



## The crucifix called « Vieux Bon Dieu » of Tancrémont

The origin of this cross is largely mysterious. The archives of the neighbouring parish church of Theux mention more than once an ancient cross in the church of St Alexander and Hermes built in the 9th century.

Relying on a number of details one may indeed surmise that this cross had its designed site in the choir of this church for many centuries. We also learn from these archives that, owing to a change of taste, it was relegated to a side-chapel in the 18th century.

It was probably buried and covered with a large stone during the French Revolution.

We at least know for sure that it was discovered by a ploughman in a fairly good state of conservation thanks to a dry environment about 1835.

This cross was then first erected on the roadside according to a regional tradition.

By 1895 because of the growing number of pilgrims Baron del Marmol decided to have a chapel built near the road.

In 1932 Baron del Marmol arranged for a monastery to be built behind the chapel, where a few Benedictine fathers were housed.

In 1957 the Benedictine monks left Tancremont for Chevetogne.

The chapel and apostolate of Tancremont were then taken over by the Norbertine Abbey of Averbode and its fathers.



*The monastery, ca. 1950*



*The chapel of Tancrémont, ca. 1905*



What characterizes this cross is its Romanesque style: a dressed Christ wearing a royal crown.

His head is slightly leaning to his shoulder. The facial expression is one of peace and quiet.

The body of the crucified is slightly vaulted. His arms are wide-stretched. The original hands having disappeared they were remade in the 17th century of birch wood, and of oak in 1932.

The feet are not nailed but rather put side by side on a block.

The history and style of this venerable art work indicate with great certainty that it was realised at the end of the 9th century, beginning of the 10th.

We are confronted with an imperturbable Christ, victor of death and King of the Universe, both God and man, serene and transcendent.

Such a figuration perfectly dovetails with the pre-gothic spirit. It corresponds to the Romanesque view of sculpture where a symbolic impact is obtained through stylized forms.

The tunic shows remnants of polychromy. This was probably at first meant to imitate byzantine green tissue comprehending oval red patterns. The microscopic analysis undertaken during the second restoration (1985) proved that it was repainted eight times. The beautiful red colour as can still be noticed on Christ's side probably dates back to the 14th century. Some time later it was painted in brown and even in grey.

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