THE CROSS IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND: AN IMAGE IN AN AGE OF ICONOCLASM

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Chapel Hill
2015

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ABSTRACT

Paul Joseph Stapleton: The Cross in Elizabethan England: An Image in an Age of Iconoclasm  
(Under the direction of Jessica L. Wolfe)

The cross was arguably the most hotly contested image in all of Elizabethan England. For some the cross was an object of devotion, but for others of idolatry and superstition; for some, the triumphal standard of Christ, but for others, the instrument of his torture; it was the banner of Christian identity, but also an abstract spiritual ideal; a symbol of the holy Roman Catholic church, but also of the pagan Whore of Babylon; the shield of crusaders and the Templar knights, but also of the English patron Saint George and the knights of the Order of the Garter; the marching flag of the northern Catholic rebels, but also of the soldiers of the Tudor armies; the ensign of the Spanish Armada, but also of the royal navy led by Charles Howard, Lord high Admiral, and Sir Francis Drake. For Elizabethans, no matter how they identified themselves in matters of religion, no matter where along the spectrum of religious identity, whatever their shade of Protestant or Catholic, and no matter how they regarded sacred objects, whether as iconodules or iconoclasts, or somewhere in between, the cross was a phenomenon indicative of far more than as one apologist claimed, “nothing,” and another, “onely barres laide a crosse.”

For all practical purposes, the various attempts in Elizabethan England to strip the cross of meaning were predicated on the same set of circumstances that historically (and ironically) undergirds almost all forms of religious iconoclasm: sacred objects like the cross are so utterly saturated with meaning that they inevitably come to be regarded as rivals to the sacred entities they are intended to represent, and thus, as inimical to “pure” forms of belief. So for some
Elizabethans the cross was the primary symbol of the Christian deity, but for others it was an idol that had displaced the true Christian god. Furthermore, another circumstance was also at work for Elizabethans: in a sixteenth-century culture undergoing tremendous flux, the multifarious politico-religious connotations of the cross fractured it with paradox. So the cross came to be adopted as the primary symbol of political entities directly in conflict with each other, for example, imperial Catholic Spain and Protestant Elizabethan England, and among the English themselves, anti-government subversives like the Northern Catholic rebels and Jesuit-supported recusants. Nonetheless, the cross is the image Edmund Spenser chooses to give us at the outset of Book One of *The Faerie Queene* in the form of the crosses on the armor of the Redcrosse Knight.

My purpose in this study is to explore the “bloodie Crosses” on the Redcrosse knight’s breastplate and shield in their relation to the politico-religious culture of Elizabethan England, which assumed for the cross a central role in the defining of English religious and national identity, albeit that role was predicated for some on a positive relation, while for others, a negative one. The fact of the matter is that devotion towards the cross was regularly regarded in post-Reformation England as a definitive marker of “papism,” if not outright allegiance to the church of Rome, and therefore, was frequently placed in a negative relation to English identity. For some like Spenser, however, such “negative” associations were simply not the case. This is partly due to the medieval setting of *The Faerie Queene*, which allows for the presence of anachronistic cultural residue like the crusader armor that the Redcrosse Knight wears. Yet the Legend of Holiness is also intended as a spiritual allegory for contemporary Elizabethans, and the Redcrosse Knight is a moral exemplar, whom some have even described as an English Protestant Everyman. The central role of the “papist” cross in Book One, therefore, cannot be
dismissed as a mere factor of the medievalism of the poem, but it must also be recognized as a necessary contributing factor to Spenser’s depiction of Post-Reformation Englishness and holiness. Thus, I believe Spenser’s deployment of the red cross reveals what many historians have come to recognize about Elizabethan England in general: that religious beliefs were far more pragmatic, malleable, and tolerant than any attempts at hardline uniformity could ever suppress; and this seems to be equally, if not more, true of literary writers like Spenser.
IN MEMORIAM

Angela Cruz Stapleton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Chapel Hill, including the staff, faculty, my fellow graduate students, especially my officemate and good friend Luke Mills, and the undergraduate students in my classes, all of whom made my years at UNC superlative.

I am especially grateful to the five members of my committee, each of whom in their own way inspired me to write this dissertation: Robert G. Babcock, A. Reid Barbour, Patrick P. O’Neill, Jessica L. Wolfe, and Robert V. Young.

I reserve gratissimum, however, for my director Prof. Wolfe, who encouraged me at every turn, yet kept me grounded.

Some believe that all good labor involves its crosses and can even become a cross itself. I would never have been able to complete the good labor of this PhD without my wife, Karen Cruz, the Cruz who softens all my crosses. Yet in completing her own PhD in English at Chapel Hill in the summer of 2012, Karen also modeled for me the tenacity and inner toughness requisite for completing a doctoral degree.

Thanks, too, to my stepson Mike Corsetti, who never failed to pull me out of the past for a respite, drawing me into the fun and intricacies of whatever ballgames were being played in the here and now; and to my stepdaughter Jessica Corsetti, who always enlivened our house with her visits, young Abigail and Benjamin in tow.
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INTRODUCTION

In the various studies of iconoclasm in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, the only comment about the cross appears as follows: “Spenser clearly sets himself apart from those who would object to any representation of the cross as idolatrous.”¹ Beyond this remark, true though it may be, nothing more about the cross presents itself, despite the fact that the cross was arguably the most hotly contested image in all of Elizabethan England. The cross was considered to be an object of devotion for some, but of idolatry and superstition for others; the triumphal standard of Christ, but also the instrument of his torture; the banner of Christian identity, but also an abstract spiritual ideal; a symbol of the holy Roman Catholic church, but also of the pagan Whore of Babylon; the shield of crusaders and the Templar knights, but also of the English patron Saint George and the knights of the Order of the Garter; the marching flag of the northern Catholic rebels, but also of the soldiers of the Tudor armies; the ensign of the Spanish Armada, but also of the royal navy led by Charles Howard, Lord high Admiral, and Sir Francis Drake. For Elizabethans, no matter how they identified themselves in matters of religion,² no matter where

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² On “the complex ways in which the religious innovations of the mid-sixteenth century presented English men and women with new ways in which to fashion their own identities and to define their relationships with society,” see *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-
along the spectrum of religious identity,\textsuperscript{3} whatever their shade of Protestant or Catholic,\textsuperscript{4} and no matter how they regarded sacred objects,\textsuperscript{5} whether as iconodules or iconoclasts,\textsuperscript{6} or somewhere 


\textsuperscript{3} On the “hybrid,” “spectrum,” or “continuum” of Elizabethan religious practices and beliefs that problematize categories like Protestant, Catholic, and Puritan, see Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, ed., \textit{Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560 –1660} (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), \textit{passim}, esp. ix-xx; and Rosemary O’Day, \textit{The Debate on the English Reformation}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), \textit{passim}, esp. 247.

The anonymous Elizabethan Catholic author of the so-called Leicester’s \textit{Commonwealth} himself demonstrates an awareness of religious syncretism, however cynical his remarks may be: “For wheras by the common distincion now receiued in speech, there are thre notable differences of religion in the land, the two extreames, wherof are the Papist and the puritan, and the religious Protestant obtaining the mean: this felow [Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester ] being of neither, maketh his gaine of al.” See \textit{The copie of a leter, wryten by a Master of Arte of Cambrige, to his friend in London} ([Paris: S.n.], 1584), 14.


\textsuperscript{5} On the term \textit{sacred object}, theorized as something “distinct from ordinary matter insofar as it is set apart and imbued with divine virtue,” see Shannon Gayk and Robyn Malo, “The Sacred Object,” \textit{The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies} 44.3 (2014): 457-467, esp. 460-463.

\textsuperscript{6} Both these English terms, as well as their correlatives \textit{iconophile} and \textit{iconophobe}, were not used until at least the year 1595. See \textit{Oxford English Dictionary}. The terms \textit{iconomach} and \textit{iconomachy}, however, can be found, denoting “iconoclast” and “iconoclasm,” respectively. Cf. James Calhhill, \textit{An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse}, ed. Richard Gibbings (London, 1565; rptd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 155-174, where he uses \textit{iconomachus} and \textit{iconolatra}. The Greek term \textit{iconomachy}, however, in its seventh-century Byzantine origins has a bilateral denotation: “struggles about images,” not “against images.” See Leslie Brubaker, “Making and Breaking Images and Meaning in Byzantium and Early Islam,” in \textit{Striking Images},
in between,⁷ the cross was a phenomenon indicative of far more than as one apologist claimed, “nothing,”⁸ and another, “only barres laide a crosse.”⁹

Elizabethan religious controversialists, in fact, could not even agree among themselves what the word cross actually meant, and contention about the word’s definition was a motivating factor for a major series of polemical skirmishes that took place between the reformist iconoclast

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⁷ On the position that “images served Protestant and Catholic alike in many significant, albeit different, ways” and that “image use in the Reformation period, like religious identity more generally, should not be segregated into Protestant and Catholic categories,” see David J. Davis, Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation (Leiden: Brill, 2013), passim, esp. 10, 16. See too, William J. van Asselt, “The Prohibition of Images and Protestant Identity,” in Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity, eds. Asselt et al (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 299-311; and Marcia B. Hall, The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), esp. the chapter “Protestants and Catholics in Dialogue on Images,” 19-39. Also, in “Art and the Counter-Reformation,” in The Ashgate Companion to the Counter-Reformation, eds. A. Bamji et al (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 386-389, Andrea Lepage discusses Franciscan missionaries in New Spain promoting Catholic iconodulia while at the same time carrying out iconoclasm against indigenous sacred objects. In light of this anecdote, I would like to take Davis’s perspicacious remark a step further: the categories iconoclast and iconodule themselves are difficult to segregate into absolutes, since within them lurks the opposite propensity (these objects are good, those evil), creating “exceptions to the rule” or circumstances of paradox which complicate, and even prove untenable, a pure binary. Cf. David Freedberg, The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 427. This dissertation, in fact, is arguing that Elizabethan attitudes about the cross create just such a complication.


James Calfhill and the Catholic iconodule John Martiall. Thus, in *The Treatyse of the Cross* (1564), Martiall writes about the need to define the term *cross*.

Because this worde *Crux*, crosse, which I nowe intend to treate of, hath diuerse significations in the scripture, and in diuerse places is diuersely taken, I through[t] it good to follo the counsell of the wise Philosopher Aristotel, and at the beginning of this treatise briefly declare the significations of it, that the readers hearing oftem times in this discourse this woorde Crosse, may better vnderstande to which it is to be referred.

In light of the range of meanings, Martiall dedicates the entirety of his first chapter to the elucidation of “this woorde.”

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Martiall’s *Treatyse of the Crosse* (Antwerp: 1564) and Calfhill’s *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse* (London, 1565), taken together with two subsequent volumes, Martiall’s *A Replie to M. Calfhills Blasphemous Answer* (Louvain: 1566) and William Fulke’s *A Rejoinder to John Martiall’s Reply* (London: 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.

Justus Lipsius’s *De Cruce* (1593) (Leiden: Peter Vander, 1695), no matter how implicit its religious sentiments may be, is more of a combination of an antiquarian investigation into the history of crucifixion and a philological treatise about the Latin term *crux* and the Greek *σταυρός* (*stauros*). Cf. Martine Gosselin, “Justus Lipsius’s (1547-1606) *De cruce libri tres*, 1594: The Influence of Johannes Molanus (1533-1585) and Caesar Baronius (1538-1607),” *LIAS: Sources and Documents Relating to the Early Modern History of Ideas* 34.2 (2007): 189-203. The German Jesuit Jakob Gretser’s *De Cruce Christi* (Ingolstadt: Adam Sartorius, 1598) is no doubt a landmark, monumental treatment of the cross, published in Latin in four volumes, but it is unequivocally a Roman Catholic apology.

For Martyall, the word *cross*, or *crux*, has four “significations” (fol. 12r). The first relates to the idea of the personal suffering experienced by all Christians. Martyall traces this connotation to its sources in the Greek and Latin: “According to the Greke woorde κρούειν, 1 *ferire* & *affligere*, to streke and to afflicte (of which after the opinion of some it is deryved) is persecution and affliction: or according to the nature of the latine verbe *cruciare*, to troble, to vexe and torment, tribulation, vexation, and al kynde of tormentes” (fol. 12v). So in its broadest sense, the cross equates to the suffering of each individual, but Martyall also relates this suffering to the gospel admonition, “Yf any man will follo me, let him deny him self, and take vp his crosse, and follo me.”12 Thus, for Martyall the “cross” is a metaphor that allows Christians to regard their own daily afflictions as a recapitulation of the Passion narrative.

The second signification is the Passion itself. According to Martyall, the word *cross* is often used by Saint Paul in this regard, as for example, in the First Letter to the Corinthians where it says, “The woorde of the crosse to them that perishe is folishnesse, to them that be saued, (that is to vs) it is the vertue of god” (fol. 12v).13 Martyall also cites the Letter to the Galatians as evidence: “God forbed that I shuld brag or glorie but in the crosse of oure lorde Iesus Christe” (fol. 12v-13r).14 In these cases, the term *cross* is indicative of more than just Christ’s suffering as an historical event, but of his suffering in its relation to the transhistorical economy of salvation. Martyall assigns the third signification to the historical cross, that is, the actual wooden gallows upon which Christ was crucified, which he terms the “materiall crosse.” As he says, “[this cross] the iewes made Christ and Symon of Cyrene carry to the mounte of

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12 Matthew 10:38; Luke 9:24; Mark 8:35.

13 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Caluarie: vpon which they fastenedoure sauiour Christ, streached his armes, nailed his handes, pierced his feete: and opened his side: which kinde of gibbet they had in the old lawe to putt men to death” (fol. 13v). Martiall also relates this cross to the idea of the “tree” (fol. 13v).

The fourth and final meaning of the cross, Martiall tells us, is the “vexillum crucis: the banner or signe of the crosse” (fol. 23v). According to Martiall, there are “two kindes of signes of the crosse, the one made of some earthely matter” and “the other expressed or made with mans hande in the ayre in forme and lieknes of the other: and imprinted in mens forheades, breastes, and other partes off the body” (fol. 24v). It is this fourth connotation, “the sign of the cross,” that Martiall designates as the main topic of his treatise, a choice due in part to the ubiquity of this sacred object in the daily lives of Elizabethans, a circumstance he attempts to convey by means of a catalog which itself aims for ubiquity. According to this catalog, the presence of the cross in Elizabethan England was in no way limited to formal religious environments like the inner sanctuaries of churches:

This crosse we may se to bе had in reuerence euery where in houses, in markettes, in wildernesse, in high wayes, in mountaines, in hills, in vallies, in sea, in shippes, in cotages, in beddes, in cotes, in armour, in chambres, in tauerne in siluer and golden plate, in pictures vpon waullles, in brute bodies euil affected, in bodies possessed with deuils, in warres, in peace, in day, in night, in companies of

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15 It should be noted that this dissertation concerns crosses in this fourth sense. This does not include crucifixes (cross images to which the corpus of Christ is affixed), although in the source materials the difference at times is either negligible or impertinent. I am also not concerned with signs of the cross made with a gesture of the hand.
delicate, in orders of religious: men so gredely take vnto them this maruelous and
goodly gift. (fol. 14r-v)

Despite such general widespread reverence for the “banner or sign,” Martiall defends the
need for his writing A Treatyse of the Crosse as an obligatory response to an equally widespread
iconoclasm, about which, he says, “they haue throuen downe the signe of the crosse euery where,
and in despite haue hewed it, hackt it, and burnte it, and in reproche of good Christen men
reuerently honoring the same, haue caulled it an idol” (fol. 16v).16 This kind of violence against
the cross, however, was not without its own systematics.

In An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse, Calfhill repudiates Martiall’s presentation
of a fourfold meaning of the cross. For Calfhill there is neither scriptural authority for Martiall’s
fourth definiton, which he identifies as “the material or mystical sign of the Cross,” nor is there
any evidence for its use in the primitive church of the apostles.17 Although Calfhill grants
scriptural precedent for Martiall’s first two definitions (“the cross of affliction” and “the passion
of Christ”), admitting they are “most necessary for salvation,” and the third meaning (“the Cross
that He died on”) he acknowledges as having some scriptural basis, nevertheless, the fourth
meaning, Calfhill says, “is not extant at all” (62). As he says, “For neither the material, nor
mystical Cross, in that sense that ye take them, to that end that ye apply them, be once mentioned

16 On Elizabethan reverence for vandalized public crosses and even the mere ground they once
stood on, see Walsham, The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in

17 By the “mystical cross,” Calfhill means the sign of the cross made with the motion of the hand,
or as Martiall explains it, “the other expressed or made with mans hande in the ayre in forme and
lieknes of the other: and imprinted in mens forheades, breastes, and other partes off the body”
(fol. 24r). As mentioned above, the “mystical cross” is not the subject of this study.
in the word of God” (63). Calfhill equally dismisses out of hand any apostolic foundation for the sign of the cross: “The Apostles that gloried in the Cross, that is to say, the death of Christ; that lived under the Cross, that is to say, were subject to afflictions, carrying about with them the death of Christ in their mortal bodies; that did many miracles by Him that hanged on the Cross; never used, (as we read,) the sign of the Cross, nor gave any counsel or commandment for it” (84-85). For Calfhill, the apostles would not have recognized in the least way any need for anything like a sign of the cross; for them the cross was strictly “a figure of Metonymia” (69), as he says, related to the Passion of Christ and by extension to the their own suffering as a consequence of living “under the Cross” (84).

According to An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse, the origins of the “sign of the cross” can be traced to the Greek fathers, but the use of the sign quickly devolved into a form of superstition. As Calfhill relates, in the time of John Chrysostom, “Christians, to testify by their outward fact their inward profession, would make, in every place, the sign thereof” (65). This initial appropriation of the image as a means of giving witness, however, was soon forgotten, and what had been benign was turned into an abuse (65). For Calfhill, superstition surrounding the cross became rampant, and in a passage which appears to be aimed at Martiall’s catalog of crosses in the English landscape, Calfhill turns the testimony of his foe on its head: “Nor it is to be thought, that wheresoever a sign of the Cross was, were it either in mountain or in valley, in tavern or in chamber, in brute bodies or in reasonable, there was by and by a zeal of true devotion; but as well, or rather, an heathenish observance, a superstition of them that never thought on Christ” (65). Ultimately, Calfhill finds no reason to associate images of the cross with the Christian god, and because he considers them nothing other than implements for “heathenish” superstition, he recommends that for the sake of those believers whom these “great
stumbling stones” would otherwise lead astray (25), crosses should be “cast out of” all churches. As for crosses in other public settings besides churches, if they were “in danger to be worshipped,” Calfhill says, they should be little tolerated there as well (44, 51, 365).

For all practical purposes, as we see in these comments from Calfhill, the various attempts in Elizabethan England to strip the cross of meaning were predicated on the same set of circumstances that historically (and ironically) undergirds almost all forms of religious iconoclasm: sacred objects like the cross are so utterly saturated with meaning that they inevitably come to be regarded as rivals to the sacred entities they represent and thus, as inimical to “pure” forms of belief.  

So for some the cross was the primary symbol of the Christian deity, but for others it was an idol that had displaced the true Christian god. Furthermore, another circumstance was also at work for Elizabethans: in a sixteenth-century culture undergoing tremendous flux, the multifarious politico-religious connotations of the cross fractured it with paradox. Thus the cross came to be adopted as the primary symbol of political entities directly in conflict with each other, for example, imperial Catholic Spain and Protestant Elizabethan England, and among the English themselves, anti-government subversives like the Northern Catholic rebels and Jesuit-supported recusants. Nonetheless, the cross is the image Spenser chooses to give us at the outset of his epic in the form of the cross on the armor of the Redcrosse Knight:  


\[\text{19} \quad \text{I use the word } \text{image} \text{ aware of its ambiguity in relation to the “cross” in Spenser’s poem, which is obviously not a visual representation of a cross, but a verbal one. In Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), W.J.T. Mitchell discusses the inexactitude of the term } \text{image} \text{ for phenomena as far flung as “pictures, statues, optical illusions,}\]
And on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore,

The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,

For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,

And dead as liuing euer him ador’d:

Vpon his shield the like was also scor’d,

For soueraine hope, which in his helpe he had. (1.1.2.1-6) 20

My purpose in this study is to explore these “bloodie Crosses” on the gentle knight’s breastplate and shield (where “the like was also scor’d”) in their relation to the politico-religious culture of Elizabethan England, which assumed for the cross a central role in the defining of maps, diagrams, dreams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas” (9). He suggests that fundamentally an image is a “likeness, resemblance, similitude,” which in turn can be expressed graphically (pictures, statues, designs), optically (mirrors, projections), perceptually (sense data, “species,” appearances), mentally (dreams, memories, ideas, fanstasmata), or verbally (metaphors, descriptions) (10). Yet graphic and optical images (that is, the kinds of images usually considered images “in a strict, proper, or literal sense”), he argues (12), are no more “stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense” than their other “bastard children”: “they are not perceived in the same way by viewers any more than are dream images; and they are not exclusively visual in any important way, but involve multisensory apprehension and interpretation” (14). Although Mitchell rightly resists collapsing the distinctions between the different kinds of images (for example, he compares the relation between graphic and verbal images by using the analogy of geometry and algebra), he is still unwilling to reify those distinctions (44).


English religious and national identity, albeit that role was predicated for some on a positive relation, while for others, a negative one. The fact of the matter is that devotion towards the cross was regularly regarded in post-Reformation England as a definitive marker of “papism,” if not outright allegiance to the church of Rome, and therefore, was frequently placed in a negative relation to English identity. For some like Spenser, however, such “negative” associations were simply not the case. This is partly due to the medieval setting of The Faerie Queene, which allows for the presence of anachronistic cultural residue like the crusader armor of the Redcrosse Knight. Yet the Legend of Holiness is also intended as a spiritual allegory for contemporary Elizabethans, and the Redcrosse Knight is a moral exemplar, whom some have even described as a “Protestant Everyman.” The central role of the “papist” cross in Book One, therefore, cannot be dismissed as a mere factor of the medievalism of the poem, but it must also be recognized as a necessary contributing factor to Spenser’s depiction of holiness. Thus, I believe Spenser’s deployment of the “bloodie Crosse” reveals what many historians have come to recognize about Elizabethan England in general: that religious beliefs were far more pragmatic,

\[21\] See, for example, Andrew King, “‘Well Grounded, Finely Framed, and Strongly Trussed up Together’ the ‘Medieval’ Structure The Faerie Queene,” The Review of English Studies n.s. 52 (2001): 22-58.


malleable, and tolerant than any attempts at hardline uniformity could ever suppress; and this seems to be equally, if not more, true of literary writers like Spenser.

We should be reminded here that historians have now convincingly demonstrated that the lines in doctrine and discipline separating the varied strains of Elizabethan Protestantism from the equally varied strains of Catholicism were in some instances barely visible, if not nonexistent, and a study of the image of the cross in Elizabethan England can help us to appreciate this confessional permeability even further. Moreover, as Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier

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25 See the Introduction in The Reformation Unsettled: British Literature and the Question of Religious Identity, 1560-1660, eds. Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Richard Todd (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2008), 3: “Literary discourse could confront incompatible doctrinal perspectives within a single text, or forge a hybrid spiritual sensibility out of competing religious traditions. Literature, sometimes in spite of writers’ avowed denominational allegiances, embraced, explored, and deepened the ambivalence of early modern English religious culture in a manner perhaps less readily available in other kinds of texts.”

26 The agenda of exposing confessional hybridity has essentially been the life’s work of scholars like Peter Lake, Michael C. Questier, and Alexandra Walsham. Yet earlier generations of proponents of the now widely dismissed grand narrative of an established Elizabethan Anglo-Catholic church, a monolithic “Anglicanism” characterized by the via media, also participated in a somewhat similar but less precise game of exposing “Catholic” predilections among Elizabethan “Protestants.” See, for example, A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), passim, esp. 362, 387; or in Spenser studies, Virgil K. Whitaker, The Religious Basis of Spenser’s Thought (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1950). With the research of scholars like Patrick Collinson, however, that monolith was once and for all overturned by works such as his The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559 – 1625 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). The mantle of Anglo-Catholicism, nonetheless, has been taken up recently by Debora Shuger in an article which expounds upon John Harington as a model of what Shuger insists is also a “type” of Elizabethan Christianity, an alternative yet equal “mainstream” type (the other being Calvinist), which she chooses to call “high church.” See Shuger, “A Protesting Catholic Puritan in Elizabethan England.” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 587-630, esp. 601, and 626-630. Also, on the concept of supra-confessional “prayer book” Christians, see Judith D. Maltby, Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
have so powerfully argued, the factor of confessional permeability makes it incumbent upon scholars of Elizabethan religious culture to avoid any methodology which reinforces the kind of rigid binaries which in actuality were not so rigid in the first place:

We are seeking then to shift our analysis from the always rather circular mode of [confessional] category formation and refurbishment and look instead at the constitution and reconstitution of the boundaries which contemporaries used to form their own categories of approbation and disapprobation, orthodoxy and deviance. Orthodoxy and conformity are seen here not as stable quantities but rather as the sites of conflict and contest.²⁷

It is the claim of this dissertation that the Elizabethan controversy about the image of the cross proves to be just such a “site of conflict and contest,” an unstable boundary along which “orthodox” beliefs about English religious and national identity came to be constituted and reconstituted, and in this case before our eyes in the pages of a literary work like Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, but also in other works inflected by Elizabethan religious culture such as ecclesiastical historiographies, chronicles, religious controversies, formal church proclamations, sermons, prayer ordinals, and writings on spirituality, all of which we will examine in this study.

It is standard fare among literary critics to read Book One of *The Faerie Queene* in a way that upholds the “Protestant” framework of the poem,²⁸ and few question, much less eschew, for

²⁷ Lake and Questier, ed., *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, xx.

²⁸ See, for example, King, “Spenser’s Religion,” 208-209, where he argues that *The Faerie Queene* exhibits a general agenda of “reformist Protestantism,” which engages “multiple and overlapping frames of reference” and cannot be reduced to any “simple conformity” with the
instance, Ephesians 6 as the definitive means for deciphering the crosses on the armor of the Redcrosse Knight, that is, as representative of Paul’s “spiritual armor,” primary among which is the sword of the word of God. Yet such readings of the epic are due in no small part to a literary tradition which has overwhelmingly, and I should emphasize, retroactively, maintained the confessional binary, confining *The Faerie Queene* within a monolithic “Protestant” theology. In light of the many well-founded arguments that the umbrella term “Protestant” is simply inadequate for describing Elizabethan religious culture in general, the upshot is that Spenser’s epic itself is now increasingly said to reflect the “spectrum of Tudor Christianity.”

official church or any oversimplified and anachronistic “Anglicanism.” In this context, he sees the Red Cross Knight as a “Protestant Everyman.”

29 The most notable exception is Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48-49.


31 On the idea of the “spectrum” in Spenser, see McEachern, “Spenser and Religion,” 30, 40. McEachern prudently advises us “to remember that in the 1570s and 1580s, the years during
one which extends beyond Protestant shades to include Catholic tonalities as well. This is not to say that Spenser was not on the Protestant end of the spectrum himself, but it is increasingly becoming clear, as I have discussed above, that depending on the circumstances, the “Protestantism” of individual Elizabethans, and even of the Elizabethan church itself, could look very much like “Catholicism.”

That there is indeed a Catholic presence in The Faerie Queene, and an unequivocal presence at that, is a circumstance that has been acknowledged by some scholars since at least the early part of the twentieth century, if not by some readers as far back as the late 1500s.

As a result the arguably “Catholic” elements in the epic, such as the prayer beads of Dame Caelia or the many other Catholic nuances in the House of Holiness, have generated a substantial amount of commentary, some subsuming these elements in one way or another into a bedrock Protestantism, and some regarding the Catholic elements qua Catholic. Such discussion has

which Spenser came of age both poetically and politically, many of the divisions and parties teased out by the events of the following seventy years were as yet intertwined” (30). Also, see Mallette, Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England, 8.

32 For example, see McEachern, “Spenser and Religion,” 40, who very strongly hints at inclusivity for Catholicism, though without ever explicitly saying so.

33 For a review, see Beatrice Ricks, “Catholic Sacramentals and Symbolism in Spenser’s Faerie Queene,” The Journal of English and Germanic Philology 52.3 (1953): 322-331. As a watershed text, the following should be noted: E. Hickey, “Catholicity in Spenser: Colligite Quae Superaverunt Fragmenta,” American Catholic Quarterly Review 32.127 (1907): 490-501.

34 Suspicion among early modern readers “that Spenser had a real sympathy for Catholicism but disguised it out of fear” has been detected in the language of Bodleian MS Eng. misc. c. 107 fo. 277, dated to 1585-1650, with a strong likelihood of 1595, which would make it prior to Dixon’s 1597 marginalia. See Guillaume Coatalen, “‘Lô a Timorous Correction’: Unrecorded Extracts from Spenser and Harrington and Negative Criticism of The Faerie Queene in a Folio from the Bodleian Library,” Review of English Studies 56 [227] (2005): 745.

occasionally addressed Spenser’s deployment of the cross, yet operating by-and-large within the construct of the strict Protestant-Catholic confessional divide, or avoiding the binary altogether by couching the discussion in terms of *medievalia*, such scholarship inevitably fails

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38 Perhaps the most thorough-going treatment of Spenser’s red cross in terms of *medieval* religious culture can be found in the chapter “The Arms of the Red Cross,” in Patrick Grant, *Images and Ideas in Literature of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), 32-60, where Grant relates the red cross to the medieval motif of the *effectus passionis*, that is, “a widespread iconographic programme for depicting the centrality of the cross to human history” (37). Some Spenserians, however, view the category *medieval* as historically imprecise in labeling “motifs that a sixteenth-century Englishman would label ‘Catholic.’” See Kaske, “The Audiences of *The Faerie Queene*,” 20. On the growing movement within English literary studies, nevertheless, to study enduring *medievalia* in the early modern period, see James Simpson, “Diachronic History and the Shortcomings of Medieval Studies,” in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, eds. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17-30.
to confront the issues raised by the enigma of a so-called Protestant poet—defined by some as even militantly Protestant—resorting to the portrayal of the cross as a sacred image during a period in England when iconoclasm, especially against the cross, was rampant among opponents of “Catholic” idolatry. Such scholarship, if it avoids the all-too-easy, and unverifiable, alternative of transforming Spenser into one of the various incarnations of a crypto-Catholic, leaves the enigma otherwise intact. Although I have no intention of arguing that Spenser was not a Protestant, I do believe that in order to appreciate his use of the cross in Book One, it is necessary to look beyond his own confessional allegiance.

My goal, therefore, is to demonstrate that the strategems that gloss over the complications created by Spenser’s presentation of the cross as a sacred image can be avoided, and the complications actually confronted more directly, if we are willing to loosen up the limitations imposed by the confessional binary. But this is no easy task, not least of all because it is a binary which Elizabethans fully indulged in, especially those Elizabethans, like Martiall and Calfhill, whom we are able to study because of the published writings they left behind, and it would be negligent, if not overly scrupulous, to deny that differences of opinion about the cross were mainly articulated by voices that adhered to the strict divide of the Protestant-Catholic binary, no matter how imperfectly that divide may have existed in the daily lives of believers on the ground, including poets like Spenser. For it was exclusively from among those who explicitly identified themselves in some way as Protestant that we find public expressions of iconoclasm and a desire


40 On the unavoidable and practical need for scholars to retain the binary categories used by Elizabethans themselves, especially the “perennial partners in crime – Catholic and Protestant,” see Lake and Questier, ed., *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, xviii.
to extirpate the cross from the various English cultural landscapes: topographical, ecclesiastical, historical, literary, and otherwise. At the same time it was exclusively from among those who were explicit about their allegiance to the Roman church that we find the publicly outspoken defenders of the cross, iconodules who regarded the image as a sacred object and as a definitive marker of English religious and national identity. Yet, if we are to trust scholars like Questier, Lake, and Walsham, within these two extremes there was a vast “middle ground” where beliefs about images, including the cross, were varied and complex, and it is within this middle ground, I would argue, that Spenser himself stood.

Evidence that some Elizabethans associated the cross with Catholicism and, at a minimum, collusion with Rome is not difficult to come by. In *The Massacre at Paris*, for example, a dramatization of the horrors that took place in France on St. Bartholomew’s Day, August 1572, and of the political turmoil that followed in its aftermath in the late 1580s, Christopher Marlowe takes full advantage of religious stereotypes. In the play, which is dated to the year 1592 and roughly contemporaneous with *The Faerie Queene*, Protestants are typified by their dedication to the written word, and Catholics by their penchant for images, especially the cross. According to this schema, Huguenot characters like the preacher Loreine, even in the face of death, express their devotion to “the word of God” (Sc. vii.6), as do the members of the Huguenot leadership, like the King of Navarre, who declares, “I intend to labour for the truth/

And true profession of his holy word” (xiii.50-51). Their Catholic persecutors, on the other hand, are motivated to violence because the Huguenots defy their commands to worship the sacred images set before them. Thus, for example, after refusing to “pray unto our Lady” and to “kiss the cross” (vi.29), the French Lord High Admiral, a character modeled on the Huguenot Gaspard de Coligny, is murdered by the Catholic Duke of Anjou, who then fiendishly proposes that the Admiral’s desecrated body be fastened to the very object he had declined to honor:

Away with him, cut off his head and hands
And send them for a present to the Pope;
And when this just revenge is finished,
Unto Mount Faucon will we drag his corse,
And he that living hated so the cross,
Shall, being dead, be hang’d thereon in chains.43 (vi.43-48)

Here Anjou hopes to offer the corpse of the Huguenot as a sacrificial victim to the inanimate cross. His sardonic proposal dramatizes in extreme fashion the purportedly inherent dangers of idolatry against which reformers like John Calvin warned Christians, namely, that image worship leads to a misdirection of devotion, a turning away from Christ towards a


43 According to Francois Hotman (alias, Ernest Varamund) in A True and Plaine Report of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce ([London]: Henry Bynneman, 1573), Admiral Coligny had advocated the destruction of “a certaine stone crosse gilded and builte after the manner of a spire steeple, commonly called Gastignes crosse,” saying “it was a monumente of ciuill dissention, and so a matter offensiue to peace and concord” (29-30).
perverse obsession with the very images intended to represent the deity. Iconoclasts like James Calfhill believed that such obsession ultimately results in a skewed value system, like Anjou’s, which depreciates the true, living images of god, that is, human beings, in favor of idolized man-made images: “The blockish Images, the dead Crosses, have been crept to, been worshipped. The lively images of Christ Himself have been brought to the cross, and burned cruelly. [...] Thus, for the Idol sake, the true image of Christ hath been defaced.” In Marlowe’s play, this kind of idolatrous reversal of the proper moral order is demonstrated in Anjou’s willingness to annihilate a human being for the sake of confirming his own devotion to the cross.

For opponents of images like Calfhill, iconodules had categorically dispossessed true Christianity and replaced the Christian god with a pantheon of false, material gods. Iconodules were said to have “set up works of their own making, to destroy the works of God,” and if any true believers, such as the Huguenots, were to disparage these idols, they were known to

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> All men, having fixed their minds and eyes upon them [images], began to grow more brutish and to be overwhelmed with admiration for them, as if something of divinity inhered there. [...] Therefore, when you prostrate yourself in veneration, representing to yourself in an image either a god or a creature, you are already ensnared in some superstition.


46 See Calfhill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, 66-67: “The Images of Mercury, set by the highway sides, were afterward converted to Crosses. And where there was, in Rome, Templum Pantheon; a temple, wherein all the Gods of the world were honoured; the devout fathers, to take away this idolatry, did consecrate a church in the same place unto All-Hallows: that that should now be converted unto Saints, that before was attributed unto false Gods. And yet, whatsoever pretext of zeal they had, this was no good change, no sound reformation: to take away many false Gods; of true Saints to make many Devils: for so they are, when they be honoured.”
Most conspicuous among the papist “idols” was the cross. As one late-sixteenth-century reformer comments, “Christ Jesus is deprived of his right, & the same is giuen to a wodden Crosse, so that it is not without just cause, that the Catholike children of our holie mother the Churche doe name themselues seruantes and slaues of the Crosse.” For such reform-minded Elizabethans, predilection for the cross as a sacred object was indicative of nothing short of idolatry.

For many Elizabethans the fact that the perpetrators of the bloodbath in *The Massacre at Paris* are described as wearing “white crosses on their burgonets” (iv.30) would also have been a fitting reminder that crosses did not necessarily represent authentic belief or even Christianity per se. In his rejoinder to Martiall’s *A Treatyse of the Crosse* (1564), for example, Calfhill debunks any requisite association of the cross with sincere Christian devotion:

> Your Popes and your Prelates have Crosses before them, Crosses hanging upon them, Crosses in their crowns, Crosses in their garments; and yet I fear me lest ye will not affirm them to be the best servants of Christ. You know sometime there be coins of counterfeits. I know the most crossers are not the best Christians. The sign of God printed in the faithful is the belief in Christ, and grace to do

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49 See, for example, the Elizabethan reformer Anthony Gilby, *To my louynge brethren that is troubllyd abowt the popishe aparrell, two short and comfortable epistels. Be ye constant: for the Lorde shall fyght for yow, yowrs in Christ* ([Emden : E. van der Erve, 1566]), sig. B[i]r: “All the papistes that saye, they worship Christ in the crosse [...] do still vnder these wordes continew still in their Idolatri.”
thereafter. The Cross that is their refuge, their succour and defence, is the death of Christ, and merits of His passion.  

According to this line of thought, the dead sign of the cross had displaced the signified, living Christ as the source of divine “virtue” in which iconodules ineffectually placed their trust.

Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* caricatures attitudes about the cross that fall neatly along the strict divide of a Protestant-Catholic binary. Yet I would like to argue that if we can free ourselves from this binary’s limitations, precisely because it is a caricature, we stand to learn much about the significant, and even outright positive, contributions that self-identifying iconodules made to English culture in the late sixteenth century, particularly in terms of religious and national identity, and in the case of the cross those contributions leave their mark on a

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50 Calfhill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, 82.


It should be noted here that scholars like Claire McEachern claim that English national identity is a sixteenth-century phenomenon tied to “the religious culture and ideology of Elizabethan England.” See McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5-33. For McEachern, the nation is an amalgam of “church, crown, and land” (7). On the Tudor “invention,” “construction,” or “writing” of national identity, including a bibliography, see Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3. A foundational text is Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For Helgerson, the generation of writers born between 1551 and 1564 (e.g., Edmund Spenser in 1552, Sir Philip Sidney in 1554, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare in 1564) engaged *ipso facto* in a “concerted generational project” to “articulate a national community” around the concepts of “king, people, and language” (1-2). The existence of national identity in sixteenth-century England, however, based on factors like religion, government, and language, is far from uncontested, precisely
supposedly definitively “Protestant” text like The Faerie Queene.\(^{53}\) My intention, then, is to piece together the cultural contexts which pertain to the image of the cross in Elizabethan England, with the hope of addressing head on—or at least with some modicum of perspicuity—Spenser’s own use of what a good many Elizabethans considered a “Catholic” image. This process, I believe, will allow Spenser’s cross to be repositioned in its rightful place as a key hermeneutic device for understanding the overarching theology of the Legend of Holiness, which, I will argue, operates according to a *theologia crucis*.

One historical example that corroborates the need to leave behind the Protestant-Catholic confessional binary in regards to the cross is given by Queen Elizabeth herself, who kept a cross in her private chapel in Whitehall at least until the year 1600 despite intermittent assaults upon it and even thefts.\(^{54}\) The presence of this cross caused a great deal of consternation among the

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\(^{53}\) I take my cue from the “turn to religion” in early modern literary studies, particularly as it has inspired the critique of the dominant “Whig, Protestant, anti-Catholic” view of English history and literature. See Ken Jackson and Marotti, “The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies,” *Criticism* 46 (2004): 167-190. For a solid review of scholarship that “reimag[ing] Catholics as participants in, rather than obstacles to or exiles from, post-Reformation English history,” see the Introduction in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, eds. Corthell, Dolan, Highley, and Marotti. See too Marshall, “(Re)defining the English Reformation,” *Journal of British Studies*, 581-582, who writes, “still more pressing is the need to integrate Catholics and Catholicism more firmly into the mainstream narrative of the English Reformation.”

queen’s highest ranking bishops and officials, notably John Jewel, arguably the unofficial chief spokesperson for the Elizabethan Settlement during the 1560s. For our purposes, what is most interesting about this affair is that the correspondence it generated among Elizabethan bishops and continental reformers provides evidence that opposing opinions on the cross early in Elizabeth’s reign were not divided along any Protestant-Catholic binary, but fluctuated among the reformists themselves. For example, according to a letter from Bishop Jewel to the Italian theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli, dated 4 February 1560, an intestine public disputation on the subject of the queen’s “little cross” (cruculam) was to take place among four of the Elizabethan bishops, every one of whom is generally considered reformist, pitting the iconoclasts Jewel and Edmund Grindal against archbishop Matthew Parker and Richard Cox. Although there is no record of the event, support for the queen’s cross, and for crosses in general, must have been

55 The queen’s cross is usually identified as silver, but sometimes gold, and it is haphazardly called a cross or a crucifix. Translations of the predominantly Latin primary sources are surprisingly inconsistent in keeping the two terms distinct. For example, in Nicholas Sander, The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism, ed. and trans. David Lewis (London: Burns & Oates, 1877), 272, the terms are interchanged. Sander’s original Latin reads “voluit aliquot annis proponi publice in mensa, quam pro altari in sacello erexerat, cereos duos, sed eos nunquam accenos, ac crucem etiam in medio argenteam unam” (“for several years she wished that there be placed publicly on a table, which she had erected as an altar in her chapel, two candles—but they were never lit—and even a single silver cross in the middle”) (italics and translation are mine). Sander, De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani (Rome: Bartholomaeus Bonfadinus, 1586), 397. Similarly, see the translation of John Parkhurst’s letter to Henry Bullinger, in The Zurich Letters: Comprising the Correspondence of several English Bishops and Others with some of the Helvetian Reformers during the early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, ed. and trans. Hastings Robinson, Parker Society (Cambridge: The University Press, 1842), Letter 53, 122 (Latin text, 73).

56 See Jenkins, John Jewel and the English National Church, 67. Some conjecture that Jewel wrote the Second Book of Homilies.

57 Zurich Letters, Letter 29, 67-68 (Latin text, 39). The debate is treated in detail by Haugaard, Elizabeth and the English Reformation, 190.
broad enough going into the debate to cause Jewel to intimate his own pessimism about the probable outcome:

Whatever may be the result I will write to you more at length when the disputation is over; for the controversy is as yet undecided; yet, as far as I can conjecture, I shall not again write to you as a bishop. For matters are come to that pass, that either crosses of silver and tin (\textit{cruces argenteae et stanneae}), which we have every where broken in pieces, must be restored, or our bishoprics relinquished.

Of course, Jewel was completely wrong in his prediction, perhaps because his opponents Parker and Cox were hardly steadfast iconodules, no matter how willing they may have been to defend the queen’s personal cross.\textsuperscript{58} The possibility looms, too, that the queen’s predilection for the cross was patently idiosyncratic and that, as one critic has argued, Elizabeth was alone in her devotion\textsuperscript{59}—this would hardly explain, however, Jewel’s expression of dismay about what he saw as the coming backlash against the iconoclast bishops: he clearly feared a contingent of\\

\textsuperscript{58}Haugaard, \textit{Elizabeth and the English Reformation}, 192-196. Haugaard discusses a letter from Cox in which he sounds at best tepid about images: 

There does not exist an entire agreement among us with respect to setting up the crucifix (\textit{de imagine crucifixi}) in churches, as had heretofore been the practice. Some think it allowable, provided only that no worship or veneration be paid to the image itself; others are of opinion, that all images are so universally forbidden, that it is altogether sinful for any to remain in churches, by reason of the danger so inseparably annexed to them.


iconodule replacements. In any case, for the remainder of her queenship, Elizabeth kept her cross, but not much else changed, including the absence of crosses in the countless churches where they had been destroyed. The constant polemics to tear down the image also never abated. The queen’s cross, however, may have factored into the curious wording of the official statement about cross adoration appearing in The Homilie against Perill of Idolatrie:

[Saint Helen] worshipped him that hanged on the Crosse, and whose name was written in the title, and so foorth [...] [for] it had beene an heathenish errour and vanitie of the wicked, to have worshipped the Crosse it selfe which was embrewed with out Saviour Christs owne pretious blood. And wee fall downe before every Crosse peece of timber, which is but an Image of that Crosse.

The concluding remark, “wee fall downe before every Crosse peece of timber, which is but an Image of that Crosse,” seems to suggest that, as long as the object of worship is “him that hanged on the Crosse” and not the “Crosse it selfe,” it is acceptable for Christians to “fall downe” in adoration before crosses. Yet the remark can also be taken as an admonition against

60 Haugaard, Elizabeth and the English Reformation, 198-200.

61 See, for example, Phillip Stubbes, A Motiue of Good Workes Or rather, to True Christianie indeede (London: Thomas Man, 1593) 115-120, esp. 119: “For certainly the continuance of them [crosses] in high wayes, or elsewhere, doth mayntayne a notable branch of Popish idolatrie, and superstition amongst vs.”

62 The Second Tome of Homilies ([London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood], 1571), 54.

63 Such a reading would be difficult, though not impossible, to reconcile with the authorized doctrine of adiaphora, or “indifferent things,” articulated also in The Homilie against Perill of Idolatrie. See The Second Tome of Homilies, 43: “We shoulde not worshippe images, and [...] we should not haue images in the Temple, for feare and occasion of worshyppyng them, though they
cross adoration: “wee fall downe before every Crosse,” which is “but an Image,” therefore, we must cease to do so. The homily gives no further commentary, and it can be vouchsafed that a more nebulous, indeterminate expression of policy would be difficult to find, a circumstance suggesting the cross-devotee Elizabeth’s own hand in its final wording. In the end, the sheer circumstance of a cross in the royal chapel apparently delighted many of the faithful, including, not surprisingly, outspoken recusants like Nicholas Harpsfield, but also quite interestingly a more general, amorphous “wretched multitude” of believers. It is the aim of this dissertation to recover the forgotten devotion of this “wretched multitude,” which in turn, I will argue, was given voice in Edmund Spenser’s Legend of Holiness.


On Elizabeth’s influence on the toning down of the iconoclastic language in other parts of the homily, see Aston, England’s Iconoclasts, 320-325.

See Harpsfield, Dialogi Sex contra Summi Pontificatus, Monasticae Vitae, Sanctorum, Sacrarum Imaginator Oppugnatores, et Pseudomartyres (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1573), 363: “Serenissima tamen Regina nostra, diuini numinis afflatu ad hoc excitata, caeleste illud redemptionis nostriam trophaeum in aulae suae basilica erectum constanter & pie retineat; nec huiusmodi concionatores aequis auribus excipiat” (“Still, our fairest Queen, stirred to it by the breath of the divine spirit, constantly and piously retains that heavenly trophy of our redemption erected in the chapel of her palace; and she does not receive the agitators of this sort with equitable ears”). See, too, Martiall, A Treatise of the Crosse, fol. 1v.

See Zurich Letters, Letter 27, 63 (Latin text, 35), Thomas Sampson to Peter Martyr Vermigli, 6 Jan [1560]: “The wretched multitude are not only rejoicing at this [the chapel cross], but will imitate it of their own accord.” This “multitude,” in its penchant for the cross, sounds much like the voiceless Church Papists whom Walsham has spent the last two decades painstakingly delineating. See, for example, the chapter “Beads, Books and Bare Ruined Choirs: Transmutations of Ritual Life,” 369-398, in her collection of republished essays, Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014).
The dissertation will proceed according to the following outline. In Chapter One, “Why the ‘Bloodie Crosse’?” I recommend that we refrain from any automatic interpretation of the red cross as representative of some kind of unilateral Elizabethan politico-religious outlook. For most of the Elizabethan period the cross was hardly a stable indicator of English national or religious identity, much less any kind of militant “Protestantism,” but an image so fundamentally controversial that when the first three books of The Faerie Queene were published, it still very much remained a contested image. The cross continued to be bloodied by the iconoclasm and religious polemics that ripped into the sixteenth-century English cultural landscape; and because it was used as a military banner by feared political entities such as imperial Catholic Spain, domestic English subversives, and recusant exiles on the continent, it continued to be associated by many Elizabethans with allegiance to Rome. If anything, in the 1580s, when Spenser was writing the first three books of his epic, the only voices celebrating the cross in the same way he does in the Legend of the Redcrosse Knight, that is, as a definitive sign of English identity and holiness, were the voices coming from the politico-religious margins and not the establishment. It is my intention in this chapter, therefore, to discuss the myriad attitudes towards the cross in Elizabethan England, with the hope that Spenser’s red cross can be appreciated more fully for its politico-religious complexity rather than restricted to any kind of uniformity.

In Chapter Two, “The Image of the Cross and the Contested Origins of English Identity,” we turn to the first translation into modern English of Bede’s eighth-century Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, Thomas Stapleton’s The History of the Church of Englande Compiled by Venerable Bede (1565). As various scholars have now convincingly demonstrated, far from being a mere exercise in updating a medieval Latin text into a modern vernacular, Stapleton’s translation of Bede actually played a major role in establishing the parameters of
debate in Elizabethan controversies about English religious and national identity as they related to the Anglo-Saxon past. Yet to-date no one has drawn ample, if any, attention to the considerable weight Stapleton placed on the image of the cross and its necessary role—at least as he construed it—in these controversies. My intention in this chapter, therefore, is to demonstrate the reasons why Stapleton believed so adamantly that the cross was a constituent marker of what it meant to be English, a perspective that contrasted sharply with the historiographical tradition laid down by John Bale, and continued by John Foxe, which attempted to eradicate the cross-image from the history of the English nation and church.

In Chapter Three, “The Cross Cult, King Oswald, and Elizabethan Historiography,” I focus on the sixteenth-century cross cult and its promotion in Stapleton’s The History of the Church of Englande as a definitive element of English religious and national identity, especially as this identity was “debated” in Elizabethan England 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 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 Books One and Three of The Faerie Queene (1590), Edmund Spenser carries on Stapleton’s iconodule understanding of the cross in contrast to that of the reformists.

In Chapter Four, “Spenser’s Theologia Crucis and the Legend of Holiness,”
I argue that the cross has been de-centered by scholars of *The Faerie Queene* and thus neglected in its broader theological capacity within the poem to represent “the way” that leads to holiness (“the way that does to heauen bownd”). I identify this *way of the cross* motif as Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, a moral theology rooted in texts like the Martin Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation (1518) and the Jesuit Robert Parson’s *A Christian Directorie* (1585), and which prioritizes the Christian mandate to “take up thy cross and follow Christ.” In turn, I reposition the cross as a key hermeneutic device for engaging “The Legend of the Knight of the Red Crosse, or Of Holinesse,” one that provides a textually rooted alternative to the Letter to Raleigh and its promotion of Paul’s “spiritual armor” motif from the Letter to the Ephesians, which was understood by Elizabethans to prioritize the scriptures over all other spiritual aids, including images.
CHAPTER 1: WHY THE “BLOODIE CROSSE”?

At the very beginning of Book One of *The Faerie Queene* Edmund Spenser introduces us to the image of the cross in the form of the red cross on the armor of the Redcrosse Knight:

And on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as liuing euer him ador’d:
Vpon his shield the like was also scor’d,
For soueraine hope, which in his helpe he had.¹

At first glance the “bloodie Crosse” on the knight’s breastplate and shield (where “the like was also scor’d”) appears to be clear-cut, almost prosaically so, in terms of its Elizabethan politico-religious context. If we are to follow the linear notes from many of the critical commentaries on Book One, the term *bloodie* should be immediately construed as the color *red* of the red cross of

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Saint George,² protector of England,³ and patron of English soldiers and the Knights of the Order of the Garter.⁴ The “bloodie Crosse” thus serves as a metonym for the English nation,⁵ a relation

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⁵ I use the word nation hesitantly, and only in light of its use by Elizabethan writers. See, for example, Sir Thomas Smith, De Republic Anglorum: The maner of gouernment or policie of the realme of England (London: Henrie Midleton, 1583), who explicitly refers to the English “nation,” which he identifies as a republic, or “commonweath,” with corporate responsibility for its own maintenance:

For as in warre where the king himselfe in person, the nobilitie, the rest of the gentilitie, and the yeomanrie are, is the force and power of Engelande: so in peace & consultation where the Prince is to give life, and the last and highest commaundment, the Baronie for the nobilitie and higher; the knightes, esquiers, gentlemen and commons for the lower part of the common wealth, the bishoppes for the clergie bee present to aduertise, consult and shew what is good and necessarie for the common wealth, and to consult together,
which would have been altogether familiar to Elizabethans because of the longstanding English
tradition of using the red cross as a military standard, and by the time of Elizabeth I and the
expansion of the royal fleet into a modern, global seafaring navy, as a naval ensign, too.

Moreover, in the decade before the first three books of The Faerie Queene were
published in 1590, Saint George and his red cross had come to be deployed, it has been argued,
in the propaganda of a religiously inflected English patriotism or nationalism. According to this
line of thought, English self-awareness as a Protestant nation intensified in the 1580s vis-a-vis

and vpon mature deliberation euerie bill or lawe being thrise reade and disputed vppon in
either house, the other two partes first each a part, and after the Prince himselfe in
presence of both parties doeth consent vnto and alloweth. That is the Princes and whole
realmes deede. (34-35)

The existence of “national” identity in sixteenth-century England, however, based on factors like
religion, government, and or even language, is far from unproblematic because of circumstances
like the enduring Roman Catholic presence. See Krishan Kumar, The Making of English
National Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89-120, esp. 111.

6 Roland M. Smith, “Origines Arthurianae: The Two Crosses of Spenser’s Red Cross Knight,”

Walters Schmid and J.A. Wagner (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 787; and David

8 William Gordon Perrin, British Flags: Their Early History, and their Development at Sea; with
an account of the Origin of the Flag as a National Device (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1922), 35-46. Perrin dates the first use of the red cross by the English army to the year
1277 during the reign of Edward I (37-38); its use “as the distinguishing characteristic of English
ships, both men-of-war and merchantmen,” he dates to the “end of the sixteenth century” (46).

9 On The Faerie Queene and militant, Protestant nationalism, see for example, Alan MacColl,
“The Construction of England as a Protestant ‘British’ Nation in the Sixteenth Century,”
Renaissance Studies 18.4 (2004): 6-3-605; Jan Albert Dop, Eliza’s Knights: Soldiers, Poets, and
Puritans in the Netherlands, 1572-1586 (Alblasserdam, ND: Remak, 1981) 106; and Roy C.
Joseph Campana refers to, but does not espouse, this tradition, in The Pain of Reformation:
Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity (New York: Fordham University Press,
2012), 2-3.
imperial Catholic Spain, first as a result of English interventionism in the Netherlands and later as response to the Armada. In the mid-1580s, this English militant Protestantism centered on personages like Spenser’s patron Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and the poet Sir Philip Sidney, both of whom were celebrated as models of citizenship and faith, with Leicester even portrayed as a new King Arthur. Such sentiments, many believe, also suffuse Spenser’s Redcrosse knight, who even as early as the first known commentary on The Faerie Queene, John Dixon’s 1597 marginalia in his 1590 edition, is similarly equated with Leicester.

Despite this tradition, however, I would recommend that we refrain from any automatic interpretation of the red cross as representative of some kind of monolithic Elizabethan politico-religious outlook. Some historians, in fact, are beginning to question narratives of Protestant

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12 For encomia to Leicester, see Geoffrey Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes (Leiden: Christopher Plantyn, 1586), sig. *3v; Stow, The Annales of England, 1204-1215. For the comparison to Arthyr, see Stow, 1208. Also, see Strong and Dorsten, Leicester’s Triumph, 44-49, especially the discussion of the Delineatio Pompae Triumphalis murals, which will also be addressed below.

triumphalism in the first place, at least in the 1580s and early 1590s. As for the cross, for most of the Elizabethan period it was hardly a stable indicator of English national or religious identity, much less any militant “Protestantism,” but an image so fundamentally controversial that when the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* were published, it still very much remained a contested image. The cross continued to be bloodied by the iconoclasm and religious polemics that ripped into sixteenth-century English culture; and because it was used as a military banner by feared political entities such as imperial Catholic Spain, domestic English subversives, and recusant exiles on the continent, it continued to be associated by many Elizabethans with allegiance to Rome. If anything, in the 1580s, when Spenser was writing the first three books of his epic, the only voices celebrating the cross in the same way Spenser does in the Legend of the Redcrosse Knight, that is, as a definitive sign of English identity and holiness, were voices coming from the politico-religious margins and not the establishment. It is my intention in this chapter, therefore, to discuss the myriad attitudes towards the cross in Elizabethan England, with the hope that Spenser’s red cross can be appreciated more fully for its politico-religious complexity rather than any uniformity.

In the wake of the invasion of the Armada in August 1588, the English Protestant militancy of the 1580s, as some would call it, turned triumphant after the demise of the Spanish fleet, which quickly came to be celebrated as a “miraculous” victory for the English church and nation, the direct result of English prayer and military preparedness in the face of a

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14 Philip Schwyzer, for example, tempers the purported enthusiasm about the defeat of the Armada, attributing it to a “vocal minority.” See *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

15 On the English response to the Armada, see Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 110-118. Also, see, as an example, *An Oration Militarie to All Naturall Englishmen, whether Protestants, or otherwise in religion affected, to moue resolution in these dangerous times wherein is expressed the delight*
Immediately after the defeat, the use of the red cross in association with the English victory is attested in the Elizabethan ballad “Song in the Praise of the English Nobilitie”:

Armor shining, white helmets, fine and graven,
swords broad and sharpe, daggers strong and large,
Launces great and long, and sharpned steele at end,
targets faire of steele, iacks of proowe, of male,
Ensignes brave advaunst, with red crosse in field white,
and a rose for devise, set out in colour read,

of libertie, and the tyrannie of the enemie: with a praier both pithie and necesssarie (London: Thomas Owrin and Thomas Cadman, 1588), authored by an anonymous “zealous affected subiect,” sig. [B3r]: “O Countrimen, detest these infidels [‘the Pope and Spaine’], thinke on your goods, your lands, parents, children, wiues, Prince, Countrie, and Religion, for which to die is euen the waye to life, without which to liue is worse than anie death: and trust in God theat giueth victorie.”

16 See, for example, the verse-letter to the reader, signed “T. H,” in Petruccio Ubaldini, A discourse concerninge the Spanishe fleete inuadinge Englande in the yeare 1588 and ouerthrowne by Her Ma[ies]tis nauie vnder the conduction of the Right-honorable the Lorde Charles Howarde highe Admirall of Englande ([London: A. Hatfield, 1590]), sig. Aii: 

Who list to heare and see what God hath donne
For vs, our realme, and Queene against our foe,
Our foe the Spaniard proud, let him o’rerun
This little booke, and he the truth shall know:
The place, the time, the means expressed be
In booke to read, in grauen maps to see.
Which when you read, and see, retaine this thought,
That howsoe’re the meane deserued well,
T’was chiefly God against our foe that fought,
And sent them quicke through middest of sea to hell.
Whether both quicke, and thicke let them go downe,
That seeke to alienate the title of our crowne.
With letters which do saie, *Let him be punisht and correct,*

*which evill thinks, & doth not do, all what, that he is bound*

*For to defend, & enlarge his cuntry & faith unto the deth.*

Here the red cross functions traditionally as the military standard of England, but it is also overlaid with religious fervor. The cross is “advaunst” as the “brave ensign” of the English knights in “armor shining,” who, intent upon their duty with a devotion that verges on the fanatical (“unto the deth”), are “bound” to “defend” and “enlarge” their “cuntry” as well as their “faith.”

In the years proximate to the invasion of the Armada, however, ephemera celebrating the red cross as a symbol of English triumphalism, in the vein of the “Song in the Praise of the English Nobilitie,” are not as easy to uncover as one might expect, and both the red cross and Saint George actually fail to get mentioned in many of the pamphlets which otherwise convey an overtly patriotic tone. In one instance the idea of George as patron of England is actually

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18 I have found only the “Song in the Praise of the English Nobilitie,” cited above.

19 For example, in the following works, all of which celebrate the English triumph over the Armada, the red cross and Saint George are absent from the discourse of patriotism: Daniel Archdeacon, *A true discourse of the armie which the King of Spaine causd to bee assembled in the hauen of Lisbon, in the kingdome of Portugall, in the yeare 1588. against England* (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1588); Theodore Beza, *Ad serenissimam Elizabetham Angliae Reginam* (London: G. B[ishop] & R. N[ewbery], 1588); William Burghley, Lord Cecil, *The copie of a letter sent out of England to Don Bernardin Mendoza* (London: I. Vautrollier, 1588); H.R., [A prayer for assistance against the Armada] (London: Edward Allde, [1588?]); Alonso Pérez de Guzmán,
disparaged because it is deemed beneath the dignity of English soldiers, specifically because devotion to such a patron is considered too much like the Spanish superstition towards its own patron Saint James de Compestella.20

Even during public displays of patriotism in the 1580s, when the celebration of England verges on the bombastic, George and the cross are somehow notably absent from some of the major written and pictorial accounts from the period. When the Earl of Leicester, for example, triumphantly entered the Netherlands in 1586 amidst pomp and circumstance, there is no mention of Saint George or the red cross in Holinshed’s Chronicles, not even in the uncensored 1587 edition.21 Likewise, in a set of etchings known as the Delineatio Pompa Triumphalis (1586),22 Leicester’s entry into the Hague in January of 1586 is elaborately illustrated, but despite the inclusion of several banners, arches, and all sorts of military regalia, not one cross is included.

20 Robert Greene, The Spanish Masquerado (London: Roger Ward, 1589), sig. C4v-D[i7].


22 Cornelis Danckerts, Delineatio Pompa Triumphalis, qua Robertvs Dvdlaeuscomes Comes Leicestrensis Hagae comitis fvit exceptvs ([The Hague: Hendrik Goltzius, 1586]).
shown. Similarly, John Stow’s written account of the St. George’s Day festivities organized by Leicester in Utrecht on 23 April 1586, as thorough as it may appear to be in its description of the pageantry, mentions no cross. In the case of Sir Philip Sidney, Stow’s narrative concerning the fallen hero’s funeral in October 1586, which in London was arguably the most celebrated event of the period, includes no explicit allusion to any crosses among the insignia. Even Stow’s recounting of Sidney’s oration to the English troops at Axel on 15 July 1586, as patriotic and religiously charged as it is, makes no reference whatsoever to either George or the cross. None of this is intended to suggest that representations and references to George or the red cross were in fact absent from these events, but the lack of their presence in the historical records intimates, nonetheless, a certain reluctance on the part of Elizabethan writers and illustrators to highlight them.

In like manner, the Order of the Garter’s traditional emphasis on Saint George and the cross appears to have been downplayed during the reign of Elizabeth. The association with George had been all but removed during the monarchy of Edward VI, and although revived by

23 For copies of the images, see Strong and Dorsten, *Leicester’s Triumph*, 38-49.


26 Stow, *The Annales of England*, 1256. It should be noted, however, that in the pictorial representation of the funeral found in Thomas Lant, *Sequitur celebritas & pompa funeris* (London: s.n., 1588), plate 6, the cross makes up part of the “vexillu[m] in quo simbola gentilitia continebantur” (“the standard on which the native symbols are contained”).


Mary, under Elizabeth it was maintained tepidly at best. The virgin queen, for example, disengaged the annual St. George’s Day ceremonials from the Order’s headquarters in the chapel of Saint George at Windsor and linked them instead to her own person, as the ceremonies after 1566 were conducted wherever she happened to be on the 23rd of April. Such disruptions to the Order’s traditions indicate that the queen may have been more concerned with using the Garter as a means of propagating her own cult rather than Saint George’s. In fact, the female monarch seems to have taken every opportunity to exert her authority over the chivalric order and to suppress its overtly masculine nature, and this includes promotion of the feminine symbol of the garter rather than Saint George and his battle cross.

From the 1560s through the 1590s, there is solid evidence that various factions of Elizabethans tried to distance themselves from George and the red cross because both were associated with idolatry. Thus, as late as 1591, we find their legitimacy called into question because of their lack of basis in scripture:

Because I am no good Heraldt, I wil not vndertake to blazon his [George’s] armes, the red Crosse in white field that he beareth in banner displaied, nor yet his worthy atchiuementes: For all those I refer you to his Legend. And heere me


30 Trigg, *Shame and Honor*, 173.


thinkes before we goe any further, we had need enquire some learned Doctors opinion of this geare, least we that be silly and looke no further then the word of God giueth us to see, take yt for most grosse idolatrie & abhomination, because in al the booke of God from the beginning to the ending, we find no such president or commandement.  

Elizabethan voices continually raised similar objections to the “silly” nature of the legend and the “geare” of the red cross. In the 1583 edition of The Book of Martyrs, for example, John Foxe cites an anecdote, not found in the earlier editions, in which the thirteen year-old Edward VI, in response to having been informed of the legend of Saint George and his slaying of the dragon, expresses such disbelief at the story that “he could not a greate while speake for laughing.” Furthermore, some Elizabethans believed George was more than just a remnant of

33 Henry Barrow, A brief discouerie of the false church ([Dort? : S.n.], 1590 [i.e. 1591?]), 82-83.

the old religion and its idolatry, but that the mythical saint, despite his cross, was really a recapitulation of the pagan god Mars.\textsuperscript{36} As for the red cross as an English military standard, some sidestepped the issue by arguing that the device was not really an image at all, and therefore, not liable to idolatry, but instead merely “barres laide a crosse.”\textsuperscript{37}

Because of the association with idolatry, crosses in general became the target of iconoclasm throughout Post-reformation England, a historical circumstance well-detailed by scholars,\textsuperscript{38} yet one that also tends to get overlooked in early modern literary scholarship. Evidence for this iconoclasm in the Elizabethan period, in fact, is plentiful. In the year 1564, for example, we find an Elizabethan lamenting that “the crosse of Christ [is] cast out of churches, chappelles, and oratories, beaten done by high wayes, and otherwise miserably abused.”\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{39} John Martall, \textit{A Treatyse of the Crosse 1564} (Yorkshire, UK: Scolar Press, 1974), fol. 7'. All references to the \textit{Treatyse} will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically. Martall’s
Similarly, in *A Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* published in 1565, John Stow describes the iconoclasm that took place in London within the first year of Elizabeth’s accession.  

In August about Bartholomew tide the Church wardens of churches in London with their persones and ministers, brought foorth the Roodes and other images of their Churches, and brente them before theyr churche doores, throwyng in their coapes and vestimentes, alter clothes, baners, crosses, bokes, and all other suche thynges as had bene accompted ornamentes of churches, and some burned roode loftes also. (fol. 241*)

Similar attacks upon the cross did not let up in the Elizabethan period, even into the latter years of the queen’s reign,  

nor did the polemics against it.  

In a popular Tudor ballad, titled in one interlocutor James Calfhill denies the charge, yet still argues that “Crosses in market-places, and not in churches, are, (as by good proof we find,) great stumbling stones.” *An Answere to the Treatise of the Crosse* (1565), 7, 25. On the iconoclasm against the cross, see Aston, “Cross and Crucifix in the English Reformation,” *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte* n.s. 33 (2002), 260.


42 See, for example, Phillip Stubbes, *A Motiue of Good Workes Or rather, to True Christianie indeede* (London: Thomas Man, 1593) 115-120, esp. 119: “For certainly the continuance of them [crosses] in high wayes, or elsewhere, doth mayntayne a notable branch of Popish idolatrie, and superstition amongst vs.”
manuscript “The lamentacion of the crosse” and in another “Verses made in the defence of the holy Crosse,” a prosopopoeic cross questions the foul treatment it receives at the hands of iconoclasts:

I sylly Crosse that here doe stand
with Clubs and staves be braste [burst],
doe praye the people hold theire hands,
and beate me not so faste.
Such payne as this before hath bene
for such that wicked bee,
and have deserved for their synne
a shamefull death to dye.
But I, alas, what have I done?
what sayde, or thoughte amysse?
ffor bearing Christ, Gods only sonne,
have I deserved this? 43

Unlike the crosses that would later be personified in pamphlets written both for and against Puritan attacks on public crosses in the early 1640s, 44 the identity here of the “I silly cross”

43 For full text and commentary, see Tudor Songs and Ballads from MS Cotton Vespasian A-25, ed. Peter J. Seng (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 96-109. I have used here the spelling from the version of the ballad found in Harvard MS Eng. 749 (fols. 125-130v), images of whose autograph appear in Tudor Songs and Ballads, 101-102.

44 See, for example, The Dolefull Lamentaton of Cheap-Side Crosse: or Old England Sick of the Staggers (London: F.C[oles] and T.B., 1641); [Henry Peacham] = Ryhen Pameach, A Dialogue
remains generic, although the verses could very well have been “spoken” by a landmark cross like the one at Cheapside, which on midsummer night, June 21, 1581, was vandalized by iconoclasts who were well equipped and prepared to carry out their premeditated handiwork, as it appears to have been.45

Unauthorized iconoclasts made it their mission to pulverize the artifacts of idolatry, including church roods and public crosses that had been in existence for centuries.46 Soon after the coronation of Elizabeth I, however, the officially authorized July 1559 royal visitorial commissions also embarked on a zealous enterprise to root out all vestiges of papism from the queen’s realm, even proscribing items of personal devotion like crosses in private homes.47 In order to eliminate the possibility of a revival of Roman Catholicism as had happened during the Marian restoration, measures were taken for the physical remnants of iconodulist worship to be

_Between the Crosse in Cheap, and Charing Crosse ([London: s.n.], 1641); The Remarkable Funeral of Cheapside Crosse (London: Robert Hodgekinsonne, 1642); The Last Will and Testament of Charing Cross ([London: s.n.], 1646). On these and other pamphlets in this vein, see Spraggon, _Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War_, 42-46._

45 On the events of June 21, 1581, see David Cressy, _Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 236, found in the chapter titled “The Downfall of Cheapside Cross: Vandalism, Ridicule, and Iconoclasm,” 234-250. Also, see _Tudor Songs and Ballads_, ed. Seng, 100; and Holinshed, _Chronicles of England, Ireland, and Scotland_, vol. 6, ed. Paulina Kewes, _et al._, 1321.

46 Aston, “Iconoclasm in England,” 56; Spraggon posits an intimate link between sixteenth-century English iconoclasm and official ecclesiastical reform, as she argues that the official condoning of image-breaking was used to establish religious change under Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I. See _Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War_, xi; and also Arthur F. Marotti, “In Defence of Idolatry: Residual Catholic Culture and the Protestant Assault on the Sensuous in Early Modern England,” in _Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism_ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 27-51.

widely expunged, though these measures were far from consistently successful. The formal royal proclamation announcing the Injunctions, dated 19 July 1559, reads as follows:

Also, that they shall take away, utterly extinct, and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindles, and rolls of wax, pictures, paintings, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glasses, window, or elsewhere within their churches and houses.

John Jewel was one of the bishops who oversaw these royal commissions, and he attests that the iconoclasm was indeed directed against crosses, which, he says in a letter to his longtime mentor, the Italian reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli, “we have every where broken in pieces.” Likewise,

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49 *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, *The Later Tudors (1553-1587)*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, C.S.V. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 123. This proclamation is number 460, item 23. The virulence of the proclamation, Hughes and Larkin note, was tempered by later ones, for example “Prohibiting Destruction of Church Monuments” (19 September 1560) and “Enforcing Peace in Churches and Churchyards” (30 October 1561; issued again after 1578). See *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, *The Later Tudors*, 146-148, 177-179, and 435, respectively. These proclamations are numbered 469, 486, and 635. None of them, however, bans iconoclasm outright, at most proscribing “the breaking or defacing of any parcel of any monument, or tomb, or grave [...] or to break any image of Kings, princes, or noble estates of this realm, or of any other that have been in times past erected and set up for the only memory of them to their posterity in common churches and not for any religious honor, or to break down or deface any image in glass windows in any church without consent of the ordinary” (147).

the recusant Thomas Stapleton comments on the destruction of crosses, saying of the iconoclasts, “they toke away the Crosse and image of our Sauiour. […] Hetherto the Crosse hath boren rule, and we haue allwaies had it before our eies. But now awaye with the sight and remembraunce of it” (153r-v). For Stapleton, the cross was no longer ubiquitous on the English cultural landscape.

Such iconoclasm was directed against crosses because of their theological import, yet for Elizabethans the image carried politico-religious significations as well. Even a staunch opponent of cross-images like John Jewel, for example, could not fail to appreciate the usage of the cross as a political insignia: “Christian Princes this day vse the same Crosse in their Armes, & Banners, bothe in peace, & in warre, of diuers formes, and sundrie colours, as in token, they fight vnder the banner of Christe.” Yet in insisting upon the broad “Christian” dimensions of the “token,” Jewel is begging the question in that for all practical purposes he is making a polemical claim, one that is tantamount to a redefinition of the insignia, since it was well known among Elizabethans that crosses on banners traditionally signified affinities and ties to Rome, and that includes the cross of Saint George. For example, insignia like the red cross were traced to alliances with the papacy from the time of the Crusades, at least as their history was recounted in popular works such as The Book of Martyrs, where John Foxe delineates, for instance, how the

51 Thomas Stapleton, A Fortresse of the Faith First planted amonge us englishmen, and continued hitherto in the universall Church of Christ. The faith of which time Protestants call, PAPISTRY (Antwerpe: John Laet, 1565).

52 Jewel, A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answeree, 501. Similarly, the reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli, who was not as iconoclast-minded as Jewel, comments in The Common places, trans. Anthonie Marten ([London: Henry Denham and Henry Middleton],1583), 349: “if it be lawfull for a man to beare in armes the badge of his owne familie; it is also lawfull for him, by the signe of the crosse, to professe Christian religion.”
various “Christian princes” joined together in taking up the sign of the cross as a “mark” of their allegiance with Pope Clement III before their invasion of the Holy Land.  

Besides awareness of the cross’s link to the Crusades, there is widespread evidence that Elizabethans were cognizant of the fact that the cross-image continued to convey Roman overtones, even during their own historical epoch when the image, paradoxically, remained in use as an English military standard. For example, in Christopher Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris* (1592) the Duke of Guise and the other perpetrators of the atrocities committed against the Huguenots in the year 1572 are depicted wearing “white crosses on their burgonets” (iv.30), a badge intended as a marker of their allegiance to the “Catholic faith of Rome” (xiv.52) and also probably alluding, anachronistically, to the French Catholic League instituted by Guise in the

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53 Foxe, *TAMO*, 1576 edition, 260:

Then in the dayes of pope Cleme iii. (newes and sorrow growing dayly for the losse of Palestina, and destruction of the Christians) K. Henry of England, & Phillip the french king, the duke of Burgundy, the Earle of Flaunders, the Earle of Campania, with diuers other Christian Princes, with a generall consent: vpon S. Georges day, tooke the marke of the crosse vpon them, promising together to take their voyage into the holy land. At which tyme the storyes say, the king of England receiued first the redde crosse, the French king tooke th[e] white crosse, the Earle of Flaunders the greene crosse, & so other princes diuersly, diuers coulors: therby to be discerned euery one by his proper crosse.

The anecdote as cited here has been emended by Foxe, who reverses the application of white and red crosses to England and France, respectively, which is the order that occurs in his sources. See Giles Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 77. Also, Constable dates the first generic use of the cross as “the characteristic mark of crusading” to Pope Urban II and the year 1098 (63). See, too, C. Field, “Under Many Flags,” *The Navy and Army Illustrated: A Pictorial Record of the World’s News* 11 (29 DEC 1900): 375-376, who traces the “St. George’s Cross” to the time of Richard I and “the white red-crossed surtouts or ‘jacks’ worn by the English crusaders to distinguish them from their foreign allies” (375).

year 1576. Although the cross here is white, other Elizabethan texts attest that red crosses in particular were also thought to delineate association with Rome.

In *The Booke of Honor and Armes* (1590), for example, the red cross is noted as the insignia of several Catholic continental orders of chivalry, including the knights of “Calatrava,” “Montesio,” “Sainct Mary,” and “San Steffano.” In *A Notable Discourse of the Happinesse of This Our Age* (1578), the linkage with Rome is emphasized as the preeminent connotation of the red cross, seemingly to the exclusion of other significations, even its relation to Christ, as it is described as having been appropriated by “papists,” who falsely believe that because of its connection to the Roman church, it has “no lesse force and might in it to abolishe and put away sinne than the crosse of our Lorde and Sauiour Jesus Christ.” Here a contrast is made between the Roman cross and the true Christian cross.

Similarly, in another text from 1578, the relation with Rome is averred in that the Spanish Conquistador Hernando Cortés is said to have sailed under a flag (an “ensign or ancient”) adorned with a “device” consisting of “a redde crosse in the middest, and bordred round with letters, in the Lattine and Spanishe tongs, which signified this in effect: friends, let vs follow the Crosse, and with liuely faith with this standerde we shall obtayne victorie.” Here, the call to “follow the Crosse” appears to establish a metonymic relation between the red cross and the

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57 Johann Rivius, *A Notable Discourse of the Happinesse of This Our Age* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1578), sig. Di"v.

Roman faith, one that is invoked as a kind of *imprimatur* of Cortés’s hope of procuring “victorie” for imperial Spain in the New World, which is to be secured “with this standerde.”

Perhaps because of this association, in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign, some English troops, like those who in 1563 assisted the Huguenots in a failed attempt to keep the Catholic French government out of Le Havre, or Newhaven, apparently refrained from donning the customary red-cross badge as their insignia, but instead wore feathers and scarves for their uniform. The association of the red cross with Rome resonated even further for Elizabethans because of its use on the ships of the Armada in 1588 under the auspices of King Philip II, and due to the imminent national crisis posed by the invasion, the cross’s politico-religious implications turned precipitously ominous for the English. The red cross in question here is the Burgundian cross, a red raguled saltire, or in other words, a jagged, diagonal cross similar to the shape of that of Saint Andrew, which had been instituted as the Spanish national flag by Philip II’s father, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In 1588 this flag was displayed on many, if not all, of the Armada ships and on the uniforms of the “principals” among the Spanish soldiery on board those ships. From the Spanish perspective, the naval invasion of England was a

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60 *Martiall, A Treatyse of the Crosse 1564*, fol. 32\*\*-32\*\*.

61 On English anxiety about the invasion, see Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 110-114.


63 Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle*, 240; also Burghley, Lord Cecil, *The copie of a letter sent out of England*, sig. Gi\*\*.
modern-day Crusade, and the cross banner conveyed the fact that the Armada had been ordained by the pope as a divine instrument in the war against English infidels, with the full pageantry of that papal blessing on public display at the various religious ceremonies that took place at the launching of the Spanish fleet from Lisbon on the date of 25 April 1588.64 Elizabethans may not have known about the events at Lisbon, but they certainly were aware that a papal bull had granted an indulgence to members of the Spanish forces, as the English translation of the bull attests:

The Bull of the holy Crosse newly graunted by our most holy father Gregory the thirteenth, & enlarged with many & very great graces, pardons, faculties and stations for all the Citizens, inhabitants, and all those which remaine in the Realme of Spaine and Ilandes thereabout, of Sicilia and Sardinia, for the aide and assistance of the wars against the faithlesse and heretiques the enemies of our holy faith and Christian religion, which Bulle is for the Sermon of the yeare 1585.65

The full translation of this bull, moreover, is supplemented by footnotes that suggest the “holy Crosse” in the title was far from a benign or indifferent symbol to the English translators: “The Crosse in times past hath been esteemed as we esteeme the gallows, and therefore all maner


65 The Holy Bull, and Crusado of Rome first published by the holy father Gregory the xiii. and afterwards renewed and ratificed by Sixtus the fift (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1588), 19-20.
of sufferance, oppression, shame and ignomie of the worlde is called a crosse. Now whether this [bull] be called a crosse, because they herewith doe persecute and destroy the poore members of Christ, each one may iudge.  

Perhaps because of the bull’s threat to “persecute and destroy” and the concomitant anxiety it caused among the English with regards to Catholic Spain (and the cross), after news of the Armada’s demise finally reached London in September 1588, and the English were fully convinced that the Spanish fleet had indeed been defeated, as part of the celebrations, ensigns bearing the cross of Burgundy, apparently plundered from Spanish ships, were displayed for the public, first at Paul’s Cross on 8 September and the next day at London Bridge. This episode indicates that red crosses per se were fraught with conflicted and even noxious significations for Elizabethans.

Yet it was not only because it was used as the device on the flags of foreigners that the cross became a target of Elizabethan vituperation, but also because its was the chosen emblem of indigenous English anti-Tudor rebels. The first major rebellion occurred in 1536 during the reign of Henry VIII, the so-called Pilgrimage of Grace, an uprising that began in Lincolnshire and spread to Yorkshire and more widely throughout northern England. These rebels adopted as their insignia both the sign of the cross and the badge of the Five Wounds, a quincuncial cross-like device consisting of five images depicting the disembodied hands and feet of Christ with his

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67 On the initial uncertainty about the victory, see Cressy, Bonfires and Bells, 116-118.


Sacred Heart in the middle.\textsuperscript{70} These “bloody” banners are mentioned in Hugh Latimer’s 1536 sermon “At the Time of the Insurrection in the North,”\textsuperscript{71} and in light of the fact that they were revived during the reign of Edward VI at the time of the Western or Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549,\textsuperscript{72} both the cross and the Five Wounds were remembered well into the late sixteenth century as associated with civil disobedience.\textsuperscript{73}

In fact, during the reign of Elizabeth herself, when Charles Neville, earl of Westmoreland, and Thomas Percy, earl of Northumberland, mustered a huge army of about 6000 troops in November 1569,\textsuperscript{74} the ultimately failed insurrection known as the Northern Rising or Rebellion,\textsuperscript{75} the insignia put forth by the rebels were once again those from the Pilgrimage of

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\textsuperscript{73} See, for example, the ballad in Wilfrid Holme, \textit{The Fall and Evill Successe of Rebellion from Time to Time wherein is contained matter, moste meete for all estates to vewe} (London: Henry Binneman, 1572), sig. H iii\textsuperscript{v}; Calfhill, \textit{An Answere to the Treatise of the Crosse} (1565), 113; and Thomas Norton, \textit{A warning agaynst the dangerous practises of papistes and specially the parteners of the late rebellion} (London: John Day, 1569), sig. Hii\textsuperscript{i}.

\textsuperscript{74} In comparison, Sir Thomas Wyatt’s famous rebellion against Queen Mary in 1554 involved 4000 troops. K.J. Kesselring, \textit{The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics, and Protest in Elizabethan England} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5. Four-hundred fifty of the 1569 rebels were executed in January 1570. Dillon, \textit{The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community}, 12.

\textsuperscript{75} For a review of the events, see Kesselring, \textit{The Northern Rebellion of 1569}, 45-90.
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Grace. In the 1577 edition of Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, for example, the following description is given: “Vpon Monday the xiii of Nouember, they [the rebels] went to Durham with their Banners displayd, and to get the more credite among the fauourers of the olde Romish Religion, they had a Crosse with a Banner of the fiue wounds borne before them.” During the uprising, moreover, the image of the red cross also was adopted by the rebels, at least according to a report dated 3 December 1569, recorded in the *Calendar of State Papers*, which indicates that “all their force, both of horse and foot, wear red crosses, as well the priests as others.”

Fears stemming from the Northern Rebellion were not short lived and seemingly lasted for the duration of Elizabeth’s reign, as evidenced from both printed ephemera and official ecclesial documents. Such concern was not without cause, as the events surrounding the 1586

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78 Kesselring, *The Northern Rebellion of 1569*, 67.


Babington Plot would attest, but it is interesting that anxiety about insurrectionists also remained tethered to the image of the cross. In various ballads lampooning the rebellion of 1569, for example, calumny is heaped upon the nominally “puissant men [who] beare a Crosse” for protection, and upon those who “worshippe gaie Crosses in euery towne” and who, consequently, need to be personally reminded by the balladeer that “your Idolles, you asses, are neuer possible/ To saue ye that will not be trew to the Crowne.” Likewise in a pamphlet related to the events of the rebellion, “[the five] woundes and crosses” are presented as definitive badges of “papistes,” whose contumacy is traced to a “naturall humor, affection, and desire” that compels them “to rebel against the Quene, to practise the alteration of her gouernement, the ouerthrow of her estate, the displacing of her counsell, the foysting in of a farre worse in her stead whosoeuer it be, and the destruction of her persone.”

These documents, no matter how sardonic and condemnatory in tone, belie fears about civil discord, which, in turn, target the cross as an object worthy of justifiable disdain and even requisite iconoclasm.

In fact, in the Homily against Disobedience and Wilfull Rebellion, published soon after the Northern Rebellion, in the year 1571, the homilist articulates what he sees as a direct relation

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81 On the Babington Plot and its attempt to usurp the crown, see Anne E. Cummings, “Babington Plot,” in Encyclopedia of Tudor England, vol. 1, 76-79.

82 Tyerman, England and the Crusades, 364.


84 William Elderton, A ballat intituled Northomberland newes wherin you maye see what rebelles do use. Come tomblinge downe come tomblinge down. That will not yet be trewe to the crowne (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1570), [1].

85 Norton, A warning agaynst the dangerous practises of papistes and specially the parteners of the late rebellion, sig. Hii’.
between insurrectionists and idolatry, especially idolatry directed towards cross images: “They [the rebels] litle knowyng what the crosse of Christe meaneth, whiche neyther caruer nor paynter can make, do beare the image of the crosse paynted in a ragge, against those that haue the crosse of Christe painted in their heartes.” As a possible safeguard against rebellion the homilist recommends that the faithful who properly construe the “cross” as a matter of inward devotion (“those that haue the crosse of Christe painted in their heartes”) should shun the “false pretenses” of cross idolators, whom he identifies categorically as “enemies of God, their prince, and countrey.” In other words, for the homilist, good citizens need to avoid the likes of insurgents who misappropriate the cross-image as an illicit banner: “Let no good & godly subiect vpon any hope of victorie or good successe, folowe suche standarde bearers of rebellion.” Here the cross-image is regarded as tantamount to a standard of civil disobedience.

In reality sentiments like those found in the Homily against Disobedience and Wilfull Rebellion, linking rebellion to the cross-image, were also not unsubstantiated, for in the 1580s English recusants enlisted the cross in a program of identity-construction which promoted open resistance against the English political and ecclesiastical establishment. This program, as Anne Dillon has demonstrated in copious detail, glorified martyrdom as the quintessential form of resistance, casting the martyr, Dillon says, as “a banner, a rallying point of identification for the

86 The Second Tome of Homilies ([London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood], 1571), 593.

87 Ibid. Cf. Martin Bucer, A Treatis Declaryng Shewig Dyvers Causes Take Out of the Holy Scriptur of the Senteces of Holy Faders (London: T. Godfray for W. Marshall, 1535), [sig. B viii'], where he interprets the injunction in Hebrews 12:2 to “look upon Christ” as a personal call for an inner, intellectualized faith, an approach which eschews images like the cross: “Let us (I say) have this Jesus nayled faste upon the crosse set up before the eyes of oure mynde as oftentimes as he tryeth us & layeth his crosse upon us by pacyence of trybulations & adversyte” ([sig. B viii']).
English Catholics, a symbol of their own adherence to the Catholic faith and their continued persecution through fines, loss of land and property and their exclusion from influential spheres of English community life.”

For hardline recusants, therefore, the pinnacle of self-identity was to suffer and even die for the faith at the hands of the English state.

Yet if martyrdom was the “banner” of self-identification, the cross was its emblematic device. For example, shortly after the Babington plot failed in 1586, William Cardinal Allen, the founder of the English seminary at Douai and a chief spokesperson for Elizabethan recusants, published a pamphlet in which he singles out the cross as the exclusive emblem of those who would espouse the civil disobedience that he recommends as the duty of the faithful:

And therwith perceiue, that those that breake with God, cannot claime any bonde or oth or fidelitie of them that were their subiectes. And least of al, of christian Knightes, & Gentlemen of armes: the principal institution and profession of al such noble orders being, for defence of the true Catholike, & Apostolike faith, and to be sworne aduersaries, and persecutors of Gods enimies: the Crosse and Cognissaunce they weare protesting the same.

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90 For a discussion of the pamphlet, see Lowers, *Mirrors for Rebels*, 60-61.

For Allen, the admonition to wear “the Crosse and Cognissaunce” had been taken up in a most exemplary way in 1581 and 1582 by a dozen “sworne aduersaries” of the Elizabethan religious establishment, whom he celebrates in *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of XII. Reuerend Priests* (1582). In this hagiographical narrative, the cross makes several appearances in the accounts of the twelve martyred clerics, where it is sometimes identified in the printed marginalia as the “Sauiours banner.” In the case of the Jesuit Edmund Campion (1540-1581), executed 1 December 1581, the martyr is depicted on his way to Tyburn, bowing down and paying homage to the landmark cross at Cheapside: “When he came by the Crosse in Chepe, in the best maner he could being pinyoned, He christianly made the signe of our Sauiour vpon his brest: and with like humilitie, deeply bent his bodie for reuerence towards Christs image there.” In this account, Campion’s ostentatious adoration of the same public cross which had been vandalized by iconoclasts less than six months before is likely intended as an exemplary model of civil disobedience which all the faithful, not just martyrs, could imitate in a practical way, since anyone could simply bless themselves every time they passed such a public cross.

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94 Allen, *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of XII. Reuerend Priests*, sig. 57. A printed note in the margin reads, “He doth reuerence to the CROSSE which in these daies there, is odious”
Allen also relates that soon after Campion’s death, his act of devotion was mimicked by fellow Jesuit Alexander Briant (1556-1581), who opted, however, for his own personal cross “banner,” which *en route* to his sentencing, he made “of such wodd as he could gett, which he caried with him openly.”95 Similarly, the secular priest William Filbie (c.1555-1582), we are told, tried to smuggle a simulacrum of the cross to the actual place of execution, although any hope he may have harbored for matching Campion’s dramatic expression of devotion was foiled.96

After that one of the Sherifes men standing in the carte with *M Filbie*, said vnto him, what hast thou there in thy handkercheefe, and therewithal taking the handkercheefe from him, found a little Crosse of wodde with in it, which he holding vp in his handes said, ô what a villainous traitour is this, that hath a Crosse, diuerse times repeating it, and diuers of the people saying the same. Wherevnto *M. Filbie* answered nothing, onely smiling at them.97

Here, Filbie’s little wooden cross, although still hidden away, is nonetheless so definitively an expression of civil resistance that it is immediately construed by the sheriff, and apparently by

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95 Allen, *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of XII. Reuerend Priests*, sig. 88. The printed marginalia reads, “He was no more ashamed of this his Saviours banner, then of his crowne, the which he made shift to shaue.”

96 Similarly, according to Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 362, “Thomas More carried to the scaffold a small red cross.”

97 Allen, *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of XII. Reuerend Priests*, sig. 112. The printed marginalia is the same as that for Briant, sig. 88.
the “diuers” bystanders as well, not as a religious token, but as a sign that Filbie was “a villanous traitour” against the English state.  

All three of the martyrs Campion, Briant, and Filbie, were educated at the English College at Douai founded by Allen, and, therefore, in their training for the priesthood would have been schooled in the same program of civil disobedience which encouraged martyrdom as the fullest expression of English recusant self-identity. Allen himself gives articulation to this “program” in An apologie and true declaration of the institution and endeavours of the two English colleges, the one in Rome, the other now resident in Rhemes against certaine sinister informations giuen vp against the same (1581), where he attempts to “iustifie our intentions against al our adversaries” and “our needeful offices towards our native Countrie.”

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98 Allen in all likelihood adds the detail of the sheriff’s “misinterpretation” of the religious object as a means of demonstrating one of the fundamentals in his construction of the Elizabethan recusant martyr-narrative: “charges against the priests were religious ones masquerading as civil ones.” Dillon, The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 91. Nevertheless, I would argue that the detail corroborates my claim that for Elizabethans the cross bore politico-religious significations connoting affiliation with Rome.


102 Allen, An apologie and true declaration of the institution and endeavours of the two English colleges, the one in Rome, the other now resident in Rhemes against certaine sinister informations giuen vp against the same (Mounts in Henault [Rheims : Jean de Foigny?], 1581), sig. Aii°.
the English colleges are intended to prepare seminarians, much like combatants in a civil conflict, for sacrificing themselves and their own well-being on behalf of their “duetiful servise to God and the Church of England”:103

Remember how many of the Nobilitie and others, in al Nations, haue aduentured their persons, frendes, and posteritie, to aduance some particular faction against their owne Countries, neuer atchieued without infinite bloudshed and calamitie. In al these quarels, be they iust or vniust, so many of al degrees to be ready to suffer al the extremities of death and ignominie, euerly man for his Prince, many for frendes, thousands for mere fantasies and falsehod: and shal none suffer for our Sauiour, for the Church our mother, for our brethrens saluation? shal we thinke it strange to haue three or foure hundred ready to die for Gods cause, to suffer for the best and most honorable quarel of al other that man can haue in this life? that Christ should haue some souldiars of al orders, that can be content to lose lands, goods, and life for his sake, in this spiritual fight of patience and toleration, when the world hath so many?104

Allen’s clarion call for the seminarians “to be ready to suffer all the extremities of death and ignominie” and “to haue three or foure hundred ready to die for Gods cause,” in other words, to

103 Allen, An apologie and true declaration of the institution and endeuours of the two English colleges, sig. Aiili

104 Allen, An apologie and true declaration of the institution and endeuours of the two English colleges, fol. 115"
adhere to the program of martyrdom, did not go unheeded, despite the 1571 Act against Fugitives over the Sea, which was intended to stem the tide of English exiles entering the college at Douai, and despite the executions of about 125 priests during the reign of Elizabeth I, including 112 who were educated in the five English seminaries on the continent.

At the English College in Rome, Elizabethan priests who had been tortured and killed in the early 1580s, including Campion and Briant, were memorialized in the college chapel as part of a cycle of murals depicting the history of the church in England. The murals were fully intended to indoctrinate seminarians in the same program of identity-construction articulated by recusant leaders like Allen, and as such, the murals did not fail to emphasize the cross. The thirty-six frescoes were commissioned by the Jesuits who administered the college, and the

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105 13 Elizabeth, c. 3: “If any born within this realm, or made free denizen, hath departed or shall depart the realm without the Queen’s licence under the great or privy seal, and shall not return again within six months after warning by proclamation, he shall forfeit to the Queen the profits of all his lands during his life, and also his goods and chattel. The like penalty he shall sustain, which having licence shall not return within six months after his licence expired. The offender shall have restitution upon submission. Fraudulent assurances made by fugitives of their lands and goods to deceive the Queen, shall be void.” William David Evans, et al., A Collection of Statutes connected with the General Administration of the Law, 3rd ed., vol. 6 (London: W.H. Bond, 1836), 231.


109 Dillon, The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 180; also, Kesselring, The Northern Rebellion of 1569, 173.
project was carried out to completion in the year 1583 by the Italian painter Niccolò Circignani (1517/1524-c.1596), also known as Il Pomarancio. Although Circignani’s frescoes were destroyed by fire in the 1780s, the originals were copied in a set of engravings by Giovanni Battista Cavalieri (also called “de Cavalleriis”), first published as a folio volume in 1584, titled the *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (*The Trophies of the English Church*) and commonly called the *Trophaea*.

In its promotion of martyrdom, the *Trophaea* was no doubt intended as a counterpoise to illustrated reformist martyrologies like John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. The engravings were designed according to a method devised in the 1570s by the Jesuit Jerome Nadal (1507-1580) while composing his *Evangelicae historiae imaginis, adnotationes et meditationes* (1595), in which each individual picture presents several related scenes marked by a capital letter and corresponding to written captions at the bottom. The method bears some resemblance to the

**References**


tradition of *ars memorativa*, which can be described as a “a virtual walk through imagined rooms, a progression from object to object, and by extension, from idea to idea.” So the engravings serve a pedagogical and meditative purpose, and readers probably committed the images to memory or copied them into their own notebooks for private consideration and study, just as the students did the frescoes in the English College.

In the *Trophaea*, the centrality of the cross in the program of identity-construction is fully on display, as the cross appears in more than a dozen of the engravings, either as an instrument of torture *per se* or as an image of one kind or another, be it apparition, statue, ensign, or badge. In fact, the very first plate in the series calls attention to the cross as having an intrinsic relation to Christ and his church. This illustration, commonly known as “The Martyrs’ Picture” and the

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119 The caption beneath the plate reads, “Cum Anglis toto terrarum orbe unicum templum Catholicum relictum sit, idq[ue] Romae S[anctissi]me Trinitati Sacrum, cuius in Summa ara haec tabula conspicitur; merito in illo suorum cum priscae, tum huius aetatis martyrum certamina exprimi curarunt: ut alios ad laudes, precesq[ue], se uero etiam ad parem animi constantiam, maiorum et sociorum exemplis, excitarent” (“Since for the English only one Catholic church remains in the whole world, and that is in Rome the Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity, of which on the high altar this painting is shown; rightly in it they have taken care to express the struggles of their own martyrs, both of old and of this age, so that by the examples of their elders and fellow associates, they might arouse others to praise and prayer themselves and even to equal constancy of soul.”) Giovanni Battista de Cavalleris, *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea sive sanctor[um] martyrum, qui pro Christo Catholicaeq[ue] fidei asserenda antiquo recentioriq[ue] persecutionum tempore, mortem in Anglia subierunt, passiones Romae in Collegio Anglico per Nicolaum Circinianum depictae* (Rome: Bartholomew Grassi, 1584), plate 2.
only one in the series for which the original fresco is still extant today,\textsuperscript{120} presents the triune god as its main theme, the dove of the Holy Spirit resting above the head of a cruciform Christ, whose body is limp, eyes closed, and arms outstretched, supported by the hands of the Father, whose own head is framed by a triangle-shaped halo (see fig. 1.1). The primary figures of the Trinity are surrounded by angels, but the English martyrs St. Thomas Becket and St. Edmund appear as well, at the bottom in either corner of the panel, their figures nearly equal in size to those of the Father and Son above them. They are depicted kneeling on terrain which is wild and unkempt, outside the walls of a temple precinct, inside of which a church building is visible in the distance via a classic use of perspective, through the openings of several city gates. In the foreground, conspicuously present are the abandoned remnants of iconoclasm, including a displaced capital from a Greco-Roman column and a toppled statue of the cross. The primary lesson of the picture is clear: death by martyrdom is an imitation of Christ’s death on the cross.\textsuperscript{121}

But there is another, collateral message at work here, too: the Roman religion must be restored to its rightful place inside the precincts of the English church, and the image of the cross, because of its linkage to Christ, must once again be positioned above that church as its necessary symbol.

\textsuperscript{120} The extant painting, however, differs somewhat from the engraving in the \textit{Trophaea}. Dillon, \textit{The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community}, 225. It is also the only image in the series not originally painted by Circignani, but by Durante Alberti. See Carol M. Richardson, “Durante Alberti, The Martyrs’ Picture and the Venerable English College, Rome,” \textit{Papers of the British School at Rome} 73 (2005): 223-263.

\textsuperscript{121} Dillon, \textit{The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community}, 227-229; and Richardson, “Durante Alberti, The Martyrs’ Picture and the Venerable English College, Rome,” 263.
Several of the plates in the *Trophaea* incorporate the cross into the various scenes of martyrdom in ways that promote the cross cult as a duty of the English faithful. In an engraving representing episodes from the life of Becket, for example, the martyr is depicted in one scene, genuflecting before an altar cross at the moment of his assassination in the cathedral in the year
In the same scene, several other crosses appear, too, including the embossed design on the face of the altar itself, the embroidered badge at the bottom of the archbishop’s stole, and a processional cross in the hand of a nearby acolyte. The appearance of these several crosses serves to corroborate the martyr’s personal devotion to the image, but it also intimates that an environment of holiness is one where the cross-image abounds. In another plate in the series, the child martyrs St. William of Norwich and St. Hugh of Lincoln are depicted according to their twelfth- and thirteenth-century legends, nailed to crosses, while their sides are being pierced by the lances of their persecutors, scenes that mimic Calvary so closely that without the explanatory captions which accompany them, they could easily be mistaken for the crucifixion of Christ himself. The import of the mimicry is that the closest way to imitate Christ is through the cross.

Finally, in a plate portraying St. Alban, the first Christian martyr from pre-Anglo-Saxon Britian, the primary scene is highly reminiscent of the accounts of the Elizabethans Briant and Filbie with their gallows’ crosses, though it is far more infused with the miraculous. Here we find Alban kneeling before his executioners, having already been decapitated, the wound in his

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neck still bleeding profusely, yet wondrously he continues to grip an upright cross-statuette, which, in turn, is doused with his own blood.\textsuperscript{126} The macabre scene is hardly understated in its promotion of the cross and the Christian responsibility to honor cross-images, positing the cross as an enduring reminder, bloodstained as it has been, of all those who in imitation of Christ have given up their lives for the English church.

Besides its promotion of the cross in its relation to English martyrs, the \textit{Trophaea} also presents the cross as an image that definitively associates the English church with Rome. The most dramatic engraving in this regard shows the Roman emperor Constantine at the moment he first sees the apparition of the cross in the sky above the Milvian Bridge before his battle with Maxentius in the year 312.\textsuperscript{127} In this plate, Constantine sits upon his horse, surrounded by his soldiers who carry banners bearing the acronym \textit{S.P.Q.R.} (\textit{Senatus Populusque Romanus} – “The Senate and People of Rome”) (see fig. 1.2).\textsuperscript{128} Constantine’s hands are folded prayerfully, and his head is lifted up to the heavens where a cross appears shining down from the clouds. The scene is no doubt intended to gainsay iconoclastic-minded Elizabethans who argued that the sign

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\item \textsuperscript{126} Cavalleriis, \textit{Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea}, plate 5.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Cavalleriis, \textit{Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea}, plate 7.
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which appeared to Constantine was never a cross-image in the first place, but an alphabetic sign, the overlapping \textit{chi rho}, that is, the first two letters in the Greek word \textit{Christos},\textsuperscript{129} claims which, however polemical, were solidly based in early Christian sources like Lactantius.\textsuperscript{130}

The caption for the scene in the Constantine panel reads, “Constantine, born in England (\textit{Anglia}) and there made emperor, with the Cross seen from heaven, hears, ‘In this sign you will conquer,’ and with Maxentius overcome, he liberates Rome.”\textsuperscript{131} The description of Constantine as “born in England and there made emperor” stems from a tradition that linked the Roman to the city of York, where he was said to have been crowned emperor after his father Constantius’s death.\textsuperscript{132} The myth of the emperor’s birthplace in Britain, however, is entirely apocryphal, yet it

\textsuperscript{129} See, for example, Fulke, \textit{A Rejoinder to John Martiall’s Reply}, 140. Fulke cites Rufinus’s \textit{Life of Constantine} as his source, although Rufinus actually does mention a cross elsewhere, in his Latin translation of Eusebius, \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica secundum translationem quam fecit Rufinus}, ed. Theodor Mommsen (1908; rptd. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) 9.8.829: “exin signum, quod in caelo sibi fuerat demonstratum, in militaria vexilla transformat ac labarum, quem dicunt, in speciem crucis dominicae exaptat et ita armis vexillis que religionis instructus adversum impiorum arma proficiscitur” (“[Constantine] then transformed the sign which had been shown to him in the sky into military banners and a standard, which they say, he fashioned into the appearance of the lord’s cross, and thus equipped with the arms and banners of religion he set out against the army of the pagans”).

\textsuperscript{130} Lactantius, \textit{De Mortibus Persecutorum (Die Todesarten der Verfolger)}, ed. Alfons Stadele (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2003), 202 [44.4-6]: “Commonitus est in quiete Constantinus, ut caeleste signum dei notaret in scutis atque ita proelium committeret. Fecit, ut iussus est, et transversa \textit{Χ} litera, summo capite circumflexo Christum in scutis notat. Quo signo armatus exercitus capit ferrum” (“Constantine was warned in his sleep to mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields and thus engage in the battle. He did as commanded and, with the crossed letter “\textit{Χ}” [\textit{chi}], the top capital curved around [for the \textit{rho}], he marked Christ on their shields. Armed with this sign the army took up the sword”). Translation is mine.

\textsuperscript{131} Cavalleriis, \textit{Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea}, plate 7: “Constantinus in Anglia natus ibiq[ue] Imperator creatus, uisa Cruce de caelo audit In hoc Signo Vinces. et Maxentio superato Romam liberat.”

\textsuperscript{132} On the coronation at York, see Timothy D. Barnes, \textit{Constantine and Eusebius} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 27 and 298. It is mentioned too in Jerome’s translated
enjoyed widespread popularity in early modern England, though the historicity of calling the locale Anglia as opposed to Britannia is altogether anachronistic, as it would have been even for Elizabethans. In the Trophaea, however, disregard for the correct historical geographical nomenclature allows for the Constantine legend, along with the image of the cross itself, to be reappropriated as a divinely bequeathed, common inheritance of both the Roman and English churches.

Furthermore, in another scene shown in the same plate, Constantine kneels submissively before the Roman pontiff Sylvester, his head bowed in preparation for baptism, a portrayal which
no doubt conveyed a loaded polemical message for Elizabethans. For in the 1563 edition of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, the identification of the queen with the emperor is strongly insinuated in that the very first words of the dedication to Elizabeth speak of “Constantine, the greate and mightie Emperour, the sonne of Helene an Englyshe woman of this youre Realme and countrie (most Christian and renowned Pryncesse Queene Elizabeth).” The identification is made even more pronounced by the illustrated initial capital letter *C* in the word *Constantine*, in which the arms of the c-curve encircle a pictorial inset which depicts Elizabeth enthroned, sword in hand, and a prostrate figure of a pope at her feet to her right, wearing a tiara and grasping his Petrine keys, with an angel above his head forthrightly displaying the queen’s royal shield. The illustration thus interlocks Elizabeth and Constantine, matching them as two secular rulers who exercised supreme authority in a Christian realm. In contrast to this Erastianism, the Constantine plate in the *Trophaea* sends the message that the emperor, although the recipient of the divine favor of the cross, was never one who, like the Tudors, tried to usurp ecclesiastical power from the bishop of Rome. The engraving thus recalibrates the cross, turning it into a sign of testimony against the Elizabethan state, whose claims of hegemony over the English church, recusants believed, went hand-in-hand with animosity towards the Roman church.


136 For the woodcut of the illustrated initial *C* with inset of queen Elizabeth I, see Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1563), sig. Bi'. The same illustrated initial *C* appears in the dedications to Elizabeth in the 1570 and 1576 editions, but all mention of Constantine is gone, and the *C* is used for the word *Christ* instead.

137 On Constantine and Elizabethan propaganda, see Strong and Dorsten, *Leicester’s Triumph*, 47.
This propagandist message is corroborated by the very next panel in the series, the legend of Constantine’s mother St. Helena and the Invention of the Holy Cross. In this engraving, Helena is shown in one scene standing above a ditch, embracing a cross in the crook of her arm almost maternally, while two other partially visible crosses are passed up to her from a gaping hole in the earth (see fig. 1.3). The caption for the scene reads, “St. Helena, daughter of King Cole of England and mother of the emperor Constantine, orders the cross of Christ to be dug up in Jerusalem.” The naming of Helena as a native of England (which once again, as in the case of Constantine, is both apocryphal and anachronistic), in conjunction with her simultaneous identification as the mother of the first Christian emperor, effectively collapses any unwanted distance between England and Rome, at least in terms of any politico-religious pedigree. Moreover, there is an interplay in the panel between written word and pictorial image that creates the aura, too, that the “English” princess is not only mater of the Christian emperor, but of the cross cult as well, since the gaping hole before which she stands is demonstrably vaginal and womb-like, and the cross in her arms like a child. In other words, with Helena as its alma mater, the cross cult itself is envisioned here figuratively as the progeny of England.

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139 Cavalleris, *Ecclesiae Anglicaee Trophaee*, plate 8: “S. Helena Coeli Regis Angliae filia, Constantini Imperatoris mater Hierosolymis Christi Crucem effodi iubet.”

140 Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend*, 12.
The two panels devoted to Constantine and Helena also celebrate a thaumaturgic quality in the cross, which elsewhere in the *Trophaea* is translated into the use of the cross as an English ensign of war. In the case of the Helena engraving, the caption tells us that the “true” (*vera*) cross is discernible from among the three she has unearthed by means of a miraculous healing which
the cross induces. In the Constantine engraving, however, the cross’s miraculous nature becomes suffused also with martial overtones, since the emperor is told, “In this sign you will conquer.” In some of the other engravings in the cycle, this thaumaturgic and even apotropaic capacity seems to be harnessed in the representation of the cross as a military standard.

For example, in a scene depicting Saint Germanus the cross is cast in just such a way. The caption reads, “St. Germanus, a Gallic bishop, puts to flight foreign enemies in England by means of the sign of the cross, and by chanting litanies and the word Alleluia.” The “sign of the cross” in this instance appears to be missing from the corresponding picture, but what is not missing are the battle flags of Germanus’s army. In fact, in the very next plate in the cycle, similar battle flags, here representing the army of “St. Edwin, the first Christian king of the Northumbrians in England,” are prominently displayed, and each is conspicuously decorated with the sign of the cross in a manner highly reminiscent of, if not duplicating, the military standard of Elizabethan England (see fig. 1.4).

Cavalleriis, Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea, plate 8: “E tribus inuentis Crucibus, Machario episcopo suadante, quae uera Christi sit curationis miraculo dignoscitur” (“From the three discovered crosses, at the suggestion of Macharius the bishop, that which is the true one of Christ is figured out by means of a miracle of healing”). This episode can be found, for example, in Rufinus, Eusebii Caesariensis Historia Ecclesiastica: Rufini continuatio, ed. Th. Mommsen, (1908; rptd. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 10.8.970.


Once again, the murals belie a certain historical fuzziness, since Germanus was actually fighting for the Britons against the Saxons and Picts. In other words, at the time of Germanus, Britain was not yet “England,” and the ancestors of the English (i.e., the Anglo-Saxons) were still foreign invaders. See the account in Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, Bk. 1, ch. 17-21; also, Stapleton, trans., The History of the Church of Englande, fol. 24r-29r. In these accounts, there is no mention of a cross.

Cavalleriis, Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea, plate 11: “S. Edwinus Northumbriorum in Anglia primus Rex Christianus.” In Bede, no mention is made of Edwin in connection with the cross.
In the *Trophaea*, in other words, an attempt is made at giving an etiological explanation for the origins of the Elizabethan cross flag. For in the subset of images, from the Constantine plate through that of Saint Edwin (plus another showing Saint George which I will discuss below), there is a progression, a kind of mini-cycle concerning the cross, which articulates an evolution in the way the “English” came to understand the inherent power in the cross-image. The apotropaic capability of that image is first recognized by the “English” in the divine revelation to Constantine (plate 7). Once that capability becomes known, the cross is embraced by them as a people, who are figuratively represented by *mater* Helena (plate 8). The apotropaic cross is then brought into *Anglia* itself and put to use in the battlefield by the foreign-born bishop Germanus (plate 10). Finally, Edwin becomes the first English monarch *per se* to fly the cross as a battle standard in the native land (plate 11), and because that standard looks so much like the ensign utilized in the sixteenth century, the overarching visual purport of the subset of plates is that the cross on the Elizabethan battle flag is rooted in the same heavenly cross which appeared to Constantine under the auspice, “In this sign you will conquer.”

Of course, all crosses, as “The Martyrs’ Picture” attests, are rooted in Christ. Moreover, the concept of the cross as an instrument of divine warfare long precedes Constantine and is, in fact, traceable to Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 2:15, where the crucified Christ is identified as
triumphants over “principalities and powers.” This idea of triumph was later expanded into a full-fledged theology by Tertullian (c.160-c.220) in his polemics against Marcion, who allegedly had asserted that the Christ of the gospels, in his compassion, could not be one and the same as the warlike god of the Old Testament. In his apology, Tertullian writes the following:

Realize that Christ also must be understood as a warrior against spiritual enemies, spiritually armed and spiritually warlike, and thus it was that he even fought against a legion of devils; and so concerning this battle the psalm can be understood to have said that he is a mighty lord, a lord potent in battle. For in battling with the final enemy, death, he triumphed through the trophy of the cross.

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148 Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, ed. C. Moreschini (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1971), 230-231 (4.20.4-5) (translation is mine):

Disce et Christum expugnatorem spiritualium hostium spiritualiter armatum et spiritualiter bellicosum intellegendum, atque ita ipsum esse qui cum legione quoque daemonum erat dimicaturus: et ut de hoc bello psalmus possit videri pronuntiasse: dominus validus, dominus potens in bello. Nam cum ultimo hoste, morte, proeliatursus per tropaeum crucis triumphavit.
The Tertullian concept expressed here, reconstituting Christ as the conqueror who “triumphs” over his adversaries by means of “the trophy of the cross,” had by the sixteenth century worked its way securely into English culture. Liturgical formularies like the Sarum Use, for example, include two well-known Good Friday hymns, the *Pange Lingua* and *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt*, both believed to have been originally composed by Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, in the year 569 on the occasion of the acquisition of a relic of the true cross for the monastery in Poitiers.149 The *Pange Lingua* celebrates the “trophy of the cross” (*crucis tropeum*),150 while the more famous *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt*, translated into English by John Lydgate (c.1370-c.1451), conjures the cross in terms of “royal Banerys vnrolled of the kyng/Towarde his Batayle, in Bosra steyned reede./ The Crosse his standart Celestyal of schynyng/With purple Hewe depeynt.”151 In the hymn, the *vexilla* “steyned reede” and painted “with purple Hewe” are the royal banners of Christ the king, yet for the faithful in late sixteenth-century England, they had become the regalia, too, of the Tudor army and navy.

So if we are to follow the logic represented in the *Trophaea*, the reason the red cross appeared on English military banners in the first place, and the reason it still remained on those banners in the 1580s, is precisely because it was considered to be an apotropaic device for the


faithful—“In this sign you will conquer”—an image whose thaumaturgic power derived from the triumphal Christ. Yet the device, as all Elizabethans knew, was also closely tied to the cult of Saint George, patron of England.\footnote{See, for example, John Bossewell, \textit{Workes of Armorie deuyded into three bookes, entituled, the concordes of armorie, the armorie of honor, and of coates and creastes} (London: Richard Tottel, 1572), fol. 24\textsuperscript{r}: “The Armes whiche of olde Heraultes are called Saincte George his Armes, are thus to be blazed, \textit{Latinè, Portat vnum Scutum de Argento cum quadam Cruce plana de Rubio. Anglicè: He beareth a Shielde Argente, thereon a plaine Crosse Gules.”} Therefore, it should come as no surprise that one of the most significant of the thirty-six panels in the \textit{Trophaea} depicts this English patron.

The original fresco of George upon which the engraving was based apparently held a place of prominence in the chapel of the English College in Rome.\footnote{Dillon, \textit{The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community}, 195.} This is very likely due to the fact that the panel brings together the major emphases of the entire cycle of images: martyrdom, the cross, and Englishness. One of the scenes in the George panel shows the saint just as he is about to be slain. The caption reads, “The same [George], with poison consumed, with body torn, with burning shoes clapped on, and having been glutted with lead, his head cut off, unconquered he is crowned as a soldier of Christ.”\footnote{Cavalleriis, \textit{Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea}, plate 14: “Idem Veneno haustum, corpore lacero, ignitis calceis indutiis, plumboq[ue] perfusus, capite praeciso, inviectus Christi miles coronatur.”} Yet it is not in this scene of martyrdom where we find George in his traditional pose in the garb of a \textit{miles Christi}, but instead it is in the primary focal image of the panel. Here George is depicted, as he customarily is, on horseback, clad in armor marked by crosses on his helmet, shield, and cuirass, with a sheathed sword on his left flank and a lance in his right hand, which he is in the act of thrusting into the wide-open gullet of a dragon, which lies coiled on the ground before him (see fig. 1.5). Of course, this image reflects the key scene in the legend when George puts to death the dragon plaguing the
city of Silene, and just as in many accounts of the myth, the princess of Silene, allotted as the
dragon’s next victim, looks on as George defeats his foe.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{155} See, for example, Voragine, “The Life of S. George,” \textit{The Golden Legend (Aurea Legenda)}, vol. 3, trans. William Caxton (1483), 58-61:

Then said S. George: Fair daughter, doubt ye no thing hereof for I shall help thee in the name of Jesu Christ. She said: For God's sake, good knight, go your way, and abide not with me, for ye may not deliver me. Thus as they spake together the dragon appeared and came running to them, and S. George was upon his horse, and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross, and rode hardily against the dragon which came towards him, and smote him with his spear and hurt him sore and threw him to the ground.

The most salient features of the legend as it is presented here, namely the armor marked by the cross and the slaying of the dragon, can also be found in sixteenth-century discussions of Christian spirituality, though not in relation to George himself, but instead in relation to the
cross. For example, in his *Treatyse of the Crosse*, John Martiall construes the cross as a unique “token” of the victory over the forces of evil which Christ accomplished through his passion, and, therefore, he deems it intrinsic to the spiritual lives of Christians. As he says about Christ’s victory on the cross, “Christ hath subdued sinne, conquered the worlde, discomfited the deuil, ransacked hel, broken the brasen gates, and ouerthrown all their pouer by his death uppon the crosse” (fol. 17r). As a result of these events, individual Christians can be sustained, Martiall says, in their own struggles against the powers of “darkness” through their faith in Christ’s triumph, but that faith is expressed most effectively by “the outwarde signe off the Crosse” (fol 17r).

In this vein, Martiall cites certain patristic writers, including John of Damascus and a certain “Martialis” (“one of the 72 disciples sent out by Christ to preach”),156 to establish that the sign of the cross is patently effective in protecting Christians from a variety of evils: “The crosse of our lorde is your inuincible armour against Satan: an helmet warding the head, a cote of fence defending the breast, a targat beating back the dartes of the deuil, a sworde not suffring iniquitie and ghostely assaults of peruerse pouer to approche nerto you” (fol. 15r-v).157 The “inuincible armour” of the cross as described here is strikingly similar to the set of armor found in traditional images of Saint George like that presented in the *Trophaea*. In another passage,

156 The various epistles of Martialis were a common, though apocryphal, authority for sixteenth-century Catholic apologists. See the comments in Calphill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, ed. Gibbings, 67-68.

157 Martiall also quotes the Latin: “Crux domini armatura vestra inuicta contra Satanam, galea custodiens caput, loricae protegens pectus, clypes tela maligni repellens, gladius iniquitatem & angelicas insidias peruersae potestatis sibi appropinquare nullo modo sinens” (fol. 15v). A marginal note says the text can be found in Martialis’s *Epistula ad Burdegalenses*. For a published copy of this letter available in the 1560s, see *Orthodoxographe Theologiae Sacrosanctae ac synceriors fidei Doctores numero LXXVI*, ed. Johannes Herold (Basil: Heinrich Petri, 1555), 272-276.
Martiall quotes the language of John Chrysostom, who also refers to the weaponry of the cross in the context of spiritual warfare with Satan, in this case represented as a dragon: “What suffreth the deuil thinkest thowe, if he see thee hold that sword with which Christ dissolved al his pouer, and withe a greate stroke cut of the dragons head?” (fol. 18v). Once again, despite the obvious similarity, there is no mention of George in this passage: it is about the cross alone, described here as the “sword” by which Christ “cut off[f] the dragons head.” Passages like these show that for Elizabethans like Martiall, the model Christian is a spiritual soldier who must turn to the vexillum of the cross as an image to be revered and trusted in times of tribulation because of its relation to Christ.

In other words, the model Christian is just like Saint George, and for this reason, in the Trophaea a subsidiary caption appears at the bottom of the George panel, which reads, “England has chosen this most famous martyr as a protector for itself, and with very great benefits received in both peace and war, it has always worshipped him very dutifully.” It would seem Edmund Spenser could not have agreed more when he decided upon the Redcrosse Knight as the central character in the first book of his epic, “The Patrone of true Holinesse” and “the true Saint George.”

158 Martiall cites John Chrysostom’s Homily 55, on the gospel of Matthew 16 (fol. 19v), but without supplying the Greek or Latin for this particular sentence. The citation should be Homily 54. See John Chrysostom, Homiliae in Matthaevm, ed. Frederick Field, vol. 2 (Cambridge: In officina academica, 1839), 114.

159 Cavalleriis, Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea, plate 14: “Hunc clarissimum matryrum Anglia sibi protectionem elegit, et maximis beneficiis tum pace tum bello receptis, semper religiosissime coluit.”
CHAPTER 2: THE IMAGE OF THE CROSS AND THE CONTESTED ORIGINS OF ENGLISH IDENTITY

In the year 1565, the English Catholic priest Thomas Stapleton (1535-1598) published *The History of the Church of Englane Compiled by Venerable Bede*, the first translation into modern English of Bede’s eighth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. As various scholars have now convincingly demonstrated, far from being a mere exercise in updating a medieval Latin text into a modern vernacular, Stapleton’s translation of Bede actually played a major role in establishing the parameters of debate in Elizabethan controversies about English religious and national identity as they related to the Anglo-Saxon past.¹ Yet to-date no one has drawn ample, if any, attention to the considerable weight Stapleton placed on the image of the cross and its necessary role—at least as he construed it—in these controversies.² My intention in

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² Heal briefly mentions Stapleton’s focus on the cross in “Appropriating History,” 123-124. It should be noted that this chapter is concerned with bare, empty crosses and not crucifixes, that is, cross images to which the corpus of Christ is affixed, although in the sources the difference is at times either negligible or not made clear. I mainly follow John Martiall in his *A Treatise of the Crosse 1564* (Yorkshire, UK: Scolar Press, 1974), where he provides four definitions of the word.
this chapter, therefore, is to demonstrate the reasons why Stapleton believed so adamantly that the cross was a constituent marker of what it meant to be English, a perspective that contrasted sharply with the historiographical tradition laid down by John Bale, and continued by John Foxe, which attempted to eradicate the cross-image from the history of the English nation and church.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, that the image of the cross was a target of early Elizabethan iconoclasm is without question. In response to these attacks against the cross, Stapleton decides to refute the iconomachs in his translation of Bede, where he emphasizes the cross as a primary symbol of English ecclesiastical and even national identity.

Since late 1559 Thomas Stapleton had been living on the continent along with other Marian clergy and lay academics who had emigrated to the Low Countries, ruled at that time by the Catholic monarch Philip II of Spain, settling mostly in the city of Louvain, where an English Catholic community had already been established by Antonio Bonvisi, friend of Thomas More, as a consequence of the Edwardian religious reforms of 1549, and where the Catholic university, founded by the papal bull of Martin V in the year 1425, had been attracting English students since 1449. These Elizabethan recusants fled England in the face of the Elizabethan Settlement, including the vexillum crucis, that is, “the banner or signe of the crosse” (fol. 23v). This study is concerned with this fourth connotation.


which overturned the religious affiliation of the English church for the third time in twelve years.\(^5\) An official, and arguably predetermined, disputation had been held at Westminster in March 1559, in which the Marian bishops failed to make their case against reformers for maintaining an English church in allegiance with Rome.\(^6\) The reformed members of Elizabeth’s parliament consequently took immediate steps to assure that the English Church would recapitulate Henrician and especially Edwardian reforms.\(^7\) Once again the English monarch assumed supreme ecclesiastical authority. The 1559 Act of Supremacy in fact mandated that all persons who were clergy or operatives of the state, and even those who were seeking university degrees, were to swear the Oath of Supremacy, subjugating themselves to the monarch in temporal and also in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters.\(^8\) Many of those who refused to take the oath joined the Catholic community in Louvain, including a sizeable contingent of academics from Oxford.\(^9\) For all practical purposes the leaders of this community organized an English

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\(^8\) McConica, “The Catholic Experience,” 50.

\(^9\) This contingent included Nicholas Sanders, Stapleton, and William Allen, who himself would found a new headquarters for English Catholic intellectual life with the establishment of the English College at Douay in 1568. Others included Thomas Harding, Nicholas Harpsfield, and
church in exile.\textsuperscript{10} Their activities included a furious book-publishing industry, generating works of religious apology printed mainly in Antwerp, a major printing center in sixteenth-century Europe, secondary only to Venice and Paris, until their presses were banished from the city in 1566 after the infamous Calvinist riots.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, as the intellectual environment at Louvain had been informed by humanist ideals since 1517, many of these religious works were composed in the vernacular, despite the Council of Trent’s censuring of theological texts written in the “vulgar tongue.”\textsuperscript{12} The publication of Stapleton’s translation of Bede’s \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum} was a product of these efforts.\textsuperscript{13}

Stapleton’s \textit{The History of the Church of Englande} is by no means a bare translation of Bede as it is buttressed with interpretative apparatuses that present an “openly Catholic agenda,”

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John Martill. Like Stapleton, many of these academics were “Wykehamists,” having attended the schools founded in the fourteenth century by William of Wykeham, the Winchester School and New College at Oxford. See Highley, \textit{Catholics Writing the Nation}, 27; Southern, \textit{Elizabethan Recusant Prose}, 25-27; and Veech, \textit{Dr. Nicholas Sanders}, 6, 85.
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It should be noted that their proximity to Antwerp may have actually enhanced the recusant enterprise, as the publishing industry in London at the time was provincial in comparison. See Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, \textit{Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26-29.
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\textsuperscript{12} Wooding, \textit{Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England}, 183-184.
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arguing for a Roman and Saxon origin of the English church.\textsuperscript{14} In his dedication to Elizabeth I, whom he addresses by her father’s title as “Defendour of the Faith,” Stapleton explains his intentions for exposing “misse informations” which have displaced “the auncient and right Christen faith” (fol. *2\textsuperscript{r}):\textsuperscript{15}

In this history it shall appeare in what faith your noble Realme was christened, and hath almost these thousand yeres continewed: to the glory, the enriching of the crowne, and great welth and quiet of the realme. In this history your highnes shall see in how many and weighty pointes the pretended refourmers of the church in your Graces dominions have departed from the patern of that sounde and catholike faith planted first among Englishemen by holy S. Augustin our Apostle, and his vertuous company, described truly and sincerely by Venerable Bede, so called in all Christendom for his passing vertues and rare lerning, the Author of this History. (fol. *3\textsuperscript{r})

For Stapleton the aim is to convince Elizabeth and the English people that the origin of their church should be traced directly to the mission sent from Rome by Pope Gregory the Great in the year 596 under the leadership of Augustine (traditionally identified as Augustine of Canterbury). Such an origin would mean that from its inception the English church was affiliated with the Roman church, and this thesis is of utmost importance to Stapleton’s project of translation.

\textsuperscript{14} Robinson, “John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons,” 59.

\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Stapleton, trans., \textit{The History of the Church of Englande Compiled by Venerable Bede} (Antwerp: John Laet,1565). References to Stapleton’s \textit{History} will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.
After the dedicatory letter in *The History of the Church of Englande*, Stapleton offers further prefatory material to support his thesis. Among this material he includes a detailed seven-page list of forty-five items concerning “doctrine” and “ecclesiastical government” under the title “Differences betweene the Primitive Faithe of England Continewed Almost These Thousand Yeres, and the late pretended faith of protestants” (fol. 1v). In presenting this list, Stapleton is most likely responding to the list of doctrinal grievances articulated by John Jewel in his famous Challenge Sermon.16

On 26 November 1559 John Jewel (1522-1571), the newly appointed bishop of Salisbury, delivered the “Challenge Sermon” at St. Paul’s Cross in London.17 Jewel himself was only recently returned from exile on the continent where he and countless other English reformers, much like the Elizabethan recusant Catholic exiles after them, had waited out the Marian persecutions.18 In the tradition of Martin Luther, Jewel dared any “learned” theologian to cite precedent from the “primitive churche” for various ecclesiastical practices, which mainly


18 See Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority*, 15-23. During Mary’s reign English reformers emigrated to the continent, particularly to the cities of Strasbourg, Geneva, Basel, and Zurich. See William P. Haugaard, “Renaissance Patristic Scholarship and Theology in Sixteenth-Century England,” *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 10.3 (1979), 51. Jewel lived in exile in both Strasbourg and Zurich with his former mentor from Corpus Christi College in Oxford, the renowned reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli. In Strasbourg, Jewel was at “the center of a group” of colleagues who would later become leaders in the Elizabethan reform. In Zurich Jewel served as assistant to Peter Martyr who had been appointed Professor of Hebrew in the university there.
concerned the eucharist and papacy, but also the worship of images (fol. 162v-164r). According to Jewel’s written account of the sermon, if acceptable proof could be offered for these practices, twenty-seven in all, Jewel would recant his reformist beliefs.\footnote{20}

If any man alyue wer able to proue, any of these articles, by anye one cleare, or plaine clause, or sentence, ether of the scriptures: or of the olde doctours: or of any olde generall Counsell: or by any example of the primitiue church: I promised then that I would geue ouer and subscribe vnto hym. (fol. 164r)

In other words, for Jewel, legitimate ecclesiastical practices had to have been established within the first six-hundred years of the church’s existence, or as he says, “vntill the tyme of S. Gregory. which was sixe hundred yeares after Christ” (fol. 160r).

The Challenge Sermon, after its initial proclamation, was repeated twice more by Jewel in the spring of 1560, once before the court and again at St. Paul’s Cross, and the widespread fame of the sermon made it impossible for Catholic apologists not to respond, as St. Paul’s Cross was the most influential pulpit in sixteenth-century England.\footnote{21} Jewel’s Challenge Sermon was in

\footnote{19} John Jewel, \textit{The True Copies of the letters betwene the reuerend father in God Iohn Bisshop of Sarum and D. Cole} (London: John Day, 1560). References to Jewel’s Challenge Sermon will be taken from the version in this edition and cited parenthetically. The sermon appears under the following subtitle: “\textit{The copie of a Sermon pronounced by the Byshop of Salisburie at Paules Crosse, the second Sondaye before Ester in the yere of our Lord. 1560. wherypon D. Cole first sought occasion to encounter: shortly set forthe as nere as the authour could call it to remembreance without any alteration or addition}” (fol. 119r).

\footnote{20} For a list of all twenty-seven propositions, see Jenkins, \textit{John Jewel and the English National Church}, 251-252.

\footnote{21} On St. Paul’s Cross, see Kirby, “Signs and Things Signified,” 58-59, 61. In 1562 Jewel published an expansion of the sermon with the \textit{Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae}. Published under
fact the first blow in what has come to be known as the “Great Controversy” as it was the practical cause propelling the Louvain recusants in their voluminous publication of books from 1564 to 1568, that is, in conjunction with their own hopes to restore the Roman faith in England.\(^{22}\)

Jewel’s challenge also motivated Elizabethan religious controversialists to turn to church history in order to substantiate their doctrinal positions.\(^{23}\) The first published reply to Jewel was written by Thomas Harding (1516-1572), the Louvain apologist who over time proved to be Jewel’s primary interlocutor.\(^{24}\) The work was titled *An Answere to Maister Iuelles Chalenge* (1565), and in this response Harding makes extensive use of material from Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*.\(^{25}\) For example, Harding translates copiously from Bede to counter Jewel’s claim that the language used by the “primitive” English church was the vernacular, citing examples in the *Historia* to corroborate that Latin was used in English liturgical practice from at least the time of the Augustinian mission (fol. 87\(^{v}\)-89\(^{r}\)).\(^{26}\) In the very midst of supplying his evidence, the auspices of Elizabeth I’s Secretary of State, William Cecil, the *Apologia* carried the weight of an official state proclamation: “The writing and publication of the *Apology* was a matter of governmental policy—a major facet of the government’s defense of the new Establishment.” Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority*, 55-56; also Kirby, 70.


\(^{24}\) Kirby, “Signs and Things Signified,” 70, 73.

\(^{25}\) Heal, “Appropriating History,” 121.

\(^{26}\) Thomas Harding, *An Answere to Maister Iuelles Chalenge, by Doctor Harding*. 92
moreover, Harding pauses to remark upon the lack of a popular English translation of Bede:

“Because Bedes ecclesiasticall storye is not very common, I have thought good here to recite his own wordes, thus englished” (fol. 89⁰). Not coincidentally, shortly thereafter in October 1565, Stapleton published his translation of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*.²⁷ In the preface to his work Stapleton refers to Bede as a “right lerned and holy Father of Christes churche,” a retort no doubt aimed at Jewel’s demands in the Challenge Sermon for evidence from the “olde doctours,” as Stapleton states elsewhere that his translation is indeed intended to be a rejoinder against “Iuell” and his “stoute chalenge.”²⁸ For Stapleton, *The History* unequivocally proves that the ecclesiastical practices questioned by the likes of Jewel had already been the norm in “the knowen church of Christ” at the time when they were first brought into England, that is, before the era when corruption had allegedly first infected Christianity.²⁹ As he says in his dedication to Elizabeth, “our faith first planted and hitherto continewed amonge us, agreeth and concurreth

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augmented vvith certaine quotations and additions (Antwerp: William Sylvius, 1565). References to Harding’s *Answere to Maister Iuelles Chalenge* will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.


²⁸ Thomas Stapleton, *A Fortresse of the Faith First planted amonge us englishmen, and continued hitherto in the universall Church of Christ. The faith of which time Protestants call, PAPISTRY* (Antwerpe: John Laet, 1565), fol. 10⁰. References to Stapleton’s *A Fortresse of the Faith* will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

²⁹ In *The Fortresse*, Stapleton’s thoughts on the matter involve a certain amount of theological legerdemain: his discussion utilizes Old Testament citations corroborating the unchangeableness of Christ’s church, complemented by a confusing, though largely accurate, digression on the inconsistencies in the time frames used by various Protestant writers for dating the church’s initial period of corruption; for example, he says, Foxe traced it to the year 1000; Jewel, to the year 600; Martin Luther and John Calvin, to the year 500; and Philip Melancthon, to the year 300 (*A Fortresse*, fol. 10⁰-20⁰).
with the practise and belefe of the first vi. c. yeres, the time approved by al mens consent for the right and pure Christianite” (*The History*, *4r*).

In Stapleton’s list of differences between the “primitive faith” and the “protestant,” he addresses matters of doctrine and policy identical to those articulated by Jewel, citing the book and chapter in *The History* where his counterexamples purportedly can be found. In his list, moreover, Stapleton also emphasizes once again the historical argument that “our first Catholik faith we receave of the See of Rome” and that “the Apostles of our faith came from Rome” (fol. l2r). He points to “the later chapters of the first booke, and first of the second” to substantiate this claim. For Stapleton, the passage in *The History* that best represents this initial evangelization of England seems to occur when Augustine and his fellow missionaries make their entrance into Kent at the bidding of the Saxon king Ethelbert. Stapleton renders Bede’s Latin as follows:

> They came not armed with the force of the diuell, but endewed withe the strength of God carying before them in place of a banner, a Crosse of syluer and the image of ower Sauiour paynted in a table, and singing the letanies, prayed bothe for themselues, and also for them to whome and for whose sake they came thether.

(fol. 31r)  

In the margin adjacent to this passage, a printed note is added, asserting without equivocation

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that “our faith begann with Crosse and procession.” The phrase “our faith begann” would seem to suggest, therefore, that the episode is intended to represent the genesis moment of the English church.  

In the earliest edition of Stapleton’s *History*, published in 1565, the same episode is accompanied by an illustration. It shows Augustine in a hooded robe, bearing a banner marked with a depiction of the crucifixion scene, which is attached to a pole headed by a large cross, as he approaches the throne of Ethelbert, attended by several other robed monks (see fig. 2.1). The illustration is described with the following heading: “The first face, shewe, and maner of preaching the gospell to vs Englishmen, by S. Augustin our Apostle, in the presence of Elbert then kinge of kent &c, An. 596” (fol. 31r). In its capacity to convey a watershed moment in the history of the English church, the significance of the illustration for Stapleton, and for his intended audience, should not be downplayed, as it depicts one of only three episodes in the entire 1565 volume selected to be represented by a corresponding illustration. Moreover, as sixteenth-century books were usually bought unbound, images like this one were easily removed from their original packaging—and context—and arguably were

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31 About the same episode, the Catholic John Martiall remarks in *A Treatyse of the Crosse* that “to plante the religion off Christ, they [the members of the Augustinian mission] brought the image and crosse of Christ” (fol. 97r).

32 There were at least two other editions of Stapleton’s *History*, published in Saint-Omers in 1622 and 1626.

33 Heal calls the illustration a “Holbeinesque woodcut” in reference to the work of the Northern Renaissance artist and illustrator Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543). See Heal, “Appropriating History,” 123.

34 The second of the three episodes portrays King Elbert, “the first Christen king of Englishmen” (fol. 52r), and the third, King Oswald and his cross at Heavenfield (fol. 77r), which will be discussed in Chapter 3.
intended to take on a life of their own, becoming independent material objects and conveyors of meaning, capable of spawning, so to speak, their own offspring.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, for example, a “descendant” of the illustration in the Stapleton edition appears in the 1605 edition of Richard Verstegan’s \textit{A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence: in antiquities Concerning the most noble and renowned English nation}.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{36} For the Verstegan illustration, see Verstegan, \textit{A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence} ((Antwerp: Robert Bruney, 1605), 144. \textit{A Restitution} is an apology for the Catholic origins of the English church. On Verstegan, see Robert S. Miola, ed., \textit{Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 210.
Figure 2.1: Illustration in Thomas Stapleton’s *The History of the Church of Englande* (Antwerp: John Laet, 1565), depicting the mission of Augustine before King Ethelbert of Kent in the year 596 (fol. 31r). Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early Modern Books Online*. www.proquest.com.

It is not only in the *History* where Stapleton highlights the Augustinian mission as the origin of the English church. Concurrently with the *History*, he also published a five-hundred-page commentary on his translation, titled *A Fortresse of the Faith First planted amongst us englishmen, and continued hitherto in the universall Church of Christ. The faith of which time Protestants call, PAPISTRY* (1565). In this work, Stapleton maintains that his translation of Bede
proves incontrovertibly that the English church is rooted in the mission from Rome. As he says, he has set forth “the history of Venerable Bede our lerned countreman, touching the primitive church of Englande our dere countre in our countre and mother language, wherein ye have sene what faith we first received, howe, and of whome” (fol. 7r). Again, he points directly to the Augustinian mission: “In the yeare 596 S. Gregory being created Pope continuing in his most godly and charitable zele, directed S. Augustin a lerned monke of Rome, with a fewe other monkes to preache the faith to english men, having before al that time no knowleadg of the gospel” (fol. 70v). He also suggests that his motivation in writing this massive supplement is to provide even further clarification, especially for any of his readers who may still be “deceived,” that the primitive English church was indeed established by the Roman mission and, moreover, that the Roman faith is the one true form of Christianity:

I will also for the furder edifying of my dere deceived countreman (for to Catholikes and right belevers the historye it selfe is sufficient) prove unto you that the faith described in this history, the faith wherein we were first baptized, the faith of all christendome these ix. C. yeares, is the only true christen faith wherein we must and may be saved: to be short. That papistry is the only true Christianite. (fol. 7r)

So for Stapleton, the Roman mission of 596 is the source of the faith with which the English were originally “baptized” and also of “the only true christen” church in England.

In making these claims for a necessarily Roman foundation of the English faith, Stapleton is pitting himself directly against another, and more dominant, tradition laid out by sixteenth-century English church historiographers. In the preface to the reader of The History Stapleton writes that unlike Bede’s account of the origins of the English church, “we haue good cause to suspect the reportes of Bale, of Fox, of Beacon and suche other, whiche are knowen to maintaine a faction and singular opinion lately spronge vp, who reporte thinges passed many hundred yeares before their daies” (3r). According to Stapleton, this other tradition attempts to undermine the apostolic authority of the Augustinian mission, dispatched as it was by Pope Gregory I, by marking it instead as the beginning of the ecclesiastical decay which eventually necessitated the reforms of the sixteenth century. Thus he writes in A Fortresse:

Now protestants haue so well marked this time, that bicause they will be accompted the Apostles of England, they make this great corruption of Christes church to beginne at the point of vi. C yeares, about which time we first receiued the faith. An that blessed man, by whose meanes we came to the knoweleadg and belefe of Christ, they make the first Antichrist. (fol. 70v)

In assailing the belief that “this great corruption” was initiated in the English church around the year 600, a time linked to Gregory I, who is cast as the “first Antichrist,” Stapleton is gainsaying the historiographical framework articulated by the English reformer John Bale. As if to clarify for readers the intended confrontation, in the preface of The History Stapleton designates Bale in the quite common, though less than irenic, mode of sixteenth-century religious controversy as a “venimous spider,” one who draws poison out of history, instead of
honey like a bee (fol. 3v).\textsuperscript{38} Let us turn then to the “spider” Bale himself, as Stapleton’s emphasis on the cross as the true marker of the English church cannot properly be understood without addressing Bale’s own contributions to the debate about the origins of the English church. John Bale (1495-1563) was the first English proponent of the interpretation of the papacy as the historical manifestation of the “antichrist” depicted in the Book of Revelation.\textsuperscript{39} He also has been recognized as the “the first of the English church historians.”\textsuperscript{40} Bale’s initial effort at historiography can be found in an unpublished manuscript titled \textit{Anglorum Heliades} (British Library MS Harley 3838), which recounts the history of the Carmelite order.\textsuperscript{41} Bale had been a Carmelite priest himself until sometime in the 1530s when he began to write plays that increasingly reveal a reformist bent.\textsuperscript{42} Soon his preaching found him in trouble with conservative church authorities and by 1537 in prison. At this point Bale came under the patronage and protection of the reformist minister to Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, who apparently liked some of Bale’s comedies, but when Cromwell was executed during the religious backlash of 1540, Bale, who had recently married, fled with his family to the Low Countries to avoid the fate of Cromwell and other reformers like John Barnes.\textsuperscript{43} He spent the remainder of Henry VIII’s

\textsuperscript{38} I find untenable the claim that Elizabethan Catholic controversialists exhibited a “distaste” for polemics, even if only ostensibly, supposedly adopting “the more eirenic stance of humanist rhetoric.” See Woodard, \textit{Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England}, 193.


\textsuperscript{40} Levy, \textit{Tudor Historical Thought}, 89.


\textsuperscript{42} Happé, \textit{John Bale}, 4-8.

\textsuperscript{43} Happé, \textit{John Bale}, 11; King, \textit{English Reformation Literature}, 5.
reign in exile, living the first six years in Antwerp where he wrote his two great contributions to English ecclesiastical historiography: the *Image of Bothe Churches* (c.1545) and the *Actes of Englysh Votaryes* (1546). After the death of Henry VIII in 1547, Bale returned to Edwardian England, where in 1552 he was appointed as a bishop, an experience he recounts in the autobiographical work *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishoprick of Ossorie in Irelande* (1553). After a second exile on the continent in response to the Marian persecutions, Bale, like John Jewel, returned to England in 1559 and in the aftermath of the Elizabethan Settlement his works were republished in London in 1560.

*The Image of Bothe Churches* is not exactly a history per se, but first and foremost an exegesis of the Book of Revelation, though one which incorporates historical commentary. It has been called the “the first full-length Protestant commentary on Revelation.” Bale’s historical interpretation was highly influential in sixteenth-century England because it “became ingrained in the Renaissance consciousness through assimilation into such major texts as the Geneva Bible, Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, and Book I of *The Faerie Queene.*” For Bale, as he tells the readers in his preface, “knowledge of Saint John’s Apocalypse or Revelation” is a necessity for all Christians, as it is “the very complete sum and whole knitting-up […] of the

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universal verities of the Bible” (36).⁵⁰ According to Bale, foremost among these “verities” is Revelation’s account of the mutual existence of two contending Christian churches, one true and the other false: “Herein is the true Christian church (which is the meek spouse of the lamb without spot) in her right-fashioned colors described; so is the proud church of hypocrites, the rose-colored whore, the paramour of antichrist, and the sinfull synagogue of Satan” (36). Bale emphasizes that for the Christian “citizen” awareness of these two churches is the most valuable “doctrine” to be learned “in the whole scriptures” (37), and in an allusion to The City of God, he writes that “after the true opinion of Saint Augustine, either we are citizens in the new Jerusalem with Jesus Christ, or else in the old superstitious Babylon with antichrist the vicar of Satan” (37). For Bale the existence of the two churches, he says, “is the cause why I have here entitled this book The Image of Both Churches” (36).

The Image of Bothe Churches offers an interpretation of ecclesiastical history in the course of a narration containing what Bale identifies as his “paraphrases,” that is, his exegesis of each chapter of Revelation, and perhaps the most important “paraphrase” for understanding his overall historical outlook can be found in his exegesis of chapter six. In this chapter, the “lamb,” whom Bale identifies with “Christ” and “the son of God” (101), opens several of the “seven seals,” which Bale claims “betokeneth” seven ages “from Christ’s death to the latter end of the world” (101). In lieu of the term ages Bale mostly uses the term estates, and for Bale the sixth estate holds singular importance: “Mark the year, day, and hour, and ye shall wonder at it” (117). When the lamb opens the sixth seal, John envisions “a marvelous earthquake” (Rev. 6:12), and Bale interprets this earthquake as the beginning of the end for the Roman church, as he says, “for

⁵⁰ John Bale, The Image of Both Churches, ed. Gretchen E. Minton (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 36. All references to The Image of Both Churches are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.
the great day of his wrath is come” (116-17). For Bale, the earthquake ushers in the Reformation, and he names its originators as John Wycliff, John Hus, Jerome of Prague, and even Henry VIII (117). In an allusion to Martin Luther whom he names directly, for example, in the printed marginalia of at least one edition, he says the sixth estate is a period of “open verity and evident scriptures” in which “faith in Christ now justifieth without their vain will-works” (120). He adds that the “bishop of Rome” is no longer mistaken for “God’s vicar and head of the church” (120). The end for Rome is near, and at last, in his “paraphrase” of chapter eight, the seventh seal is opened, prophesying the seventh and final estate, the fall of “Babylon” and everlasting “peace in the Christian church” (133).

The attack on the Roman church in *The Image of Bothe Churches* would have been sufficient in itself to provoke Stapleton to publish his translation of Bede’s *Historia* along with the auxiliary commentary *A Fortresse of the Faith*. Yet arguably even greater provocation comes from Bale’s second major work of historiography, *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes* (1546), which as the title suggests, provides a narrative focusing mainly on English ecclesiastical history rather than on the broad universal church. Although Bale continues to use the overarching historical framework of *The Image*, the major theme of the *Actes* is the corruption instigated in the English church as a result of the “vowed chastity” of the Roman clergy:

In thys boke of myne, is one face of Antichrist chefelye dysclosed […] wherwith he hath of longe tyme paynted oute his whore, the Rome churche, that she myght to the worlde appere a gloryouse madame. That face is her vowed chastyte,

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wherby she hath deceitfullye boasted her selfe spirituall, beynge but whore and thefe, and dysdayned marryage.  

Because of Bale’s unrelenting invective about the lecherous Roman clergy and its penchant for whores and buggery, Stapleton himself refers to him as “baudy Bale” (fol. 4r). Stapleton seems particularly perturbed by Bale’s assault on a famous episode involving Pope Gregory I, which much like the Augustinian mission with its cross and banner presented before King Ethelbert, is distinctly emblematic for Stapleton of the nascent English church. In the preface to The History, for example, Stapleton explicitly directs the reader’s attention to this legend:

The facte of Saint Gregory described in the seconde booke the first chapter of this history reporting how that holy man seing in Rome certain of our countremen sette to be solde in the market, moued with their outwarde beauty, beganne to pitie and lament their inward foule infidelite, holy S. Bede writeth diligently as an argument of his greate good zele and tendering of Christes religion, and construeth it to the beste, as no honest Reader can other wyse do. (3v)

For Stapleton the story of Gregory in the marketplace is presented not as if it were some kind of legend, as it is for Bede, but as a factual retelling of “the occasion why S. Gregory sent

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preachers unto our countre” (*History*, fol. 48v, marginalia).\(^{55}\) In other words, Stapleton believes Bede is literally “reporting” a “facte” about English history (*History*, fol. 3v), and indeed he seems to view Bede’s entire history purely as a “fresh remembraunce” of a homogeneous English past. From his perspective, Bede’s only “purpose was to declare to the posterite how the english nation came to be christened, by whom the faith was first preached, howe it spredd in short time through oute the whole Iland” (*Fortresse*, fol. 104r). Stapleton translates Bede to provide his English contemporaries with what he posits as a matter-of-fact account, or as he says, “a matter historicall” (*History*, Preface to the Readers, n.p.).

In this vein Stapleton also remarks on the marketplace episode in *The Fortresse of the Faith*, where he says as follows: “S. Gregory as it appeareth in the history, before he was avaunced to the high dignite of Christes vicar on earthe, by occasion of certain english young men brought then to Rome to be solde for slaves, uttered his great desire and most godly zele to have the ghospell preached unto us” (fol. 70r-70v). In the story itself Gregory puns on the national identity of the slaves, in Latin designated by the word *Angli*, which Stapleton translates in *The History*, “Angles, or english” (fol. 48v).\(^{56}\) Having heard their identity, the pope decides that a mission must be sent to the “Angles” so they may become “inheretors with the Angels in heaven” (fol. 48v). Gregory also reappropriates the names of both their province *Deyre* and their king *Alle* as puns, the first, as a play on the Latin *de ira*, “from the ire of God,” and second, on

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\(^{55}\) Bede seems to offer the episode as more conjectural, referring to it as an *opinio*. He says, for example, “Nec silentio praetereunda *opinio*, quae de beato Gregorio […] ad nos usque perlata est”; and “Haec iuxta *opinionem*, quam ab antiquis accepiimus” (2.1; 132, 134) [my italics]. Stapleton translates as follows, respectively: “I must not here with sylens passe ouer the reporte wich we haue heard […] of S. Gregory”; and “This much according to the *opinion* whiche we haue heard from our auncienters” (fol. 49r) [my italics]. Yet *opinio* is more like a “rumor” or “belief.”

\(^{56}\) For the Latin see *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 2.1;132,134.
the transliterated Hebrew term Alleluia (fol. 48v-49r). The legend holds great significance for Stapleton, as he seems to believe that if it had not occurred, the English church would not have come into existence. Yet in The Fortresse of the Faith, Stapleton also retells the legend partly to draw attention away from another version of the story, that is, the one given by Bale in The Actes of Englysh Votaryes.

Bale’s account of the legend has less to do with Gregory’s hope for the salvation of the English people than for the satisfaction of his salacious appetite. Thus Bale prefices the story with a reminder that Roman priests have no wives and “therfor other spirytuall remedyes were sought out for them” (fol. 22v). He then sets up the pun on the word “Angly” (fol. 22v). After Gregory remarks on the boys’ “Angelick vysages,” he does not continue, however, as in Bede, with the other puns about the angels in heaven, or the “ire” and mercy of Christ, or even King Aelle and “Alleluia.” Instead, the reader is left with Gregory, the future bishop of Rome, “curyouse,” as Bale suggests, eyeing the boys’ “wares” (fol. 22v). The insinuation is less than subtle, and Stapleton remarks in the preface of the History that Bale has charged “a holy man with a most outragious vice and not to be named” and thus “maketh this history also […] to serue his filthy appetit and bestly humour” (fol. 3v). Yet Bale’s ad hominem attack fits well with this overarching theme of the pitfalls of “vowed chasytie.”

57 Kidd, British Identities before Nationalism, 110-111.


60 When John Foxe first tells the episode in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments, the pun on national identity is completely stamped out. No mention whatsoever is made of the Angli or the “Angles” or even the “English.” Instead, the slaves are said to come from “England” out of a province of the “Northsaxons” (2.168). See The Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO), Ed. David
In keeping with this theme, Bale explains that England was actually first converted by married men during the apostolic period, shortly after the death of Christ, not the sexually deviant “celibate” monks sent by Pope Gregory I (fol. 13\textsuperscript{v}-14\textsuperscript{r}). According to this tradition, Christianity had already existed in England long before Augustine ever arrived in 596. Citing Polydore Vergil among others, Bale explains that the apostle Philip first sent Joseph of Arimathea to proselytize Britain, along with “other dysciples” and “their wyves” (fol. 14\textsuperscript{r}). Thus, he writes that “this realme than called Brytayne was converted unto the Christen beleve for in the yeare from Christes incarnacyon lxiii was Joseph of Arimathe and other dysciples sent over of the seyd Philip to preache Christ” (fol. 13\textsuperscript{v}-14\textsuperscript{r}). For Bale, in light of the later corruption of the church brought about by Rome, this apostolic connection is especially poignant as it means the origin of Christianity in England arose from the pure, primitive, apostolic church: “The Brytayns toke the christen faythe at the verye spryng or fyrst goynge forth of the Gospell, whan the churche was moste perfyght, and had most strenthe of the holye ghost” (fol. 14\textsuperscript{r}).

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61 Polydore Vergil was the sixteenth-century Italian humanist commissioned by Henry VII to write the history of England. In the Anglica Historia (1555), ed. and trans. Dana F. Sutton (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 2010), he writes: “At this time Joseph of Arimathea, who according to Matthew the evangelist gave burial to Christ’s body, either by happenstance or in accordance with God’s will, came into Britain with no small company of followers, where both he and his companions earnestly preached the Gospel and the teaching of Christ” (“Cum Ioseph ille qui, teste Matthaeo euangelista, ab Arimathaea civitate oriundus Christi corpus sepeliverat, sive casu sive consilio, ita volente Deo, cum non parvo comitatu in Britanniam venit, ubi tam ipse quam eius socii, cum de euangelio praedicarent atque dogma Christi sedullo docerent”) (2.7). The Joseph of Arimathea tradition was not definitively rejected until Edward Stillingfleet’s Origines Britannicae (1685). See Kidd, British Identities before Nationalism, 102.

62 John Foxe does not address these origins until the 1576 edition of The Acts and Monuments: “I take of the testimony of Gildas, our countryman, who in his history affirmeth plainly, that Britayne receaued the Gospell in the tyme of Tiberius the Emperour, vnder whom Christ
in making these claims Bale overlooks another tradition that directly links the image of the cross to Joseph of Arimathea, found, for example, in The Chronicle of Ihon Hardyng in metre (1543), a work by the fifteenth-century English chronicler John Hardyng (1378-1465) in which Joseph presents to his first British convert, King Arviragus, a shield, which he had made, marked with the cross itself.63

[Joseph] gaue hym then a shelde of siluer white
A crosse endlong and ouer twhart full perfect.
These armes were vsed through all Brytain
For a common signe eche manne to knowe his nacion
Frome enemies whiche nowe we call certain
Sainct Georges armes by Nenyus enformacion
And thus this armes, by Iosephes creacion

suffered. Lib. De victoria, Aurelii Ambrosii. And sayth moreouer, Ioseph of Arimathie after the dispersion of the Iewes, was sent of Philip the Apostle from Fraunce to Britayne, about the yeare of our Lord. 63. and here remayned in this land all hys tyme: and so with his fellowes, layd the first foundation of Christian fayth among the Britayne people.” The Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO), ed. David Loades (Sheffield UK: University of Sheffield, 2011), 2.130 (1576 edition).

63 See also John Coke, The Debate betwene the Heraldes of Englands and Fraunce ([London]: Rycharde Wyer, 1550), sig. [C vii'- C vii']: “This Joseph [of Aramathia] conuerted to the fayth the foresayd Aruiragus and his people of Engelande the yere of our Lorde god Ixxvi as before is declared, and gaue hym a whyte shelde with a red crosse in it for his Armes”; and Gerard Legh, The Accedens of Armory ([London: Richard Tottill, 1562]), fol. 47: “Ioseph of Aramathia, who came into thys Realme with Vespaisan the Emperour, and instructing Aruiragus, (then kinge of this land,) in the faith, Christened him, & gaue vnto him thysh Shielde: whyche was 200 yeares before Saynt George was borne.”
Full long afore sainct George was generate

Were worshipt heir of mykell elder date.⁶⁴

This tradition would not have fit well within Bale’s historiographical framework, and it is ignored in his ecclesiastical history,⁶⁵ as Bale chooses to employ, instead, the messengers of the “false” Roman faith as the first bearers of the cross, and idolatry, to Britain.

For Bale the corruption of the “perfyght” church of the Britons began only with the coming of the Augustinian mission, that is, during the period when the “true” universal church was in the throes of the “fourth estate.” Thus as Bale explains it, Gregory’s motivation in sending a mission to England was not to teach “the ordre of Christ,” but to “sprede abrode the Romshe faythe and relygyon” (fol. 23v); and “the labour of Augustyne with his monkes” was not to evangelize, but “to prepare Antichrist a seate here in Englande, against the full tyme of hys perfyghtage, of. 666” (fol. 25v-26r). The Augustinian mission was rooted in anything but divine revelation, but instead on the machinations of the human intellect: “Wele armed were they with Aristotles artylerye, as wyth logyck, Phylosophye, and other craftye scyences, but of the sacred scripturs, they knewe lyttle or nothynge” (fol. 23v). For Bale the church established by the Augustinian mission in England was not even a true Christian church, and the moment that for Stapleton is so emblematic of the beginnings of Christianity in England is for Bale emblematic of the intrusion of a new, false, idolatrous faith:

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The fyrst poyn of Religyon they shewed, was this. They spred fourth a banner wyth a paynted Crucyfyxe and a syluer crosse thervpon, and so come to the kynge in processyon, synging the Letany. Wele myght thys be called a new chrystyanyte, for neyther was it knowne of Christ nor of hys Apostles, nor yet euerseane in Englande afore. It came altogyther from the dust heape of their monkery. (fol. 24v)\(^{66}\)

Thus according to Bale, Augustine’s mission in 596 was in no way the origin of the true native church, but rather of a diabolical assault upon it, lasting nearly a millennium: “Thus ded that carnall Synagoge (than called the Englysh churche) which came from Rome with Augustine, most cruellye persecute, at her first commynge in, the Christen churche of the Brytaynes” (fol 27r).\(^{67}\) This assault was finally checked only with the ushering in of the Reformation. According

\(^{66}\) In the 1570 edition of *The Actes and Monuments*, Foxe renders the same event, which was ignored in the 1563 edition, as follows: “[Austen] erected vp a **banner** of the crucifixe (such was then the grossenes of that tyme) and preached to hym [King Ethelbert] the worde of God” (*TAMO*, 2.169). Similarly, Thomas Becon construes the event as the beginnings of superstition in *The reliques of Rome* (London: John Day, 1563), fol. 84v:

> Thys Monkyshe Austen with, xl. Monkes moe, when they arriued and came on lande in the easte side of Kent in y\(^{e}\) Iland of Thanet, entred in with a crosse, & with banners displayed hauing a crucifixe paynted vppon euery one of them. […] Whiche swarme of monkes, when they hadde once thorow their hipocrisy and flattering, obtained of y\(^{e}\) Kyng to inhabite at Canterbury, went joyfully forth on their iourney, hauyng their crucifixe crosse and banners borne before them, and singing Alleluia with a lustye cou[r]age and merye voyce vntil they came to y\(^{e}\) city, where they practised al kinde of superstition, as beades bidding, po[p]yshe fasting, wiuelesse liuyng, long laten Mattens and Masses singing, Saintes reliques boastyng, &c. In the yeare of oure Lorde. 590.

\(^{67}\) Bale insinuates that even after Augustine’s mission a remnant of Christian Britons remained on the island whose faith was not corrupted: “The Brytaynes in those dayes hadde none other Gods servyce but the Gospel” (fol. 25v). Likewise, in *An Answere to the Treatise of the Crosse* (1565), ed. Richard Gibbings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), James Calfhill
to this line of thought, the Reformation in England was not so much a reform of the English church as it was a return to the practices of the primitive British church.  

For Bale, moreover, the Saxons were neither rightfully Christians nor even rightfully English, as he denigrates the Saxons, linking his contemporaries in England to the Britons as their true forebears. For example, in *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes*, citing John Leland, he argues that the Saxons were foreign usurpers and invasive agents of the Roman pontiff when they made their incursion into Britain:

True is the faythfull saynge of Iohan Leylande *in assertione Arturij. fo. 35*. That the Romysh Byshop sought all means possyble to vpholde the Englysh Saxons in a kyngedome falselye gotten, the Brytaynes hatynge hym for yt, and he agayne of myschefe prouokynge those Saxons fearcelye to invade them” (fol. 27r-v).  

For Bale the Saxon invasion of Britain was “a kyngedome falselye gotten,” and only after their “violent conquest” was the name of the island forcibly changed: “Anon after the Saxons
had gotten of the Brytaynes the full conquest of thys lande, the name therof was changed, and hath euer sens bene called Englane of Engist which was than their chefe captayne” (fol. 22r).

As an indication of his bias in favor of British ancestry, Bale begins his preface to the Actes with a reference to the sixth-century Briton historian Gildas and his “cursse” upon the Saxons (fol. 2r): 70 “Gildas that auncyeut Brytayne, in hys first treatyse of the dolorouse destruccyon of hys coutreye, hath [a] worthye sentence agaynste them [the Saxons] whych were the chefe cause therof.” 71 For Bale, Gildas is the historian of the true English ancestry.

In Gildas’s De Excidio Britonum the Saxons are unquestionably the antagonists against the Britons. For Gildas the Britons are the “present-day Israel” (“praesentem Israelem”) (26.1; 98), 72 God’s peculiar familia (22.1; 96). The Saxons on the other hand are “those most fierce ones of unspeakable name, hateful to God and to men.” 73 Gildas claims, nevertheless, that the Saxon invasion occurred “with God willing,” but only because God intended to use the Saxons as a divine instrument in punishing his chosen people, who needed to be upbraided on account of

70 The British monk Gildas wrote his De Excidio Britanniae, or The Ruin of Britain, around the year 540. See Gildas, The Ruin of Britain and other works, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), 1. Though it reviews events from Britain’s past, the work is not exactly a history, but a “piece d’occasion” written in the tradition of Old Testament prophecy to encourage moral reform among the contemporary inhabitants of Gildas’s Britain. See Robert W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 45. Gildas himself describes his work as “this history so tearful and querulous of the evils of this age” (tam flebilis haec querulaque malorum aevi huius historia) (37.1; 105). All references to Gildas’s De Excidio Britonum will be taken from the Winterbottom edition and cited by chapter and section, followed by page number. The translations, however, are mine.

71 Bale renders Gildas’s “worthye sentence” against the Saxons, taken from Proverbs 24, as “whosoever commendeth the wicked (saith he) and reporteth them righteous or holy, the same shall once have the cursse of the people” (Actes of Englysh Votaryes, fol. 2r).

72 “Praesentem Israelem” (26.1; 98).

73 “Ferocissimi illi nefandi nominis Saxones deo hominibusque invisi” (23.1; 97).
their moral laxity: “God, meanwhile, wished to purge his family, and to cleanse it from such an infection of evil.”74 After the Britons repented, they were consequently able to defeat the Saxons at the battle of Badon Hill in the year of Gildas’s nativitas, forty-four years before his writing the De Excidio (25.2-26.1; 98). Gildas came to believe, however, that his contemporary “age [was] ignorant of the time” when the Saxons posed a threat to Briton dominance,75 and so the Briton nation had “degenerated.”76 Gildas writes the De Excidio so as to warn his generation “in order that the fury of the Lord may be turned away from us.”77 Gildas could not have known, of course, what we would later learn from Bede: that the future of Britain, from the seventh-century up until the time of the Norman invasion in 1066, would rest in the hands of the Saxons.

Yet for Bale writing in the 1540s the ancient Britons had risen up once again. He calls attention to a legendary prophecy of the magician Merlin, which predicted a repossession of the kingdom usurped by the Saxons and a revival of a Briton hegemony embodied in the Tudor monarchy: “As I was in wrytynge thys matter an olde prophecye of Merlyne came vnto my remembraunce. That after the manyfolde irrupcyons of straungers, the kynges of thys realme shuld be ones agayne crowned with the Dyademe of Brute” (fol. 40v). For Bale, moreover, the prophecy has been fulfilled, since he believes the “dyadem” snatched away by the “Englysh Saxons” has already been regained.78 One sign of this restoration is that the English church has

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74 “Interea volente deo purgare familiam suam et tanta malorum labe infectam […] emendare” (22.1; 96).

75 “Aetas tempestatis illius nescia” (26.3; 99).

76 “Degeneravit” (25.3; 98).

77 “Ut avertatur furor domini a vobis” (110.2; 142).

78 For commentary on the Tudor link to the prophecy, including bibliography, see Curran, Roman Invasions, 19.
been taken back from “the great whores domynyon (which ys the Rome churche),” the consequence of the English Reformation (fol. 40v): “And now (prayse be vnto that Lorde) yt is in good waye to that fredom agayne, & wold fully attayne therunto, were her heythnysh yokes in relygyon ones throwne a syde, as I doubt yt not but they will be within short space” (fol. 41r). The other sign is that the “auncyent name” has been restored, with “the newe name of straungers so vanysheinges awaye” (fol. 40v). In other words, the English people are once again properly identified. As Bale says, “As concernynge the returne of the name, marke in this age the wrytinges of lerned men, and ye shall wele perceyue the change, for now commonlye do they write vs for Englysh men, Brytaynes” (fol. 41r).79 The proper nomenclature has been re-established: the contemporary English are properly recognized as one and the same as the ancient Britons.

In light of The Actes of Englysh Votaryes Stapleton’s focus on the Augustinian mission to the Saxons is undoubtedly a response against Bale’s promotion of the earlier mission of Joseph of Aramithea to the Britons. But Stapleton is also pursuing via Bede an argument about national

79 The influence of Bale, and those who followed his lead, in designating the Britons as the true ancestors of the English can be found, for example, in the writings of John Milton. In his early poem In Quintum Novembris, written when he was seventeen, Milton links the contemporary English and the ancient Britons as if they are one and the same people, with the Saxons and Rome cast as their foes. Terms like sceپra Anglica (“English scepters”) (line 4), pharetrati Britanni (“quiver-bearing Britons”) (line 96), belligeros Anglos (“warlike English”) (line 128), and meos Britannos (“my own Britons”) (line 202) are used indiscriminately of the English in their antagonism towards the church of Rome. In Lycidas, a lamentation for a deceased fellow schoolmate, Milton describes the native territory of England as the land where “the famous Druids” lie (line 53). Likewise in Manso, when Milton speaks of his genus (line 35), it is the race of the “Druids” that he names (Druidum) (line 40); and when he reveals his hope to celebrate in epic verse the “indigenous kings” (“indigenas reges”), he says the “Mars of the Britons” (Britonum […] Marte) will smash the “Saxon phalanxes” (Saxonicas […] phalanges) (line 84). All references are taken from John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, Ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1957).
ancestry, not surprisingly opposing Bale by claiming that the Saxons are the same as the
contemporary sixteenth-century English, to the exclusion of the Britons. For Stapleton there is
absolutely no difference between the English people of his own day and the Saxons, in other
words that race of people whom Bede celebrates in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*,
where they are referred to as the *gens Anglorum*, the English race.\(^8^0\)

Even when Stapleton names the original Germanic tribes that first arrive in Britain, he
chooses not to identify them as they are now commonly known, as “the Angles, Saxons, and the
Jutes.” Instead, they are the “English,” the Saxons, and the Jutes (*The History*, fol. 23\(^v\)). To
Stapleton the Saxons and the English are one and the same people, so he unhesitatingly translates
Bede’s term *gens Anglorum* and its various cognates as “English,” or with terms such as

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\(^8^0\) According to Bede, the original tribe that arrived in Britain was the *gens Saxonum* (1.14; 48).
Bede also describes this tribe as the *gens* “Anglorum sive [‘or’] Saxonum” (1.15; 50; and 1.22;
68). At other times, he refers to the “three peoples of Germany” (*tribus Germaniae populis*), that
is, “the Saxons, the Angles, the Jutes” (1.15; 50), or even to provincial subgroups like the
*Cantuari* (“the people of Kent”) (1.27; 78). To put it simply, once the Augustinian mission to
England begins, Bede regularly subsumes all the separate names under the collective term *gens
Anglorum*, though the separate terms sometimes still appear. Furthermore, with the beginning of
the mission, Bede establishes a correlation between the collective *gens Anglorum*, on the one
hand, and the *ecclesia Anglorum*—even in its inchoate form—on the other. For all practical
purposes, Bede forges a collective identity for the *gens Anglorum* only after he embarks upon his
narrative about the *ecclesia Anglorum*. The issue is a thorny one. See Nicholas Brooks, *Bede and
the English*, Jarrow Lecture 1999 (Jarrow, England: St. Paul’s Rectory, 1999); but also, *Bede’s
Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors (1969), xxx; Patrick Wormald, “Bede, the
Bretwalda*, and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum,*” in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-
Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary*
Robinson, “John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons” (2002), 58; Stephen J. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity
(2005), 122; and Don Henson, *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxons* (Norfolk, UK: Anglo-Saxon
“England,” “englishmen,” or even as “us” or “our country.” Moreover, from Stapleton’s point of view Bede is uniquely to be trusted in his historiography because he is, as Stapleton says, “our countreman” (The History, fol. 1v). Bede is a “scholar” whose sole “purpose was to declare to the posterite how the english nation came to be christened” (A Fortresse, fol. 104r). In his dedication to Elizabeth, moreover, Stapleton downplays The History’s designation as an ecclesiastical history and calls it the “generall history of the realme of England” (fol. *2v).

Likewise in the preface to the reader he defines Bede’s work as “the historical narration of the coming of us Englishmen into this lande” (fol. 6r). Furthermore, Bede’s Historia is for Stapleton the only true history of the origins of the English church—or as he reiterates numerous times, “our primitiue churche”—precisely because the Saxons are exclusively the ancestors of the English people: “In this history therefore vewe and consider the coming in of Christen faithe in to oure countre, the heauenly tydinges brought to our Lande, the course, encrease, and multiplying thereof. The vertuous behauiour of oure forefathers the firste Christen englishmen” (fol. 3v). The insinuation is that the Britons are not properly the ancestors of the English in any way whatsoever, and thus the church of the Britons should not be acknowledged, either, as having any kind of direct correlation to the contemporary English church. In fact, from Stapleton’s point of view, the “olde Britons” are the ancestors of the Welch, or as he says, “the walsh men” (fol. 132v), not of “we englishmen” (A Fortresse, fol. 150r). Stapleton’s exclusion of

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81 According to Nicholas Brooks, the difference between the term Angles and English can be deceptive. Modern English reserves Angles to refer to one of the primitive Germanic tribes who first invaded Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries and not to their descendants; this, however, is a modern understanding. See Brooks, Bede and the English, 6. For Bede, there was only one Latin term Angli, not two terms. Old English, too, does not have two terms: there is only Engle and its compounds Angelcynn (the “English race”) and Angeltheod (the “English people”). So, in other words, to translate Angli sometimes “Angles,” sometimes “English,” is an anachronism. According to Brooks, the Latin term should always be translated “English,” as Stapleton translates it.
the Britons from English identity flies directly in the face of the historical perspective promoted by Bale and taken up by later sixteenth-century historiographers, most important among them John Foxe, who in the 1570 edition of *The Actes and Monuments*, for example, writes that the Britons “were bereued of their land, by the cruel subtillitye of the Saxons” (2.165), and that the Saxons “violentlye and falselye dispossessed the Britons of their right” (2.167).

As a response to Bale, moreover, Stapleton emphasizes the intrinsic relation between the cross and the Saxon faith, but this emphasis is partially due to the fact that it is warranted by Bede’s narrative itself. As we have already seen, in Stapleton’s translation Augustine and his fellow missionaries are depicted coming before King Ethelbert, “endewed withe the strength of God carying before them in place of a banner, a Crosse of syluer and the image of ower Sauiour paynted in a table.” In Bede another, similar scene is presented, nearly verbatim, as the first arrival of the missionaries into the city of Canterbury is described: “Fertur autem, quia adpropinquantes ciuitati, more suo cum cruce sancta et imagine magni regis Domini nostri Iesu

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83 One of the few who did promote Stapleton’s interpretation was Verstegan in *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities*. Curran, *Roman Invasions*, 26. In the preface titled “To the Most Noble and Renowned English Nation” Verstegan writes:

> Wee not only fynde Englishmen (and those no idiots neither) that cannot directly tel from whence Englishmen are descended, and chanceing to speak of the Saxons, do rather seem to vnderstand them for a kynd of forreyyn people, then as their own true and meer anceters, but euen among English wryters themselues, woords diuers tymes vttred that savour of reproche vnto their own anceters the Saxons; for Englishmen cannot but from Saxon originall deryue their descent and offspring, and can lack no honor to be descended of so honorable a race, and, therefore are the more in honor obliged to know and acknowledge such their own honorable and true descent. (n.p.)

84 The text in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* reads: “Diuina uirtute praediti, […] crucem pro uexillo ferentes argenteam, et imaginem Domini Saluatoris in tabula depictam” (1.25; 74).
Christi hanc laetaniam consona uoce modularentur” (1.25; 74). Stapleton translates the Latin as follows: “It is sayd that as they approched neare the citty, hauing the crosse and image of our kyng and Sauiour Iesus Christ caried as their maner was, before them, they songe all in one tune [a] letany” (fol. 32r). Bede’s repetition of the description of the missionaries carrying the cross renders the scene as emblematic of the arrival of the Christian faith in England.

Yet over and above Bede’s text, Stapleton actively promotes the link between the cross and the Saxons in The History of the Church of Englannde through paratextual means. As noted already, Stapleton’s translation was first published replete with an illustration of the scene of the Augustinian missionaries carrying the cross-image. As it is deemed tantamount to an epoch-making moment, the episode is also remarked upon in the printed marginalia of Stapleton’s text: “our faith begann with Crosse and procession” (31r).85 Furthermore, the centrality of the cross to the episode is highlighted in several other places. For example, in the prefatory list of “Differences” between Protestant and Catholic the cross is earmarked as a distinguishing characteristic of the English church because of its presence at its origination moment: “Againe our faith was first preached with Crosse and procession. Lib. 1. cap. 25. These heresies first raged by throwing downe the Crosse” (fol. 12r). Likewise in the alphabetized index appearing at the end of The History the following item appears under the letter C: “Our faith began with Crosse and procession” (fol. CCCr). In The Fortresse of the Faith, too, Stapleton points out the use of the cross in the “example” of the Augustinian mission (fol. 129r). These several ancillary

paratextual methods drive home Stapleton’s message: the cross is not only a definitive symbol of the Christian faith, but of the English faith.

In conclusion, the claims of Bale and Stapleton about the origins of the English church are distinctly parallel, though in ways that are opposed to each other. For Bale the church is rooted in the evangelization of the Britons by the apostolic mission of Joseph of Arimathea. For Stapleton the church arises from the papal mission to the Saxons led by Augustine. Yet for Stapleton the controversy about origins, although rooted in disagreements about chronology (first century v. late-sixth century), race (Britons v. Saxons), and the derivation of ecclesiastical authority (apostolic v. papal), is also inextricably linked to the image of the cross. For Stapleton its presence from the moment of the church’s inception in England—or at least what he believes to be its inception—establishes the cross-image as a marker of English faith non pareil, one which cannot be undone.

Suffice it to say this perspective about the cross never became dominant among other early modern English historiographers, including arguably the most influential among them, John Foxe, yet one need only look ahead to the year 1590 to see the cross rise up again definitively in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, whose “gentle knight,” a character regarded by many as representative of a generic English reformist, even militant, Protestant Everyman,86 takes up the image of the cross himself, becoming the Redcrosse Knight, sprung no less, as Spenser curiously tells us, “from ancient race/ Of Saxon kinges.”87 I dare say no one


could have been more surprised than Stapleton by the chosen emblem and nationality of Spenser’s English champion.
CHAPTER 3: THE CROSS CULT AND ELIZABETHAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

In *The History of the Church of Englande* (1565), religious controversy about the image of the cross also makes its mark on Thomas Stapleton’s presentation of the legend of the Saxon king Oswald. In Stapleton’s narrative, Oswald’s cross draws all attention to itself, both from the reader and literally from the characters in the story themselves, as Oswald and his army turn to the image, making it the focal point of their prayer, with the cross itself standing *in absentia* for the Christian deity in a nearly equivalent mode. For sixteenth-century apologists like Stapleton, the religious implications of the story could not have been more pronounced as the legend embodies some of the principal points of contention in Elizabethan debates about the cross and its relation to the Christian deity, including its use as a focal point of cultic devotion. The fact of the matter is that for Elizabethan church historiographers, primary among them Stapleton, but just as equally John Foxe, the Oswald narrative became a perfect vehicle for representing in dramatic fashion opposing confessional beliefs about the cross; yet as I will demonstrate at the end of the chapter, the Oswald narrative presented to us in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590) is marked by a theology more akin to that in Stapleton’s *History* rather than that in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*.

In Stapleton’s *The History of the Church of Englande* the magnitude of the cross in the Oswald legend looms so large that it is even greater than in the original Latin of Bede, for just as
with the presentation of the Augustinian mission, Stapleton’s Oswald narrative is highlighted by means of several ancillary interpretative mechanisms intended to alert the reader to the putative significance of the story. For example, in the 1565 quarto edition of The History, a panel of three illustrations accompanies the episode (see fig. 3.1), each separately portraying Oswald in the presence of a cross-image in one form or another; and as this is one of only three episodes 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 Stapleton himself, to represent in a constitutive way the import of the entire volume.  

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1 There were at least two other editions of Stapleton’s History, published in Saint-Omers in 1622 and 1626.

2 As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the other three illustrations, which depicts the Augustinian mission, also highlights a cross-image (fol. 31r).

Figure 3.1: Panel of illustrations in Thomas Stapleton’s *The History of the Church of Englande* (Antwerp: John Laet, 1565), depicting the Saxon king Oswald (1) setting up his cross; (2) praying before it with his soldiers; and (3) routing the enemy at Heavenfield (fol. 77v). Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early Modern Books Online*. www.proquest.com.
Besides the panel of illustrations, written textual guideposts also feature the image of the cross, as can be seen, for example, in the chapter-heading for the story, where the primary emphasis is placed on the cross-image and not on the main character King Oswald, who is not even identified by name; thus, the heading reads, “How by the signe of the Crosse, which the same kinge set vp when he fought against the Barbarous Britons, he conquered them” (fol. 76r).\(^4\)

A printed marginal note, albeit very brief, also invests the cross with a subtle precedence over the king via its word arrangement, as it reads, “A crosse erected by king Oswald” (fol. 76v)—not the other way around with the person in the subject position as one might expect it. Also, since the 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. Besides this marginal note, the index, which appears at the end of the volume and is titled “A Table of Special Matters,” also prioritizes the cross over Oswald, listing the story alphabetically according to the letter C and not O, under the title “A crosse erectyd by kinge Oswald” (n.p.).

Still, the centrality of the cross is no trick of Stapleton’s translation or of Laet’s editorial packaging, but it is a function of Bede’s Latin text, which is fraught with the image, including diction alluding to the cross cult, a fact that was already being recognized in ecclesiastical circles as early as the ninth century, that is, within a century of Bede’s death.\(^5\) In composing the \textit{Historia}

\(^{4}\) Thomas Stapleton, \textit{trans., The History of the Church of Englande} (Antwerp: John Laet, 1565). References to Stapleton’s \textit{History} will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

\(^{5}\) See, for example, Amalarius of Metz, \textit{Liber Officialis}, in \textit{Amalarii Episcopi Opera Liturgica Omnia}, vol. 2, ed. Jean Michel Hanssens, S.J. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948), 103, where Bede’s Oswald is cited as evidence for the legitimacy of adoration rituals that allow for a cross-replica in place of a relic of the “true” cross. Amalarius’s work was known to some sixteenth-century English religious writers and is cited in various works of controversy, \textit{e.g.}, Jean Lemaire de Belges, \textit{The Abbreyyacyon of All Generall Counclellys}, trans. Johan Gowgh (London: Joh[an] Gowgh, 1539), sig. Ciii\(^v\); Matthew Parker, \textit{A Defence of Priestes Mariages}
Ecclesiastica, in fact, Bede deliberately incorporated the cross-image into an Oswald legend that did not always involve one, such as in Adomnan’s early seventh-century hagiographical Life of Columba, where the narrative makes no mention of any cross whatsoever. Much discussion has been given to Bede’s emendation, with all agreed that he is casting Oswald as a new Constantine, whose vision of the cross famously inspired the triumph over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in the year 312. Bede’s motivation may have been the tradition that linked Constantine with the city of York, where the emperor was said to have been crowned after his father Constantius’s death, according to sources like Eusebius’s Chronicon, which was translated into Latin by

(London: Jugge, 1567), 127; and John Rainolds, The Summe of the Conference betwene Iohn Rainoldes and Iohn Hart (London: [John Wolfe], 1584), 583-584.


7 Instead, a vision of St. Columba inspires Oswald, speaking “the very same words” (verba eadem) spoken by the deity to Joshua before his crossing of the Jordan. See Adomnán’s Life of Columba, eds. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 14-17.


Jerome. Perhaps Bede was even influenced by the Byzantine ideal of sacral kingship exemplified in Constantine, an ideal promoted by the Byzantine-born second archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore (668-690). Others have argued that Bede may have been prompted by the popularity of the cross cult in the Northumbria of his own day. In any case, in Stapleton’s translation the core of the narrative reads as follows:

The place is shewed vntill this daye, and is had in greate reuerence, where Oswald when he should come to this battayle did set vp a signe of the holy crosse, and beseeched God humbly vppon his knees that with his heauenly helpe he would succour his seruauntes being in so great a distresse. The report also is, that (the crosse being made with quicke spede, and the hole prepared wherein it should be sette) the kinge being feruent in faiethe did take it in hast, and did put it in the hole, and held it with both his handes, when it was sett vp, vntill it was fastened to the earth with duste wich the souldiers heaped about it. Nowe when this was done he cried out a loude to his whole armie: Let vs all kneele upon our knees, and let vs all together pray ernestly the almighty, liuing, and true God, mercifully to defend vs from the proude and cruell ennemy: for he knoweth, that we enterprise warres

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10 For Jerome’s text, see Eusebius, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus (Chronicum Hieronymi)*, ed. Rudolph Helm (Berlin: Akadamie-Verlag, 1956), 228.


in a ryghtfull quarell for the saulfegard of our subjectes. All did as he
commaundd them. And thus in the dawning of the day they marched forth,
encountred with their enemie, and (according to the merite of their faith)
atchieued and wonne the victorie. (fol. 76v)\textsuperscript{13}

When Oswald stations the cross and implores his soldiers to pray before it, Stapleton and
his readers would have been altogether aware of the fact that the communal
supplication before
the image was highly reminiscent of ritualistic practices related to the cross cult. This cult
burseoned in the fourth century with the legend of Helena, mother of Constantine, and the
Invention of the true cross in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{14} The earliest account, however, of a formal

\textsuperscript{13} The corresponding Latin text in Bede’s \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum} reads as
follows:

Ostenditur autem usque hodie, et in magna ueneratione habetur locus ille, ubi uenturus ad
hanc pugnam Osuald signum sanctae crucis erexit, ac flexis genibus Deum deprecatus
est, ut in tanta rerum necessitate suis cultoribus caelesti succurreret auxilio. Denique
fertur, quia facta citato opere cruci, ac fouea praeparata, in qua statui debet, ipse fide
feruens hanc arripuerit, ac foueae inposuerit, atque utraque manu erectam tenuerit, donec
adgesto a militibus puluere terrae figeretur; et hoc facto, elata in altum uoce cuncto
exercitui proclamauerit: “Flectamus omnes genua, et Deum omnipotentem, uiuum, ac
uerum in commune deprecemur, ut nos ab hoste superbo ac feroce sua miseratione
defendat; scit enim ipse, quia iusta pro salute gentis nostrae bella suscepius.” Fecerunt
omnes, ut iusserat, et sic incipiente diluculo in hostem progressi, iuxta meritum suae fidei
victoria potiti sunt. (3.2; 214)

\textit{Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People}, ed. Colgrave and Mynors. Any references to
Bede’s \textit{Historia} will be taken from this edition, cited by book and chapter, followed by page
number.

\textsuperscript{14} 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 Ambrose of Milan, \textit{Oratio De Obitu
Theodosii: Text, Translation, Introduction and Commentary}, ed. Sr. Mary Dolorosa Mannix
(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1925), 60-61. On Helena and the early cross
cult, see Stephan Borghemmer, \textit{How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval
Legend} (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International, 1991); Louis van Tongeren, \textit{Exaltation of
ecclesiastical ritual related to the cult can be found in Egeria’s *Travels*, or the *Itinerarium*, a late fourth-century account of a pilgrimage taken by a Western European nun to the holy sights in Jerusalem, a trip probably occurring between the years 381 and 384.\textsuperscript{15} Egeria provides details of a Good Friday liturgy in Jerusalem during which the congregation participated in a communal demonstration of obeisance before a reliquary containing the “holy wood of the cross.”\textsuperscript{16} 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.”\textsuperscript{17}

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 for *Ordo Romanus XXIII*, which dates to the first half of the eighth century.\textsuperscript{18} According to the rubric of *Ordo Romanus XXIII*, a *capsa*, that is, a


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Itinerarium Egeriae}, 37.2; 272: “consuetudo est ut unus unus et unus omnis populus veniens, tam fideles quam cathecumini, acclinantes se ad mensam, osculentur sanctum lignum.”

“reliquary,” containing wood purportedly from the true cross is carried into the church where it is venerated in succession by the clergy and laity. The first ritual to use a replica as a substitute for a relic of the “true” cross can be found in *Ordo Romanus XXIV*, a formulary first available in the second half of the eighth century. Already in these early documents we find some of the same rubrics that appear in late medieval English formularies, as well as in early modern Roman liturgical books, including the Tridentine Roman Missal, published in the year 1570, which for the first time in history standardized liturgical rites for the universal Roman church.

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In *The History of the Church of Englande*, when Oswald “setts vp” the “signe of the holy crosse” and appeals to his soldiers, “Let vs all kneele upon our knees, and let vs all together pray ernestly the almighty, liuing, and true God, mercifullly to defend vs from the proude and cruell ennemy,” the language mimics that of the cross-adoration rituals that Stapleton and his English readership would have known from liturgical formularies prevalent in sixteenth-century Tudor England such as the Sarum Use. For example, according to a 1555 edition of the Sarum Processional, as part of the liturgy of *Parasceve*, that is, Good Friday, a veiled cross having been carried into the church is set up like Oswald’s cross in a conspicuous location, after which it is uncovered by the priests, who, similarly to Oswald’s invocation, chant, “Behold, the wood of the cross on which hung the savior of the world. Come let us adore.” In response the congregation genuflects much like Oswald’s soldiers and kisses the ground, after which a prayer

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24 A *processional* was supplemental to primary liturgical books like missals and contained mostly, though not exclusively, the chants and prayers to be used throughout the liturgical year during processions. See Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 63.

is offered much like the one Oswald recommends, seeking mercy and protection: “God have pity on us and bless us.”26 The close mimicry of these liturgical rubrics would very likely have triggered an emotional response in Stapleton’s reading audience, especially among the nominally Protestant who still recalled the Roman rite with nostalgia, that is, the so-called “Church Papists” and others who did not fully conform to the Elizabethan Settlement,27 since many, if not all, would have had memories themselves of the catharsis elicited by participation in what arguably amounts to a theatrical experience.28 In reflecting upon the ritual, in fact, the recusant apologist Nicholas Sander intimates that pathos was the very aim of participation:

And to make vs the better to thinck vpon that we singe [i.e., the hymn to the cross Vexilla regis prodeunt], and to conceaue it more deuoutly, we are appointed at the singing of those words to knele, and to turn our selues toward the altar, to the end,

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26 Processionale, fol. lxixr: “Deus misereatur nostri et benedicat nobis.”


we fastening our eye vpon the Signe of the Crosse, might print in our hart a more
liuely representation of the precious death of Christ.  

The highly emotional purchase of the cross adoration experience, combined with the fact that small personal crosses could be smuggled into England and easily hidden away, makes it not inconceivable that crosses, like other sacramentals such as rosary beads, came to be utilized as substitutes for the sacraments, especially among the poor.  

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, harbor priests for their own private masses, or, like the members of the Recusant


In *A Newyeares Gifte Dedicated to the Popes Holinesse, and all Catholikes Addicted to the Sea of Rome* (London: H[enry] B[yynneman], 1579), crosses are among fifteen items listed under the heading, “A description of certaine of the Popes wares and merchaundize of late sent ouer into England” (sig. H ii5). About the images of the cross, *A Newyeares Gifte* provides the following description, clearly intended to be taken ironically: “This Crosse representeth the Crosse of Christe, and the very Crosse it selfe once hallowed and bestowed in secrete place, where it maye be honoured, or else caried about man, woman, or child (and being strengthened with the Epistle of Saint Sauior) sauth and defendeth them whiche beare it, from al manner of peril, both bodily and ghostly, as Pope Leo the tenth promiseth” (sig. H ii5).
community in exile, pack up and leave the country. In fact, in an anti-Roman tract translated from Latin and titled The Bee Hiue of the Romishe Church (1579), sacramentals like the cross are attacked for the very reason that they encroach upon the territory of legitimate sacraments based in scripture. Likewise, the reformer William Fulke makes a similar argument in his own contribution to the Elizabethan cross controversies, A Rejoinder to John Martiall’s Reply (1580), where he refutes iconodulic claims about the efficacy of cross adoration: “The end is [for iconodules like Martiall], the Cross is like a Sacrament, although that it be not as good as a Sacrament. But wherein is it like? It hath neither institution, nor element, nor promise, nor effect of a Sacrament: then it is as like as an apple is like an oyster.”

Besides the linguistic allusions to the cross adoration rituals in Stapleton’s translation, two of the three illustrations that accompany the Oswald narrative also appear to be informed by sixteenth-century formularies, specifically the Sarum Missal. The first illustration shows

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32 Philips van Marnix, Lord van St. Aldegonde, The Bee Hiue of the Romishe Church, trans. George Gilpin (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), fol. 223v. Walsham writes that “technically sacramentals [like the cross] did not work ex opere operato but it is clear that the laity often appropriated them as if they were automatically efficacious.” See Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain, 153.


34 A missal contains all the items spoken or said during mass by priests and their assistants, including all readings. Harper, The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy, 63. On lay familiarity with the content of the missal, see Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 370.
Oswald staunchly presenting the cross to two soldiers who are in the process of digging the hole for its insertion, though both 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 his head uplifted, while the other looks downward towards his work, his head lowered in such a way that, if it were not for the presence of a shovel, he would appear to be striking a humble pose of prayer. The scene closely resembles the dramatic moment during the Good Friday ritual when the priests first reveal the bare wooden cross to the congregation, which is immediately followed by the choir’s demonstration of obeisance. As the Missal says, “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.”

The second illustration captures as a single tableau the various acts of kneeling prescribed at different junctures for the participants in the ceremony. 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 petition. 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, a circumstance which would


36 In comparison to the other two pictures in the panel the illusion of bare feet is, admittedly, not peculiar to this one scene, but it does appear to be more pronounced here in the two kneeling figures.
accord well with the rubrics calling for worshippers, including the priests and other members of
the clergy, to approach the cross “with feet stripped bare.”

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. We find the term explicitly defined in a Henrician royal proclamation, dated 26
February 1539, issued in defence of the practice: “On Good Friday it shall be declared,
howe crepyng of the crosse, sygnyfieth an humblynge of oure selfe to Christe, before the crosse,
and the kyssynge of it a memorie of our redemption, made vpon the crosse.”

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 impertinently
thought to bear spiritual fruit. As the proclamation advises, “And so it shalbe well vnderstanden
and knowen, that neyther [...] crepyng [nor] kyssynge the crosse, be the workers or workes of

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37 Missale ad vsum ecclesie Sarisburiensis, fol. lxxxv: “nudatis pedibus.”

38 Thomas Becon (1512-1567) assigns the origin of “the Crepying unto the Crosse” to the papacy
of Gregory I, when the initial period of corruption in the church first commenced, at least, as we
saw in Chapter 2, according to Protestant writers like John Bale and John Jewel. See Becon, The
Reliques of Rome (London: John Day, 1563), fol. 165v-166r. According to Ronald Hutton, in his
chapter “The Ritual Year in England c.1490-c.1540,” “it is hard to tell how widespread the ritual
was. It is recorded at the cathedrals of York, Lincoln, Hereford, and Wells in addition to
Salisbury and Durham, in several Benedictine and Augustinian monasteries, and in some urban
churches, and literary comment suggests that it was very widely known.” Hutton, The Rise and
Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 22-

39 A proclamation, concernynge rites and ceremonies to be vused in due fourme in the Churche of
Englande (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1539), n.p. Also, Tudor Royal Proclamations, vol. 1, The
Early Tudors (1485-1553), ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, C.S.V. (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1969), 279 (no. 188).
our saluation, but onely be as outwarde signes and tokens, wherby we remembre Christe and his doctrine, his workes and his passion, from whens all good christen men receyue saluation.” In other words, standard Reformation belief about the inefficacy of good works in securing salvation, as opposed to faith alone, applied to the cross cult as well.\textsuperscript{40}

In Henrician England, however, 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.\textsuperscript{41} As one reformer, William Turner (1509/1-1568), explains in \textit{The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox} (1543), “in crepyng of the cross ye worship the cros but the worshippping of the cross is contrari to the vord of god” (37), for, as he continues, according to the scriptures, “to bow to an image or before an image or to knele to it or to any suche thynge is to worship it” (38).\textsuperscript{42} For Turner and others like him cross adoration was patently idolatrous and strictly forbidden by the second commandment: “Thow shall mak the no grauen image nether the lykenes of anythynges whiche ar in heuen aboue & whiche ar in the erthe

\textsuperscript{40}The English church’s doctrine about the relation between good works and salvation is formally articulated, for example, in Articles 11, 12, and 13 of the Thirty-nine Articles (1563). For the texts of these articles, see \textit{The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662}, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 677. Good works are also the subject of the homily titled “Of Good Works” in the \textit{First Book of Homilies} (1547). See \textit{Certayne Sermons, or Homelies Appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie} (London: Richard Grafton, 1547).

\textsuperscript{41}On Thomas Cranmer’s failed attempts to prompt Henry VIII to abolish the practice, see Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}, 443-444. On “iconoclastic outbreaks” during these years, see Aston, \textit{England’s Iconoclasts}, 245.

\textsuperscript{42}William Turner, \textit{The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox} (Basel: L. Mylius,1543), 37, 38. The text was originally published anonymously. References to \textit{The Huntyng & Fyndyng out of the Romishe Fox} will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.
benethe / & which ar in the waters vnder the erth thou shalt nether bow to them nor worship
them” (43).

Turner, moreover, refutes a standard iconodule counterargument—i.e., that worship is not
directed towards the cross-image per se but towards “Christe hym self that the image
representithe” (39) by appealing to the ostensible source of the controversy, the “ordinari
rubrike” prescribed in the various formularies of the Roman Church (41). The proof lies in the
rubrics, he argues, because their language is seemingly unambiguous about the intended object
of worship, especially as articulated in some of the traditional Latin Good Friday antiphons that
say, for example, “Lord, we worship thy cross” (“Crucem tuam adoramus domine”). One of the

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43 For further discussion of Turner’s “uncompromising position,” see Aston, England’s
Iconoclasts, 244-245.

44 The iconodule tenet was formally legitimated as doctrine in the Henrician church, as we find,
for example, in the explication of the Second Commandment in The King’s Book, formally titled
A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christen man set furthe by the kynges maiestye of
Englande (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1543), fol. O’: “We wust knowe and vnderstande, that
suche thynges be not, nor ought to be done to the image it self, but to god and in his honour,
although it be done afore the image whether it be of Christe [or] of the crosse.” This is a
reiteration of nearly the same clause in the 1537 Bishops’ Book. See The Institution of a Christen
Man (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1537), fol. 71f.

Contextually, however, the two documents were hardly written in the same vein, as the
King’s Book is much more consistently tolerant, claiming from the outset, “By these wordes [of
the commandment] we be not forbydden, to make or to haue similitudes, or ymages, but onely
we be forbydden, to make or to haue them to thintent to do godly honour vnto them”; the
Bishops’ Book in contrast is fraught with iconoclastic inclinations that seem to preclude the
legitimacy of Good Friday cross-adoration rituals as they were traditionally practiced: “By these
wordes we be utterly forbydden to make, or to have any similitude or image, to the intent to
bowe downe to it, or to worship it.” On the difference in tone between the two, see Duffy, The
Stripping of the Altars, 429.

45 A rubric is technically a ritualistic directive concerning the activities and physical actions
carried out during a ceremony—that is, the “stage directions”—as they appear in a liturgical
formulary, printed in red, but the term is often used for liturgical directives and prescriptions in

46 Turner quotes the Latin text and provides his own English translations.
Good Friday directives also instructs that “the cross be born thorow the quere by ij prestes that theyr it may be worshipped of the peple” (“deportetur crux per medium chori a duobus sacerdotibus vbi a populo adoretur”) (41). Both ot these rubrics can be found verbatim, for example, in the Sarum Use. For Turner, an insurmountable conflict arises between the iconodule practice of cross adoration and the authority of the word of God, and his final recommendation leaves no room for compromise: “Therfor ether condem & scrape out the second commandment or ellis leue of the crepyng of the cros [...] for the crepyng of the cross & the second commandment of god can no longer agre to gether” (43). By February 1548, sentiments like Turner’s were taken seriously enough to be converted into law, as a royal proclamation of Edward VI explicitly banned creeping to the cross on Good Friday.48

Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of the reign of the Roman Catholic monarch Mary Tudor, who had allowed for the legal restoration of the creeping of the cross,49 the voices of

47 For the hymn and directive, see the Sarum Processionale, fol. lxxv and fol. lxxi, respectively; also see the Sarum Missale, where the hymn is truncated to its incipit “Crucem tuam,” but the directive is fully articulated, lxxxv.

48 Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, vol. 2, 1536-1558, ed. Frere (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), 184, note. Also, Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Early Tudors, 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 (Visitation Articles and Injunctions, 244), and John Hooper’s Articles for Gloucester and Worcester Dioceses in 1551-1552 (267). See, too, Aston, England’s Iconoclasts, 262, and Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, 457.

The Marian bishop John Christopherson comments on the Edwardian injunctions in his Exhortation to all mene to take hede and beware of rebellion ([London: John Cawood, 1554]), sig. Uv-Uvi: “they toke away crepyng to the crosse vpon good fridaye, wherby euerie man declareth hys humble obeysaunce to Christ.”

49 Visitation Articles and Injunctions, 349, 362, and 406; also, Tudor Royal Proclamations, vol. 2, The Later Tudors (1553-1587), ed. Hughes and Larkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 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. For the author of A treatise of treasons, believed to be John Leslie
dissent resounded once again in England with the re-establishment of a “Protestant” religious order under Elizabeth I. For example, the Marian exile John Jewel (1552-1571), appointed bishop of Salisbury in 1559 and, in light of his 1559 Challenge Sermon, arguably the chief spokesperson for reform among early Elizabethan bishops, leveled a critique against the cross cult in his 1565 *Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answere*—itself a rejoinder to Thomas Harding’s response against Jewel’s famous sermon, *An Answer to Maister Iuelles chalenge* (1564).\(^{50}\) In *Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answere*, in a section titled the “Adoration of Images,” although he admits to the sacredness of Christ’s own original cross and its various apparitions to personages like Constantine, Jewel expresses disbelief at Harding for having dared to suggest that there was any real precedent, biblical, historical, or otherwise, for the ritualistic adoration of man-made cross-shaped images: “Yet is it not hitherto any waie prooued, either that this Crosse was an Image, or that it was set vp in any Churche, or that it was Adoured of the people.”\(^{51}\)

Similarly, in another early Elizabethan Protestant apologetic work, *An Aunswere to the Treatise* (1527-1596), a bishop from Scotland, the practice of creeping to the cross is tantamount to a definitive marker of the Roman faith: “For they that vnder King Henry were as Catholike, as the six Articles required; that under King Edward were such Protestants, as that Protectour would haue them; that vnder Q. Marie were Catholikes againe, euuen to creeping to the Crosse; and that vnder Q. Elizabeth were first Lutherans [...] than Calvinistes [...] [are] now (if not Anabaptists, and Arrians) plaine Macchiauellians.” [Leslie], *A treatise of treasons against Q. Elizabeth, and the crowne of England* ([Louvain: J. Fowler, 1572]), fol. 97\(^{5}\). On the issue of the treatise’s authorship, see Glen Bowman, “Elizabethan Catholics and Romans 13: A Chapter in the History of Political Polemic,” *Journal of Church and State* 47.3 (2005): 537.


of the Crosse (1564), the iconomach James Calfhill (1529/30-1570) lashes out against “the blockish Images, the dead Crosses, [which] have been crept to, been worshipped” (20), because “to fall down and worship a silver Cross, or a wooden tree” (367), he says, contradicts the second commandment (41), the “silly Cross” being a “schoolmaster of error and impiety” (356-357). Even John Whitgift (1530/31?-1604), though a foe of Puritan radicals, could not condone this form of cross adoration. In 1572, in the course of refuting what he describes as the tenet that “nothing is to be tollerated in the Churche of Chryste, touching either doctrine, order, ceremomyes, discipline, or gouernement, except it be expressed in the worde of God,” Whitgift, nonetheless, says the following: “It is also true, that nothing in ceremonies, order, discipline, or gouernement in the Churche is to be suffered, beeing against the worde of God: And therfore wee reiect all ceremonies, wherein there is any opinion to saluation, woorshipping of God, or merite: as creeping to the crosse.”

As for Calfhill, he finds fault with the standard “transferred devotion” argument used by apologists to rationalize cross adoration. Seemingly addressing his interlocutor John Martiall, he rehearses, correctly, the iconodule position: “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 [i.e., the metal cross], but unto God alone, whom in spirit you worship, though your face peradventure be

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turned to the image” (386). For Calfhill, nonetheless, the argument is problematic, and he even denigrates it as a cloaked form of idolatry (186). As he understands it, the argument posits that the person who “adoreth and honoureth an Image doth adore and honour that which is resembled by the Image” (186). Yet for Calfhill this transference of adoration and honor, from the image

55 Martiall himself cites John of Damascus (d. c.750) for the original idea: “Damascene a lerned father writing of the crosse saieth. Adoramus figuram preciosae et vivificae crucis, etc. We adore the figure of the precious and liuely crosse, albeit it be made of another matter, not worshipping the matter it selff, for god forbed that, but the figure, as the signe off Christ.” Martiall, A Treatyse of the Crosse (Antwerp: John Laet, 1564; rtpd. Yorkshire, UK: Scolar Press, 1974), fol. 126’ For the Greek, see John of Damascus, La Foi Orthodoxe, vol. 2, ed. B. Kotter (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2011), 196 (sec. 84 [lib. 4, cap. 11], line 68-70): “Προσκυνοῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν τύπον τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ, εἰ καὶ ἐπὶ ἑτέρας ὅλης γένηται, οὐ τὴν ὅλην τιμώντες—μὴ γένοιτο—ἀλλὰ τὸν τύπον ὡς Χριστοῦ σμμβολὸν.” Note, the term τιμίοι appears to have been rendered loosely into the Latin preciosae et vivificae. See, too, John of Damascus, Three Treatises on the Divine Images, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 42-43.


itself to the thing the image represents, precipitates a devotional slippage in actual practice, with
the upshot, he says, “that Crosses have displaced Christ” whenever they are allowed to be the
focus of Christian worship (292). He even calls to mind the medieval theological nuance first
articulated by eighth-century Greek iconodules that distinguishes “between λατρεία [latria] and
dουλεία [dulia],” or as Calfhill defines them, respectively, “divine honour, due only to God”
versus “an inferior kind of reverence” (381). For Calfhill any claim that cross adoration is
construed by worshippers as a form of dulia, or that any real difference exists between “divine
honour” and “reverence,” is an “absurdity” (382). In fact, he implies that iconodules like John
Martiall extend latria to the cross-image de facto when they recommend “adoration and worship
to the sign of the Cross” (381).

56 Calfhill anticipates David Freedberg, who indentifies “the fusion of image and prototype” as
“the ontological heart of the problem” in theories of iconology. Freedberg, The Power of Images
(1989), 402. Calfhill’s argument is much the same as that in Jan van der Noot’s A Theatre for
Voluptuous Worldlings (London: Henry Bynneman, 1569), fol. 48: “Not only haue they stouped,
bowed, and kneeled before stockes and stones, lighting candels before it, made Crosses, blessing
it, kissing it, & held vp their hands to it, but also haue put their confidence in it.” I pinpoint this
work because Edmund Spenser, while in his late teens, was involved in its English translation.
See Andrew Hadfield, “Edmund Spenser’s Translations of Du Bellay in Jan van der Noot’s A
Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings,” in Tudor Translations, ed. Fred Schurink (New
York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 143-160; John N. King views the experience as formative for
Spenser’s religious outlook. See King, “Spenser’s Religion,” Cambridge Companion to Spenser,

57 For a discussion of latria and dulia, see Aston, England’s Iconoclasts, 47-49.

58 Thomas Aquinas, it seems, assigns latria to cross adoration. See Thomas, Summa Theologica,
vol. 4 (Rome: Senatus, 1887), 227 (Pars 3, Quaestio 25, Articulus 4), translation is mine:

Si vero loquamur de effigie crucis Christi in quacumque alia materia, puta lapidis, vel
ligni, argenti, vel auri, sic veneramur crucem tantum, ut imaginem Christi, quam
veneramur adoratione latriae.
(So if we speak about an image of the cross of Christ in whatever kind of material,
suppose stone, or wood, or silver, or gold, we so honor the cross only as it is the image of
Christ, which we honor with the adoration of latria.)
For Calfhill, an image is first and foremost a kind of visual metaphor, not at all one and the same as the divine entity it represents, and therefore not in any way worthy of devotion; yet like a metaphor it is a signpost, a bearer of meaning pointing beyond itself towards the unseen divine essence that alone is deserving of worship. Citing Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 113, Calfhill claims that, when engaged with a “more 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) that he “ought to worship” (debet colere) (186). 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 sign” (67).

In fact, for Calfhill, “the bare sign of the cross” is “in effect, nothing” (85). As he explains, “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.” (85). This lack of inherent “virtue” (386), or divine “substance” (378), in the cross-image vitiates forms of worship like creeping to the cross, proving them to be nothing other than a kind of idolatry because “the honour peculiar unto God is transferred to a creature” (384), that is, Calfhill says, to what is tantamount to an “idol,” the “dead image” of the cross (387). Calfhill, moreover, citing mainly patristic sources, catalogs this “dead image” of the cross variously as “a vile stock, or a cold, cankered, corrupt piece of metal” (367), “a post” (368), “a dumb god” (368), “a dead Devil”

For further evidence that the Roman church sanctioned latria for the cross, see Calfhill, An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse, ed. Gibbings, 381 n.2.

59 Elsewhere he says iconodules “have in reverence [the] idle sign, and let the thing signified be forgotten” (116).
(368), “a dead thing” (369), “the counterfeit of Christ” (371), “an earthly counterfeit” (372), “the work of man’s hand” (372), “a senseless Image” (374), “a piece of wood” (375), “a mass of metal” (375), “two pieces of wood” (376), “the false Cross” (380). The upshot is that Calhull charges believers to “let the sign of the Cross be cast out of the church [...], lest, by suffering the sign of the Cross to stand, the Son of God crucified be contemned; and we fall to worshipping of a Cross material” (365), not “the Divinity of Christ” (378). “Unless ye make your Cross a God,” he maintains, “it can have no worship nor adoration” (376).

Jewel, too, considers the argument of transferred devotion unconvincing, and he rejects outright the notion that Christians are sanctioned “to kneele doune” to crosses or “to yelde them any godly honour.” Furthermore, as an example of misdirected adoration, he cites a verse from one of the hymns related to the cross cult, *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, found among other places in the Sarum Use hymnal, which reads, he says, “Ave Crux spes vnica: Alhaile o Crosse our onely oape.” For Jewel, the invocation of the cross, identified here explicitly as “our only hope,” seemingly to the exclusion of Christ, qualifies the hymn as a form of “superstitious abuse.”


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 cult had already secured a foothold in the narrative of the Oswald legend. The 1542 edition of The 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, first published in the year 1516, then again in 1533 under the title Fabyans Cronycle Newly Prynted. According to the title page of the 1542 edition, however, the text had recently been revised, “nowe newly printed, & in many places corrected, as to the dylygent reader it may apere.” These “corrections” were for all practical purposes religiously motivated 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.” 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 receaued in


63 Jewel, A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Ansvweare, 502.


Englande: iii. C. yeares, before the commyng of saint Augustayne.” 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.

In the 1542 Chronicle of Fabyan, King Oswald too is “reformed,” with the narrative casting him as an exemplar of the faith, who gains his victory mainly because of his prayerful humility and hope for salvation. The “corrected” Oswald story reads as follows:

But Oswalde when he was warned of the greate strengthe of this Cadwan, he made his prayers to God, and besought him meekely of helpe to withstande his enemie for the saluacion of his people. Than after Oswalde had prayed for the saluacion of his people, the two hoostes met in a feeld named than Denisborne or Denislake, wher was fought a stronge battayle. But finally Cadwan, whiche Policronica nameth Cedwalla, was slain and his people chased; which were ferre exceding the nomber of Oswaldus hoost.

The most salient feature of this account, differentiating it from Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, is derived ironically from what it lacks: the cross. Apparently,

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68 See Womersley, Divinity and State, 30.
69 The Chronicle of Fabyan (1542), 128.
70 The text itself refers to the Polychronicon, but it should be noted that the account there does not neglect the cross. See Ranulf Higden, Polychronicon, vol. 5, trans. John Trevisa, ed. Joseph R. Lumby (London: 1865-1886; rtpd. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2006),
the printer Bonham, along with whoever else might have been employed as his co-editor, recognized that King Oswald offered too fitting an example of secular holiness not to be put to good use in a country where the monarch, and not any cleric, exercised supreme authority over the national church. For this reason at the very least, Bonham and any editorial associate working with him must have deemed it imprudent, if not reckless, to depreciate a royal figure like Oswald, who offered a compelling prototype of Henry VIII himself, and toss him to the scrap heap 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 from the story by means of the judicious removal of three “idolatrous” sentences, which were altogether present in the earlier 1516 and 1533 editions of The Chronicle. The original account reads as follows:

CMEPV, 453: “And that place is callede Hæwynfelde, wher Oswaldus, afore batelle knelynge downe, made a crosse, and preide Crist for the salvacioun of his peple, whiche felde is hade now in grete veneracioun. That place is at the northe parte of the famose walle whom the legions of the Romanes made, not ferre from þe churche of Hangustald. Mony virtues beschewede by the partes of that crosse, afor which tyme noo in that londe callede Bermicia hade eny awter, afore that Oswaldus the kynge had made a crosse, where a church was made sone after.”

The promotion of royal supremacy in the 1542 Chronicle is most glaring in its presentation of Thomas Becket, who was lauded in the earlier 1516 and 1533 editions as a martyr for the faith, but in the 1542 edition is castigated as a criminal guilty of treason against a morally upright monarch Henry II. For an extensive discussion, and for more examples of “reformation” bias in the 1542 volume, 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 18.4 (2004): 584-586.

It also should be noted that the feast of St. Thomas Beckett was removed from the liturgical calendar by Henry VIII. See The Book of Common Prayer, ed. Cummings, 752.

It is hardly possible that Bonham or his editor knew Adomnan’s version of the legend, sans cross. For textual history, see Adomnán’s Life of Columba, eds. Anderson and Anderson, liv-lxiv.
But Oswald whan he was warned of the greate strength of thys Cadwan he made
his prayers to god, and besoughte hym mekely of helpe to withstande his
enemyes. And or he yode to prayer he arreryd a crosse of tre before the whyche
he knelyd a longe whyle in a felde whyche longe after was called Heuynfelde, and
at thys daye is had in greate worshyppe. That place is nere vnto the town or
ychyrche of Agustalde in Brennicia the whyche chyrche was there buylded by
Oswalde after the wynnyng of that batayle. And of the spones of that crosse are
tolde many wounders the whiche I ouer passe. Than after Oswalde had prayed for
the saluacyon of hys people the two hostes met in a felde named than Denysborne
or Denyslake, where was foughten a stronge batayle. But fynally Cadwan,
whych Polycronyca nameth Cedwalla, was slayne and his people chasyd  which
were farre excedynge the nomber of Oswaldus hoste.\footnote{Fabyan, \textit{Fabyans Cronycle Newly Prynted} (London: William Rastell, 1533), fol. LXV\textsuperscript{v}; and \textit{The Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce} (London: Richard Pynson, 1516), fol. lxvi\textsuperscript{v}.}

The account here is exactly the same as the 1542 version, except for presence of the second,
third, and fourth sentences, which concern, respectively, the “crosse of tre,” the “chyrche” that
was “buylded by Oswalde,” and the miraculous “spones,” all details equally found in Bede’s
\textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}.\footnote{See below for the church built by Oswald and the miraculous splinters from the cross as presented in Stapleton’s translation of Bede.} This original, unelided account did not recirculate when a fourth edition
was published by John Kyngston in the spring of 1559, within months after the coronation of the

\footnote{See below for the church built by Oswald and the miraculous splinters from the cross as presented in Stapleton’s translation of Bede.}
new Protestant queen,\textsuperscript{75} under the title \textit{The Chronicle of Fabian}.\textsuperscript{76} Instead, once again it was Bonham’s bowdlerized version of 1542, with the three discredited sentences removed, which took to the stage of Elizabethan religious controversy in 1559.\textsuperscript{77}

In light of the redacted Fabyan text reintroduced in 1559, the presentation of the Oswald story in Stapleton’s 1565 edition of \textit{The History of the Church of Englan
de} appears to be intended as a corrective. The fact of the matter is that in Stapleton’s \textit{History} the cross plays such a leading role in the unfolding of events that the episode would fail to cohere without its presence. This privileged status may be the reason for the cross’s highly theatrical entrance into the scene, with the cast of human characters depicted as intent and nearly frantic about the construction and erection of the wooden simulacrum: “The report also is, that (the crosse being made with quicke spede, and the hole prepared wherein it should be sette) the kinge being feruent in faiithe did take it in hast, and did put it in the hole, and held it with both his handes, when it was sett vp, vntill it was fastened to the earth with duste wich the soldiers heaped about it.” As the cross is planted into the earth, so, too, it is literally planted into the narrative, and once

\textsuperscript{75} Two versions of the 1559 edition were actually published, in January and in May, the second chronicling the first months of Elizabeth I’s reign. See Beer, “Bibliographical Notes,” 201.

\textsuperscript{76} Kyngston claims in his preface that “bicause the last printe of Fabians Chronicle [1542], was in many places altered from the first copie [1533], I have caused it to be conferred with the first print of all, and set it foorte in all pointes, accordyng to the aucthours meanyng.” This is patently not true. See Womersley, \textit{Divinity and State}, 35-37. Still, Kyngston seems not to have personally espoused a religious bias one way or the other, as he was probably concerned mainly with printing books that would sell. See Barrett L. Beer, “Bibliographical Notes: John Kyngston and Fabian’s Chronicle (1559),” \textit{The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society} [\textit{7th} ser.] 14.2 (2013), 203. Womersley, nevertheless, discerns in the 1559 \textit{Chronicle} a “conscripted” Fabyan, “unmistakenly Protestant” yet not endorsing “pure or radical positions.” Womersley, \textit{Divinity and State}, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{77} For the 1559 Oswald text, see \textit{The Chronicle of Fabian} (London: John Kyngston, 1559), 139.
it has been securely stationed there, it dominates the subsequent series of events nearly like a deity.

For it is only after the cross has been “sett up” that King Oswald deems it at all fitting to summon his soldiers to prayer: “Nowe when this was done he cried out a loude to his whole armie: Let vs all kneele upon our knees, and let vs all together pray ernestly the almighty, liuing, and true God, mercifully to defend vs from the proude and cruell ennemy.” 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. In other words, 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.”

Moreover, the relation between the image and deity is so intrinsically intimate that it infuses the cross with a power that is tantamount to divine. This episode bears witness to a potency in the cross that is quintessentially apotropaic, since in light of their prayer and devotion Oswald’s army does indeed win the battle. As the text in The History tell us, “All did as he commaunded them. And thus in the dawning of the day they marched forth, encountred with their enemie, and [...] wonne the victorie.” The victory is instantiated as a miraculous “heauenly victorie,” as Oswald’s “small armie” is described elsewhere in the narrative as having “vanquished,” in the face of great odds, a formidable, previously undefeated foe, about which its

78 This is not to suggest that iconoclasts like Calfhill did not appreciate the metonymic capacities of the cross, for Calfhill himself argues that the patristic writer John Chrysostom used the cross as “a figure of Metonymia,” though not for Christ himself, but rather for his Passion. Calfhill, An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse, 69.
captain, in this case identified as “Kadwallader the king of Britons,” had boasted (“made his auante”) that “nothing coulde be able to withstand it” (fol. 76r).

The narrative takes precautionary measures, nonetheless, not to attribute the victory solely to the image, as attention is also drawn to the faith of both Oswald and his army, which, too, is presented as a necessary contributing factor to the “heavenly” outcome.

79 In Bede there are two separate, unrelated personages named Cadwalla, the first being Oswald’s foe, but there is also a third personage with a very similar name, Cadwaladrus, who is the son of the first Cadwalla. See J.S.P. Tatlock, The Legendary History of Britain. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950, 251. In later historiographers, however, all three get conflated in various combinations with variant spellings, which makes the exact identity of the last king of the Britons, according to Merlin’s prophecy, fairly confusing, especially in relation to the Oswald myth. To help clarify, the prophecy in The Faerie Queene concerns Oswald’s foe Cadwallin, who is one and the same as Stapleton’s Kadwallader (i.e., Bede’s Cadwalla, father of Cadwaladrus), and Fabyan’s Cadwan.

80 This concern about superstition had roots as far back as the description of the origins of the cult in Ambrose’s funeral oration for Theodosius I in 395 (see note above). In this work, after Helena uncovers the “true” cross and proceeds to worship it, Ambrose addresses 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, scriptus in titulo” (“She worshipped the king [that is, Christ the King], not the wood in particular, which is a pagan error and a misunderstanding of godless people; but she worshipped him who hung on the wood”). Ambrose, Oratio De Obitu Theodosii, 61 (section 46). Translation is mine. Ambrose’s caveat was well-known to sixteenth-century controversialists. See, for example, Jewel, A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Ansvweare, 501; Calfhill, An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse, 192, 377; Martall, A Replie to M. Calfhills Blasphemous Answer (Louvain: 1566. Rptd. London: Scolar Press, 1974), fol. 215v-216; Sander, A Treatise of the Images of Christ, fol. 137v; and Fulke, A rejoinder to John Martall’s Reply, 202-203.

In 1563, the Council of Trent took measures itself to eradicate the superstitious abuse of images, while at the same time reaffirming their veneration. See Walsham, “Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission,” in Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain, 137. For an English version of the Tridentine text, see The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent celebrated under Paul III, Julius III, and Pius IV, Bishops of Rome faithfully translated into English (London: T.Y. 1687), 146:

That the Images of Christ, of the Virgin, and of other Saints, ought especially to be had and kept in Churches, and to have due Honour and Veneration given them: Not that is believed that there is any Divinity or Virtue in them, for which they are to be Worshipped, or that any thing is to be begged from them, or that any Confidence or Trst is to be reposed in Images, as the Heathens heretofore did, who placed their hopes in Idols;
first introduced, he is depicted in stark contrast to his immediate predecessors, the “Apostate kinges” of Northumbria (fol. 76r). These previous “English kinges” are accused of “forsaking the religion of Christe” (fol. 76r), of turning to the “diuell” (fol. 75v), and even of resorting to the “olde filth of Idolatrie” (76r). Unlike these earlier kings, Oswald is described instead as “a man dearely beloued of God” (fol. 76r), who erects the cross “feruent in faithe.” Oswald’s army, too,

but because the Honour, which is given to them, redounds to the Prototypes, which they represent; so that by the Images, which we kiss, and before which we uncover the Head, and Prostrate our selves, we worship and adore Christ, and the Saints, whose similitude they bear: As hath been established by Council but especially by the Decrees of the second Synod of Nice, against the Oppugners or Opposers of Images.

81 Many have noted, accepting Bede’s narrative apparently at face value, that Oswald’s motivation in erecting the cross may have been to appeal to the religious sensibilities of non-Christian soldiers among his troops, pagans who worshiped objects that were similar to the cross but with absolutely no connection to the Christian god, because freestanding objects like wooden posts and even trees were sacred pagan symbols in Anglo-Saxon England. See Rosemary Cramp, “The Making of Oswald’s Northumbria,” in Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint, 30. On pagan freestanding wooden posts, see Douglas MacLean, “King Oswald’s Wooden Cross at Heavenfield in Context,” in The Insular Tradition, eds. Catherine E. Karkov, Michael Ryan, and Robert T. Farrell (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 91-92; for sacred trees, see Clive Tolley, “Oswald’s Tree,” in Pagans and Christians: The Interplay between Christian Latin and Germanic Cultures in Early Medieval Europe, eds. Tette Hofstra, L.A.J.R. Houwen, and A.A. MacDonald (Groningen: Forsten, 1995), 166-167. Also, see the discussion in John Blair, “Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines and Their Prototypes,” Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 8 (1995), 2, 20. I would think the same motivation applies to Bede himself.


Thomas Stapleton would not have been cognizant of Bede’s underlying agenda, but he no doubt saw in Bede’s text a means to his own agenda, as stated in the dedication of The History, to convince Elizabeth I to submit her “scepter” to the “holy Cross,” which he equates with “the
is said to be “fenced with the faith of Christe” (fol. 76r), and after its victory over Kadwallader’s host, the narrative pays tribute to that faith: “And (according to the merite of their faith) [they] atchieued and wonne the victorie” (fol. 76r).83

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 that take place at Heavenfield well after the victory. As The History relates, other “heauenly miracles” began to occur in the years following Oswald’s triumph due to the cross’s thaumaturgic capabilities: “For euen vntill this present day many men do customablye cut chyppes out of the veraye tree of that holy crosse which casting into waters and geuing thereoff to sick men and beasts to drinke, or sprinckling them therwith, many forthwith are restored to their helth” (fol. 76v).84 As a consequence of this outpouring of miracles, The History designates Heavenfield as a “holy” place, held “in greate reuerence” (fol. 76v), a location, it says, which “is now much honoured of al men by the reason of the church that was lately builded and dedicated in the same place” (fol. 77v).85 The mentioning of a church building, for all practical purposes, validates for Stapleton’s sixteenth-century audience—as it had before that, Bede’s eighth-century audience86—that the cross has long been ordained as an image worthy of formal liturgical devotion.

83 “Iuxta meritum suae fidei victoria potiti sunt” (3.2; 214).

84 “Nam et usque hodie multi de ipso ligno sacrosanctae crucis astulas excidere solent, quas cum in aquas miserint, eisque languentes homines aut pecudes potauerint, siue asperserint, mox sanitati restituuntur” (3.2; 214, 216).

85 “Nuper ibidem ecclesia constructa, sacratioem et cunctis honorabiliorem omnibus locum fecere” (3.2; 216).

Stapleton’s promotion of the cross cult as it occurs in his 1565 Oswald narrative, repackaged with the aforementioned appurtenances, did not fail to meet opposition from Elizabethan reformist historiographers. The first major rebuttal in a work of historiography appears in John Foxe’s 1570 edition of *The Acts and Monuments*, or as it is more commonly known, *The Book of Martyrs*. This is not to say that Foxe had not already begun to undermine the status of the cross cult before Stapleton’s translation of Bede. In the first edition of *The Book of Martyrs*, published in 1563, the cross already falls victim to Foxe’s program of reform, though without any mention whatsoever of Oswald. For example, in a panel of woodcut illustrations appearing on the title page (also used in later sixteenth-century editions of *The Book of Martyrs*), the cross is presented as an instrument of the damned. On one side of the page, the woodcuts show 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. 3.2).

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Figure 3.2: Title page of John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1563). Image produced by ProQuest as part of Early Modern Books Online. www.proquest.com.
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 one hand the figures of the “Persecuted Church” towards their heavenly reward, and with the other, the figures of the persecutors towards their damnation.⁹⁰ Included among the several images of the damned is a scene of a congregation of Catholics reciting the rosary during a homily. In the background of this scene there appears a liturgical procession winding its way seemingly towards a gibbet,⁹¹ headed by a clergyman carrying a large, elevated banner of the cross, with another cleric, midway, holding a smaller cross-image.⁹² The unspoken message is clear: the cross is the sign of the persecutors and not of the true church.⁹³

In the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments Foxe’s critique of cross adoration 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 St. Paul’s Cross, published by

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⁹¹ Aston and Ingram do not discuss this particular illustration.

⁹² 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), 342. For Elizabethan reformers who considered such crosses objects of veneration, and thus idolatry, see Jewel, A Replie vnto M. Hardinges Answere, 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 the “true” faith in Stapleton, The History of the Church of Englanede, fol. ǁ 2f.

⁹³ Similarly, the link between the cross and the persecutors is illustrated in a full-page pullout in the Book of Martyrs, showing a scene titled “The burning of Mayster Bucers and Paulus Phagius bones and burning of theyre booke with a solemn procession.” Aston and Ingram, “The Iconography of the Acts and Monuments,” 83. For further discussion of the anti-cross bias in the 1563 Book of Martyrs, especially concerning Sir John Oldcastle (generally regarded as the model for Shakespeare’s Falstaff), see Aston and Ingram, 80-85.
John Day soon thereafter, in which he differentiates between false devotion directed externally towards images like the cross, and true devotion, which is described as an internal experience: “To know Christ Jesus crucified, and to know hym rightly, it is not sufficient to stay in these outward thynges: wee must go further then the sensible man, we must looke inwarde with a spirituall eye into spirituall thynges.” In a similar vein, in the 1570 Acts and Monuments Foxe cites the letters of the Marian martyr John Philpot, in which the gospel admonition to take up “the crosse and folow [me]” (q.v., Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23; Mark 8:34) is described as an internalized, personal experience (“my cross”), calling for believers to be “ioyfull vnder the crosse,” that is, in the face of hardships, “infirmities,” and other like sufferings such as “the losse of landes, goodes, and lyfe,” all endured in “the hope of a better reward.” An individual’s joyful endurance in the face of personal suffering, in other words, is rendered as the true form of

94 On John Day, whom Elizabeth Evenden labels as “the Premier printer to the Protestant regime” from the years1569 to 1576, and on his engagement with John Foxe, see Evenden, Patents, Pictures, and Patronage: John Day and the Tudor Book Trade (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), esp. 119-155.


96 See Foxe, The Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO), ed. David Loades (Sheffield UK: University of Sheffield, 2011), 11.2043 and 2046. References to The Acts and Monuments will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically by book and page number, unless otherwise noted.
devotion to the “crosse of Christ”: “O how glorious be the crosses of Christ, which bring the bearers of them vnto so blessed an end” (11.2046).97

For Foxe, as with the Elizabethan controversialists John Jewel and James Calhfill, devotion to cross images was hardly a godly practice, and for this reason, in the 1570 Acts and Monuments, the legend of Oswald and his cross is censured, though in a manner, it is not unfair to say, that is of two minds. After the publication of Stapleton’s translation of Bede, along with the ancillary text A Fortresse of the Faith First Planted amongst Us Englishmen (1565), where Stapleton glosses The History with further explications for 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.98

At the same time, ironically, 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, using Saxon texts to disprove the antiquity of sundry Roman doctrines, foremost among them, the doctrine of transubstantiation, an endeavor that initially culminated in the publication of A Testimonie of Antiquitie in about the


year 1566. As a consequence of these two countervailing proof-text approaches, in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments* Foxe himself reveals a bifurcated approach 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 in the narrative and Oswald is not mentioned at all. For all intents and purposes, 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 approaches leave their mark on Foxe’s presentation of King Oswald, about whom we are given nearly paradoxical information.

On the one hand, Foxe responds to Stapleton’s promotion of the cross cult by grouping Oswald’s cross together with other monuments of Saxon superstition. In this vein, Foxe

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Wherfore what may we nowe thike of that great consent, wherof the Romanistes haue long made vaunte, to witte, their doctrine to have continued many hundred yeares as it were lincked together with a continuall chaine, wherof hath been no breche at any time. Truely this their so great affirmation hath vittered vnto vs no truth, as good christian reader thou mayest well iudge by dulye weighing of this wich hath been spoken, and by the reading also of that which here followeth, wherunto I now leaue thee.

It should be noted that scholars are now challenging the generalization that “the impetus for all Tudor Anglo-Saxon research was Parker’s polemical needs in his pamphlet wars.” See Rebecca Brackmann, *The Elizabethan Invention of Anglo-Saxon England: Laurence Nowell, William Lambarde and the Study of Old English* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2012), 8.

follows the suit of the historiographer John Bale in his *Actes of Englysh Votaryes* (1546), where, as we saw in Chapter 2, Bale asserts that the Saxons were neither rightfully Christians nor even rightfully English, as he denigrates the Saxons, linking his English contemporaries to the Britons as their true forebears. In similar fashion to Bale, Foxe castigates the Saxons in the 1570 edition of *The Actes and Monuments*, claiming that the Britons “were bereued of their land, by the cruel subtillitye of the Saxons” (2.165), who “violentlye and falselye dispossessed the Britons of their right” (2.167), and having “vntruely expulsed and chased out the Britaines from their land,” he says, the Saxons were guilty of “bloud, bloudy violence, and the vniuste dealings” (2.190).

Besides their crimes against the Britons, Foxe also accuses the Saxons of instigating the corruption of the native British church, albeit unintentionally. At first “Paganes,” he says, the Saxons were eventually “conuerted to the Christian fayth” by the Britons and became “devout” “to holy church and to the church men” (2.190). Yet in time, he says, that devotion turned to the “church of Rome” (2.190), and the Saxons “seme both to haue runne the wrong way, and to haue bene deceaued” (2.191): “For albeit in them there was a deuotion & zeale of mind that thought wel in this their doing, which I wil not here reprehend: yet the end and cause of there deedes and buildynges can not be excused beyng contrary to the rule of christes Gospel” (2.191). As a result of this misguided Saxon devotion, Foxe says, “first came in the Peterpence or Romschots in this realme” and, likewise, “most parte of the greatest Abbayes and Nunneries in thys realme were first begonne and builde” (2.190). For Foxe (“so it semeth agayne to me”), these markers of the Roman church were the foundations—elsewhere he calls them “Monkish foundacions” (Preface, 4)—of the ecclesiastical corruption that would only be rectified with the coming of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. So in hindsight Foxe laments the lack of spiritual

perspicacity on the part of the Saxons, and in the following passage, he wishes, contrafactually, that they had not opened the door to corruption:

First that they [the Saxons], which began to erecte these monasteries, and Celles, of Monks and Nonnes, to lyue soly and singley by them selues out of the holy state of matrimonie, had forsene what daunger & what absurde enormities might and also did therof ensue, both publikly to the Churche of Christ, and priuatly to there owne soules. Secondly, that vnto this their zeale and deuotion had ben ioyned lyke knowledge and doctrine in Christes Gospell. (2.290-291)

To corroborate the gravity of these claims, Foxe calls attention to the tangible evidence of what he refers to in the preface as Saxon “superstition and ceremony” (Preface, 4), providing a catalog of “monkish” monuments, a list that includes Oswald’s cross:

The first crosse and altare within thys realme was first set vp in the North partes in Heuenfield, vpon the occasion of Oswald king of Northumberland, fighting against Cadwalla, where he in the same place set vp the signe of the crosse, kneling and praying there for victory. Polychr. lib. 5. cap. 12. An. 635. (2.190)

In citing this example, seemingly derived from Ranulf Higden’s fourteenth-century Polychronic, Foxe utilizes the Oswald story as a counterpoise against Stapleton’s affirmation of the cross cult.
Nevertheless, at the same time that Foxe critiques the Oswald legend as part of his denunciation of Saxon ecclesiastical errors, he also appropriates the legend in a way that seems to align it with the work of the Parker circle and its co-option of the Saxons for a reformist historiographical agenda.\textsuperscript{102} The 1570 edition even includes a printed marginal note to prevent anyone from misconstruing the nexus of the Oswald story, one that contrasts sharply with that promoted in the printed marginalia and chapter heading for Stapleton’s text, where the cross is highlighted. In fact, Foxe’s marginal note downplays and even overlooks the cross, as it summarizes the story with the sanitized quip, “Strength of prayer ouercommeth armies” (2.176). In other words Foxe casts 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, a prayerful king who is not in any way associated with the theological messiness of iconodulia. For Foxe, too, Oswald is most likely intended as a prototype of the monarch, in this case Elizabeth I, whom he describes in his dedication as characterized, much like Oswald, by “a zeale full of solicitude” (Preface, 10). Foxe’s version of the Oswald episode reads as follows:

But Oswald when he was warned of the great strength of this Cadwall, & Penda made his prayers to God, & besought him mekely of helpe to withstand hys enemie, for the saluation of his people. Thus after Oswald had prayed for the sauing of his people, the two hostes met in a field named Denisburne, some saye, Heuenfield, where was faught a stron battail. But finally the army and power of Penda & Cedwal, which wer far exceding the nomber of Oswaldus host, was chased & most part slayne by Oswaldus. (2.176)

\textsuperscript{102} On Foxe’s personal relationship with Parker and the other members of his circle, see Evenden and Freeman, Religion and the Book in Early Modern England, 149-153.
Foxe cites several sources for this particular version of the story, including Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Higden’s *Polychronicon*, William of Malmsbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, John Bromton’s *Joralensis Historia*, and

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But one night while Oswaldus was besieged by Peanda in a place called Hevenfeld, or “The field of heaven,” he raised the Lord’s cross there and instructed his companions to shout with their dying breaths: “Let us all kneel and together entreat the one, true, almighty God to protect us from the haughty army of the British king and its wicked leader, Peanda. For he know that we are waging a just war for the salvation of our race.” They all did as he said and, advancing against the enemy at dawn, won the victory their faith deserved.

104 See above.


Better furnished with faith than with steel [Oswald] attacked Cadwallon, who was exulting in the record of his own exploits and seemed a man born, as he himself used to say, to annihilate the English; the first attack drove Cadwallon from his camp, and soon he was destroyed with all his forces. Oswald had collected from every possible source such an army as he could, and encouraged his comrades in arms to do battle with the assurance that they must conquer or die without a thought of flight. It was a most disgraceful circumstance, he said, that the English should be struggling against the British on such unequal terms as to be forced to fight for their lives against men whom they had been used to challenge freely for the sake of glory. They must therefore assert their independence with bold hearts and all their strength, and not devote a thought to the means of escape. Such was the keenness, such the force of the attack on both sides that it may be said with truth that no day ever dawned more lamentable for the British or happier for the English. One side lost all their strength, and never dared to breathe again; the other, with its union of true religion and a generous-hearted king, was prodigiously increased.


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“Fabian.” In actuality, however, Foxe is re-presenting Bonham’s 1542 account nearly verbatim, with the only major alterations being the inclusion of Penda as co-commander of the Britons, not Cadwall (i.e., Cadwan) alone, and the mentioning of Heavenfield. Once again, the cross has been expunged, as it would be again in the later editions of The Book of Martyrs from the years 1576 (2.145-146) and 1583 (2.144).  

Tunc Oswaldus rex, [...] cum magno exercitu contra dictum Cedwallam regem Britonum subito supervenientes, quandam crucem manibus suis erexit, quam foveae impositam cespitibus firmavit, dixitque, Flectamus genua & deum omnipotentem unum & verum in communi precemur, ut nos ab hoste feroci & superbo miseratione suorum defendat. Seint enim quia justa pro salute gentis nostrae bella suscipimus. Quo facto, incipiente diluculo congressi Cedwallam & copias suas, quibus nichil resistere creditit, apud Denisbourn, id est rivus Denisi vicit & fugavit.

[Then King Oswald, with a great army suddenly coming against the aforementioned Cedwalla, king of the Britons, erected a certain cross with his own hands, which having been placed in a ditch he propped up with a mound, and said, “Let us bend our knees and pray in common to the one and true omnipotent god so that with mercy for his own he may defend us from a fierce and proud enemy. In fact, he knows that we take up the war for the just salvation of our people. And with this done, at daybreak having met Cedwalla and his troops, which he believed resisted nothing, at Denisburn, that is the stream at Denis, he conquered and put them to flight.]  


108 William of Malmesbury’s twelfth-century account also does not include a cross, though it is hardly similar to Foxe’s account otherwise. See note above for text. Raphael Holinshed and his later editors offer a revisionist Oswald narrative in The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, although without going so far as to expunge the cross. In both the 1577 and 1587 editions of The Chronicles, the cross remains, but its apotropaic qualities are subdued, as the emphasis is subtly transferred to “the skilfull knowledge which Oswald had sufficientlie learned in feates of war,” and which he puts to good use in a “sore and cruell fight” against Cadwallo. For the 1577 edition, see Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Ireland, and Scotland, vol. 1, ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian Archer, Felicity Heal, and Henry Summersen (London, 1577; rptd. Oxford: The Holinshed Project, 2008-2013), 165. For the 1587, see Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Ireland, and Scotland, vol. 2, ed. Paulina Kewes, et al. (London, 1587; rptd. Oxford: The Holinshed Project, 2008-2013),111. Moreover, in a heading first appearing in the 1587 edition, reference is made to “Oswalds superstitious devotion.”
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, Canto Three of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, where Merlin explains to Britomart the prophecies concerning the future history of the Britons. In the course of his narration Merlin mentions King Oswald (Stanzas 38-39), who will be a foe in the conflicts pitting Britomart’s descendants against the invading Saxons, which will initiate a period of eight hundred years when Briton supremacy in Britain will be suppressed: “For twise fowre hundreth yeares shalbe supplide./ Ere they vnto their former rule restor’d shalbee” (3.3.44.5-6). The last of the primitive line of Briton kings will be Cadwallin, and his line will not be restored, it is implied in Stanza 48, until the ascendancy of the dynasty of the Tudors in the fifteenth century. In the

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   Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26-27, traces “the most complete statement” of this prophecy “in any text originating in England before the Reformation” to Polydore Vergil. See Vergil, *Anglica Historia* (1555), ed. and trans. Dana F. Sutton (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 2010), 26.1 (book and chapter): “Thus Henry [VII] gained the throne, as had been preordained by God’s will and plan, since, as I have recalled earlier, 797 years previously Cadwallader had forecast that his stock would reign once more. Men’s minds had already been gripped by the belief that Henry had been brought to the throne by this prophecy, and Henry VI had also predicted it” (“Henricus sic regnum adeptus est quod Dei nutu atque concilio provisum est, quamdo abhinc ex hoc anno salutis 1486 annos dccxcvij
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 period of 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 over Penda will occur 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,

Al holding crosses in their hands on hye,

Shall him defeate withouten blood imbrewd:

Of which, that field for endlesse memory,

Shall Heuenfield be cald to all posterity. (3.3.38)
I bring this version of the Oswald myth to our attention because it is unique and likely Spenser’s own invention. Nevertheless, Spenser’s Oswald aligns well with the Oswald of the 1542 *Chronicle of Fabyan* and 1570 *Acts and Monuments*, as he does not engage in any kind of adoration of the cross. Thus, Spenser has largely removed the elements of the story that could be interpreted as allusions to the cross cult found in the Roman formularies, and so his presentation seems to align with iconoclast theology.

Yet unlike his reformist precursors, Spenser retains the cross image; this factor alone presents us with a theological complication that makes it impossible to limit Spenser’s 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 these angels are engaged in “rescuing” the Saxon king 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: the crosses 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 connected to the deity by a relation of metonymy. Although no explicit act of adoration is taking place, Spenser’s crosses still serve as apotropaic embodiments of the divine presence. Not even the angels in and of themselves are sufficient to manifest that presence as the circumstance of their “all holding

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113 The mere presence of the angels, moreover, would undermine any attempt at a unilaterally reformist interpretation of Spenser’s Oswald. As Alexander Walsham has argued, “angels were implicated in the campaign to restore Catholicism to political dominance in England.” Walsham, “Catholic Reformation and the Cult of Angels,” in *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*, 207.
crosses in their hands on hye” is what allows them to act as the conduits of “heauenly powre.”

The crosses, therefore, are not deployed as visual metaphors, but just as in Stapleton’s Bede, as visual metonyms, which because of their intrinsic association with the divinity, are endowed with agency. In this instance the Protestant Spenser carries on Stapleton’s understanding of the cross and not that of reformists like Turner, Jewel, Calfhill, Bonham, or Foxe.

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CHAPTER 4: SPENSER’S *THEOLOGIA CRUCIS* AND THE LEGEND OF HOLINESS

In Book One, Canto Ten of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* the “godly, aged Sire” Contemplation instructs the Redcrosse Knight in “the way that does to heauen bownd.” This “way” is one that is described as a “painefull pilgrimage,” yet in the course of their conversation, Contemplation reveals that through such “paine,” the knight will attain to his true destiny as one of the chosen saints in the New Jerusalem:

Then seeke this path, that I to thee presage,
Which after all to heauen shall thee send;
Then peaceably thy painefull pilgrimage
To yonder same *Hieruslame* doe bend,
Where is for thee ordaind a blessed end:
For thou emongst those Saints, whom thou doest see,
Shalt be a Saint and thine owne nations friend
And Patrone: thou Saint *George* shalt called bee,

*Saint George* of mery England, the signe of victoree.¹

The Redcrosse Knight is so enthralled by this revelation that his immediate desire is to indulge himself in the consolation it brings by means of one of two ways: either by extending his stay on the Mount of Contemplation, enjoying his newly discovered identity as Saint George, future patron of “mery England”; or by “bending” his path directly to his predestined “blessed end.” As he says to Contemplation, “O let me not (quoth he) then turne againe/ Back to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are./ But let me heare for aie in peace remaine/ Or streight way on that last long voyage fare” (10.63.1-4). Redcrosse clearly has misgivings about having to suffer in the “world” any further. It would seem he hopes that his pain can finally be over.

Unfortunately for him, the old Sire informs Redcrosse that both of his proposed options, the life of contemplation or the “last voyage” of death, “may not be” (10.63.6). For Redcrosse, the “painefull pilgrimage” is not about to come to an end. In fact, the defining moment in his life has yet to take place, the “great aduenture” marked for him since his introduction in Canto One, the battle with the Dragon, the “infernall feend” and the nemesis of Redcrosse’s “ladie” Una (1.3-5). This episode, of course, was *de rigueur* in early modern pictorial representations of the saint, including that in the woodcut appearing at the end of Book One in both the 1590 and 1596 editions of *The Faerie Queene* (see fig. 4.1), and even the mere mention of a slain dragon in an hagiographical context could suffice for Elizabethans as an allusion to George.² Thus, when Redcross intimates that he may want to remain on the Mount where “nothing may my present hope empare” (like a dragon fight perhaps), or alternatively, to skip right over to the beatific stage of his existential pilgrimage, Contemplation will have none of it: “Ne maist thou yitt/ Forgoe that royal maides bequeathed care,/ Who did her cause into thy hand committ,/ Till from her cursed foe thou haue her freely quitt” (10.63.6-9). In the end, given the Sire’s remonstrance,

² See, for example, Barnabe Googe, *A newe booke called the shippe of safegard* (London: W. Seres, [1569]), [sig. Dv’]. Here the allusion is intended to mock the legend.
Redcrosse departs from the Mount and returns to Una, to “abett that virgins cause disconsolate,” and in Canto Eleven his three-day battle with the Dragon ensues. The Passion of the Redcrosse Knight is about to begin.

I call attention to the episode on the Mount of Contemplation because I believe it is germane to what I would like to identify as Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, or theology of the cross, a term derived from the writings of Martin Luther, who once said, “the cross alone is my theology.” Luther’s highlighting of the cross is certainly not original to the sixteenth century, as we find similar emphasis in medieval spiritual writings like Thomas à Kempis’s early fifteenth-century *Imitatio Christi*, which remained influential for Christians of all stripes even into the Post-Reformation period. According to Roger Thomas’s 1580 translation *Of the Imitation of Christ*, the cross is essential for the Christian spiritual life:

In the crosse saluation is; in the crosse, life; in the crosse, aide against enimies; in the crosse, celestial comfort; in the crosse, strength of minde; ioie of the spirit is in the crosse; in the crosse, the chiefest virtue; perfection of holines is in the crosse; finalie without the crosse there is neither saluation of the soule, nor hope of eternal life.

The meaning of the term *cross* in this catalog is so broad as to become almost meaningless, and perhaps for this reason, sixteenth-century theologians like Luther sought to provide greater

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clarity about the meaning of the “cross” by articulating concepts like the *theologia crucis*.

Luther’s fullest expression of this theology can be found in the Heidelberg Disputation, the articles of which were contested publicly on 26 April 1518, and although he never expanded upon the *theologia crucis* with a more fully developed systematics, contemporary theologians today place its *locus classicus* in the 1518 debate. The key article in the Disputation is Number 21, titled “A theologian of glory calls evil good, and good evil, a theologian of the cross calls the thing what it is,” and it reads as follows:

> It appears that while one is ignorant he does not know the god who has been hidden away in his suffering. Therefore, he prefers deeds (*opera*, with the sense of “achievements” or “accomplishments”) to suffering, and glory to the cross, power to weakness, wisdom to folly, and generally good to evil. Such are those whom the Apostle calls “enemies of the cross of Christ” [*Philemon* 3:18]. Because while they hate the cross and suffering, they really love deeds and their glory, and thus they call the good of the cross evil, and the evil of achievement (*operis*) good. But God is not found except in suffering and the cross, as it has already been stated. Therefore, the friends of the cross say that the cross is good, and deeds evil, because by the cross deeds are overturned and “Adam” is crucified, that is, the

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one who is built up by his own deeds. In fact, it is impossible that he not be filled up by his own good deeds who has not first been emptied and overcome by suffering and evil, until he knows that he himself is nothing and that his deeds are not his own but God’s.\(^7\)

Here we find the *theologia crucis* contrasted with what Luther identifies as the “theology of glory.” In opposition to theology of glory, the *theologia crucis* accentuates the “stumbling block” of the cross mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, that is, the idea that “deeds” or “accomplishments” (*opera*) cannot help Christians in their search for god and holiness, nor can the glory which those deeds garner. For Luther, the Christian god simply cannot be discovered through power or wisdom or anything that would otherwise “fill,” “puff up,” or “inflate” (*inflare*) a person with pride.

In *The Faerie Queene*, the characteristics of the theology of glory are the very ones associated with the Redcrosse Knight before his sojourn in the House of Holiness. In Book One Spenser continually depicts Redcrosse contending with his own pride, for example, in Canto Five during his temporary convalescence in the House of Pride, or in Canto Seven during his

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\(^7\) Luther, *Disputatio Heidelbergae habita 1518*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 1, 362 (translation is mine):

> Theologus gloriae dicit malum bonum et bonum malum, theologus crucis dicit id quod res est: Patet, quia dum ignorant Deum absconditum in passionibus. Ideo praefert opera passionibus et gloriam cruci, potentiam infirmitati, sapientiam stulticiae, et universaliter bonum malo. Tales sunt quos Apostolus vocat Inimicos crucis Christi [marginal note: Phil. 3:18]. Utique quia odiunt crucem et passiones, Amant vero opera et gloriam illorum, Ac sic bonum crucis dicunt malum et malum operis dicunt bonum. At Deum non inveniri nisi in passionibus et cruce, iam dictum est. Ideo amici crucis dicunt crucem esse bonam et opera mala, quia per crucem destruuntur opera et crucifixit Adam, qui per opera potius aedificatur. Impossibile est enim, ut non infletur operibus suis bonis, qui non prius exinanitus et destructus est passionibus et malis, donec sciat se ipsum esse nihil et opera non sua sed Dei esse. (1.362).
defeat at the hands of the “geaunt” Orgoglio (Italian for “pride”), who due to the similar ge-root of the words geaunt and George, is often interpreted as the personification of Redcrosse’s own “puft vp” self-importance. Likewise, when Contemplation reveals to Redcrosse his true origins as a changeling, he couches Redcrosse’s motivation for leaving his foster parent the Ploughman in terms of a desire for glory: “Till prickt with courage, and thy forces pryde,/ To Fary court thou cam’st to seeke for fame” (10.66.7-8). Redcrosse, consequently, can never attain to the glory of the New Jerusalem as long as his motivation is rooted in himself and his own “courage” and “pryde.”

For Luther the theology of glory is a false Christian theology because it fails to embrace the cross. Luther argues that god is “hidden away” (absconditum) in the cross, and by the cross he means “suffering” (passiones), but specifically the kind of suffering that drives out all pride in oneself and one’s own good deeds (opera sua bona) and that also leaves nothing behind but the knowledge that all accomplishments are god’s (opera dei) and not one’s own (non sua). This is the same theological sentiment, I believe, that undergirds the process of sanctification in Book One of The Faerie Queene, or to put it another way, Book One is rooted in the belief that the cross alone leads to holiness. Thus, for example, in Canto Ten, most of what leads to Redcrosse’s spiritual perfection consists in suffering. For in the House of Holiness the “sowle-diseased knight” (10.24.1) endures “paine and anguish” (10.28.7) to reach spiritual “health” (10.27.8) and a state of “holy righteousnesse” (10.45.9). In this regard, the House of Holiness embodies the prescriptions of Luther’s theologia crucis.

Despite this similarity, however, I have no intention of claiming that Spenser was a Lutheran or that he drew upon Luther’s theology of the cross as it is articulated in the Heidelberg Disputation. What I will claim is that Luther’s theologia crucis can help us to appreciate the
centrality of the cross in the Legend of Holiness as it relates to the Redcrosse Knight and to the transformation he undergoes in the process of fully becoming Saint George. Therefore, I would like to make a distinction between Luther’s *theologia crucis* and Spenser’s, because in many ways we are to leave Luther behind, for our real goal is to discover Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, how it functions in its own way and with its own nuances.

One of the most significant ways Spenser’s theology differs from Luther’s derives from the fact that even though Redcrosse reaches spiritual health during his time in the House of Holiness, this penitential suffering is not the suffering which will lead to his “blessed end.” In order to embrace his identity to its fullest extent and become Saint George, Redcrosse must fight the Dragon. In fact, without doing so, he would risk not ever becoming the *saint* George; he would just be “George.” His suffering in Canto Ten, therefore, is really only preparatory to his ultimate “path” to holiness, which takes place in Canto Eleven when he finally does engage the Dragon. So in *The Faerie Queene*, there is a personal dimension to suffering that we do not find expounded in the Heidelberg Disputation, a non-generic, predestined form of suffering that the Redcrosse must allow to happen if he is to become definitively Saint George himself, or to put it another way, *wholly* Saint George. In Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, as opposed to Luther’s, the cross is not at all one and the same as suffering in a broad general sense of the term, but rather the cross is a very personal, specific suffering which is endured in such a way that it shapes a person into becoming, like Christ, a fully sanctified, that is a whole, self. Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, in other words, necessitates a personal cross, which for Redcrosse is fighting the Dragon. Without that fight, Redcrosse does not become Saint George.

The rudiments of this concept of a “personal cross” can be detected in various religious texts published in Elizabethan England. In a 1562 edition of the collected homilies of Hugh
Latimer, for example, commonly referred to as the *Fruitfull Sermons*, Latimer delineates what he sees as the conditions that are necessary for suffering to be considered a “crosse of God.” Thus, he makes a distinction between crosses which are not sought out and those which are. For Latimer, a cross can be derived from any kind of suffering experienced in daily life due to poverty, theft, calumny, gossip, or, as he says, “miseries” in general. All of these “crosses” are to be endured “wylyngly and humblye” and “withoute anye murmuryinge or grudgynge,” for they are examples of god-given suffering. Yet Latimer is adamant that not all forms of suffering are equivalent to “Christes cross”:

But you wyll saye, I praye you tell me what is my crosse. Aunswere. This that God layeth vppon you that same is your crosse: not that whiche you of your owne wylfulnesse laye vpon your selues. As there was a certayne secte whyche were called *Flagellarii*, whyche scourged themselues wyth whyppes, tyl the bloude ranne from their bodies: thys was a crosse, but it was not the crosse of God. No no, he layde not that crosse vpon theym, they dydde it of theyr owne heade. Therfore looke what God layeth vppon me that same is my crosse, whiche I oughte to take in good parte. (sig. k[i]v-kii)

Here a clear distinction is made between kinds of suffering. On the one hand there are self-inflicted forms of suffering like flagellation, which, having been conjured up out of your “owne heade,” Latimer says, “your owne wylfulnesse lay vpon yourselves.” On the other hand,

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8 Hugh Latimer, *27 Sermons* [*Fruitfull sermons*] (London: John Day, 1562), sig. k[i]v. All references to Latimer’s *27 Sermons* will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.
there is the suffering which “God layeth vpon” you. For Latimer, a true cross cannot be the
effect of a person’s desire or volition, but it must first be encountered through unforeseen
circumstances beyond an individual’s willfull control. In other words, only after a person has
been afflicted by suffering can it be called a “cross of God,” and only then does the individual’s
volition become a factor, that is, to make a choice whether or not to “beare it [the cross]
wylyngly and humblye” (sig. kiiś). Although Latimer’s understanding of the cross is not fully
the same as what I am describing as the personal cross in Spenser’s theologia crucis, Latimer’s
insistence that, first of all, the cross must not be sought out, and secondly that, once it has been
given, it must be embraced, are nuances that should be recognized as corresponding to what
happens in The Faerie Queene. Thus, at the end of Canto Ten, the Redcrosse Knight would have
preferred not to return “backe to the world” and his “painefull pilgrimage,” but after the sire
Contemplation rebukes him, he accepts the fact that he must confront the Dragon, which I am
arguing, is the Knight’s god-given cross.

Another Elizabethan text which can help us to appreciate Spenser’s theologia crucis is
the Jesuit Robert Parsons’s A Christian Directorie (1585). An earlier version of this text was first
published in 1582 under the title The First Book of Christian Exercise, appertayning to Christian
Resolution, and it proved to be so popular in Elizabethan England, among believers of all stripes,
that a nearly verbatim, “Protestant” version appeared as Edmund Bunny’s A Booke of Christian
Exercise in 1584. In A Christian Directorie, Parsons, like Latimer before him, believes that
“crosses” can be found in the quotidian circumstances of life: “There is alwaies a crosse to be
found, for them that wil take it vp. For euer is there either pouertie, sicknesse, slander, enemitie,

9 See Victor Houliston, “Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified: Edmund Bunny’s Theft of
The Book of Resolution,” in The Reckoned Expense, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Woodbridge,
injurié, contradiction, or some like affliction offered continually.” Also, similarly to Latimer, Parsons intimates that crosses are given, and not sought out, since he suggests that crosses are “laied vpon you” (685). Finally, like Latimer, Parsons recommends that Christians bear their crosses “willingly” (639).

Parsons also introduces, moreover, two nuances which are not found in Latimer, but which bear directly on the Redcrosse Knight. The first nuance is found in the context of Parsons’s exegesis of the verse from Matthew 10 that reads, as he quotes it, “He that taketh not vp his crosse and foloweth me, is not woorthie of me” (639). As an explanation for this verse, Parsons posits “that there is no saluation now to be had, but onely for them that take vp [...] their proper crosses.” Although he does not define the term proper cross, the insinuation is that it is an experience unique to each individual and that the salvation of the individual depends upon it. In another place in the Directorie, Parsons appears to expound upon this same idea, this time using the metaphor of a battle: “Let vs runne by patience vnto the battaile offered vs, fixing our eyes vpon the authour of our faith, and fulfiller of the same, IESVS” (684). If indeed the terms proper cross and battaile can be applied to one and the same idea, the fact that the battle is qualified here as “the battaile offered vs” would seem to corroborate that there is a personal, non-generic dimension to the experience of suffering that constitutes each individual’s cross. In The Faerie Queene, the “proper cross” of the Redcrosse Knight is that he must encounter the Dragon in battle. The general suffering he experiences in Canto Ten in the House of Holiness, however

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10 Robert Parsons, S.J., *A Christian Directorie Guiding Men to Their Saluation* ([Rouen : Fr. Parsons’s Press], 1585), 640. All references to Parsons’s *Christian Directorie* will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically. Bunny’s text does not differ from Parson’s in the passages discussed.
penitential it may be, is simply not enough to allow for him to reach his “blessed end” and to become wholly Saint George.

The second nuance discernible in Parsons’s *Christian Directorie* is that after their “proper crosses” have been taken up by individual believers, a situation is created whereby they follow along the very same path as Christ himself. By the means of “their proper crosses,” Parsons suggests, believers “therwith doe folow their captaine, walking on with his crosse vpon his shoulders before them” (639). This image suggests an analogy between the individual believer and Christ. Just as Christ carries his cross, so, too, believers carry theirs. Of course, the crosses in the analogy are totally different: Christ carries the cross of his Passion, whereas the believer carries his or her “proper cross,” which can be virtually any plausible form of human suffering or one completely unique to the individual, as long as that suffering has been given by God. In either case, however, the believer, in taking up the “cross,” is effectively traveling along the very same existential pathway as the deity. To put it another way, through their suffering, believers follow in the footsteps of Christ, albeit analogously. In *The Faerie Queene*, we find this very analogy established between Christ and Redcrosse, and as I will discuss more fully below, Spenser draws out the analogy so effectively in Canto Eleven that it has caused some scholars to surmise, inexactely I believe, that the Knight actually becomes Christ during his three-day battle with the Dragon.

Another early modern source that can help us to appreciate Spenser’s *theologia crucis* can be found in John Donne’s sermon on Matthew 4,11 where Donne delivers a digression on Christ’s admonition, “Let him take up the crosse, and follow me” (299). Although Spenser

obviously would not have known Donne’s sermon, I should reiterate that my aim here is not to argue that Spenser was familiar with any of the texts being discussed, but rather that these texts can offer us insight into the nuances of the theology at work in Book One of *The Faerie Queene.*

That said, Spenser could easily have read the works I have mentioned by Luther, Latimer, and Parsons, and, therefore, he may in fact have been influenced by them, but in the case of Donne, he actually anticipates his ideas.

For Donne, just as for Latimer and Parsons, a cross must be given by God. As he says, “That onely is my crosse, which the hand of God hath laid upon me” (300). Similarly, it must be “voluntarily embraced” (301). Like the others, too, Donne insists that crosses should not be sought out, although he is much more emphatic about this criterion, expanding even further upon Latimer’s negative exemplum of the *Flagellari* who whip themselves under the false notion that their self-induced suffering is a legitimate cross:

I must not go out of my way to seeke a crosse; for, so it is not mine, nor laid for my taking up. I am not bound to hunt after a persecution, nor to stand it, and not flye, nor to affront a plague, and not remove, nor to open my selfe to an injury, and not defend. I am not bound to starve my selfe by inordinate fasting, nor to teare my flesh by inhumane whippings, and flagellations. (301)

Here any attempt to harm oneself or even to allow oneself to be harmed is dismissed out of hand. Even the failure to try to avoid the suffering that comes from persecution or illness is rejected as a true kind of cross. In fact, Donne is so insistent that a cross have its origins in God, and not the
self, that he goes so far as to question some of the quotidian forms of suffering that the other writers we have looked at present as crosses *ipso facto*:

> Alas, that crosse of the present bodily weaknesse, which the former wantonnesses of my youth have brought upon me, is not my crosse; That crosse of poverty which the wastefulnesse of youth hath brought upon me, is not my crosse; for these, weaknesse upon wantonnesse, want upon wastfulnesse, are Natures crosses, not Gods, and they would fall naturally, though there were (which is an impossible supposition) no God. (301)

Thus, for Donne, the ravages of sickness and poverty may inappropriately become excuses for a person’s failure to accept the natural consequences of earlier “wantonnesse” and “wastfulnesse,” consequences which, in other words, are the effects of personal sin and hardly the kind of crosses, Donne says, “prepared for me by God.” This particular insight, in turn, relates directly to Donne’s unqualified proposition that true God-given crosses are not at all generic, but tailored to the individual: “for every man hath afflictions, but every man hath not crosses” (300). In fact, Donne maintains that a true cross is tantamount to a personal vocation. As he says, “I am bound to take up my Crosse; and that is onely mine which the hand of God hath laid for me, that is, in the way of my Calling” (301). According to Donne’s exegesis, therefore, Christ’s mandate to “take up the crosse, and follow me” is a call to a radically personal experience: “my Calling.”

Furthermore, for Donne, just as for Parsons, the radically personal cross is analogous to Christ’s cross, as he also says individual Christians, in bearing their personal crosses, “follow”
Christ (300). Yet Donne goes one step beyond Parsons in that he acknowledges that the individual will fail in his attempt to walk in the same footsteps as the deity, not least of all because of the many “tentations and tribulations incident to that [cross]” (301). As a result, the only recourse is to turn to Christ for help: “I must bring my crosse to his; lay downe my crosse at the foote of his” (302). With this claim, Donne effectually collapses the analogous relation, recommending that the distance between an individual’s personal cross and Christ’s cross be reduced to nothing. In other words, an identity, or as he labels it, “conformity” (300), is established between the two “crosses.” For the individual, the willingness to seek out this conformity is an act of humility that, in turn, becomes salvific because the deity will indeed always help the individual: “God, since it [the personal cross] is his burden, will make it lighter, since it is his yoake, easier, and since it is his Crosse, more supportable” (301). Admittedly, there is a circularity at play here: the personal cross to which God first calls an individual becomes the means of that person’s salvation because in taking up that cross the individual inevitably fails, but in this failure receives the assistance he needs from Christ, since Christ is the very one who has bestowed, or authored, the cross in the first place. Yet this process for Donne is what allows the personal cross to become holy: “I must bring my crosse to his; lay downe my crosse at the foote of his; Confesse that there is no dignity, no merit in mine, but as it receives an impression, a sanctification from his” (302). In this way, the personal suffering that the individual experiences unites, or “conforms,” him to the suffering God who is “hidden away” in the cross, thus making the individual holy. Donne writes, “And when I am come to that conformity with my Saviour, as to fulfill his sufferings in my flesh, [...] then I am crucified with him, carried up to his Crosse” (300). For Donne, to be crucified with Christ is true holiness.
In the Legend of Holiness, the Redcrosse Knight responds to the calling to take up his personal cross and follow Christ, to be crucified with him, when he engages the Dragon in battle. This is the cross ordained for him, the “great aduenture” that “greatest Gloriana to him gaue” (1.3.1-2) and that Sire Contemplation confirms as necessary for him to complete (10.63.6-9). Furthermore, Redcrosse does not seek out this battle, as he does, for example, the fight with Errour, when he ignores the admonitions of both Una and the Dwarfe to stay away from her den (1.12-13) and does as he pleases, invading the monster’s lair: “But full of fire and greedy hardiment./ The youthfull knight could not for ought be staide./ But forth vnto the darksom hole he went./ And looked in” (1.14.1-4). Once Errour is provoked, moreover, Redcrosse depends on himself and not his faith, as he is “resolud in minde” to defeat the foe, and in the end, the victory is described in terms of his “great glory wonne” and not of any suffered cross (1.27.6).

Redcrosse’s battle with the Dragon is also unlike his contest with Orgoglio, where Redcrosse’s struggle never even gets the chance to be identified as any kind of cross akin to Christ’s, because the red crosses on the knight’s armor are never even brought into play in the narrative. As we are told, “But ere he could his armour on him dight./ Or gett his shield, his monstrous enimy/ With sturdie steps came stalking in his sight,/ An hideous Geaunt horrible and high” (7.8.1-4). Without his armour and shield, in other words, Redcrosse’s suffering at the hands of the giant is disconnected from any relation to the cross. In fact, the whole experience, even before he gets trapped in Orgoglio’s dungeon, renders him “haplesse, and eke hopelesse,” as well as “Disarmd, disgraste, and inwardly dismayde” (7.11.4, 6). Orgoglio’s conquest of Redcrosse is the nadir of Book One and leaves him not only bereft of his armor, but after his imprisonment, seemingly stripped of all hope of salvation too, a situation whose effects are the antithesis, if we are to trust the likes of Parsons and Donne, of taking up the cross and following
Christ. In the battle with the Dragon, in contrast, Redcrosse does in fact wear his “glistring” (11.4.8) and “godly armes” (11.7.9), since by this point in the narrative he has been trained in righteousness in the House of Holiness and is prepared to continue his “painefull pilgrimage” and to follow Christ in his suffering.

Furthermore, in Canto Eleven, Spenser utilizes an allusion to Hercules to draw attention to the fact that the Redcrosse, in confronting the Dragon, has begun to follow Christ in his suffering. As I have argued above, the idea of “following Christ” sets up an analogy between the individual Christian and the deity, both of whom carry crosses, though each of a different kind. The allusion to Hercules allows for just such an analogy to be arranged between Redcrosse and Christ, albeit in a highly complex way. The passage in question reads as follows:

Not that great Champion of the antique world,
Whom famous Poetes verse so much doth vaunt,
And hath for twelue huge labours high extold,
So many furies and sharpe fits did haunt,
When him the poysoned garment did enchaunt
With Centaurs blood, and bloody verses charmd,
As did this knight twelve thousand dolours daunt,
Whom fyrie steele now burnt, that erst him armd,
That erst him goodly armd, now most of all him harmd. (11.27)

On one level, the stanza sets up an analogy between the Redcrosse Knight and Hercules: the cause of Redcrosse’s suffering is akin to that of the “great Champion.” The Knight’s pain is
caused by the “fyrie steele,” which refers to Redcrosse’s armor after the flaming breath of the Dragon has scorched it (11.26.6-7); Hercules’s suffering is caused by “the poysoned garment,” which in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* actually consumes his flesh and kills him. The “fyrie steele” daunts the Knight with “twelve thousand dolours,” whereas the “the poysoned garment” haunts Hercules with a lesser number of “furies and sharpe fits.” Yet the analogy may go further.

In the overtly Christian context of Book One, the terms *Champion* and *antique world* could easily be mistaken as references to Christ—until, that is, the mention of the “twelue huge labors.” Even so, Hercules is a curious allusion given the nature of the analogy comparing Redcrosse’s suffering to Hercules’s. Christ’s Passion would seemingly make a more fitting comparison, especially since, as I am arguing, Redcrosse experiences his own Passion in Canto Eleven. Yet in this instance, Hercules may actually be an allusion to Christ. In his “Hercule Chrestien,” the sixteenth-century French poet Pierre de Ronsard writes the following:

Hercules, having a piece of wood,
Went to the Underworld: Jesus, having his Cross,
Went there too. Hercules took Theseus
Out of the Underworld, and his friend Pirithous,
Dragging the Dog backwards by force,
the Gatekeeper of the Styx, who was attached by a chain:
And Christ, bursting the gate of Hades,
By virtue of his blessed Cross,

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His dear friends cast out of Limbo.\footnote{13}

Here Hercules and Christ are compared analogously. Just as Hercules visited the Underworld to free his friends, so too did Christ. If indeed Spenser is alluding to this poem, or perhaps to some other source linking Hercules’s descent to Christ’s harrowing of hell, then the analogy between Redcrosse and Hercules can be taken one step further: Redcrosse is to Hercules in his suffering as Hercules is to Christ in his freeing his friends from hell. Yet since Christ does so by means of his cross, the double analogy can carry through to include Redcrosse: Redcrosse suffering in his armor is analogous to Christ suffering on the cross.

In any case, in the battle with the Dragon, Redcrosse does indeed suffer, and in a fashion that can be properly called a “cross of God.” It is unlike the suffering he experiences earlier at the hands of Errour, which is due almost solely to his hubris, since, as we have seen, he dismisses the warnings of his companions to “fly fly” (1.13.8) from a “place vnknowne and wilde” (1.12.3), telling them brashly, “Vertue giues her selfe light, through darkenesse for to wade” (1.12.9). Similarly, in the Orgoglio episode, Redcrosse ends up nearly dead, “a ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly drere” (8.40.9), by-and-large because he allows himself to be

\footnote{13} Pierre de Ronsard, \emph{Hymnes}, ed. Albert Py (Geneva: Librairie Druz, 1978), 272 (translation is mine):

\begin{verbatim}
Hercule ayant une masse de bois
Vint aux Enfers: Jésus ayant sa Croix
Y vint aussi. Hercule ôta Thésée
Hors des Enfers, et son cher Pirithée,
Traînant par force à reculons le Chien
Portier de Styx, attaché d’un lien:
Et Christ rompant la porte Ténarée,
Par la vertu de sa Croix honorée,
Ses chers amis hors des Limbes jeta. (257-265)
\end{verbatim}
taken by surprise in a weakened, drunken state, “pourd out in loosenesse” (7.7.2), “carelesse of his health” (7.7.3), “vnready” with his weapons (7.7.9). He is so unprepared that he can barely fight: “and eke so faint in euynt and vayne,/ Through that fraile fountain, which him feeble made,/ That scarsely could he weeld his bootlesse single blade” (7.11.7-9). Donne himself could not have better described the “wantonnesse” and “wastfulnesse” that precipitates the trials of “Natures cross.” In contrast, Redcrosse approaches his conflict with the Dragon as a “man of God” (11.7.9) fully prepared to suffer the tribulations that the cross of God entails.

Yet the tribulations Redcrosse endures during his fight are horrific. From the moment he sees the Dragon, his panic causes him to “quake for feare” (11.15.8). His pain becomes so fierce that he wishes for death: “Faynt, wearie, sore, emboyled, grieued, brent/ With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart, and inward fire/ That neuver man such mischiefes did torment;/ Death better were, death did he oft desire” (11.28.1-4). Over the course of the three days of combat, Redcrosse falls three times just as Christ did on the way to Calvary (11.23, 11.28 11.45). The third fall is precipitated by the sheer intensity of the Dragon’s “infernall” breath (11.44.2). As the poem reads, “The heate whereof, and harmefull pestilence/ So sore him noyd, that forst him to retire/ A little backeward for his best defence,/ To saue his body from the scorching fire,/ Which he from hellish entrailes did expire” (11.45.1-5). Redcrosse’s suffering becomes so excessive that even Una has “great doubt of his safety” (11.33.8).

His armor, too, which is meant to protect him, betrays him in the course of his fighting the fiery beast: “The scorching flame sore swinged all his face,/ And through his armour all his body seard,/ That he could not endure so cruell cace,/ But thought his armes to leaue, and helmet to vnlace” (11.26.6-9). The pain is so unbearable that Redcrosse is nearly broken. The temptation to discard his armor, whose red cross symbolizes his desire to join his sufferings to Christ’s,
suggests that the mandate to “take up the cross and follow me” has brought Redcrosse to the moment of salvation: the breaking point when he cannot complete his vocation without God’s help. The suffering of his cross is no longer bearable. According to Spenser’s *theologia crucis*, however, the personal cross is always a call to suffering, and therefore, even though the armor is intended to help Redcrosse in carrying out the vocation of his personal cross (that is, defeating the Dragon), in putting on the red-cross armor and “signing” himself with the “badge” of the cross, he is necessarily putting on, and signing himself with, suffering. In other words, the very means by which he carries out his vocation to follow Christ has, in turn, become the very cause of his pain.

At this juncture in Canto Eleven when Recrosse appears near death, he is saved by a *deus ex machina*, as he will be again after the second day of his battle. Yet this *deus ex machina* is itself a manifestation of medieval traditions related to the cross, but to understand these traditions, we must first rehearse the medieval exegetical idea of typology. As explained by Jean Daniélou, the “essence of typology” is “to show how past events are a figure of events to come.”\(^\text{14}\) In the writings of Church fathers like Peter Chrysologus and Irenaeus, the prefiguring of future events is articulated by the concepts of *recirculatio* and *recapitulatio*, concepts which recognize in the gospels a revision of events from the Old Testament, a kind of historical retracing of steps which allows Christ to rehabilitate fallen mankind.\(^\text{15}\) As Chrysologus explains


recirculatio, the very same pathways that lead to salvation are necessarily those which first led to death.\textsuperscript{16} For example, in his commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, Chrysologus interprets the wood of the cross as the recirculation of the wood of the tree in paradise: “He was crucified so that life might return through wood because, through wood, death had first come.”\textsuperscript{17} So the wood of the cross recirculates the wood of the tree from which Adam and Eve ate.

Typology, however, calls for resemblances that are contingent upon difference as well. This nuance is defined by the concept of recapitulatio. Thus, as Irenaeus relates, Christ is the new Adam who re-enacts Adam’s fall, but in an antithetical way.\textsuperscript{18} For example, as the wood of the tree in paradise is the vehicle of Adam’s disobedience, and so too, of humanity’s condemnation, the wood of the cross on Calvary is conversely the vehicle of Christ’s obedience and so, of salvation.\textsuperscript{19} Thus Adam, the prefiguration of Christ, is recapitulated or renewed in Christ because his disobedience is reversed. As Irenaeus says, “through his obedience on a tree,” Christ effects “the recapitulation of the disobedience which occurred on a tree.”\textsuperscript{20}

Typological narratives involving the trees in Paradise and the tree of the cross can be found in numerous medieval sources, written and otherwise. For example, Jennifer O’Reilly discusses various medieval manuscript illustrations that incorporate the theme,\textsuperscript{21} and similarly

\textsuperscript{16} Chrysologus is cited by Lukken, \textit{Original Sin}, 370. See Chrysologus’s \textit{Sermo} 142, on the feast of the Annunciation, \textit{Patrologia Latina Database}, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996), 52 col. 579B: “Audistis hodie, fratres charissimi, angelum cum muliere de hominis reparacione tractantem. Audistis agi, ut homo cursibus eisdem quibus dilapsus fuerat ad mortem, rediret ad vitam. Agit, agit cum Maria angelus de salute, quia cum Eva angelus egerat de ruina” (Today you have heard, most dear brothers, the angel talking with a woman about the reparation of mankind. You have heard it accomplished that man returns to life by the very same pathways by which he had fallen to death. An angel consorts with Mary for salvation because an angel had consorted with Eve for destruction). Translation is mine.

\textsuperscript{17} Chrysologus, \textit{Sermo} 59 (\textit{PL} 52 col. 364A): Crucifixus est. Ut quia per lignum mors venerat, rediret vita per lignum.
Rab Hatfield addresses this kind of “tree” typology in medieval Italian paintings, frescoes, and mosaics. Some of the more pertinent medieval written sources include the Italian Franciscan Bonaventure’s treatise *Lignum Vitae*, and perhaps most importantly, Jacobus de Voragine’s *Aurea Legenda* or *The Golden Legend*. In William Caxton’s fifteenth-century translation of Voragine’s work, according to the narrative for “The Invention of the Holy Cross,” whose feast is May 3rd, the tree typology works as follows:

It is read in the gospel of Nicodemus that, when Adam waxed sick, Seth his son went to the gate of Paradise terrestrial for to get the oil of mercy for to anoint withal his father's body. Then appeared to him S. Michael the angel, and said to him: Travail not thou in vain for this oil, for thou mayst not have it till five thousand and five hundred years be past. In another place it is read that the angel brought him a branch, and commanded him to plant it on the Mount of Lebanon. Yet find we in another place that he gave to him of the tree that Adam ate of, and said to him that when that bare fruit he should be healed and made whole. When

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Seth came again he found his father dead and planted this tree upon his grave, and it endured there unto the time of Solomon. And because he saw that it was fair, he did do hew it down and set it in his palace. And when the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, she worshipped this tree, because she said the Saviour of all the world should be hanged thereon, by whom the realm of the Jews shall be defaced and cease. Solomon for this reason made it to be taken up and buried deep in the ground. Now it happened after, that they of Jerusalem did do make a great pit for a pool, where the ministers of the temple should wash their beasts that they should sacrifice, and there found this tree, and this pool had such virtue that the angels descended and moved the water, and the first sick man that descended into the water, after the moving, was made whole of whatsoever sickness he was sick of. And when the time approached of the passion of our Lord, this tree arose out of the water, and floated above the water, and of this piece of timber made the Jews the cross of our Lord. Then, after this history, the cross by which we be saved came of the tree by which we were damned, and the water of that piscine had not his virtue only of the angel but of the tree. With this tree, whereof the cross was made. 23

Spenser engages this tree typology in more than one way in Canto Eleven. The first instance occurs in Stanza Twenty-nine, when Redcrosse is seemingly about to be destroyed by the Dragon, but is saved miraculously by the “well of life”:

It fortuned (as fayre it then befell,)
Behynd his backe vnweeting, where he stood,
Of auncient time there was a springing well,
From which fast trickled forth a siluer flood,
Full of great vertues, and for med’cine good.
Whylome, before that cursed Dragon got
That happy land, and all with innocent blood
Defyled those sacred waues, it rightly hot
*The well of life*, ne yet his vertues had forgot.

The allusion here has been construed as a reference to a fountain appearing in the “Life of Saint George” narrative in *The Golden Legend*, where it is mentioned after George has slain the dragon: “Then were there well fifteen thousand men baptized, without women and children, and the king did do make a church there of our Lady and of S. George, in the which yet sourdeth a fountain of living water, which healeth sick people that drink thereof.” 24 This allusion would make the “well of life” a reference to the sacrament of baptism. 25 Yet another possibility is that the allusion is to the pool out of which the cross “arose,” whose water, according to the legend, was made sacred by the cross itself: “the water of that piscine had not his virtue only of the angel but of the tree.” Such an allusion allows for Spenser to express the theology, later articulated by Donne, that George has brought his cross to Christ's, and in doing so, has been saved.


A similar allusion to Voragine’s Holy Cross legend occurs in Canto Eleven, Stanza Forty-Eight, when Redcrosse once again faces defeat. This time the allusion is to the “oil” from the Tree of Life:

From that first tree forth flowd, as from a well,
A trickling streame of Balme, most soueraine
And dainty deare, which on the ground still fell,
And ouerflowed all the fertile plaine,
As it had deawed bene with timely raine:
Life and long health that gracious ointment gaue,
And deadly woundes could heale, and reare againe
The senselesse corse appointed for the graue.
Into that same he fell: which did from death him saue.

The meaning of the “trickling streame of Balme” has been debated by Spenserian scholars, with many arguing, for example, that the balm flowing from the Tree of Life allegorically represents sacraments like the Eucharist, baptism, or in some cases, the Anointing of the Sick. Instead, I would suggest that based on *The Golden Legend*, the source of this balm is the cross itself, and, therefore, the balm should be interpreted, first and foremost, in relation to the tree of salvation, and not primarily as an allegorical construct pointing to the sacraments or anything else.

Moreover, the tradition linking the Tree of Life and its balm to the cross can be found in sources besides those from the medieval period. In Elizabethan England, for example, in the *The
Treatise of the Crosse, the iconodule John Martiall says the following, citing John Damascene and Cyril of Alexandria:

The tree of life, which was planted by god in paradise, prefigured the precious cross. For seeing death came in by the tree, it was convenient that life and resurrection should be given again by a tree...The holy crosse brought us up to heaven who were cast down to the bottomless pit of hell. For this is the tree of life which the scripture sayeth was planted in the midst of paradise, because from that tree the lively and healthful medicine came to us. (fol. 25v).

The balm that saves Redcrosse, in other words, is the balm of Christ’s cross.

Besides the personal cross, another important aspect of Spenser’s theologia crucis stems from his willingness to allow for the cross to operate in the poem as a spiritual aid that takes the form of an image, that is, as a sacred object. This is not to say that Spenser is an iconodule. Spenser’s theologia crucis, instead, proves itself to be highly tolerant of religious outlooks that might otherwise find themselves at loggerheads. His theological approach reveals a flexibility, enabling it to function across the binary established by those Elizabethans who cared to oppose the word of God to sacred images, or as the iconomachs labeled them, objects of idolatry. In Book One of The Faerie Queene, in fact, Spenser’s theologia crucis is pliable enough to bend with the religious sensibilities of its audience. Yet this pliability has very often been overlooked when it comes to the cross. Instead, Spenser’s cross has too often been aligned with a word-based or sola scriptura reformist theology, which questions and even demeans the spiritual
efficacy of images. So one of my aims is to reclaim the theological flexibility of Book One, at least with regards to the cross image.

At face value, Spenser’s use of the cross in Book One appears to be clear-cut in terms of its compatibility with the official teaching of the Church of England. In Canto One, for example, the Knight’s crosses are a “deare remembrance” memorializing the crucified deity, the “dying lord”:

But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as living ever him adored:
Upon his shield the like was also scored,
For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had. (1.2.1-6)

Unlike cross-images reviled by iconoclast-minded English reformers because they were thought to be the object of idolatry, the crosses here seem to provide a suitable example of the proper application of religious objects in their capacity as “indifferent things,” a doctrine authorized by the Elizabethan church and formally pronounced in the 1571 edition of The Second Book of

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26 See, for example, the Elizabethan reformer Anthony Gilby, *To my lounyge brethren that is troublyd abowt the popishe aparrell, two short and comfortable epistels. Be ye constant: for the Lorde shall fyght for yow, yowrs in Christ* ([Emden : E. van der Erve, 1566]), sig. B[i]: “All the papistes that saye, they worship Christ in the crosse [...] do still vnder these wordes continew still in their Idolatri.”
According to *The Homilie against Perill of Idolatrie*, “We shoulde not worshippe images, and [...] we should not haue images in the Temple, for feare and occasion of worshippyng them, though they be of them selues thynges indifferent,” with the term “thynges indifferent” referring to the indeterminacy of images, in and of themselves, as neutral objects “which may be abused, or wel used.” The knight’s cross thus veers away from any “abuse” of the “indifferent” image, existing as it does beyond the precincts of the “Temple,” and “wel used” as it is as a memorial and not an object of devotion.

Mixed into this seemingly clear-cut imagery, however, is language that admits possibilities for an iconodulist interpretation. For example, in Spenser’s description of the crosses on the Knight’s armor in Canto One, Stanza Two, the deity and the cross-image are obviously not one and the same thing, yet the relation between them is so intimate that the cross on the knight’s breastplate is called a “glorious badge.” The use of the transferred epithet insinuates that divine glory actually passes somehow over to the image itself. A similar

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28 *The Second Tome of Homilies* ([London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood], 1571), 43. On the role of Elizabeth I in toning down the original tone of this passage, see Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts: Volume I: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 322. The original, quoted in Aston, reads, “neither the material church or temple ought to have any images in it (for of it is taken the ground of the argument) neither [...] any true Christian ought to have any ado with filthy and dead images.”

29 *The Second Tome of Homilies*, 95.

intimacy between deity and image is also implied by the identity-relation that is established by
the image’s capacity as a memorial: the god “for whose sweete sake” the knight “bore” the
cross is himself remembered by means of that very image. In other words, the material sign is
connected to the immaterial divinity in a determinative and existential way. The device of the
cross, as opposed to say a pair of parallel lines, uniquely provides access to a very specific
deity, that is, the Christian god, who would otherwise not be present to the scene, if, for
example, the armor were devoid of any markings whatsoever or if it bore another device such
as a crescent moon. In short, a stanza that first appeared to be doctrinaire in its iconology, at
least according to the rubric given in *The Second Book of Homilies*, because it demarcates the
cross ostensibly as a memorial alone, turns out to be fissured with the possibility of iconodulia.
This “fissure” in Spenser’s verse, as I posit it here, even mimics the set of circumstances feared
in *The Homilie against Perill of Idolatrie*:

> For the greater thoppinion is of the maiestie & holines of the person to whom an
> image is made, the sooner will the people fall to the worshipping of the sayd
> images. Wherfore the images of God, our sauiour Christ, the blessed virgin Mary,
> the apostels, martirs, and other of notable holinesse, are of all other images most
daungerous for the peril of idolatrie, and therefore greatest heede to be taken that
> none of them be suffered to stande publiquely in Churches and temples. For there
> is no great dread least any should fall to the worshipping of the images of Annas,
> Cayphas, Pilat, or Iudas the traytour, if they were set vp. But to the other, it is
already at full proued, that idolatrie hath ben, is, and is most lyke continually to be committed.\textsuperscript{31}

The homilist’s concerns about the “daungerous” nature of “images of God, our sauiour Christ, the blessed virgin Mary, the apostels, martirs, and other of notable holinesse” appear to apply to the crosses on the Knight’s armor since, through them, Christ is said to be “adored” by the knight. This additional information could be taken, in one sense, as a nonreciprocal claim about the knight’s unmediated worship of the deity, that is, his direct engagement with the divine that takes place over and above the his appropriation of the cross as a way to remember his “dying lord.” Taken as an absolute statement, therefore, it would be free of any iconodulia. Its location in the narrative, however, proximal as it to the other details about the cross, in the very same sentence no less, could als mean that it provides complementary, inclusive information about the knight’s usage of the image. In other words, the knight’s adoration can reasonably be understood as an amplification of what has come before it: his adoration is also linked to the cross, manifesting itself too in the “glorious badge he wore.” For the sake of honoring his god, the Knight uses the image as the means of his “ever,” ongoing worship. Such an interpretation is a far cry from designating the cross monolithically as a memorial, but instead it disposes the images on the armor to the logic of iconodulia in what amounts to a definitive way.\textsuperscript{32} In a very similar way, Thomas More, in discussing images like the cross, assumes a causality between


\textsuperscript{32} For further evidence in the poem of a cross-iconology that lends itself to iconodulia, see Harold L. Weatherby, “Holy Things,” English Literary Renaissance 29 (1999): 434-436.
remembrance and adoration that is altogether seamless: “We reuerence these in honour of the thynges whyche they represent and in the remembrauns of Cryste do crepe to the crosse and kysse it.” For More, remembrance and adoration are seemingly interconnected.

A framework of iconodulia is discernible, too, in the next two verses of Stanza Two, where the knight’s “shield” is “scored” with the cross, as Spenser says, “for soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had.” In one sense, the cross here remains sufficiently free of iconodulia if the word *for* is understood to mean “a representation of” or “sign of” the hope that the Knight *had* (“keeps” or “maintains”) in (“with respect to”) the help of Christ. Such a reading ultimately attributes the knight’s hope to the divine assistance of Christ and not to any measure of causality in the image itself. Yet there is enough play in the language because of the inherent ambivalence of the terms *for, had,* and *in* to construe the verses otherwise. Thus, an alternative reading is that the cross is scored on the knight’s shield precisely for the sake of causality, “because it attends to” (*for*) the hope that he indeed “gets” (*had*) “via” (*in*) Christ’s “helpe.”

In the case of such a reading, the relation between the image of the cross and the deity is an intimate one, to the point that both image and god operate in tandem with each other in an interdependent way. The cross-image on the shield itself provides the knight with hope, even though that hope in its origin comes from the deity. Put another way, the deity “helps” the knight by granting the hope that the knight secures through the image, which is functioning here as a kind of medium. Although the deity is the ultimate source of the given hope, nevertheless, the


34 See *OED* entries for *for* 4; *had* 20; and *in* 7; 17; and also 32 is pertinent.

35 See *OED* entries for *for* 10d; *had* 10; and *in* 13.
cross-image grants access to the divine gift: without the image, hope would not be “had” by the
Knight because his means of attaining it, at least from his perspective, would not be present. An
analogous example may be helpful: “The soldier had a four-leaf clover tattooed on his arm for
good luck, which in fortune’s help he had.” Here the four-leaf clover represents good luck, but it
also helps to cause that luck, at least in the eyes of the lucky soldier with the tattoo, that is, if he
indeed happens to be lucky.

In the case of Redcrosse, the hope that he gains through the cross is a “soveraine hope,”
the transferral of the epithet soveraine intimating that the mere display of the cross-image is
tantamount to an expression of hope in the sovereignty of the Christian god himself. In sum, the
cross on the Knight’s armor is hardly imimical to iconodulia if it is defined by a belief in the
transference of some measure of divine presence, and agency, to images. As the iconodule John
Martiall explains the relation, “It is Christe that worketh in the vertue and merites of his passion,
al the effectes which shal be, or may be mentioned, but by the holy signe of his crosse, as an
external meane, which we must use in al our necessities, as the phisicion doth his medicines in
sicknes, and leaue the rest to god.” According to Martiall’s formula, the “external meane” of
the cross, like a doctor’s medicine, is necessary for the well-being of Christians.

Beyond the text of The Faerie Queene itself, moreover, I would like to argue that another
reason why the crosses in Book One are often construed solely within an iconoclastic or
iconomachic theological spectrum, and thus, too, official Elizabethan church doctrine, is largely
because of the gloss given by Spenser in his Letter to Raleigh, which supplemented the 1590

36 John Martiall, A Treatyse of the Crosse (Antwerp: John Laet, 1564; rtpd. Yorkshire, UK:

37 Spenser too uses soveraign to mean healing in FQ 4, when referring to the Nepenthe that
Cambina administers.
edition of *The Faerie Queene*. According to this gloss, the crosses on Redcrosse’s armor effect an allusion to “the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes.,” a reference laden with iconoclastic implications.\(^{38}\) The “armour of God” motif found in Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 6, depicts the Christian believer clad like a soldier, protected by the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of God’s word.\(^{39}\) The motif, popularized in the early sixteenth century by Desiderius Erasmus’s *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, would have been familiar to Elizabethans not only through the many reprints of Erasmus’s handbook, but also through various contemporary religious tracts, including John Calvin’s homiletical exegesis of Ephesians, published in an English translation by Arthur Golding in 1577.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Hamilton, 717, line 64.

\(^{39}\) Ephesians 6:10-17 reads as follows in the 1540 edition of *The Great Bible*: “Finally, my brethren, be strong thorow the Lorde and thorow the power of his myght. Put on all the armoure of God, that ye maye stande agaynst the assautes of ye deuyll. For we wrestle not agaynst bloude and flesche: but agaynst rule, agaynst power, agaynst worldly rulers, euen gouerners of the darknes of thys worlde, agaynst spretuall craftynes in heauenly thynges. Wherfore take vnto you the whole armoure of God, that ye maye be able to resyste in the euyll daye, and stande perfecte in all thinges. Stande therfore, and youre loynes gyrd with the trueth, hauynge on th[e] brest plate of ryghtewesnes, & hauynge shoes on youre fete, that ye maye be prepared for the Gospell of peace. Aboue all, take to you the shylde of fayth, wherewith ye maye quenche all the fyrie dartes of the wycked. And take the helmet of saluacyon, and the swearde of the sprete, which is the worde of God.” See *The Byble in Englyshe [...] This is the Byble apoynted to the use of the churches [The Great Bible]* ([London]: Edward Whytchurche, [1540]). I cite from *The Great Bible* since it was the translation found in the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer*. See *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 763. Verse numbers were not yet standardized. On Spenser’s familiarity with the various English translations of the Bible, as well as with the Latin Vulgate, see Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 10-12.

\(^{40}\) See Desiderius Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis Christiani*, which may be called in English, the hansome weapon of a Christian knight replenished with many goodly preceptes: made by the famous clerke Erasmus of Roterdame, and newly corrected and imprynted (London: William How, 1576), particularly the chapter titled “Of the wepons to be vset in the warre of a chrysten
For a reformer like Calvin, the metaphor of “the sword of the word” proves to be peculiarly important, even to the exclusion of the rest of the spiritual panoply enlisted by Paul:

Furthermore let vs vnderstand also, that it is long of none but our selues that wee be not wel armed ageinst all the wyles of the diuell and the world, namely by laboring too profit in the Gospell and in Gods woord. For from thence must wee fetch armor and weapon too furnish our selues withall, when wee bee weake. That is the way too withstand at the cosinages and falshoods of Satan: that is the meane for vs to beate backe all his assaultes: that is to wyt, by hauyng the said worde, which wyll serue vs for Swoord, Target, and Headpeece as wee shall see in the syxt Chapter.  

In this instance Calvin reappropriates Paul’s imagery, preempting both the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation in favor of “Gods woord” alone, which indiscriminately suffices as “Swoord, Target, and Headpeece.” A similar reappropriation of Ephesians 6 can be found, too, in a sermon by the Elizabethan bishop Thomas Cooper:

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For of all the spirituall armor that S. Paul describeth, aboue all things he warneth to haue the Target of faith, & the sword of gods holy word. By that weapon only, you know that christ our saviour droue back the Deuil, when he indeuoured to seduce him by perueriting the scriptures of God. They therefore that forbid the people to reade the scriptures, & to hearken to gods word, are to be esteemed no better than traitors, that take from the people of God their chief defence, & to leaue them open to the daunger of their enimies. 42

Although the “target” or shield of faith is also mentioned, Cooper emphatically gives precedence to “the sword of gods holy word” as Christ’s own preferred “weapon” and as the “chief defence” of Christians. In like fashion, the reformer William Fulke recasts all parts of the Christian soldier’s armor as dependent on the word: “All which spirituall weapons, the Lord doth minister vnto vs by his holy woorde.” 43 Here the full panoply has been for all practical purposes reduced to one single weapon.

In light of this kind of recapitulation of Ephesians 6, which prioritizes the sword of the word above all else, Spenser’s promotion of the text as a gloss can be interpreted as an attempt to ensconce the crosses on the Redcrosse Knight’s armor theologically within the confines of the official doctrine of the Church of England. In other words, the gloss serves de facto as a defense mechanism, exonerating the crosses from any imputations of iconodulia, because it virtually precludes readers from spying out idolatrous “abuse” in the “indifferent” images on the

42 Thomas Cooper, Certaine sermons wherin is contained the defense of the gospell (London: Ralphe Newbery, 1580), 97.

breastplate and shield. The gloss may have also been intended as a way to shield *The Faerie Queene* from the eyes of the Elizabethan censors.\(^{44}\) Whatever its motivation, however, the gloss categorically co-opts the crosses, relegating them to an auxiliary role in the agenda of promoting sacred scripture as the necessary means to salvation, an agenda that simultaneously downplayed any need for images in the spiritual lives of Christians.\(^{45}\) Such a scripture-based agenda, of course, shaped the foundation of the Church of England’s formal doctrine, as we find it expressed, for example, in Article 6 of the Thirty-Nine Articles, “Of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation.”\(^{46}\) Similarly, in the *The First Book of Homilies*, the sermon titled “A fruitfull exhortation, to the readyng and knowledge of holy scripture” opens with the following encomium to scripture:

> Unto a Christian man, there can be nothynge, either more necessarie, or profitable, then the knowledge of holy scripture: forasmuche, as in it, is conteyned Gods true word, settyng forth his glorie, and also mannes duetie. And there is no truth, nor doctrine, necessary for our iustificacion, and euerrastyng saluacion, but

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\(^{45}\) See, for example, *The Homilie against Perill of Idolatrie in The Second Tome of Homilies* (1571), 26: “Images [...] haue nothing at all profited suche as were wyse and of vnderstanding: but haue thereby greatly hurt the simple and vnwyse, occasionyng them thereby to commit most horrible idolatrie.”

\(^{46}\) Article 6 can be found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Cummings, 675: “Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”
that is, (or may be) drawen out of that fountain, and well of truth. Therfore, as many as be desirous, to entre into the right and perfect way vnto God, must applie their myndes, to knowe holy scripture, without the which, they can neyther sufficiently knowe God and his will, neither their office and duetie.  

Here “holy scripture” is the “necessarie” means for the “Christian man” to understand “the right and perfect way vnto God” and to attain “euerlastyng saluacion”; or as it says elsewhere in the sermon, “For the scripture of God is the heauenly meate of our soules, the hearing and kepying of it, maketh vs blessed, sanctifieth vs, and maketh us holy.” In sum, for reformist Elizabethan readers, when Spenser identifies the knight’s armor as one and the same as that “armour of a Christian man” from Ephesians 6, his disclosure would have triggered an allusion to “the sword of gods holy word,” the “holy scripture” that “maketh us holy.” Moreover, Spenser would not have been the first to represent the armor of Ephesians 6 by means of armor bearing the image of the cross. Just such an image, for example, depicting a soldier holding a shield with a cross on it, can be found in the various Elizabethan editions of Richard Day’s Booke of Christian Prayers, where the picture is accompanied by the captions “Christian soldiour harnised” and “Put on the whole armor, etc., Ephesians 6.” So Day, for one, also considered the device of the cross as a fitting representation of Paul’s spiritual armor.

47 Certayne Sermons, or Homelies Appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie (London: Richard Grafton, 1547), sig. Aiii\textsuperscript{v}.

48 Certayne Sermons, sig. Av\textsuperscript{v}.

49 Day, A Booke of Christian Prayers (1590), fol. 45\textsuperscript{v}. The image appears in the 1578 and 1581 editions as well, at sig. Ni\textsuperscript{v}. Figure is on far left.
Yet I would like to argue that despite the gloss from the Letter to Raleigh, the crosses on the Redcrosse Knight’s armor do not have to be interpreted necessarily as an allusion to Paul’s spiritual armor. In fact, for some Elizabethans the image of the cross, in its capacity as a sacred object, functioned no less effectively than the scriptures did as a spiritual aid. As we have seen, for example, in his *Treatyse of the Crosse*, John Martiall construes the cross as a unique “token” of the victory over the forces of evil that Christ accomplished through his passion, and, therefore, he deems it intrinsic to the spiritual lives of Christians. As he says about Christ’s victory on the cross, “Christ hath subdued sinne, conquered the worlde, discomfited the deuil, ransacked hel, broken the brasen gates, and ouerthrown all their pouer by his death uppon the crosse” (fol. 17v). As a result of these events, individual Christians can be sustained, Martiall says, in their own struggles against the powers of “darkness” through their faith in Christ’s triumph, but he insists that that faith is expressed most effectively by “the outwarde signe off the Crosse” (fol 17v).

In this vein, Martiall cites certain patristic writers, including John of Damascus and a certain “Martialis” (“one of the 72 disciples sent out by Christ to preach”),⁵⁰ to establish that the sign of the cross is patently effective in protecting Christians from a variety of evils: “The crosse of oure lorde is your inuincible armour against Satan: an helmet warding the head, a cote of fence defending the breast, a targat beating back the dartes of the deuil, a sworde not suffring iniquitie and ghostely assaultes of peruerse pouer to approche nere vnto you” (fol. 15v).⁵¹

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⁵⁰ The various epistles of Martialis were a common, though apocryphal, authority for sixteenth-century Catholic apologists. See the comments in Calphill, *An Aunswere to the Treatise of the Crosse*, ed. Gibbings, 67-68.

⁵¹ Martiall, *A Treatyse of the Crosse*, fol. 15v, also quotes the Latin: “Crux domini armatura vestra inuicta contra Satanam, galea custodienis caput, lorica protegens pectus, clypeus tela maligni repellens, gladius iniquitatem & angelicas insidias peruersae potestatis sibi
another passage, Martiall quotes the language of John Chrysostom, who also refers to the weaponry of the cross in the context of spiritual warfare with Satan, in this case represented as a dragon: “What suffereth the deuil thinkest thoue, if he see thee hold that sword with which Christ dissolved al his pouer, and withe a greate stroke cut of the dragons head?” (fol. 18v). 52 Passages like these show that for Elizabethans like Martiall, the model Christian is a spiritual soldier who turns to the vexillum of the cross as an image to be revered and trusted in times of spiritual tribulation. In The Faerie Queene we also find this same cross-centered spirituality at work.

Spenser’s toleration for the cross image in Book One of The Faerie Queene anticipates the sentiments in John Donne’s undated early seventeenth-century poem “The Crosse,” a rebuke against those preachers and lawmakers in England who would “withdraw” the image of the cross from the sphere of sanctioned Christian piety, denying it as a sacred object worthy of honor, much less adoration:

Since Christ embraced the cross itself, dare I
His image, th’ image of His cross, deny?
Would I have profit by the sacrifice,
And dare the chosen altar to despise?
It bore all other sins, but is it fit

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52 Martiall, A Treatyse of the Crosse, fol. 19v, cites John Chrysostom’s Homily 55, on the gospel of Matthew 16, but without supplying the Greek or Latin for this particular sentence. The citation should be Homily 54. See John Chrysostom, Homiliae in Matthaevm, ed. Frederick Field, vol. 2 (Cambridge: In officina academica, 1839), 114.
That it should bear the sin of scorning it?
Who from the picture would avert his eye,
How would he fly his pains, who there did die?
From me no pulpit, nor misgrounded law,
Nor scandal taken, shall this cross withdraw,
It shall not, for it cannot; for the loss
Of this cross were to me another cross.

For Donne’s speaker, the cross is not merely one sacred image among many, but an image definitively representative of Christ himself, “His image,” as the poem says, a unique designation determined by the fact that, in the economy of salvation, the cross was selected as the peculiar means for Christ’s salvific act, his “chosen altar” that “bore all other sins.” For the speaker, “no pulpit, nor misgrounded law” can legitimately call upon a Christian to “deny” this image, for such a “sacrifice” would cause a believer to “despise” the very symbol of the divine sacrifice originally effected at Calvary when Christ “embraced the cross itself.” For Donne’s speaker, there is no “profit” in “scorning” the cross, and as a Christian he will not tolerate any imperative to “avert his eye” or to “fly” from its “image” or its “picture”; to do so, in fact, would not only be tantamount to inflicting a personal kind of torment, causing himself “another cross,” but it would also make him guilty of committing “sin” so grave that it would be analagous to Peter’s denial of Christ, and even Judas’s betrayal, as intimated by the terms “deny” and “profit.”

In his argument for the image of the cross, I would argue, Donne is making explicit what we find portrayed in Book One of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*: the image of the cross is the image of holiness.
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