централна фигура првог миленијума у Британији то видимо на много цркава и манастира које су посвећене светим Константину и Јелени. Самим тим много је утицао и на развој културе, па не чуди зашто је много мотива који су везани за његов живот постало главна тема многих британских песама, прича и легенди. Киневулф, англо-саксонски песник, написао је поему и назвао је Јелена. Живим, библијско-агиографским стилем Киневулф је успео да истакне све значајне тренутке из Константиновог и Јелениног живота, а понајбоље се снашао у исправном хришћанском вероисповедању.

Наш циљ је био само да истакнемо колико је био значај светих Константина и Јелене у Британији. Намера нам је била да самим Киневулфовим речима покажемо

<sup>11</sup> Cf. E. Gordon Whatley, *Old English Onomastics and Narrative Art*: “Elene” 1062, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Nov., 1975), The University of Chicago Press, pp. 109-120.

колико је Константиново наслеђе остало у англо-саксонском народу током целог првог миленијума Христове ере. На крају, ваљаност вере у Свету Тројицу и сам зачетак стварања Никоо-цариградског *Символа вере*, који се и данас чита на Светој Литургији, а коју је Јелена током целе поеме истицала, показује колико је био јак византијски утицај на најудаљенију тачку тадашњег Царства – Британију. Ова поема показује јак утицај светих Константина и Јелене на живот хришћана у Британији.

