

Postgraduate English

www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english

ISSN 1756-9761

Issue 32

Spring 2016

Editors:

Arya Aryan, Daniel Norman and Douglass Virdee

Saintly Bodies, Cult, and Ecclesiastical Identity in Anglo-Saxon

Northumbria

Curtis Runstedler

Durham University

Saintly Bodies, Cult, and Ecclesiastical Identity in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria

Curtis Runstedler

Durham University

Postgraduate English, Issue 32, March 2016

Saint lives, their bodies, and the development of cult were integral towards establishing Northumbrian ecclesiastical identity during the Anglo-Saxon period. These saints' cults effectively established ecclesiastical identity through their relics, hagiographical accounts, and the promotion of their cults through kingly and lay interaction. While the ecclesiastical community regarded Cuthbert as a model of ascetic practice and contemplation, they viewed Oswald as a warrior king who died for his faith. Both saints, however, became models for Christian worship. The cults of these saints grew in similar ways. Firstly, the diffusion and distribution of saintly relics helped to create relationships between the saint and the individual, encouraging cult growth through miraculous occurrences and intimacy with the saint. Secondly, the monastic community wrote and issued hagiographical documents to spread awareness and recognition of the saints. Cuthbert's cult initially stemmed from the monastery at Lindisfarne, where he once lived, and Bede, who wrote at the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monastery, also wrote about both Cuthbert and Oswald. Their textual manipulation of these stories idealised the saints and their images and helped promote the monastery. Thirdly, the church emphasised lay interaction with the saint through enshrinement, allowing for miraculous instances to occur. The clergy encouraged pilgrimages and interactions with the shrine, which spread awareness of the cult and empowered the reputation of the church. Finally, regal appeal increased church authority and stimulated cult building. This relationship recognised the monastery as a place of sanctity and learning, and empowered their socio-political connections. Oswald's saintly portrayal contributes towards understanding this relationship because his role bridged both

kingly and Christian values. In this paper, I will discuss the cults of Cuthbert and Oswald to compare and contrast their cults in terms of literary, material, and historical evidence. Together, these saints and their following created a lasting impact in ecclesiastical Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.

The life of St Cuthbert and his early cult following after death was prominently described in two early hagiographical biographies written during the seventh century, as well as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. Bishop Eadfrith of Lindisfarne recognised the potential of hagiographic accounts for cult promotion, commissioning these early texts.¹ In the text, Cuthbert's role could be reinterpreted and rewritten, and in turn these representations could be copied and distributed.² One of the early biographies was written by Bede and the other was written anonymously, presumably by a monk from Lindisfarne.³ Catherine Cubitt acknowledges that hagiographical records followed stock patterns and ideas, depicting the saint in idealised terms.⁴ The anonymous monk, writing shortly after Cuthbert's death, sought to capitalise on the reputation of the saint, establishing Cuthbert as an idealised character. This tradition draws from the stories of the early Christian fathers, notably Athanasius' text *Life of St Anthony*. Cuthbert's stories followed similar ideas and characteristics. Anthony's story exemplified the hagiographical model, involving heroes resisting adversaries, and standing alone against the enemy.⁵ Cuthbert's anonymously written biography was written during a time of prestige, and its organisation of events and emphasis on contemplation and saintly miracles further popularised Cuthbert's image and growing cult.⁶ The Lindisfarne biographer portrayed

¹ Carole Newlands, 'Bede and Images of St Cuthbert', *Traditio*, 52 (1997), p.76

² Newlands, p. 76.

³ Anon. and Bede, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. Bertram Colgrave. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 2.

⁴ Catherine Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints', *Early Medieval Europe*, 9/1 (2000), p. 60.

⁵ Jerome Rosenthal, 'Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert*: Preparatory to *Ecclesiastical History*', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 68/4 (1982), p. 601.

⁶ Alan Thacker, '*Membra Dissecta*: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995, p. 115.

Cuthbert as a model of the contemplative life, writing that Cuthbert ‘dwelt on [Lindisfarne]...following the contemplative amid the active life’.⁷ The anonymous author preferred to describe Cuthbert’s most outstanding miracles, omitting the miracles that did not fully represent Cuthbert’s supernatural power. In this account, praying to the saint and relics caused supernatural healings and miracles.⁸ Cuthbert is depicted as the perfect bishop, pastor, and monk. He was interpreted as a good role model for misbehaving monks, and a source of inspiration. The author’s rhetoric implies that interaction with the church was an attractive prospect because it caused miracles and wonders to occur, recognising the local church as a centre of power. While Bede better illustrated this idea, the anonymous monk’s contribution was fundamental towards establishing and promoting Cuthbert as an ideal figure in Northumbria.

While the anonymous monk explains why Cuthbert was venerable, Bede explains why he was important.⁹ Bede was inspired by Gregory the Great’s writing, particularly his work *Cura Pastoralis*, which explains the duties of the clergy.¹⁰ Bede took his source material from the anonymous monk’s writing, as well as oral sources and historical records, and improved Cuthbert’s image. The anonymous biography features Cuthbert as a holy man, Bede’s story portrays him as a heroic monk.¹¹ Bede’s Cuthbert actively helps the sick and injured, and identifies Lindisfarne as an ideal and local place of worship through Cuthbert’s ascetic role. Bede’s image of Cuthbert helped create an identity for the church as a place of sanctity and ideal practice.¹² The text emphasises issues of morality and the importance of faith. The recognition of morality and its values strengthens it and makes it appealing to the clergy.¹³

⁷ Anon., *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p. 95.

⁸ Ibid., *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p. 137.

⁹ Rosenthal, p. 605.

¹⁰ Rosenthal, p. 606.

¹¹ Newlands, p. 102.

¹² Thacker, ‘Membra Disjecta’, p. 120.

¹³ Ibid., ‘Membra Disjecta’, p. 120.

Bede's selectivity of content idealised Cuthbert as a bishop who was excited to promote Christianity, whereas the actual Cuthbert preferred the seclusion of Farne as opposed to the worldliness of the bishopric.¹⁴ Cuthbert's spiritual journey follows a 'hierarchical ladder of obedience and asceticism', ascending through ordinary life and circumstance.¹⁵ Cuthbert sets an example for the monastic audience, wearing 'ordinary garments and, keeping the middle path, he was not noteworthy either for their elegance or for their slovenliness'.¹⁶ Using the anonymous account as his template, Bede details Cuthbert's importance to the ecclesiastical community, appropriating Cuthbert's reserved nature into model Christian behaviour. Bede devotes six chapters to Cuthbert in his historical text, indicating his life's historical importance. Bede describes a variety of Cuthbert's miraculous acts towards diseases and ailments, particularly the most contemporary occurrences, and cites first-hand sources for them.¹⁷ Bede also emphasises the supernatural powers of Cuthbert's body and relics through prayer and physical contact, presenting the worship of Cuthbert as a way of life.¹⁸

The later Anglo-Saxon period and early Norman biographies continued to promote Cuthbert's life and personality, and they also provided insight into the transformation of his image and the influence of his cult. Later accounts further idealised Cuthbert's image, endowing him with magical powers and the ability to 'make substance from nothing, direct the elements...and control the whole of creation'.¹⁹ The more universal miracles indicate that the monastic authors were appealing to a wider audience. Other records report that during the Viking invasions, he 'struck dead [the] invaders who tried to take his lands'.²⁰ In 793, Alcuin

¹⁴ George Brown, 'Bede and Change', in *Aedicifia Nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. Catherine Karkov and H. Danico. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁵ Rosenthal, p. 607.

¹⁶ Bede, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p. 213.

¹⁷ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, tr. Dom Knowles (London: Dent, 1910), pp. 221-3.

¹⁸ Bede, *Historia*, pp. 221-3.

¹⁹ Victoria Tudor, 'The Cult of St Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century: The Evidence of Reginald of Durham', in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), pp. 451-2.

²⁰ Newlands, pp. 73-4.

of York wrote that the Vikings destroyed much of the ornamentation of Cuthbert's shrine.²¹ The Viking invasions posed a serious threat to the prosperity of Cuthbert's shrine. The attacks became so relentless that the monks were forced to relocate in exile, eventually settling upon Chester-le-Street before moving to Durham in 995.²² The endurance of Cuthbert's cult during this period suggests its impact upon society. Despite the Viking destruction, the monks were still able to escape with not only the body of their saint, but also their relics. In the mid-tenth century, *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* was written. While it draws from previous sources for its earlier content, the text becomes more idealised as it progresses, incorporating fantastic elements and stories. These alterations reveal that Cuthbert was gradually becoming a more universally renowned saint rather than a localised one.

Unlike the contemplative, cloistered Cuthbert, the historical records depict Oswald of Northumbria as a war leader of his people. Bede devotes several chapters to Oswald in his *Historia*, describing him as the 'most holy and most victorious king'.²³ He ruled from 634-642 and became a Bretwalda, gaining complete control and acting as overlord over Britain.²⁴ Bede writes that Oswald 'brought under his dominion all the nations and provinces of Britain'.²⁵ According to Bede's account, God privileges Oswald and favours his rule because he established churches in Northumbria, cementing the Church's claims to the north. Clare Stancliffe asserts that he entrusts his fate to a Christian God.²⁶ Like his representation of Cuthbert, Bede is selective about his information, highlighting the facts which idealise the king. Bede wanted to uphold Oswald as a model for kingship, one who represented kingship and

²¹ Rosenthal, p. 599.

²² G. Baldwin Brown and Archibald Christie, 'S. Cuthbert's Stole and Maniple at Durham', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 23/121 (1913), p. 4.

²³ Bede, *Historia*, p. 105.

²⁴ Max Adams, *The King in the North: The Life and Times of Oswald of Northumbria* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd, 2013), p. 195.

²⁵ Bede, *Historia*, p. 112.

²⁶ Clare Stancliffe, 'Oswald, "Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians"', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), p. 41.

Christianity. Oswald's heroic role promotes an active Christian lifestyle, appealing to both clergy and kingship. In this regard, Oswald became a protector of his people, tending to them like a Biblical shepherd to his flock.²⁷ Although Bede's Oswald follows stock patterns of the saints, he is not stereotypical; instead, he is defined by his virtuous tasks and doings which represent a Christian ethic. For example, Bede claims that he gives to the poor and includes others at his feast.²⁸ As with Cuthbert, he tailored Oswald's life to conform to the life of Christ. Oswald also held appeal to the scholastic interests of the church. He used his own resources and power to support Aidan's mission to Iona, which became a centre for scholastic learning. His influence is commemorated in Ionian manuscripts, and their interest in intellectual thought eventually expressed to Northumbria.²⁹ Bede mentions his cult taking root in Ireland and Germany in the eighth century, with many miracles occurring after his death.³⁰ Oswald's international reception signified that he was a figure of worship that appealed to different cultures.

Kingship was important towards identifying and spreading his cult into the mainland, particularly in the later Anglo-Saxon centuries. Judith of Flanders, who was the widow of Tostig of Northumbria, married a Bavarian duke, and she brought Oswald's relics with her to Germany, including manuscripts about his active cult.³¹ Their marriage was integral to the diffusion of cult activity to the mainland. In 1058, Drogo of Flanders wrote a *vita* for Oswald.³² He drew much of his source material from Bede's history, but it is unclear about the impact of cult in the area at that time. Drogo's work indicates that the cult was not only making an impact in the Germanic and Scandinavian territories, but also in Flanders. The manuscripts brought

²⁷ Janet Nelson, 'Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship', in *Studies in Church History*, 10 (1973), p. 41.

²⁸ Bede, *Historia*, p. 112.

²⁹ Bede, *Historia*, p. 43.

³⁰ Marianne Kalinke, *St Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 4.

³¹ Kalinke, p. 5.

³² Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta', p. 126.

awareness and recognition of his cult to Germany, leading to his veneration as a saint in Germany in the twelfth century.³³ Oswald's influence eventually spread to Iceland. As a source of miracles and healing, Oswald appealed to these people. His Icelandic biographies reveal that his good Christian behaviour, virtues, and giving qualities made him favourable to God.³⁴ This transition illustrates that as his biographies became more idealised and revised to conform to God's image, the more receptive and universal his audience became.

The relics of Cuthbert and Oswald, including the body and its parts, enforced Christian values. In the case of Oswald and Cuthbert, the bodies were preserved for their incorruptibility and praised as sources of miracles. The body was a drawing point for people, reportedly causing wondrous events and happenings.³⁵ During Cuthbert's translation in 698, the monks involved discovered that his body had not deteriorated as a normal human body should.³⁶ This revelation indicated that his body was not susceptible to the rules of nature, and therefore his body was incorrupt and more favourable to God.³⁷ The monks reasoned that his devout ascetic practice on Farne explained his incorruptibility.³⁸ Reginald of Durham documented that in 1104, Cuthbert's body was removed for transferral to the east end of the Cathedral, and his body still appeared incorrupt.³⁹ Towards the end of the cult's dominant period, Durham tried to change Cuthbert's image to challenge the rising cults of Becket and Godric of Finchale.⁴⁰ In the late Victorian period, the remains of Cuthbert and Oswald were exhumed, and a medical report was

³³ Kalinke, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³⁵ Alan Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, Clare Stancliffe, and David Rollason. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989, p. 106.

³⁶ Bede, *Historia*, p. 220.

³⁷ David Willem, *St Cuthbert's Corpse: A Life After Death*. Durham, Sacristy Press, 2013, p. 19. See also David Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 38.

³⁸ Tudor, p. 452.

³⁹ Dominic Marnier, *St Cuthbert: His Life and Cult in Medieval Durham*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p. 22.

⁴⁰ A.J. Piper, 'The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert', in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, Clare Stancliffe, and David Rollason. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989, p. 452.

provided. The examiner wrote that ‘the suture of the skull was completely ossified’.⁴¹ Medieval society likened this preservation to supernatural powers of the saint. The physical body created awareness of the saint’s life and spiritual importance. Furthermore, the bodily relic empowered the early church’s claims to the north.⁴² Their authority was undisputable with the body of a saint. Cuthbert, providing an identity of Christian virtue and practice, empowered the ecclesiastical centre, portraying them as closer to God and as a place of holy sanctity.

Cuthbert’s cult also flourished due to the diffusion of his physical body and the presence of relics within his tomb. Cuthbert’s hair and shoes were kept for churches that wanted saintly relics.⁴³ For a price, these relics could be distributed to the prospective buyer, and the cult would spread and manifest accordingly. The market for relics was highly active because every ecclesiastical centre wanted the sanctity and economic opportunity of a prominent saint, especially Cuthbert. The church was built to commemorate the saint, and then the relics were translated (a process which involved moving the remains of a saint from one location to another), fortifying the reputation of the saint.⁴⁴ The possession of relic empowered the church, giving them control over the physical evidence of the saint’s work. Furthermore, Cuthbert’s body and relics had apparent healing powers. His shoes, the roof of his oratory in Farne, and even the nearby soil were all recorded sources of supernatural healing.⁴⁵ With its interest and successful promotion of relics, Cuthbert’s cult was blossoming when Bede wrote *Historia ecclesiastica* in the eighth century. Bede wrote that Cuthbert’s hair was used for miraculous remedies.⁴⁶ Rollason explains that the relics were sent as gifts to certain churches as sources of

⁴¹ Anon., ‘Nova et Vetera. The Bones of St Cuthbert’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2/2114 (1901), 42-3, at p. 42.

⁴² Newlands, p. 74.

⁴³ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 105.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Willem, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Richard Bailey, ‘St Cuthbert’s Relics: Some Neglected Evidence’, in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, Clare Stancliffe, and David Rollason. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989, p. 236.

spiritual and financial endowment.⁴⁷ Cuthbert's secondary relics were invested with supernatural meaning and purpose, creating awareness of the power and influence of the saint. Cuthbert's cloth, which was used during his time in Farne, was cut into pieces and distributed, and supposedly had healing powers.⁴⁸ He demanded that his body be covered in a special cloth, and in death his body was surrounded with gilded ornaments.⁴⁹ The proximity and intimacy of the cloth to his body gave it special and spiritual value.

Alternatively, the cloth could be used to adorn his shrine. The use of cloth enhanced the beauty and value of the body, enabling the cult to gain reputation.⁵⁰ The recovery of numerous articles within Cuthbert's shrine suggests the wealth of his cult.⁵¹ Givers benefitted the cult, and the more sizeable the wealth, the more prosperous the cult. Moreover, the shrine indicated cult status. The monks built a 'coffin-shaped box, made from six planks cut from a single, slow growing oak tree'.⁵² The coffin was adorned by the work of master craftsmen, displaying a wide range of influences and ultimately creating a style of their own. The coffin featured carved images along the outside, and seven archangels along the side from the Celtic tradition, and the other side displayed the twelve Apostles. The other end showed 'Jesus as a baby in the arms of his mother'.⁵³ Monks decorated the reliquary of his shrine with beasts and flowers, implying a strong connection to the natural world and enforcing the power of his mortal life. The lid revealed an 'image of an adult but beardless Jesus surrounded by symbols of the four gospel writers: an angel, a lion, an ox, and an eagle'.⁵⁴ Willem deduces that two

⁴⁷ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Newlands, p. 73.

⁴⁹ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne', p. 105.

⁵⁰ Kelley Wickham-Crowley, 'Buried Truths: Shrouds, Cults and Female Production in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Aedificia Nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. Catherine Karkov and Helen Damico. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008, p. 312.

⁵¹ Rosemary Cramp, 'The Artistic Influence of Lindisfarne within Northumbria', in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, Clare Stancliffe, and David Rollason. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989, pp. 225-8.

⁵² Willem, p. 15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

men carved the coffin, with one having more skill than the other.⁵⁵ The high quality of the craftsmanship and rich ornamentation suggest the cultural importance of the saint, having his place among the Irish Church, Christ, and the gospel writers. The rising power of Cuthbert's cult enabled the church to develop these skills and present their artistic achievements to the highest degree.

In 1827, investigators discovered a gold and garnet cross, the Gospel of St Cuthbert, and a stole and maniple, among other treasures, in Cuthbert's tomb with Anglo-Saxon origins, signifying the prosperity of the cult and the importance of relic. The central boss of the cross 'consists of a garnet plug below which is a cavity with walls made of shell from Far East—the cavity, which has never been unsealed, may well contain a relic'.⁵⁶ The cross was visually appealing, which would attract visitors to the site, but its exotic construction suggests multicultural influence and possible interactivity as well. The discovery of the cross demonstrates that the monastery, supported by Cuthbert's presence, had growing international appeal and the wealth to acquire exotic materials. The material evidence suggests a thriving cult with strong connections and a more universal focus.

The stole and maniple found in Cuthbert's shrine is perhaps the best example of Anglo-Saxon embroidery. Its decorative detail and remarkable state of preservation indicate its importance. The maniple features 'two figures of saints, Sixtus and Gregory, and two deacons, Laurence and Peter' on the quatrefoil. The prophets adorned the centre of the piece, and were presented as gifts by Æthelstan in 934.⁵⁷ Æthelstan was the first recorded royal to venture to his shrine, and he placed a list documenting all his gifts into Cuthbert's coffin.⁵⁸ The act of gift-giving was an important ritual for the cult, involving an offering from king to saint. In

⁵⁵ Willem, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 29.

⁵⁷ G. Baldwin Brown and Archibald Christie, 'S. Cuthbert's Stole and Maniple at Durham', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 23/121 (1913), 2-17, at p. 3.

⁵⁸ Newlands, p. 74.

doing so, kings displayed their authority and connection to the saint. Kings were rewarded for having monasteries and promoting cult. The monastery offered them a place of refuge, a place to train workers and craftsmen, and it could be used during times of war.⁵⁹ Possessing relics showed status of the king and boosted morale. In his accounts, Bede prefers to record miracles occurring in the presence of royalty. Furthermore, ecclesiastical buildings gained prestige through acquisition of relics.⁶⁰ The appearance of Gregory upon the maniple places indicates English origins because he was especially revered in England, and the lettering upon the artwork indicates tenth century inscriptions due to the form of the thorn. The stole and maniple demonstrates a variety of needling techniques congruent with the style of *opus Anglicum*, including couching, stem, and split-stitching techniques. Archibald H. Christie and G. Baldwin Brown assume that needlework was used for crafting, although the artist likely had knowledge of both weaving and embroidery for this project. The maniple has a woven braid along the edge, but the central part has embroidery stitches.⁶¹ In fact, the embroidery was preserved by the thickness of gold.⁶² It features ‘threads of dyed silk...round which are wound spiral-fashion narrow strips of thin gold’.⁶³ The fabric of the stole and maniple was disputed, and Brown and Archibald conclude that silk, not linen, was used.⁶⁴ Despite its influences, the skill and creativity of the craftsmanship reveals its own style of art. The importance of the saint in the north enabled artists to practice their craft with the finest available resources and materials, as indicated by the silk fabric and gilded ornamentation. The construct of identity became not only a matter of masterful creative expression, but also an intimate offering to the saint, where

⁵⁹ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 153-60.

⁶⁰ Alan Thacker, ‘The Making of a Local Saint’, in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 245.

⁶¹ Brown and Christie, pp. 3-5.

⁶² Reginald Smith, ‘St Cuthbert’s Stole’, *The British Museum Quarterly*, 11/1 (1936), p. 5.

⁶³ Brown and Christie, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the knowledge of craftsmanship weaves together to create a beautiful work of art that is representative of the saint and Christian values.

Oswald's relics also helped to create ecclesiastical identity. After his death at the hands of Penda in 642, Oswald's body was dismembered and distributed.⁶⁵ Rollason informs the reader that his body went to Bardney, his head went to Lindisfarne, and his right arm went to Bamburgh.⁶⁶ Oswald's arm was integral towards developing Bamburgh as a centre for local cult worship, and the bodily relic remained there until the eleventh century, when it was mysteriously stolen.⁶⁷ Thacker draws an important distinction between the ecclesiastical development in Lindisfarne and Bamburgh. In Bamburgh, the presence of relic helped to form the church and establish it as a local centre of cult worship. Despite Cuthbert's presence in Lindisfarne, however, the monastic centre still emphasised the bishop's role first and foremost.⁶⁸ Like Cuthbert, Oswald's bodily relics became sources of miracles. Family members of the saints, particularly royalty, often helped to promote relics. In the case of Oswald, their influence was crucial towards the multicultural diffusion of relics and foundation of localised cults. Oswald's niece Osthryth wanted to move Oswald's remains to Bardney, but the monks would not receive him initially because he had imposed rule upon their province. Miracles started to occur in the presence of the body, however, persuading the monks to accept him.⁶⁹ As well, Oswald's cross held special significance for his cult. Bede describes the cross and its supernatural connotations in his *Historia*, articulating that Oswald 'laid hold of it and held it with both his hands'.⁷⁰ Oswald's bodily contact with the cross invested it with miraculous power, and thus it became recognised as an object of veneration and secondary relic. The cross symbolised victory for Northumbria through his war-like achievements, as well

⁶⁵ Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta', p. 101.

⁶⁶ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 27-8.

⁶⁷ Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta', p. 119.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁰ Bede, *Historia*, p. 105.

as holiness for Christianity.⁷¹ The sites of Heavenfield and Maserfelth, where Oswald's fought his battles, also became popular places for cult worship.⁷² In order for the cult to succeed, however, initial local devotion was necessary. Parts of the cross were diffused and distributed accordingly. The splinters cut from the wood were used for medicinal purposes, supposedly containing the saint's power. The stake that impaled Oswald became a relic with similar reported effects.⁷³ David Rollason notes that many miracles recorded near local areas.⁷⁴ In the later Anglo-Saxon period, the cult and relics spread into southern England, as well as into Germany in the tenth century.⁷⁵ When the monks travelled to Chester-le-Street during the Viking attacks, they brought Oswald's head along with them, which encouraged the relic to be held with special value.⁷⁶ In Germany, Oswald's iconography was accompanied by a raven, which symbolised kingship.⁷⁷ Oswald was accepted as a martyr on the mainland because he died for the Gospel. His iconography in Germanic manuscripts from this period also establishes his presence on the continent. Cubitt asserts that the physical items act as mnemonic devices for the monks, helping to preserve the saint's memory and role within the monastery.⁷⁸

During the late Anglo-Saxon period, holy wells became associated with Oswald, appearing to commemorate his memory and acting as local memorials for cult worship.⁷⁹ Wells and shrines established connection between sanctity and place for the lay community. These places of worship were accessible and available to the secular audience, broadening the appeal and awareness of the saint. Ceremonial enshrinement was comprised of two rituals: elevation,

⁷¹ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 26.

⁷² Catherine Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 425.

⁷³ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 26-7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁵ Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta', p. 123.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁷⁷ David Rollason, 'St Oswald in Post-Conquest England', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995, p. 170.

⁷⁸ Catherine Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Early Identity in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. William Frazer and Andrew Tyrell. London: Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 271.

⁷⁹ 'Introduction', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995, p. 2.

which involved raising and exhuming the saint's remains, and translation, which involved moving the remains to a more honorary position. In Eadberht's time Cuthbert's remains were removed and elevated to the floor of the church.⁸⁰ The enshrinement ceremonies empowered the religious community, giving them claims to the site of miraculous activity. Translation of the shrine fortified status for the saint, bringing the cult to greater attention. This allowed for greater accessibility, visibility of the saint, and more intimate interaction, and it was also a key step in the process of transforming a saint from localised to universally recognised.⁸¹ The success and widespread audience of Oswald's cult also stemmed from popular lay devotion. Bede's account of Oswald, for example, features numerous lay reports of healing and miracles. The local cults brought sacred ideas and notions closer to the secular audience. The devotion of the lay people also offered the potential of the landscape for sanctity. The landscape could be converted and used for ecclesiastical purposes.⁸² The landscape could literally be given to the church with a land donation and transformed into a space for cult worship.

Cuthbert's cult flourished and became the most prominent cult in Northumbria until the death of Thomas Becket, and Oswald's influence extended to the continent, where his cult had a lasting presence.⁸³ The cults of these saints effectively create a religious identity for themselves through their relics, hagiography, and support from regal and lay audiences. While Cuthbert was praised for his ascetic role and Oswald was celebrated as a warrior saint king, both cults began with localised followings, which eventually led to widespread appeal. Cuthbert's popularity in Northumbria and Oswald's fame recognised the monastic centre as a place of sanctity and authority. The distribution of their relics enabled cult growth and awareness, and miracles helped to benefit their images. Cuthbert's bodily relics and secondary

⁸⁰ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 35.

⁸¹ Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints', p. 437.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁸³ Tudor, p. 451.

relics, encouraged by ceremonial rituals, rooted local devotion, and the diffusion of relics, led to more widespread worship. Oswald's body, the site of his battles, and the presence of secondary relics sanctified his place in Northumbrian churches and beyond. The clergy's commission of hagiographical texts supported the distribution of relics, benefitting the image of the saint and their church. As the saints became more recognised, their interpretations became more idealised to secure a wider reception. Bede's interpretation of the saints established their holy presence in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, and his favourable portrayals promoted the saints' ecclesiastical centres and relics. Finally, regal and lay involvement enabled cult development, allowing for active involvement with the church and endowing the cults with wealth and authority. Pilgrimages and access to shrines empowered the churches and sanctified cult figures. From their cult inception in local churches to their universal recognition, Cuthbert and Oswald's roles were essential towards determining ecclesiastical identity in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.

Works Cited

- Adams, Max. *The King in the North: The Life and Times of Oswald of Northumbria*. London: Head of Zeus Ltd, 2013.
- Anon. 'Nova et Vetera. The Bones of St Cuthbert'. *The British Medical Journal*. 2/2114 (1901), 42-3.
- Anon. and Bede. *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*. Ed. Bertram Colgrave. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940.
- Bede, Adam. *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. Tr. Dom Knowles. London: Dent, 1910.
- Blair, John. *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Bonner, Gerald, Clare Stancliffe and David Rollason. Eds. *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989.
- Brown, G. Baldwin and Archibald Christie. 'S. Cuthbert's Stole and Maniple at Durham'. *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*. 23/121 (1913), 2-17.
- Cambridge, Eric and Clare Stancliffe. Eds. *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995.
- Cubitt, Catherine. 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints'. *Early Medieval Europe*, 9/1 (2000), 53-83.
- Frazer, William and Andrew Tyrell. Eds. *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*. London: Leicester University Press, 2000.
- Kalinke, Marianne. *St Oswald of Northumbria: Continental Metamorphoses*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005.
- Karkov, Catherine and Helen Damico. Eds. *Aedificia nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008.

- Marner, Dominic. *St Cuthbert: His Life and Cult in Medieval Durham*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Nelson, Janet. 'Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship'. *Studies in Church History*, 10 (1973), 39-44.
- Newlands, Carole. 'Bede and Images of St Cuthbert'. *Traditio*, 52 (1997), 73-109.
- Rollason, David. *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Rosenthal, Jerome. 'Bede's Life of St Cuthbert: Preparatory to Ecclesiastical History'. *The Catholic Historical Review*, 68/4 (1982), 599-611.
- Sharpe, Richard and Alan Thacker. *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Smith, Reginald. 'St Cuthbert's Stole'. *The British Museum Quarterly*, 11/1 (1936), 4-5.
- Thacker, Alan and Richard Sharpe. Eds. *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Willem, David. *St Cuthbert's Corpse: A Life After Death*. Durham, Sacristy Press, 2013.