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The Cross cult, King Oswald, and Elizabethan historiography

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In Thomas Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande* (1565), the first modern English translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, the cross cult is promoted as a definitive element of English religious and national identity, via the legend of the Saxon king Oswald. The version of the legend in Stapleton's narrative, which includes textual supplements like illustrations, appears to be intended as a corrective in light of attacks upon the cross cult made in works of religious controversy by the reformists William Turner, John Jewel, and James Calfhill, but also in works of historiography such as the 1559 edition of Robert Fabyan's *Chronicle.* In response to Stapleton's expanded presentation of the Oswald legend, John Foxe reconfigures the narrative in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments* or *Book of Martyrs*, but in a bifurcated manner, perhaps to appease members of Matthew Parker's circle of Saxon scholars. Surprisingly, in Book Three of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), Edmund Spenser carries on Stapleton's iconodule understanding of Oswald's cross in contrast to his reformist Protestant precursors.[1]

Keywords: Bede, John Foxe, *The Faerie Queene*, Iconoclasm, Thomas Stapleton

In the year 1565, Thomas Stapleton (1535–98) published *The History of the Church of Englande*, the first translation into modern English of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. As various scholars have now convincingly demonstrated, far from being a mere exercise in updating a medieval Latin text into the modern vernacular, Stapleton's translation actually played a major role in establishing the parameters of debate in Elizabethan controversies about English religious and national identity, particularly as they related to the Anglo-Saxon past.[2] Yet to date no one has drawn ample, if any,

[1] Thank you to the members of the SIAS Institute on the History of the Image, led by Thomas Pfau and David Womersley, in 2013 in Durham, NC, and in 2014 in Berlin.
[2] See Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), particularly the chapter titled 'Britons, Saxons and the Anglican quest for legitimacy', 99–122; Benedict Scott Robinson, 'John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons', in Christopher Highley and John N. King, eds. *John Foxe and His World* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 54–72; Anne K. Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 333–7; Donna B. Hamilton, 'Catholic Use of Anglo-Saxon Precedents,

attention to the considerable weight Stapleton placed on the image of the cross and its necessary role in these controversies.[3] Stapleton's emphasis on the cross was intended as a polemical move, writing as he was in the midst of several waves of iconoclasm in early modern England that saw to the destruction of images in churches and municipalities for well over a century, from the 1530s through the 1640s, including attacks upon roods, crosses, and crucifixes, a strain of iconoclasm that left its mark not only on the physical church, but also on ecclesiastical historiography, most notably as we shall see, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

In Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande* the magnitude of the cross looms so large that it is arguably greater than in the original Latin of Bede, for his narrative is highlighted by means of ancillary interpretative apparatuses intended to alert readers to the significance of various episodes in the history, but especially the legend of King Oswald and his cross. In the 1565 edition of *The History*, a panel of three illustrations accompanies the episode (see fig. 1), each separately portraying Oswald in the presence of a cross in one form or another. Yet as this episode is one of only three in the entire volume supplemented by any illustration whatsoever, much less three together at once, the panel is arguably a visual indicator that the episode was selected by the publisher John Laet, if not by Stapleton himself, to represent in a constitutive way the import of the entire volume.[4]

Besides the illustrations, printed guideposts also highlight the image of the cross, as for example, in the heading of the story, where primacy is given to the image and not the main character King Oswald, who is not even identified by name: 'How by the sign of the Crosse, which the same king set up when he fought against the Barbarous Britons, he conquered them'.[5] A printed marginal note also conveys the cross's

1565–1625', *Recusant History* 26 (2003): 537–55; Felicity Heal, 'Appropriating History: Catholic and Protestant Polemics and the National Past', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68 (2005): 109–31; and Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 84–7.

[3] Heal briefly mentions Stapleton's focus on the cross in 'Appropriating History', 123–4.

[4] On the relationship between illustrations and written texts, including the possibility for a single image to encapsulate an entire work, see Edward Hodnett, *Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English Literature* (London: Scolar Press, 1982), 8, 15. Oswald's role in Elizabethan Catholic propaganda is corroborated by his inclusion in the non-extant cycle of murals in the English College at Rome, copied as part of the set of engravings in Giovanni Battista de Cavalleriis, *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (Rome: Bartholomew Grassi, 1584), fol. 11^{r}. For commentary, see Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 172–81, 202. For a similar cycle at Lisbon, where Oswald appeared sans cross, see Michael E. Williams, 'Paintings of early British Kings and Queens at Syon Abbey, Lisbon', *Birgittiana: Rivista internazionale di studi brigidiani* I (1996): 123–34, at 125; and Peter Davidson, 'Perceptions of the British Isles and Ireland among the Catholic Exiles', in David Worthington, ed. *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603–1688* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 315–22, at 316.

[5] Thomas Stapleton, trans. *The History of the Church of Englande Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman* (Antwerp: John Laet, 1565), fol. 76^{r}.

Figure 1. Panel of illustrations in Thomas Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande* (1565), depicting the Saxon king Oswald (1) setting up his cross; (2) praying with soldiers; and (3) routing the enemy at Heavenfield (fol. 77[r]). Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early Modern Books Online*. www.proquest.com. Published courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library, STC 1778, and with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

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primacy via its word arrangement, as it reads, 'A crosse erected by king Oswald',[6] and not the other way around with the person in the subject position as one might expect. Since this note appears in four successive lines in the margin ('A crosse/ erected by/ king Os-/wald'), the words *A crosse* visually stand above *king Oswald* on the printed page. The index at the end of the volume, titled 'A Table of Special Matters', also prioritises the cross, listing the story alphabetically according to the letter *C* and not *O*.[7]

Still, the centrality of the cross is no trick of Stapleton's translation nor of Laet's editorial packaging, but it is a function of Bede's Latin text, which is fraught with the image, including diction which alludes to the cross cult, a fact that was already being recognised in ecclesiastical circles as early as the ninth century, within a century of Bede's death.[8] In composing the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede incorporated the cross into an Oswald legend that originally did not involve one, as his material differs from Adomnan's seventh-century hagiographical *Life of Columba*, where the narrative makes no mention of any image whatsoever.[9] Much discussion has been given to Bede's emendation, with all agreed that he is casting Oswald as a new Constantine.[10] In Stapleton's translation the core of the narrative reads as follows:

> The place is showed until this day, and is had in great reverence, where Oswald, when he should come to this battle, did set up a sign of the holy cross and beseeched God humbly upon his knees that with his heavenly help he would succour his servants being in so great a distress. The report also is that, the cross being made with quick speed, and the hole prepared wherein it should be set, the king being fervent in faith did take it in haste and did put it in the hole and held it with both his hands when it was set up, until it was fastened to the earth with dust which the soldiers heaped about it. Now when this was done he cried out aloud to his whole army, 'Let us all kneel upon our knees, and let us all together pray earnestly the almighty, living, and true God mercifully to defend us from the proud and cruel enemy, for he knoweth that we enterprise war in a rightful quarrel for the safeguard of our subjects'. All did as he commanded

[6] *Ibid*., fol. 76^{v}.
[7] *Ibid*., n.p.
[8] See Amalarius of Metz, *Liber Officialis*, in Jean Michel Hanssens, SJ, ed. *Amalarii Episcopi Opera Liturgica Omnia*, 3 vols (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948–50), 2.103; here Bede's Oswald is cited as evidence for the legitimacy of adoration rituals using a cross replica rather than a relic of the 'true' cross.
[9] Clare Stancliffe, 'Oswald, "Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,"' in Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, eds. *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, UK: Paul Watkins, 1995), 33–83 at 50–1; and Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba', in Cormac Bourke, *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba* (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1997), 80–116 at 81–2.
[10] Peter Clemoes, *The Cult of St. Oswald on the Continent*, Jarrow Lecture 1983 (Jarrow, UK: St. Paul's Church, 1983), 3; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 89; Stancliffe, 'Oswald', 63; O'Reilly, 'Reading the Scriptures', 82; and Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 231.

> them. And thus in the dawning of the day they marched forth, encountered with their enemy, and according to the merit of their faith, achieved and won the victory.[11]

Here the man-made cross draws all attention to itself, both from the reader and from the characters in the story, as Oswald and his army turn to the image, making it the focal point of their prayer, with the cross standing *in absentia* for the Christian deity in a nearly equivalent mode. For a sixteenth-century Catholic apologist like Stapleton, the religious implications of the story could not have been more pronounced. When Oswald stations the cross, imploring his soldiers to pray before it, Stapleton and his readers would have been altogether aware that the communal supplication before the image was reminiscent of traditional ritualistic practices related to the cross cult. This cult had burgeoned in the fourth century with the legend of Helena and the Invention of the true cross in Jerusalem.[12] The earliest account of a formalized ritual can be found in Egeria's *Travels*, or the *Itinerarium*, the late fourth-century narrative of a pilgrimage taken by a Western European nun to the holy sights in Jerusalem, probably occurring between the years 381 and 384.[13] Egeria provides details of a Good Friday liturgy in Jerusalem during which the congregation demonstrates communal obeisance before a reliquary containing the 'holy wood of the cross'.[14] As Egeria writes, 'It is the custom that one by one all the people come forth, both the faithful and the catechumens, incline themselves before the table, and kiss the holy wood'.[15]

Sometime between the years 683 and 752, a similar Good Friday practice emerges in Rome, via either Jerusalem or Constantinople, and the oldest Roman codification of this ritual can be found in the Holy Week directives of *Ordo Romanus XXIII*, which dates to the first half of the eighth century.[16] According to the rubric of this ordo, a

[11] Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. 76^{v}. For the corresponding Latin text see Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, eds. and trans. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 214.

[12] The earliest Helena narrative in Latin can be found in Ambrose's funeral oration for the emperor Theodosius I in the year 395. For the text, see Sr. Mary Dolorosa Mannix, ed. *Sancti Ambrosii Oratio De Obitu Theodosii: Text, Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1925), 60–1. On Helena and the early cross cult, see Stephan Borgehammer, *How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International, 1991). The earliest mention whatsoever of the relics of the cross in Jerusalem occurs in the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem, a work written in Greek around the year 350. Louis van Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross: Towards the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 20.

[13] John Wilkinson, ed. and trans. *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1981), 3 and 235–9; and Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross*, 2.

[14] Georg Röwekamp, ed. *Itinerarium (Reisebericht) Egeriae* (New York: Herder, 1995), 272 (37.1): 'lignum sanctum crucis'. Translations are mine.

[15] *Ibid.*, 272 (37.2): 'consuetudo est ut unus et unus omnis populus veniens, tam fideles quam cathecumini, acclinantes se ad mensam, osculentur sanctum lignum'.

[16] Hermanus Schmidt, SJ, ed. *Hebdomada Sancta*, 2 vols (Rome: Herder, 1956–7), 2.791–2. Also, see Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross*, 120. Sarah L. Keefer calls *OR XXIII* 'the earliest

reliquary containing wood purportedly from the true cross is carried into the church, where it is venerated by the clergy and laity.[17] The first known ritual to use a replica as a substitute for a relic of the cross can be found in *Ordo Romanus XXIV*, a formulary from the second half of the eighth century.[18] Already in these early documents we find some of the same rubrics that appear in late medieval English formularies,[19] as well as in early modern Catholic liturgical books, including the 1570 Tridentine missal.[20]

In *The History of the Church of Englande*, when Oswald 'sets up' the 'sign of the holy cross' and instructs his soldiers, 'Let us all kneel upon our knees, and let us all together pray earnestly the almighty, living, and true God, mercifully to defend us from the proud and cruel enemy', the language mimics that of rituals which Stapleton and his readership would have known from formularies prevalent in Tudor England such as the Sarum Use. For example, according to a 1555 Processional, as part of the liturgy of *Parasceve* (Good Friday) a veiled cross is carried into the church and set up just like Oswald's cross in a conspicuous location, after which it is uncovered by the priests, who, similar to Oswald, chant, 'Behold, the wood of the cross on which hung the saviour of the world. Come let us adore'.[21] In response the congregation genuflects much like Oswald's soldiers and kisses the ground just before a prayer is offered, akin to the one Oswald recommends, seeking mercy and protection: 'God have pity on us and

ordo material serving as witness for the ritual of Good Friday'. Keefer, 'The Performance of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England', in Karen Jolly, Catherine Karkov, and Keefer, eds. *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Morgantown: University of West Virginia Press, 2008), 203–41 at 215.

[17] Michel Andrieu, ed. *Les Ordines Romani du Haute Moyen Âge*, 5 vols (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense Administration, 1931–65), 3.271.

[18] Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources* (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1986), 170–1. Schmidt dates this *ordo* to the year 754 and considers it an adaptation by a liturgist from Gaul or a part of Italy outside Rome. *Hebdomada Sancta*, 513. See also Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani*, 282. On the cross replica, see Keefer, 'The Performance of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England', 219–20.

[19] The oldest extant description of a veritable English cross-adoration synaxis can be found in eleventh-century manuscripts of the *Regularis Concordia*, a widely disseminated monastic liturgical document, often attributed to Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester, originating from the synod of Winchester held in the early 970s. Keefer, 'The Veneration of the Cross', in Helen Gittos and Bradford Bedingfield, eds. *Liturgy of the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 142–84 at 144 and 161. For historical background, see Thomas Symons, '*Regularis Concordia*: History and Derivation', in David Parsons, ed. *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millenium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia* (London: Phillimore, 1975), 37–59, esp. 37–43. A synopsis can be found in Keefer, 'The Veneration', 145–8. For the Latin text, with an interlinear Old English translation, see Lucia Kornexl, ed. *Die Regularis Concordia und ihre altenglische Interlinearversion* (Munich: Fink, 1993), 89–96.

[20] For the 1570 cross-adoration formulas, see Manlio Sodi and Achille Maria Triacca, eds. *Missale Romanum, Editio Princeps (1570)* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 192–5.

[21] *Processionale ad vsum insignis ecclesie Sar[um]* (London: J. Kingston and H. Sutton, 1555), fol. lxviii^{v}: 'Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pependit venite adoremus'. The ritual is described in the Sarum Missal, too, with the prayers truncated. See *Missale ad vsum ecclesie Sarisburiensis* (London: John Kyngston and Henry Sutton, 1555), fol. lxxxv^{v}.

bless us'.[22] The close mimicry of these rubrics would likely have triggered an emotional response in Stapleton's audience, especially among the nominally Protestant who still recalled the Roman rite with nostalgia, that is, 'Church Papists' and others who did not fully conform to the Elizabethan settlement,[23] since many, if not all, would have had memories themselves of the catharsis elicited by participation in what arguably amounts to a theatrical experience.[24] In reflecting upon the ritual, Nicholas Sander intimates that pathos was indeed the aim of participation:

> And to make us the better to think upon that we sing [the hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt*], and to conceive it more devoutly, we are appointed at the singing of those words to kneel, and to turn ourselves toward the altar, to the end, we fastening our eye upon the Sign of the Cross, might print in our heart a more lively representation of the precious death of Christ.[25]

The highly emotional purchase of the experience, combined with the fact that small personal crosses could be smuggled into Elizabethan England and easily hidden away, makes it not inconceivable that crosses, like other sacramentals such as rosary beads, came to be utilised as substitutes for the sacraments, especially among the poor.[26] In other words, in a country where the Roman mass had been outlawed and priests proscribed, the cross cult may have blossomed among Church Papists, providing a focal point of piety for the less affluent, especially in areas not served by missionary or clandestine Roman priests, that is, for those among the various stripes of Church Papists who lacked the resources of the aristocratic elite, who could, for example, harbour priests for their own private masses or, like the members of the Recusant community in exile, pack up and leave

[22] *Processionale*, fol. lxix[r]: 'Deus misereatur nostri et benedicat nobis'.

[23] On Church Papists, see Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans Under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967), 28–31. On the 'spectrum' of early modern English Catholic identities, see Lowell Gallagher, ed. *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 8–9. On alternative Catholic identities in Elizabethan England which overreach 'Catholic-Protestant binaries', see Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1993), 2–3, 8–9; Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 1–15; and Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560–1633* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2005), xvi–xvii.

[24] See Keefer, 'The Performance of the Cross', 203ff.; and O.B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 131–4; also, Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 152.

[25] Nicholas Sander, *A Treatise of the Images of Christ, and of his Saints* (Louvain: 1567; rptd. London: Scolar Press, 1976), fol. 136[r].

[26] In *A Newyeares Gifte Dedicated to the Popes Holinesse, and all Catholikes Addicted to the Sea of Rome* (London: H[enry] B[ynneman], 1579), sig. H ii[r], crosses are listed in the 'description of certain of the Popes wares and merchandize of late sent over into England'. Lisa McClain cites an anecdote where early lay Catholics furtively gathered during Easter week of 1604 in Lancashire and worshipped on hands and knees a broken cross placed on an upside-down basin. See McClain, 'Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine: The Search for Religious Space among Catholics in England, 1559–1625', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002): 381–99 at 381.

the country.[27] In an anti-Roman tract translated from Latin and titled *The Bee Hiue of the Romishe Church*, sacramentals like the cross are attacked for the very reason that they encroach upon legitimate sacraments based in scripture.[28]

Besides the linguistic resonances, two of the three illustrations which accompany the Oswald narrative in Stapleton's text also appear to be informed by the Sarum formularies.

The first illustration (see fig. 2) shows Oswald presenting the cross to two soldiers in the process of digging a hole for its insertion, though both soldiers are figured with one knee bent in a posture similar to genuflection. While the sacerdotal-like Oswald holds up the cross, one of the soldiers admires it with head uplifted, while the other looks downward towards his work, his face lowered in such a way that if it were not for the presence of his shovel, he would appear to be striking a pose of humble prayer. The scene closely resembles the dramatic moment during the Good Friday ritual when the priests reveal the bare wooden cross to the congregation, immediately followed by the choir's demonstration of obeisance. As the Sarum Missal relates, 'Then the priests, uncovering the cross next to the altar on the right side, sing this antiphon, Behold, the wood [of the cross]. The choir with a genuflection, kissing their pews, should respond with the antiphon, We adore your cross, O Lord'.[29]

The second illustration (see fig. 3) captures the act of kneeling, prescribed at different junctures for the various participants in the adoration ceremony, as a single tableau. Oswald folds his hands together in the course of descending to his knees, one knee on the ground, the other still raised, while the soldiers accompanying him gaze upon the cross, already kneeling, their hands pressed together in prayer. Another detail in the picture may also be inspired by the ritual in that the two soldiers in the foreground are made to appear as if their feet are unshod,[30] a circumstance which would accord with the rubric calling for worshippers, including the priests and other members of the clergy, to approach the cross 'with feet stripped bare'.[31]

[27] On lay piety among Church Papists, see Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), especially the chapters, 'Beads, Books and Bare Ruined Choirs: Transmutations of Ritual Life', 369–98; and 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation', 341–67. According to Robert Whiting, in parishes in Sussex where crosses had been destroyed, 'traditionalists' were known to chalk crosses onto church walls. Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 161.

[28] Philips van Marnix, Lord van St. Aldegonde, *The Bee Hiue of the Romishe Church*, trans. George Gilpin (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), fol. 223^{v}.

[29] *Missale ad vsum ecclesie Sarisburiensis*, fol. lxxx^{v}: 'Deinde sacerdotes discooperientes crucem iuxta altare in dextera parte: canunt hanc an[tiphonam] Ecce Lignum [crucis]. Chorus cum genuflexione osculando formulas respondeat an[tiphonam] Crucem tuam [adoremus, Domine]'.

[30] In comparison to the other two pictures in the panel, admittedly, the illusion of bare feet is not peculiar to this one scene, but it does appear to be more pronounced in the two kneeling figures.

[31] *Missale ad vsum ecclesie Sarisburiensis*, fol. lxxxv^{v}: 'nudatis pedibus.'

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Figure 2. Upper left illustration from Oswald panel in Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande*, depicting the Saxon king Oswald setting up the cross at Heavenfield (fol. 77[r]). Published courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library, STC 1778, and with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

The adoration ceremony echoed in the Oswald account and codified in the Sarum Use was often labeled in English religious discourse with the epithet 'the creeping of the cross', a term dating to the early thirteenth century but especially popular among sixteenth-century reformers.[32] We find the term explicitly defined in an Henrician royal

[32] Thomas Becon (1512–67), *The Reliques of Rome* (London: John Day, 1563), fol. 165[v]–6[r], assigns the origin of 'the Creeping unto the Cross' to the papacy of Gregory I, when the

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Figure 3. Upper right illustration from Oswald panel in Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande*, depicting the Saxon king Oswald praying with soldiers before the cross at Heavenfield (fol. 77[r]). Published courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library, STC 1778, and with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

proclamation, dated 26 February 1539, issued in defense of the practice: 'On Good Friday it shall be declared, how creeping of the cross, signifyeth an humbling of ourselves to Christ, before the cross,

initial period of corruption in the church commenced, at least according to Protestant writers like John Bale and John Jewel.

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and the kissing of it a memory of our redemption, made upon the cross'.[33] This proclamation, although tolerant of creeping to the cross, still warns against the superstitious abuse of cross adoration, wherein participation in the ceremony in and of itself is thought to bear spiritual fruit. As the proclamation advises, 'And so it shall be well understood and known that neither [...] creeping [nor] kissing the cross be the workers or works of our salvation, but only be as outward signs and tokens whereby we remember Christ and his doctrine, his works, and his passion, from whence all good Christian men receive salvation'. So standard Reformation belief about the inefficacy of good works for securing salvation, as opposed to faith alone, applied to the cross cult as well.[34]

In Henrician England toleration for Good Friday cross-adoration rituals, even when conducted with a theoretically orthodox mindset, increasingly fell under attack, and iconoclastic controversialists maintained that creeping to the cross was a practice intrinsically and irreparably flawed.[35] As William Turner (1509/1–68) explains in *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox* (1543), 'In creeping of the cross ye worship the cross but the worshipping of the cross is contrary to the word of God'; it is a practice patently idolatrous and strictly forbidden by the second commandment.[36] Turner, moreover, refutes a standard iconodule counterargument—that worship is transferred from the image *per se* to the spiritual entity it represents—by castigating the ostensible source of the controversy, the various formularies of the Roman church.[37] The problem lies in the rubrics, Turner argues, because the language in them is seemingly unambiguous about the intended object of worship, especially as articulated in some of the traditional Latin Good Friday antiphons, which in the Sarum Use say, for example, 'Lord, we worship thy cross' ('Crucem tuam adoramus domine').[38] For Turner, an insurmountable

[33] *A proclamation, concernynge rites and ceremonies to be vsed in due fourme in the Churche of Englande* (London: [T. Berthelet], 1539), n.p. Also, Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, CSV, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 1.279.

[34] The English church's doctrine about the relation between good works and salvation is formally articulated in Articles 11, 12, and 13 of the Thirty-nine Articles (1563). For the texts, see Brian Cummings, ed. *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 677. Good works are also the subject of the homily 'Of Good Works' in the *First Book of Homilies* or *Certayne Sermons, or Homelies Appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie* (London: Richard Grafton, 1547).

[35] On Thomas Cranmer's failure to provoke Henry VIII to abolish the practice, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 443–4. On 'iconoclastic outbreaks' during these years, see Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 245.

[36] William Turner, *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox* (Basel: L. Mylius,1543), 37–8, 43. This was originally published anonymously. On Turner's 'uncompromising position', see Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 244–5.

[37] Turner, *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox*, 39, 41.

[38] *Ibid.*, 41. Turner quotes the Latin text, providing his own translations. For the complete hymn, see the Sarum *Processionale*, fol. lxviii^{v}. It is truncated in the Sarum *Missale* to the incipit 'Crucem tuam', but the directive is fully articulated at fol. lxxxv^{v}. See too the Good

conflict arises between cross adoration and the authority of the word of God,[39] and by February 1548 sentiments like his were taken seriously enough to be converted into law, with an Edwardian proclamation explicitly banning creeping to the cross on Good Friday.[40]

Not surprisingly, Mary Tudor allowed for the legal restoration of the creeping of the cross,[41] but with the Elizabethan Settlement the voices of dissent resounded once again. For example, the Marian exile John Jewel (1552–71), appointed bishop of Salisbury in 1559 and in light of his 1559 Challenge Sermon arguably the chief spokesperson for reform among early Elizabethan bishops, himself levels a critique against the cross cult in his 1565 *A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answeare*.[42] In the *Replie*, although admitting to the sanctity of the original cross and to the authenticity of various cross apparitions like that to Constantine, Jewel expresses doubt about any real precedent—biblical, historical, or otherwise—for the adoration of man-made crosses.[43] Jewel considers unconvincing, too, any claims about transferred devotion, and as evidence he cites a verse from one of the traditional hymns of the cross cult, *Vexilla regis prodeunt*: 'Ave Crux spes vnica: All hail, O Cross, our only hope'.[44] For Jewel, the invocation of the cross, seemingly to the exclusion of Christ, qualifies the hymn unequivocally as a form of 'superstitious abuse'.[45]

Friday directive that 'the cross be born through the choir by two priests that there it may be worshipped of the people' ('deportetur crux per medium chori a duobus sacerdotibus vbi a populo adoretur'). *Processionale*, fol. lxxi^{r}; and *Missale*, fol. lxxxv^{v}.

[39] Turner, *The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox*, 43.

[40] W.H. Frere, ed. *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), 2.184. Also, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 1.416, n.1. Other Edwardian injunctions against creeping to the cross can be found in Nicholas Ridley's 1550 Injunctions for the London Diocese and John Hooper's Articles for Gloucester and Worcester Dioceses in 1551–2 (*Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, 2.244, 2.267). See too Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 262; and Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 457.

[41] *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, 2.349, 2.362, and 2.406; also, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 2.37. See, too, Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 283; and *[Interrogatories upon which ... churchwardens shalbe charged, for searche, of al such things as now be amysse]* ([London: Robart Caly, 1558]), item 10. The creeping to the cross is tantamount to a definitive marker of Papism for the Roman Catholic author—believed to be John Leslie (1527–96)—of *A treatise of treasons against Q. Elizabeth, and the croune of England* ([Louvain: J. Fowler, 1572]), fol. 97^{v}.

[42] On the Challenge Sermon, see Gary W. Jenkins, *John Jewel and the English National Church: The Dilemmas of an Erastian Reformer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 70–3. *A Replie* is itself a rejoinder to Thomas Harding's *An Answere to Maister Iuelles chalenge* (Antwerp: William Sylvius, 1565).

[43] Jewel, *A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answeare* (London: Henry Wykes, 1565), 502.

[44] For lyrics, see *Hymnorum cum Notis Opusculu[m] Vsui Insignis Ecclesie [Sarum] Subseruie[n]s* (London: J. Kyngston & H. Sutton, 1555), fol. xli^{v}. The song is attributed to Venantius Fortunatus. See his *Poemes*, 3 vols, ed. Marc Reydellet (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994–2004), 1.57. For an English version, see John Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, 2 vols, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken (London: Early English Text Society, 1911), 1.26–7.

[45] Jewel, *A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answeare*, 502.

Similarly, in another early Elizabethan work, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, the iconoclast James Calfhill (1529/30–70) lashes out against 'the blockish Images, the dead Crosses, [which] have been crept to, been worshipped'.[46] Like Turner and Jewel, Calfhill finds fault with the transferred-devotion argument, considering it a cloaked form of idolatry.[47] For Calfhill the necessary distinction between an image and the entity it represents becomes obfuscated in actual cultic practice, with the upshot that for iconodules, he believes, 'Crosses have displaced Christ'.[48] Calling to mind the medieval theological nuance first articulated by eighth-century Greek iconodules which distinguishes 'λατρεία [*latria*]' from 'δουλεία [*dulia*]', he dismisses the subtle distinction as an 'absurdity'.[49]

For Calfhill, an image first and foremost is a kind of visual metaphor, not in any way one and the same as the divine entity it represents and, therefore, not at all worthy of devotion. Like a metaphor it is a signpost, a bearer of meaning pointing beyond itself towards the unseen divine essence which alone should be worshipped. Citing Augustine's commentary on Psalm 113, Calfhill claims that when engaged in the 'pure' form of religion, a believer neither worships an 'image' (*simulachrum*) nor cultivates its 'power' (*daemonium*), but instead, through the 'corporal likeness' (*effigiem corporalem*) manifested in the image, the believer is able to behold a 'sign of the [very] thing' (*ejus rei signum*) which he 'ought to worship' (*debe[t] colere*).[50] To worship the sign, in this case the cross, is equivalent, therefore, to a misdirected adoration because as Calfhill suggests, in worshiping the cross the 'virtue' inherent in 'the signified Christ' is falsely 'attributed to the

[46] James Calfhill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, ed. Richard Gibbings (London: Henry Denham, 1565; rptd. Cambridge: The University Press for the Parker Society, 1846), 20. Calfhill's *Aunswere* countered John Martiall's *Treatyse of the Crosse* (Antwerp: John Latius, 1564; rtpd. Yorkshire, UK: Scolar Press, 1974), and this pair of treatises, taken together with two subsequent volumes, Martiall's *A Replie to M. Calfhills Blasphemous Answer* (Louvain: John Bogard, 1566) and William Fulke's *A Rejoinder to John Martiall's Reply* (London: Henrie Middleton, 1580), representative as they are of opposing confessional viewpoints, offers what collectively amounts to the fullest expression of the cross controversy published anywhere in Europe during the entirety of the sixteenth century, if not beyond.

[47] Calfhill rehearses the iconodule position in *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, 386: 'When ye adore an Image and creep to the Cross, saying, you know that to be but a piece of metal; you make not your prayers to that [the metal cross], but unto God alone, whom in spirit you worship, though your face peradventure be turned to the image'. Martiall cites John of Damascus (d. *c.*750) for the original idea, *A Treatyse of the Crosse*, fol. 126^{r}.

[48] Calfhill, *An Aunswere*, 292.

[49] *Ibid.*, 381–2. On *latria* and *dulia*, see Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 47–9. Thomas Aquinas assigns *latria* to cross adoration in the *Summa Theologica*, 6 vols (Rome: Senatus, 1887), 4.227 (*Pars* 3, *Quaestio* 25, *Articulus* 4). For further evidence that the Roman church sanctioned *latria* for the cross, see Gibbings's note in Calfhill, *An Aunswere*, 381.

[50] Calfhill, *An Aunswere*, 186.

sign'.[51] Moreover, the 'bare sign of the cross', he maintains, is 'in effect, nothing'.[52] This lack of inherent 'virtue' or divine 'substance' in the image vitiates all forms of worship like creeping to the cross, proving them to be nothing other than a form of idolatry because 'the honour peculiar unto God is transferred to a creature', an 'idol', a 'dead image'.[53]

Arguments like those of Turner, Jewel, and Calfhill would leave their mark on Elizabethan historiography, but even as early as the 1542 edition of *The Chronicle of Fabyan*, antagonism against the cross had already secured a foothold in the Oswald legend. The 1542 edition of Fabyan's *Chronicle* was a revision of *The Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce*, an annalistic British history encompassing a time frame beginning with the legendary Brute and ending with the monarchy of the Tudors and first published in the year 1516, then again in 1533 under the title *Fabyans Cronycle Newly Prynted*.[54] According to the title page of the 1542 edition, the text had been recently revised, 'nowe newly printed, and in many places corrected, as to the diligent reader it may appear'.[55] These 'corrections' were in fact religiously biased emendations sponsored by the printer William Bonham, including revisions, marginal commentary, and deletions, all amounting to what one critic has called 'a re-imagining of the national past in the light of reformed religion'.[56] For example, a marginal comment inserted beside the account of the 'first Christian king of Britain', the second-century King Lucius, advises the reader to 'note that the fayth of Christ was received in England: four hundred years before the coming of saint Augustine'.[57] The comment is intended to redirect the reader away from any false notions about a Roman origin of the English church, no doubt since the very next chapter relates the story of the Roman mission to the Saxons led by Augustine in 597.[58]

In the 1542 *Chronicle of Fabyan*, King Oswald too is 'reformed' as he is cast as an exemplar of the faith, who gains his victory mainly

[51] *Ibid.*, 67.
[52] *Ibid.*, 85. He also remarks, 'Your naked Cross, as it cannot stand by itself, so in itself it containeth nothing, unless perhaps some worms and spiders be crept into a corner of it'.
[53] *Ibid.*, 386, 378, 384, 387, respectively. Calfhill variously cites patristic sources to catalogue the cross as 'a vile stock, or a cold, cankered, corrupt piece of metal', 'a post', 'a dumb god', 'a dead Devil', 'a dead thing', 'the counterfeit of Christ', 'an earthly counterfeit', 'the work of man's hand', 'a senseless Image', 'a piece of wood', 'a mass of metal', 'two pieces of wood', 'the false Cross' (367–9, 371–2, 374–6, and 380).
[54] Editions of Fabyan's *Chronicle* were published in 1516, 1533, 1542, and 1559. The 1533 edition, printed by William Rastell, was the first explicitly attributed to Robert Fabyan, who had died in 1513. M-R. McLaren, 'Fabyan, Robert (*d.* 1513)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), n.p.
[55] Robert Fabyan, *The Chronicle of Fabyan* (London: William Bonham, 1542), title page.
[56] David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29.
[57] Fabyan, *The Chronicle* (1542), 105.
[58] See Womersley, *Divinity and State*, 30.

because of his prayerful humility and hope for salvation. The 'corrected' Oswald story reads as follows:

> But Oswald when he was warned of the great strength of this Cadwan, he made his prayers to God and besought him meekly of help to withstand his enemy for the salvation of his people. Then after Oswald had prayed for the salvation of his people, the two hosts met in a field named then Denisburne or Denislake, where was fought a strong battle. But finally Cadwan, which the *Polychronicon* nameth Cedwalla, was slain and his people chased, which were far exceeding the number of Oswald's host.[59]

The most salient feature in this account, differentiating it from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, is derived ironically from what it lacks: the cross.[60] Apparently, the printer Bonham, along with whomever else he employed as an editor, recognised that King Oswald offered too fitting an exemplar of secular holiness to be ignored in a country where the monarch exercised supreme authority over the national church.[61] For this reason, at the very least, Bonham must have deemed it imprudent, if not reckless, to depreciate a royal figure like Oswald, a compelling prototype of Henry VIII himself, by tossing him to the scrapheap of Saxon idolators. A much more shrewd strategy, therefore, was chosen for handling the theological unpleasantries posed by King Oswald's adoration of the cross: the 'idol' was eliminated, but not the prayerful king. The cross was excised by means of the judicious removal of three sentences all too conspicuous in the earlier 1516 and 1533 editions. The original 'idolatrous' account reads as follows:

> But Oswald, when he was warned of the great strength of this Cadwan, made his prayers to God and besought him meekly of help to withstand his enemies. And before he went to prayer, he erected a cross of tree, before which he kneeled a long while in a field which long after was called Heavenfield and to this day is had in great worship. That place is near unto the town or church of Agustald in Brennicia, which church was there builded by Oswald after the winning of that battle. And of the spones of that cross are told many wonders, which I over pass. Then, after Oswald had prayed for the salvation of his people, the two hosts met in a field named then Denisburne, or Denislake, where was fought a strong battle. But finally Cadwan, which the *Polychronicon* nameth Cedwalla, was slain and his people chased, which were far exceeding the number of Oswald's host.[62]

[59] Fabyan, *The Chronicle* (1542), 128.

[60] The text cites the *Polychronicon*, which however, does not expunge the cross. See Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*, 9 vols, ed. Joseph R. Lumby and trans. John Trevisa, Corpus of Middle English Prose & Verse (London: 1865–86; rtpd. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2006), 5.453.

[61] The promotion of royal supremacy in the 1542 *Chronicle* is most glaring in the case of Thomas Becket, lauded in the 1516 and 1533 editions as a martyr for the faith, but in the 1542 maligned as a traitor against a morally upright Henry II. For discussion and further examples of 'reformation' bias in the 1542 edition, see Womersley, *Divinity and State*, 22–33; and Alan MacColl, 'The Construction of England as a Protestant "British" Nation in the Sixteenth Century', *Renaissance Studies* 18 (2004): 582–608, at 584–6. It should be noted that the feast of St. Thomas Beckett was removed from the liturgical calendar by Henry VIII. Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 752.

[62] Fabyan, *Fabyans Cronycle Newly Prynted* (London: William Rastell, 1533), fol. LXV^{v}; and *The Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce* (London: Richard Pynson, 1516), fol. lxvi^{v}.

The narrative here is exactly the same as the 1542 version, except for the second, third, and fourth sentences, which concern, respectively, the 'cross of tree', the 'church' 'builded by Oswald', and the miraculous 'spones', all details found in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[63] This original account also failed to be recirculated when a fourth edition of the chronicle was published by John Kyngston in the spring of 1559 under the title *The Chronicle of Fabian*,[64] within months after the coronation of the new queen.[65] Instead, once again it was Bonham's bowdlerised version of 1542 that took to the stage of Elizabethan religious controversy, with the three discredited sentences effaced.[66]

In light of the redacted Fabyan text of 1559, the presentation of the Oswald story in Stapleton's 1565 edition of *The History of the Church of Englande* appears to be intended as a corrective. The fact of the matter is that in *The History* the cross plays such a leading role in the unfolding of events that the episode would not cohere without its presence. This privileged status may be the reason for the cross's highly theatrical entrance onto the scene, with the cast of human characters depicted as nearly frantic about the construction of the wooden simulacrum: 'The report also is that, the crosse being made with quick speed, and the hole prepared wherein it should be set, the king being fervent in faith did take it in haste, did put it in the hole, and held it with both his hands when it was set up, vntil it was fastened to the earth with dust which the soldiers heaped about it'.[67] The cross is planted into the earth and so, too, into the narrative, and once it has been securely stationed there, it dominates the subsequent events nearly like a deity.

Only after the cross has been 'set up' does King Oswald deem it fitting to summon his soldiers to prayer: 'Now when this was done he cried out aloud to his whole armie, "Let us all kneel upon our knees, and let us all together pray earnestly the almighty, living, and true God mercifully to

[63] See discussion below for the church built by Oswald and the miraculous 'chips' from the cross as presented in Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande*.

[64] Kyngston claims in his preface that 'because the last print of Fabians Chronicle [1542], was in many places altered from the first copy [1533], I have caused it to be conferred with the first print of all, and set it forth in all points, according to the authour's meaning'. This is patently not true. See Womersley, *Divinity and State*, 35–7. Still, Kyngston may not have been biased one way or another, as he was probably more concerned with printing books that would sell. See Barrett L. Beer, 'Bibliographical Notes: John Kyngston and Fabian's Chronicle (1559)', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* (7th ser.) 14 (2013), 199–207 at 203. Womersley, nevertheless, discerns a 'conscripted' Fabyan, 'unmistakenly Protestant' yet not endorsing 'pure or radical positions'. *Divinity and State*, 34–5.

[65] Two 1559 editions were published, in January and May, the latter chronicling the first months of Elizabeth I's reign. Beer, 'Bibliographical Notes', 201.

[66] For the 1559 Oswald text, see *The Chronicle of Fabian* (London: John Kyngston, 1559), 139.

[67] Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. 76^{v}.

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defend us from the proud and cruel enemy"'. The implication is that the image is necessary for the act of worship to be effectual and for the army's prayers even to be heard. The presence of the image mediates the divine presence, not just pointing towards it, but actually bringing it down to earth and setting it before the army. Thus, a kind of visual metonymy rather than a visual metaphor is invoked as the cross stands *in absentia* for 'the almighty, liuing, and true God'.[68]

Moreover, the relation between the image and deity is so intrinsically intimate that it infuses the cross with a power tantamount to divine. There is a potency in the cross that is quintessentially apotropaic since in light of their prayer and devotion Oswald's army wins the battle. As *The History* tell us, 'All did as he commanded them. And thus in the dawning of the day they marched forth, encountered with their enemy, and [...] won the victory'.[69] This is instantiated as a miraculous 'heavenly victory' as Oswald's 'small army' is also described as having 'vanquished', in the face of great odds, a formidable, previously undefeated 'victorious host'. The enemy captain, identified as 'Kadwallader the king of Britons', [70] had even boasted ('made his avante') that 'nothing could be able to withstand it'.

The narrative takes measures, nonetheless, not to attribute the victory solely to the image, as attention is also drawn to the faith of Oswald and his troops, which is also presented as a necessary contributing factor to the 'heavenly' outcome.[71] When Oswald is first introduced, he is depicted in stark contrast to his immediate predecessors, the 'apostate kings' of Northumbria.[72] These kings are accused of 'forsaking the religion of Christ', turning to the 'devil', and resorting to the 'old filth of Idolatry'.[73] Oswald, however, is described

[68] This is not to suggest that iconoclasts like Calfhill did not appreciate the metonymic capacities of the cross, for Calfhill himself argues that John Chrysostom used the cross as 'a figure of Metonymia', though not for Christ, but for his Passion. *An Aunswere*, 69.

[69] Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. 76^{r}.

[70] In Bede there are two separate, unrelated personages named *Cadwalla*, one of whom is Oswald's foe, but there is also a third personage with a very similar name, *Cadwaladrus*, who is the son of this *Cadwalla*. See J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 251. In later historiographies, however, all three get conflated in various combinations with variant spellings.

[71] The concern about superstition has roots as far back as the description of the origins of the cross cult in Ambrose's funeral oration for Theodosius I in 395, where, after Helena uncovers the 'true' cross and proceeds to worship it, Ambrose clarifies the propriety of her action: 'Regem adoravit, non lignum utique, quia hic gentilis est error, et vanitas impiorum; sed adoravit illum qui pependit in ligno' ('She worshipped the king [Christ the King], not the wood in particular, which is a pagan errour and a misunderstanding of godless people; but she worshipped him who hung on the wood'). Ambrose, *Oratio De Obitu Theodosii*, 61 (section 46). Ambrose's caveat was well-known to sixteenth-century English controversialists.

[72] Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. 75^{v}–6^{r}.

[73] Many have noted, accepting Bede's story apparently at face value, that Oswald's motivation in erecting the cross may have been to appeal to the religious sensibilities of non-Christians among his troops because freestanding objects like wooden posts and even trees

as 'a man dearly beloved of God', who erects the cross 'fervent in faith'.[74] Oswald's soldiers, too, are said to be 'fenced with the faith of Christ', and after the battle, the narrative pays tribute to the fact that 'according to the merit of their faith, [they] achieved and won the victory'.

Still, the overriding thrust of the narrative is that divine power is inherent in the battle cross, and this belief is corroborated by other, subsequent events at Heavenfield. As *The History* relates, other 'heavenly miracles' began to occur in the years following Oswald's triumph due to the cross's thaumaturgic capabilities: 'For even until this present day many men do customably cut chips out of the very tree of that holy cross, which casting into waters and giving thereof to sick men and beasts to drink, or sprinkling them therewith, many forthwith are restored to their health'.[75] As a consequence of this outpouring of miracles, *The History* designates Heavenfield as a 'holy' place, held 'in greate reuerence', a location, it says, which 'is now much honoured of all men by the reason of the church that was lately builded and dedicated in the same place'.[76] The mentioning of a church building validates for Stapleton's sixteenth-century audience—as it had for Bede's in the eighth century[77]—that the cross had long been ordained as an image worthy of formal liturgical devotion.

Stapleton's promotion of the cross cult via the Oswald narrative, repackaged with the aforementioned appurtenances, did not fail to meet opposition from Elizabethan reformist historiographers. The strongest rebuttal appears in John Foxe's 1570 edition of *The Acts and Monuments*.[78] This is not to say that Foxe had not already begun to undermine the cross cult before Stapleton's translation of Bede. In the first edition of *The Book of Martyrs*, published in 1563, the cross falls victim to Foxe's programme of reform, though without any mention whatsoever of Oswald. For example, in the panel of woodcut

were sacred pagan symbols in Anglo-Saxon England. See Rosemary Cramp, 'The Making of Oswald's Northumbria', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, 17–32 at 30. I would think the same motivation may have applied to Bede himself.

[74] In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede's emphasis on Oswald's faith is likely a function of his historiographical program to provide secular exempla for the educated political elite in his native Northumbria. See, for example, Alan Thacker, 'Bede and History', in Scott DeGregorio, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173–7, and 183–8. Stapleton would not have been cognizant of Bede's underlying agenda, but he no doubt saw in Bede's history a means to his own agenda, stated in his dedication: to convince Elizabeth to submit to the 'holy Cross', which he equates with 'the only Catholike faith', thus intending Oswald as an exemplum for the queen herself, whom he addresses as 'Defendour of the Faith'.

[75] Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. 76^{v}.

[76] *Ibid.*, fol. 76^{v}, 77^{v}.

[77] Paul J. Stapleton, 'Alcuin's York Poem and Liturgical Contexts: Oswald's Adoration of the Cross', *Medium Aevum* 82 (2013): 189–212 at 192.

[78] On the 1570 edition as an intentional response to Stapleton, among others, see Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas. S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 137–40.

illustrations appearing on the title page (also used in later sixteenth-century editions, including the 1570), the cross is presented as an instrument of the damned.[79] On one side of the page, the woodcuts depict scenes characteristic of the 'Persecuted Church', such as figures listening to a preacher explicate scripture, and on the other side, scenes of the 'Persecuting Church', such as a priest at an altar, elevating the host during mass (see fig. 4).

At the top of this diptych-like panel, Christ is centrally located, facing the reader and seated alone in the act of judgment, motioning with his right hand the figures of the 'Persecuted Church' towards their heavenly reward, and with his left, the figures of the 'Persecuting Church' towards their damnation. Included among the images of the damned is a scene of a congregation of Catholics reciting the rosary during a homily (see fig. 5).

In the background of this scene there appears a liturgical procession winding its way seemingly towards a gibbet, headed by a clergyman carrying a large, elevated banner of the cross, with another cleric holding midway, beneath a canopy, a smaller cross statue.[80] The unspoken message is clear: the cross is the sign of the persecutors and not of the true, persecuted church.[81]

In the 1570 edition of *The Acts and Monuments* Foxe's critique becomes more explicit, and for the first time he directly addresses the Oswald legend. In the same year, moreover, Foxe delivered a Good Friday sermon at Paul's Cross, published by John Day soon thereafter, in which he differentiates between false devotion towards images like the cross and true devotion, which is described as an internal experience: 'To know Christ Jesus crucified, and to know him rightly, it is not sufficient to stay in these outward things: we must go further then the sensible man, we must looke inwardly with a spiritual eye into spiritual things'.[82] In a similar vein,

[79] Foxe participated in the creation of his woodcuts. Aston and Elizabeth Ingram, 'The Iconography of the *Acts and Monuments*', in David Loades, ed. *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1997), 66–142 at 70–1.

[80] On processional crosses as objects of medieval veneration, see Sible De Blaauw, 'Following the Crosses: The Processional Cross and the Typology of Processions in Medieval Rome', in P. Post, G. Rouwhorst, Tongeren, and A. Scheer, eds. *Christian Feast and Festival: The Dynamics of Western Liturgy and Culture* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 319–43 at 342. That Elizabethan reformers considered such crosses objects of veneration, and thus idolatry, see Jewel, *A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answeare*, 502; Calfhill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, 315; and Fulke, *A Rejoinder to John Martiall's Reply*, 184. Processional crosses are also included in the prefatory list of definitive markers of Catholic faith in Stapleton, *The History of the Church of Englande*, fol. ‖2^{r}.

[81] On the anti-cross bias in the 1563 *Book of Martyrs*, especially concerning Sir John Oldcastle, see Aston and Ingram, 'The Iconography of the *Acts and Monuments*', 80–5.

[82] John Foxe, *A Sermon of Christ Crucified, preached at Paules Cross the Friday before Easter, commonly called Goodfryday* (London: John Day, 1570), sig. A.iii^{v}. The sermon is noted by Aston and Ingram, 'The Iconography of the *Acts and Monuments*', 82. Foxe's theology of the cross aligns with Bucer and Calvin. Cf. Martin Bucer, *Das Einigerlei Bild*, trans. William Marshall ([London: T. Godfray, 1535]), 15–6; and John Calvin, *Institutes of*

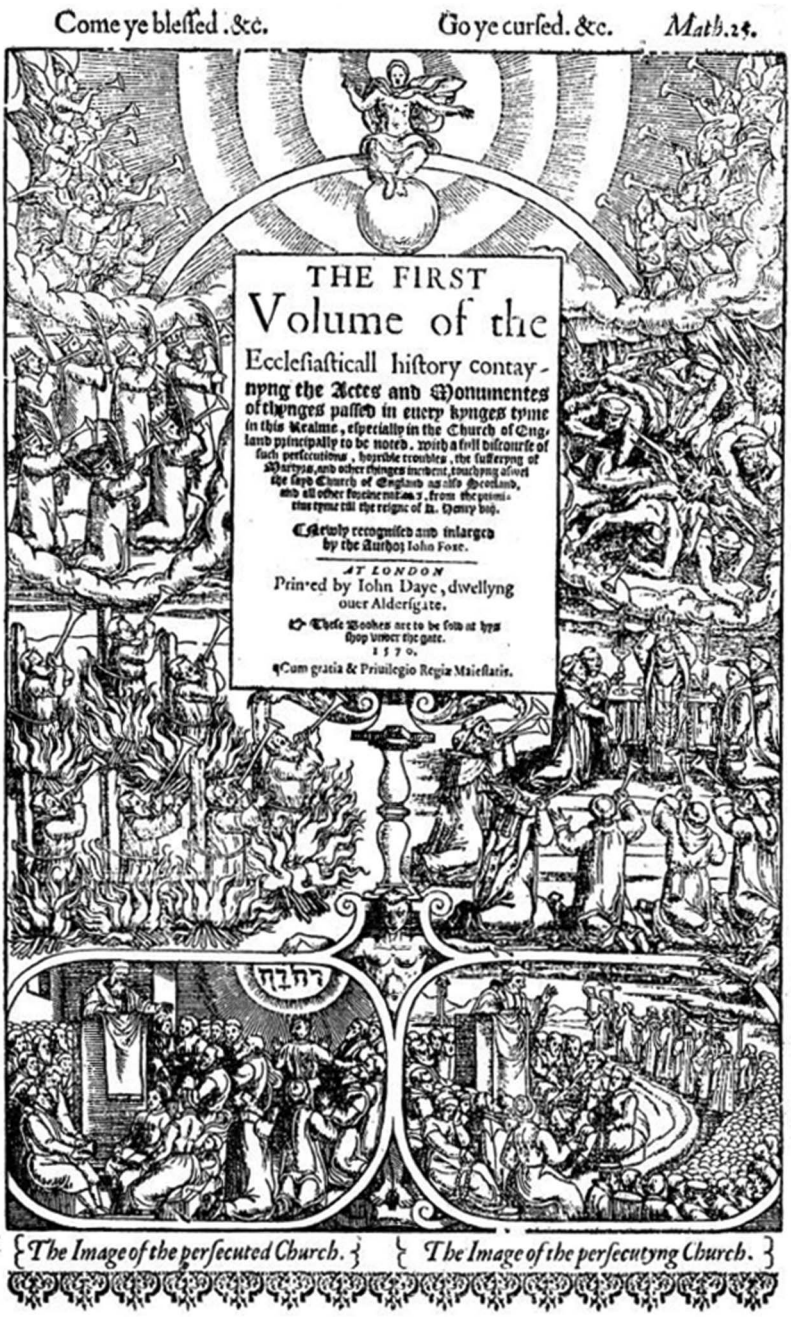

Figure 4. Title page of John Foxe, *The first Volume of the Ecclesiasticall History contaynyng the Actes and Monumentes* (London: John Day, 1570). Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early Modern Books Online*. www.proquest.com. Published courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library, Typ 505.70.404, and with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

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Figure 5. Lower right panel from title page of Foxe's *Actes and Monumentes* (1570), showing various practices for which the Roman church will be damned, including a cross procession. Published courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library, Typ 505.70.404, and with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

the 1570 *Acts and Monuments* cites the letters of the Marian martyr John Philpot, who describes the gospel admonition to take up the cross (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23) as an internalised, personal experience ('my cross'), one which calls for believers to be 'joyful under the cross', that is, in the face of hardships, 'infirmities', and other like sufferings such as 'the loss of landes, goods, and life', all endured in 'the hope of a better reward'.[83] To keep an inner disposition of joyfulness in the face of personal suffering is rendered as true devotion to the cross: 'O how glorious be the crosses of Christ, which bring the bearers of them unto so blessed an end'.[84]

For Foxe, as with the controversialists Turner, Jewel, and Calfhill, adoration of the cross was hardly a godly practice, and for this reason

the Christian Religion (1559), 2 vols, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, 1960; rpt. 2006), 1.107 (1.11.7).

[83] Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (hereafter *TAMO*), ed. David Loades (Sheffield, UK: Humanities Research Institute Online Publications, 2011), http://www.johnfoxe.org (accessed 03 August 2015), 1570 edition, 2043 and 2046.

[84] *Ibid.*, 2046.

in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments* the legend of Oswald is modified, though in a manner, it is not unfair to say, which is patently of two minds. After the publication of Stapleton's translation of Bede and his ancillary text *A Fortresse of the Faith First Planted amonge Us Englishmen* (1565), where Stapleton glosses *The History of the Church of Englande* with further commentary on what he saw as the Saxon, and therefore Roman, origins of the English church, Foxe had no choice but to gainsay Stapleton by taking up the very same Saxon material Stapleton had so penetratingly introduced onto the stage of Elizabethan controversy.[85] At the same time, Archbishop of Canterbury Matthew Parker and his circle of Anglo-Saxon scholars, most famous among them John Joscelyn, were already beginning to deploy the Saxons in the cause of the English Reformation, capitalizing on Saxon texts to disprove the antiquity of sundry Roman doctrines, foremost among them the doctrine of transubstantiation, an endeavour which culminated in the publication of *A Testimonie of Antiquitie* in about the year 1566.[86] As a consequence of these two countervailing proof-text approaches, in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments* Foxe resorts to a bifurcated viewpoint towards Saxon history, the complexities of which he had not fully confronted in the 1563 *Acts and Monuments*, where the Saxons are apportioned a fairly cursory role, with Oswald not mentioned at all.[87] In 1570 Foxe found himself caught in the middle of two mutually exclusive enterprises to harvest the Saxons, the one seeking material to prop up a 'Roman Catholic' past, and the other, a 'Reformation' past; and these contradictory agenda leave their mark on Foxe's presentation of King Oswald, about whom we are given nearly paradoxical information.

On one hand, Foxe counters Stapleton's promotion of the cross cult by grouping Oswald's cross together with other monuments of Saxon superstitution. In this vein, Foxe follows the suit of the historiographer John Bale in his *Actes of Englysh Votaryes* (1546), where Bale asserts that the Saxons were neither rightfully Christians nor even rightfully

[85] Hamilton, 'Catholic Use of Anglo-Saxon Precedents, 1565–1625', 538–41; Robinson, 'John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons', 61.

[86] See Theodore H. Leinbaugh, 'Aelfric's *Sermo de sacrificio in die pascae*: Anglican Polemic in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in C. T. Berkhout and M. M. Gatch, eds. *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 51–68; Robinson, '"Dark Speech": Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998): 1061–83; Robinson, 'John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons', 61–2; and Heal, 'Appropriating History', 122. See, too, *A Testimonie of Antiquitie* (London: John Day, 1566), fol.18^{r}. Rebecca Brackmann cautions against overgeneralizing that 'the impetus for all Tudor Anglo-Saxon research was Parker's polemical needs in his pamphlet wars'. *The Elizabethan Invention of Anglo-Saxon England: Laurence Nowell, William Lambarde and the Study of Old English* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2012), 8.

[87] Hamilton, 'Catholic Use of Anglo-Saxon Precedents', 542; and Robinson, 'John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons', 65.

English, as he denigrates the Saxons, linking his contemporaries in England to the Britons as their true forebears. In similar fashion Foxe vilifies the Saxons in the 1570 edition of *The Acts and Monuments*, claiming that the Britons 'were bereaved of their land by the cruel subtlety of the Saxons', who 'violently and falsely dispossessed the Britons of their right', and having 'untruly expulsed and chased out the Britains from their land', he says, the Saxons were guilty of 'blood, bloody violence, and unjust dealings'.[88]

Besides these crimes, Foxe also accuses the Saxons of initiating the corruption of the native British church, albeit unintentionally. At first 'Pagans,' he says, the Saxons were eventually 'converted to the Christian faith' by the Britons and became 'devout' believers.[89] Yet in time, he says, they deviated and became 'deceived' in their religious practices, turning to the 'church of Rome': 'For albeit in them there was a devotion and zeal of mind that thought well in this their doing, which I will not here reprehend; yet the end and cause of their deeds and buildings cannot be excused being contrary to the rule of Christ's Gospel'.[90] As a result of misguided Saxon zeal, Foxe says, 'first came in the Peter pence or Rome shots in this realm' and, likewise, 'most part of the greatest abbeys and nunneries in this realm were first begun and builded'.[91] For Foxe ('so it seemeth again to me'), these markers of the Roman church were the foundations—elsewhere he calls them 'monkish foundations'[92]—of the ecclesiastical corruption which would only be rectified by the Reformation in the sixteenth century. So in hindsight Foxe laments the lack of spiritual perspicacity on the part of the Saxons:

> First, [I wish] that they, which began to erect these monasteries and cells of monks and nuns to live solely and single by themselves out of the holy state of matrimony, had foreseen what danger and what absurd enormities might and also did thereof ensue, both publicly to the Church of Christ and privately to their own souls.[93]

To corroborate the gravity of his claims, Foxe calls attention to the tangible evidence of what he refers to in his preface as Saxon 'superstition and ceremony', providing a catalogue of 'monkish monasteries', a list which includes Oswald's cross:[94]

> The first cross and altar within this realm was first set up in the north parts in Heavenfield upon the occasion of Oswald king of Northumberland fighting against Cadwalla, where he in the same place set up the sign of the cross, kneeling and praying there for victory. *Polychronicon*. Book 5, ch. 12. Anno 635.[95]

[88] Foxe, *TAMO*, http://www.johnfoxe.org (accessed 03 August 2015), 1570 edition, 165, 167, 190. See Hamilton, 'Catholic Use of Anglo-Saxon Precedents', 542–3.
[89] Foxe, *TAMO*, http://www.johnfoxe.org (accessed 03 August 2015), 1570 edition, 190.
[90] *Ibid.*, 190–1.
[91] *Ibid.*, 190.
[92] *Ibid.*, 4.
[93] *Ibid.*, 190–1.
[94] *Ibid.*, 4.
[95] *Ibid.*, 190.

In citing this example, seemingly derived from Ranulf Higden's fourteenth-century *Polychronicon*, Foxe utilises the Oswald story as a counterpoise against Stapleton's approbation of the cross cult.

At the same time that Foxe critiques the Oswald legend as part of his denunciation of Saxon ecclesiastical errors, he also appropriates it in a way that seems to support the work of the Parker circle and its cooptation of the Saxons for a reformed historiographical agenda.[96] The 1570 edition even includes a printed marginal note to prevent anyone from misconstruing the nexus of the Oswald story, one which contrasts sharply with that promoted in Stapleton's text, where the cross is highlighted. Instead, Foxe's marginal note downplays and even overlooks the cross, as it summarises the story with the sanitised quip, 'Strength of prayer overcometh armies'.[97] Foxe is casting Oswald as a secular exemplum of pure, devout faith, much in the same way William Bonham presents Oswald in the 1542 edition of *The Chronicle of Fabyan* as a prayerful king who is not in any way associated with the messiness of iconodulia. For Foxe, too, Oswald is likely intended as a prototype of the monarch, in this case Elizabeth I, whom he characterises in his dedication as possessing, much like Oswald, 'a zeal full of solicitude'.[98] Foxe's narrative reads as follows:

> But Oswald, when he was warned of the great strength of this Cadwall and Penda, made his prayers to God and besought him meekly of help to withstand his enemy, for the salvation of his people. Thus after Oswald had prayed for the saving of his people, the two hosts met in a field named Denisburne, some say, Heavenfield, where was faught a strong battle. But finally the army and power of Penda and Cedwal, which was far exceding the number of Oswald's host, was chased and for the most part slain by Oswald.[99]

Foxe cites several sources for this version of the Oswald story, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*,[100] Higden's *Polychronicon*,[101] William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*,[102] John Brompton's *Chronicon*,[103] and 'Fabian.'[104] In actuality, however, he is copying Bonham's 1542 Fabyan nearly verbatim, with the exceptions

[96] On Foxe's personal relationship with Parker and members of his circle, see Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 149–53.
[97] Foxe, *TAMO*, http://www.johnfoxe.org (accessed 03 August 2015), 1570 edition, 176.
[98] *Ibid.*, 10.
[99] *Ibid.*, 176.
[100] See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of the De Gestis Britonum [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007), 272–3.
[101] See note above on *Polychronicon*.
[102] See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998–9), 1.70–1 (1.49.2–4).
[103] See John Brompton's *Chronicon*, in *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores X Antiqui*, ed. Roger Twysden (London, Jacob Flesher, 1652), 785.
[104] See Foxe, *The first Volume of the Ecclesiasticall History contaynyng the Actes and Monumentes* (London: John Day, 1570), 163: 'Galfredus, Polychro, Malmesbury, Historia iornalensis, and Fabian'.

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being the naming of Penda as co-commander of the Britons and the mention of Heavenfield. The cross, however, has been expunged as it would be in later editions of *The Book of Martyrs* published in 1576 and 1583.

In closing, I would like to draw attention to another Elizabethan version of the Oswald legend, though one not found in a work of historiography, but instead in Book Three of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590), where Merlin explains on behalf of Britomart his prophecies concerning the future history of the Britons.[105] In the course of his narration Merlin mentions King Oswald, who will be a foe in the conflicts pitting Britomart's descendants against the invading Saxons, initiating a period of eight hundred years during which Briton supremacy in Britain will be suppressed.[106] The last of the primitive line of Briton kings will be Cadwallin, and his line will not be restored until the fifteenth century and, it is implied, the ascendancy of the Tudor dynasty.[107] In the final days of Cadwallin's tottering and soon-to-be preempted hegemony, however, the Britons for a brief time will regain the upper hand over the Saxons.

It is during this temporary Briton resurgence that King Oswald appears in Merlin's narrative as a champion of the Saxons. Although Oswald will ultimately be slain by Cadwallin in an unnamed battle in Northumberland, his death will occur only after he has first defeated, Merlin says, Cadwallin's henchman, the perfidious Saxon turncoat Penda. Oswald's victory will happen under the auspices of the Christian deity:

> Him [Penda] shall he [Cadwallin] make his fatall Instrument,
> T'afflict the other *Saxons* vnsubdewd;
> He [Penda] marching forth with fury insolent
> Against the good king *Oswald*, who indewd
> With heauenly powre, and by Angels reskewd,
> All holding crosses in their hands on hye,
> Shall him defeate withouten bloud imbrewd:
> Of which, that field for endlesse memory,
> Shall *Heuenfield* be cald to all posterity.[108]

I bring this version of the myth to our attention because it is unique, likely Spenser's own invention,[109] although it matches up well with the

[105] On Spenser's Merlin in 'the role of true Christian prophet', see Jerrod Rosenbaum, 'Spenser's Merlin Rehabilitated', *Spenser Studies* 29 (2014): 149–78.
[106] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 2001), 318 (3.3.44.5–6).
[107] Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 319 (3.3.44.5-6). For commentary on the Tudor link to the prophecy, see John E. Curran, Jr., *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530–1660* (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 2002), 19; and Megan S. Lloyd, *'Speak It in Welsh': Wales and the Welsh Language in Shakespeare* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 87.
[108] Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 317 (3.3.38).
[109] Carrie Anna Harper, *The Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's Faerie Queene* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College, 1910), 161–2; and Curran, *Roman Invasions*, 63.

Oswald of the 1542 *Chronicle of Fabyan* and 1570 *Acts and Monuments* since there is no adoration of the cross. Spenser has largely removed the elements which could be interpreted as allusions to the cross cult, and so, it seemingly aligns with iconoclast theology.

Unlike his reformist precursors, however, Spenser retains the cross image, and this factor presents us with theological complications that make it impossible to limit his Oswald account solely within the confines of a reformist Protestant iconoclasm. In *The Faerie Queene* crosses are present, they are in the hands of angels, and those angels are engaged in 'rescuing' the Saxons on behalf of the Christian God by means of those very crosses. From a theological perspective the crosses are functioning in accord with an iconodule logic: they are not merely visual metaphors of the deity, that is, they are not as William Turner suggests, 'nothing', empty signs of a distant divinity, but instead they are intrinsically linked to the deity by a relation of metonymy. Although no explicit adoration takes place, the crosses still serve as embodiments of the divine presence. Not even the angels are sufficient in and of themselves to manifest that presence, as the circumstance of their 'holding crosses in their hands on hye' is what allows them to act as the conduits of 'heauenly power'.[110] The crosses, therefore, are not deployed as visual metaphors, but just as in Stapleton's Bede, as visual metonyms. In this instance *The Faerie Queene* carries on Stapleton's understanding of the cross and not that of reformist Protestants like Turner, Jewel, Calfhill, Bonham, or Foxe.

[110] Cf. Beatrice Ricks, 'Catholic Sacramentals and Symbolism in Spenser's "Faerie Queene"', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 52 (1953): 322–31 at 326; and Harold Weatherby, 'Holy Things', *English Literary Renaissance* 29 (1999): 422–42 at 432.