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## Chapter 4

# “BEATEN DOWN AND BUILT ANEW”: SAINT ERKENWALD AND OLD ST. PAUL’S

BRENDAN O’CONNELL\*

THE LATE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY poem *Saint Erkenwald* opens with the construction of St. Paul’s Cathedral on the site of a pagan temple which is “beten doun and buggyd efte new” (“beaten down and built anew,” l. 37).<sup>1</sup> The poet demonstrates a keen sense of the place that St. Paul’s has, for centuries, occupied in the cultural imagination of “London in Englonde” (“London in England,” l. 1). Then, as now, the monumental structure occupying the site was a symbol of continuity and endurance; at the same time, the evolving form of the building—destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries—charts the tumultuous history of the city and celebrates the resilience and adaptability of its people. The Gothic cathedral that dominated the medieval skyline was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666, posing a challenge for modern readers who seek to imagine the space of St. Paul’s as it was understood when *Saint Erkenwald* was written. Compounding this difficulty, some influential studies have tended to erase Old St. Paul’s from the poem by arguing that the poet’s true interests lie with events and debates that centred on other sacred spaces, such as Westminster Abbey. The setting in Old St. Paul’s, however, is much more than a backdrop to the action. By mapping the events of the poem onto what we know of the building as it stood in the late fourteenth century, we can come to understand that, as both a monument to eternity and a chronicle of the turbulent history of church and state, Old St. Paul’s provides an essential foundation for the poem’s argument. By excavating the literary traces of the now-lost cathedral, we can start to recover the history of medieval buildings that have been erased or substantially altered over time, and better understand how those spaces were read and interpreted at earlier historical moments.

The action of *Saint Erkenwald* unfolds, with striking specificity, within the grounds of St. Paul’s Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> After a brief historical prelude, which traces the

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1 *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Clifford Peterson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977). All quotations from *Saint Erkenwald* are by line number from this edition. Throughout, I have modernized the runic letters thorn (þ=th) and yogh (ȝ=gh).

2 The work is a Middle English alliterative poem of 352 lines, composed in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, and surviving in a single fifteenth-century manuscript: London, British Library, MS Harley 2250, fols. 72v–75v.



history of Britain with a particular focus on the arrival of the “Saxones unsaght” (“hostile Saxons,” l. 8) and the mission of St. Augustine, the poem launches into a description of a great pagan temple that is demolished and rebuilt, as part of a program to convert pagan places of worship into churches (in this case, St. Paul’s). The work of the builders—and, with it, the very progress of conversion—is halted by the startling discovery of an ancient tomb which contains the wondrously preserved body of what appears to be an ancient king. When no trace of such a ruler can be found in the records, Erkenwald, the Saxon bishop of London, is asked to intervene. He addresses the corpse which begins to speak, revealing that he was not a king, but a pagan judge, whose soul has been damned to hell in spite of his blameless life, as he died before Christ. Deeply moved, the bishop weeps as he wishes he might have water with which to baptize the judge in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; a single tear falls on the body, whose soul leaps from hell to the heavenly banquet hall. Now that the soul has been redeemed, the body crumbles to dust; the remnants of a troubling pagan past thus dissolve and are incorporated into the very foundations of the building.

As this brief summary suggests, the *Erkenwald*-poet invites us to read poem and cathedral in conjunction, challenging the boundaries between narrative and architecture, and encouraging us to confront the ways in which past, present, and future come to be inscribed in our textual and architectural records. The following analysis falls into two sections. In the first, I argue that the poem’s setting in St. Paul’s is crucial to its thematic preoccupation with the salvation of the righteous heathen and the sacrament of baptism. Building on the work of Jennifer Summit and Emily Dalton, I suggest that familiarity with the memorials of Old St. Paul’s helps the reader to understand London’s role within a history of conversion that privileges the ascent of Christianity over the rise and fall of secular power. Noting that St. Paul’s was the burial place of two early English kings, I offer an intertextual reading that draws the Latin inscriptions on the tombs of Kings Sebba and Ethelred into dialogue with the Middle English poem’s account of the seemingly royal remains in the pagan tomb; this account challenges “royalist” readings of the poem, and suggests that the poet’s treatment of the secular and ecclesiastical histories of London and Britain serves to subordinate state authority to church authority. In the second section, I build on the work of Emily Dalton and Laura Varnam, who have drawn scholarly attention to the parallels between the sacrament of baptism and the consecration of a church, arguing that the poet’s account of the discovery of the body of a pagan judge, and his subsequent baptism by the titular saint, are brought into dialogue with the initial consecration of the cathedral in ways that transcend time and space. The conclusion will briefly consider the ways in which virtual technologies have made it possible to reimagine the now-lost cathedral, while also highlighting the ways in which plans for a Covid-19 memorial in the modern St. Paul’s illustrate the continuing capacity of the cathedral to transcend the limitations of time and space.

### **Saint Erkenwald in its Architectural Setting**

*Saint Erkenwald* is universally understood to be a poem about history: the relationship between past and present, pagan and Christian, and sacred and secular histories.<sup>3</sup> It is also, inescapably, about a very specific sacred and civic space, though not all critics agree on the significance of the setting in St. Paul's. Indeed, one of the poem's most brilliant and prolific critics, Frank Grady, has argued that the poem is effectively a coded discussion about the history and privileges of Westminster Abbey, reading it as a royalist response to the challenges experienced by Richard II during the Merciless Parliament.<sup>4</sup> Grady's argument is imaginative, meticulously researched, and certainly lends support to a strain of criticism that identifies the poem as part of a Cheshire school of alliterative poetry that was distinctly royalist.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the attempt to read the poem as being about Westminster flies in the face of the very specific details provided in the poem; indeed, the setting in St. Paul's is essential to the poem's meaning, and designed to evoke a way of thinking about the history of London that is modelled on the process of conversion.

In her analysis of the representation of pre-Christian Rome in a range of medieval narratives, Jennifer Summit challenges the idea that the Middle Ages lacked a meaningful sense of historical difference, or that it was a period in which "the distinctions of human history were subsumed ... under a totalizing Christian schema that exchanged the temporal for the eternal."<sup>6</sup> Through her discussion of medieval encounters with Rome's classical architecture in a number of texts (including *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, Petrarch's "Letter to Colonna," and Chaucer's *Second Nun's Tale*), she demonstrates that these works do not exhibit any desire to recover the past authentically, but rather "represent historical change as a form of conversion that did not so much destroy or supplant the

**3** Several interpretations of the poem focus on its treatment of the past, but among the most influential are Monika Otter, "'New Werke': *St. Erkenwald*, St. Albans, and the Medieval Sense of the Past," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 24, no. 3 (1994): 387–414; Ruth Nissé, "'A Coroun Ful Riche': The Rule of History in *St. Erkenwald*," *ELH* 65, no. 2 (Summer, 1998): 277–95; John Scattergood, "*St. Erkenwald* and the Custody of the Past," in *The Lost Tradition: Essays on Middle English Alliterative Poetry*, ed. J. Scattergood (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000), 179–99.

**4** Frank Grady, "*St. Erkenwald* and the Merciless Parliament," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000): 179–211. Grady argues that the poem reflects debates about the right of Westminster to offer sanctuary, which became an issue when Robert Tresilian attempted to claim sanctuary to prevent his arrest after the Merciless Parliament of 1388.

**5** John Bowers, in particular, has promoted this reading of poetry produced by Cheshire poets such as the author of *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001) and "Pearl in its Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 111–55.

**6** Jennifer Summit, "Topography as Historiography: Petrarch, Chaucer, and the Making of Medieval Rome," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism and Debate*, ed. Holly A. Crocker and D. Vance Smith (London: Routledge, 2004), 304–20 at 304; originally published in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000): 211–46.

past as conserve its outward forms while assigning them new meanings.<sup>7</sup> Emily Dalton has brilliantly applied this theory to *Saint Erkenwald*, noting that “the poem addresses the problem of physical remains that persist in the wake of material and cultural change, mirroring the problem of the spiritual ‘remains’ of the past in the unredeemed souls of the forgotten and unnamed dead.”<sup>8</sup> In much the same way as Summit identifies for medieval discussions of the architectural remnants of classical Rome, the setting of *Saint Erkenwald* in St. Paul’s Cathedral serves to confront and assimilate the pagan past, “recuperating its material structures and surviving topographies to form a prehistory of Christianity’s ascent.”<sup>9</sup>

The setting in St. Paul’s is crucial to the poem’s “historiography of conversion” precisely because of the ways in which the pre-Christian history of London is commemorated in the walls of the late medieval cathedral.<sup>10</sup> Given that the poem is so intimately concerned with the process of conversion, the fact that it takes place in a sacred space dedicated to the early Christian figure most directly associated with God’s plan for salvation of the Gentiles is far from coincidental, and the poet establishes an intricate network of associations between the sacrament of baptism, the consecration of sacred space, and the larger Christian mission to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Of course, St. Paul was one of two patron saints to whom the cathedral is dedicated, the other being Erkenwald himself. The poet, evidently, has gone to great lengths to challenge the traditional legend of Erkenwald, in which the saint is often violent and hostile to those who fail to observe his feast day.<sup>11</sup> This version of Erkenwald is much more compassionate, but also much more insistently imagined as a driving force in the conversion of pagan spaces and souls. The poet positions Erkenwald as a successor to Augustine, who was sent by Pope Gregory to convert the English; moreover, the poet crafts a miracle clearly modelled on the legend of Gregory and Trajan, transposing the sanctity of Rome to London.<sup>12</sup>

**7** Summit, “Topography as Historiography,” 305.

**8** Emily Dalton, “‘Clansyd hom in Cristes nome’: Translation of Spaces and Bodies in *St. Erkenwald*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 117, no. 1 (January 2018): 56–83 at 59.

**9** Summit, “Topography as Historiography,” 316.

**10** The phrase “historiography of conversion” is Summit’s, used in reference to Petrarch and Chaucer: “Topography as Historiography,” 316.

**11** The legends are set out in Gordon Whatley, “Heathens and Saints: *St. Erkenwald* in its Legendary Context,” *Speculum*, 61, no. 2 (1986): 330–63 at 353–63. See also Eamon Duffy’s account of the “savage little revenge stories” associated with Erkenwald in *Royal Books and Holy Bones: Essays in Medieval Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 166–67. For a fine overview, see Simon Jarrow, “The Cult of Erkenwald at St Paul’s Cathedral,” in *Old St. Paul’s and Culture*, ed. Shanyin Altman and Jonathan Buckner (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 29–50.

**12** The story of Gregory and Trajan, in which the pope’s intercession for the soul of the pagan emperor leads to his salvation from hell, enjoyed widespread currency in the Middle Ages. On this, see Gordon Whatley, “The Uses of Hagiography: The Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages,” *Viator* 15 (1984): 25–63; “Heathens and Saints,” 330–63; Frank Grady, “*Piers Plowman*, *St. Erkenwald*, and the Rule of Exceptional Salvations,” *Yearbook of Langland*

St. Paul's is the seat of the bishop of London, then, as now, one of the three great sees of England: York, London, and Canterbury. Unlike the other two, London was not (and never has been) an archdiocese, yet the poem strongly implies that it was in the time of Erkenwald, even referring to the bishop as "primate" (l. 107). At line 31, the poet refers to the existence in pre-Christian England of a tripartite ecclesiastical division (the "Triapolitanes"), clearly designed to suggest that the Christian church in England simply took over the same structure, installing (arch)bishops in the sees of York, Canterbury, and London.<sup>13</sup> The poet arguably goes beyond this in an infamous crux at line 33, which refers to Erkenwald being of "Augustynes art": while attempts have been made to read this line as referring to Erkenwald as the inheritor of Augustine's discipline or beliefs, it makes more sense to interpret "art" as a province or district.<sup>14</sup> As Peterson notes, Erkenwald is not strictly the successor of Augustine's bishopric (since Augustine was bishop of Canterbury), but Bede made clear that Augustine had originally intended to establish himself at London.<sup>15</sup> The poet exploits all available ambiguity to suggest that the three sees reflect a pre-Christian triad in which London was the first among equals: it was the "mayster-toun" ("principal city," l. 26), and the "maghty devel" ("mighty devil," l. 27) honored in its temple was the greatest of the false gods worshipped in Saxon lands (ll. 29–30). As with the pagan body lying in the ground waiting for conversion at the hands of Erkenwald, the ecclesiastical structures of the pagan English, with their clear Trinitarian overtones, were waiting for the Christian mission that would convert them to their true purpose in the divine plan for the conversion of the Gentiles.

The long historical view taken by the poet, who refers to the popular myth of London as the "New Troie" (l. 25), consistently subordinates the imperial destiny that led to the foundation of Britain to the spiritual destiny that led to its conversion. Royal and secular authority are repeatedly invoked only to be undermined. The poet achieves this by having the tomb of the pagan judge mistaken for that of an ancient king: the body wears a "coroun ful riche" ("opulent crown," l. 83) and there is a "septure sett in his honde" ("sceptre set in his hand," l. 84), leading those who behold the body to assume that he has been "king of this kithe" ("king of this country," l. 98). When Bishop Erkenwald arrives at the scene, the Dean laments that a seven-day search through the library records has failed to uncover even "one cronicle of this kinge" ("one chronicle of this king," l. 156); Ruth Nissé convincingly argues that the poem undermines models of history rooted in

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*Studies* 6 (1992): 61–86; Annemarie Thijms, "The Sacrament of Baptism in St. *Erkenwald*: The Perfect Transformation of the Trajan Legend," *Neophilologus* 89 (2005): 311–27.

**13** Peterson points out that Geoffrey of Monmouth makes a reference to a pagan system of "archflamins," corresponding to archbishops, with seats at London, York, and Caerusk in Wales (*Saint Erkenwald*, 88–89, note to l. 31).

**14** Helen Young argues that the word must mean "body of knowledge or learning:" "Line 33 of *St Erkenwald*," *Notes and Queries*, 54, no. 2 (June 2007): 124–25; Andrew Breeze rejects this reading and claims it must refer to a district, however loosely defined: "Art 'Direction' in *St Erkenwald*," *Notes and Queries*, 55, no. 3 (September 2008): 273.

**15** *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Peterson, 89, note to l. 33.

genealogical ties and linear descent, including the model of the chronicle itself.<sup>16</sup> The mystery of the crown and sceptre are finally revealed, as the judge explains that his reputation as a scrupulously fair judge led the people of New Troy to bury him with the crown and sceptre as the “king” of wise justices (l. 254), a symbolic coronation that surely undermines the authority of the pagan king Belinus (l. 213). The poem suggests at every turn that secular power is worthless compared to the providence of the prince who rules Paradise (l. 161); strikingly, the poet never mentions Erkenwald’s own royal lineage as the third son of King Offa, a fact well known and recorded on the saint’s tomb, as well as in Bede. Eamon Duffy rightly points out that the campaign to secure the canonization of Edward the Confessor made it more pressing for the clergy of St. Paul’s to champion their own saint.<sup>17</sup> The poem responds to the cult of the early medieval saint-king of Westminster with a miracle of a Saxon bishop, which centres on a body from an even earlier period in Britain’s history, that appears to bear the marks of saintly incorruption as well as bearing the crown and sceptre of a king. Throughout, however, the poem subordinates royal authority to the authority of the church.

Unlike Westminster, Old St. Paul’s was known in the Middle Ages as the burial place of bishops (none more sacred than its second patron, Erkenwald), rather than of kings. Indeed, it is partly for this reason that the apparent discovery of a royal burial there would have seemed so curious to a medieval audience. And yet, even if it seems undeniable, as T. McAlindon has pointed out, that royalty, both actual and spiritual, is a central issue in the plot, the royalist sympathies that have been detected in the poem have been overstated.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, it is likely that the poem is influenced by Richard II’s famous “quarrel” with the city of London, the resolution to which featured a procession to St. Paul’s and an offering to the shrine of St. Erkenwald, which is described powerfully in the “De Concordia” of Richard of Maidstone.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, a consideration of the evidence of the poem in the light of what we know about the burial of kings and bishops within Old St. Paul’s supports an interpretation of *Saint Erkenwald* that is more deeply critical of royalty, and more insistent on its subordination to clerical authority, than is usually recognized.

The architectural setting of *Saint Erkenwald* becomes especially significant in this regard. As D. Vance Smith has argued, “[m]uch of the poem’s information about Erkenwald himself comes ... as much from the signifying machinery of the cathedral as it does from less accessible chronicles and *vitae*.”<sup>20</sup> At the time the poem was written, Smith

**16** Nissé, “Rule of History,” 283.

**17** Duffy, *Royal Books*, 166.

**18** T. McAlindon, “Hagiography into Art: A Study of *St. Erkenwald*,” *Studies in Philology*, 67, no. 4 (October, 1970): 472–94 at 492.

**19** Richard de Maidstone, “De Concordia Inter Regem Richard II et Civitatem London,” in *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History*, ed. T. Wright (London, Rolls Series, 1859), 282–300. Discussed in Nissé, “Rule of History,” 279–80.

**20** D. Vance Smith, “Crypt and Decryption: Erkenwald Terminable and Interminable,” *New Medieval Literatures* 5 (2002): 59–86 at 64.

observes, the tomb of Erkenwald was situated behind the high altar, with an inscription that reminded the reader that he was the third bishop of London "post Anglo-Saxonicum ingressum," the third son of King Offa, and was converted to Christianity by Melitus, the first bishop of London.<sup>21</sup> The inscription also reminded the reader of Erkenwald's foundation of abbeys at Chertsey and Barking (the latter apparently referred to at line 108 of the poem), while Erkenwald is also mentioned on the tomb of Sebba, king of the East Saxons, which lay a little to the north of Erkenwald's tomb.<sup>22</sup> Building on Smith's observation, I would like to explore the relevance to the poem of two early English royal tombs in the cathedral: those of Sebba and Ethelred the Unready (Figure 9). The way in which these royal burials were commemorated in the fabric of the cathedral suggests a way of thinking about the Christian mission—and the role of St. Erkenwald—as modelling a "historiography of conversion" that subordinates temporal to spiritual power, and offers a way out of a historical model rooted in the recursive experience of trauma and violence.

While the only reminder of the royal burials in St. Paul's today is the names of Sebba and Ethelred on a plaque in Wren's cathedral, the royal tombs in Old St. Paul's occupied a prominent place and literate medieval visitors to the cathedral could read the Latin inscriptions on the tombs. Taken together, these inscriptions offer insight into a very particular attitude to kingship which, while recognizing the authority of kings, insists on the subordination of secular to sacred power, and makes clear that the events of secular history must submit to a plan for divine providence. The inscription on the tomb of Ethelred the Unready is excoriating in its criticism of the king, whose cursed reign is blamed for a host of injuries inflicted on the kingdom.

Hic jacet Ethelredus Anglorum Rex, filius Edgari Regis; cui in die consecrationis his, post impositam Coronam, fertur S. Dunstanus Archiepiscopus dira prædixisse his verbis: Quoniam aspirasti ad regnum per mortem fratris tui, in cujus sanguinem conspiraverunt Angli, cum ignominiosa matre tua; non deficiet gladius de domo tua, sæviens in te omnibus diebus vitæ tuæ; interficiens de semine tuo quousque Regnum tuum transferatur in Regnum alienum, cujus ritum et linguam Gens cui præsidet non novit; nec expiabitur nisi longa vindicta peccatum tuum, & peccatum matris tuæ, & peccatum virorum qui interfuere consilio illius nequam: Quæ sicut a viro sancto prædicta evenerunt; nam Ethelredus variis præliis per Suanum Danorum Regem filiumque suum Canutum fatigatus et fugatus, ac tandem Londoni arcta obsidione conclusus, misere diem obiit Anno Dominicæ Incarnationis MXVII. postquam annis XXXVI. in magna tribulatione regnasset.<sup>23</sup>

**21** Smith, "Crypt and Decryption," 64. Smith cites the inscription from Henry Holland, *Ecclesia Sancti Pauli illustrata* (London, 1663), fol. F.

**22** Smith, "Crypt and Decryption," 64.

**23** William Benham, *Old St. Paul's Cathedral* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 17. "Here lies Ethelred King of the English, son of King Edgar; to whom on the day of his consecration after the crown was placed on his head St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, is reported to have predicted terrible things in these words: 'Because thou hast aspired to the Crown by the death of thy Brother, for whose murder the English have conspired with thine infamous Mother; therefore the sword shall not depart from thine house for ever, but shall cruelly rage against thee all the days of thy life,

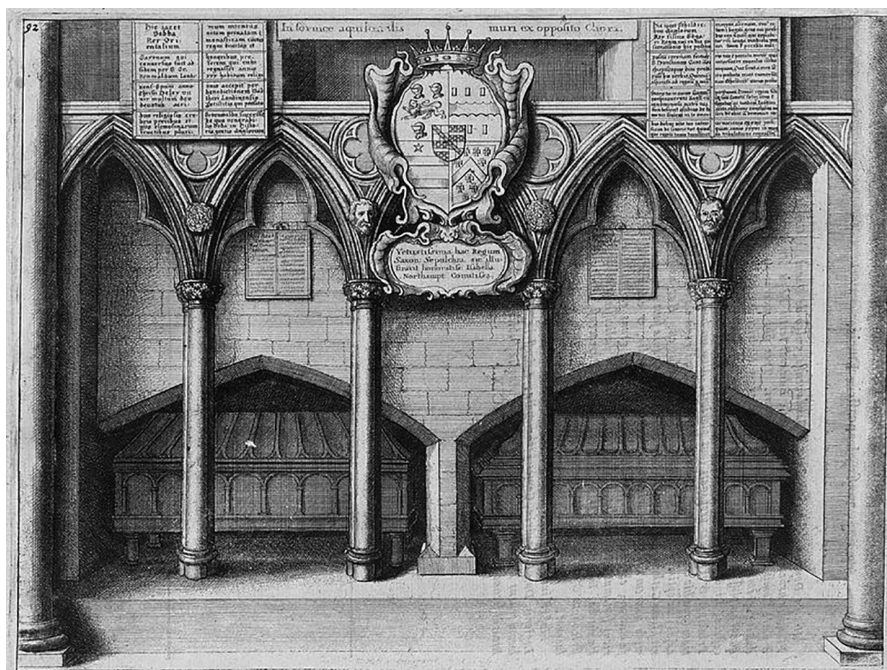


Figure 9 Sebba and Ethelred (monument). Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection, Plate number P2341. Used with permission of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

The inscription reflects an attitude to secular power that also informs the poem. *Saint Erkenwald* is a poem in which salvation history is presented as the antidote to an endlessly recursive cycle of violence. Thus, the poem opens by referring to Britain's past, not with an idealized reference to its foundations by the Trojan hero but to the moment of invasion of the Saxons, who "bete oute the Bretons and brogth hom into Wales / And pervertyd alle the pepul that in that place dwellide" ("beat out the Britons and drove them into Wales / And corrupted all the people who dwelled in that place," ll. 9–10). The

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destroying of thy seed so long till thy Kingdom shall be transferred to a foreign nation, whose customs and language neither thou nor thy people shall understand. Neither shall this thy sin be expiated but by a very long punishment, nor yet the sin of thy mother, nor the sins of all those wicked men who had a hand in that most execrable and pernicious Council.' The which things as they were ominously predicted by this holy man were exactly verified; for King Ethelred being vanquished, and put to flight in several battles by Sweyn and his son Canute, and being at last closely besieged in the City of London, and brought to great extremity, finally ended his days in much tribulation and trouble in the year of our Lord 1017, after reigning six and thirty years in great perplexity." Translation from William MacDonald Sinclair, *Memorials of St. Paul's Cathedral* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1909), 94.

temple is thus at the centre of a tumultuous period of history, that only started to see the light when St. Augustine came to convert the people (ll. 7–14).<sup>24</sup> It is only when the pagan judge begins to speak that we are reminded of the foundation of the city by the Trojan Brutus, while the judge becomes increasingly insistent about London's identity as "New Troy," referring to it no less than four times in a short speech (ll. 211, 246, 251, 255). The city of London is not ennobled by this, however, but rather diminished: New Troy here is an emblem of violence, whose citizens are "felonse and fals and frowarde to reule" ("felonious and duplicitous and difficult to rule," l. 231). The parallels seem clear: just as Troy was a sinful city doomed to be conquered and defeated, so too was the new Troy destined to be sacked by the invading Saxons.

It is through this focus on a city and state riven by conflict and successive invasion that we can identify the parallels with the inscription on the tomb of Ethelred, which lays the blame for the invasion of the Danes (and ultimately the Normans) squarely on the wicked reign of the king. Even if the parallels do not point to a direct influence on the poem, they do foreground a similar attitude to history. Thus, the inscription on Ethelred's tomb frames the king's ill-fated reign as the result of a poisonous familial breakdown, noting that Ethelred was the heir to his brother, who was executed as the result of a conspiracy engineered by Ethelred's mother. Similarly, the pagan judge characterizes his time in New Troy as one scarred by the conflict between two warring brothers, Belin and Beryn (l. 213), whose hostility and "wrakeful werre" ("furious war," l. 215) lasted a long time. Reading the poem and the inscription together, we see an utterly desolate vision of secular history, as an endless cycle of violence, invasion, and loss of power: one that can be traced from Troy to London, and through such events as the Saxon invasion, the overthrow of Ethelred by Sweyn Forkbeard, the conflict with Cnut and the overthrow of Edmund Ironside, and perhaps even the Norman Conquest under the reign of Ethelred's other son, Edward the Confessor.

The other royal tomb in Old St. Paul's, however, points to a very different model of royal power, one which makes clear that secular power is inferior to a life of holy devotion to God. The inscription on the tomb of Sebba read as follows:

Hic jacet Sebba Rex Orientalium Saxonum; qui conversus fuit ad fidem per Erkenwaldum Londonensem Episcopum, anno Christi DCLXXVII. Vir multum Deo devotus, actibus religiosus, crebris precibus & piis elemosynarum fructibus plurimum intentus; vitam privatam & Monasticam cunctis Regni divitiis & honoribus præferens: Qui cum regnasset annos XXX. habitum religiosum accepit per benedictionem Waltheri Londinensis Antistitis, qui præfato Erkenwaldo successit. De quo Venerabilis Beda in historia gentis Anglorum.<sup>25</sup>

**24** Unlike *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poem does not begin specifically with a reference to Brutus as an illustrious founding father; yet the opening of the poem alludes to this foundation through repeated reference to "Bretons" (9) and "Bretayne" (32), while also referring to London as "New Troie" (25).

**25** Benham, *Old St. Paul's*, 16–17. "Here lies Sebba, King of the East Saxons, who was converted to the Faith of Christ by that Holy Man Erkenwald Bishop of London, in the year of our Lord 677. This good King was a person frequent in his daily duty and devotion towards God, and seriously



The relevance of the tomb to the poem seems clear: here is a king who was converted to Christianity by none other than Erkenwald himself, and received the religious habit from Erkenwald's successor, when he chose to abdicate the throne and commit himself to a monastic life. The inscription describes a good king, whose goodness is clear in his rejection of kingship. In the same way, the poem focuses on Erkenwald's encounter with a figure dressed in the trappings of kingship and earthly power, whose presence is designed only to undermine them, to show that what truly matters is justice and the salvation of the soul. What the inscription on the tomb of Sebba champions is a model of history that escapes from the recursive cycle by focusing on the act of conversion: the process by which the troublesome pagan past becomes absorbed into a Christian understanding of salvation history. That all this takes place in St. Paul's is crucial, since the cathedral building functions as an enduring and legible space that helps orient the reader toward the theological truths at the heart of the poem.

### Transcending the Cathedral

The conversion of Sebba by Erkenwald, recorded on the king's tomb in Old St. Paul's, provides an important context for the miracle at the heart of the poem, which focuses on the baptism and salvation of a righteous heathen, who died before the coming of Christ. The debate over the salvation of the heathen has been explored extensively in the scholarship on *Saint Erkenwald*, which addresses theological issues that exercised a range of medieval writers and thinkers, including the author of the *Whitby Life of Gregory*, several major scholastic philosophers, not to mention Dante, Langland, and Wycliffe. The legend raises a number of theological issues, including essential soteriological questions such as the role of faith, works, and baptism in salvation; how and by whom baptism can be effected; whether there is any efficacy in prayers for the dead, and so on. *Saint Erkenwald*, as Annemarie Thijms has noted, offers a particularly successful resolution of the several thorny issues raised by the Gregory-Trajan legend.<sup>26</sup> The poem is quite unusual, however, in its focus on the discovery of the body of the righteous heathen in a space in which the baptism and salvation then take place.<sup>27</sup> This is one of the most memorable features of the poem, and it is striking that a later Irish poem that appears to be heavily influenced by *Saint Erkenwald* also makes much of this

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intention on religious exercises, and continual prayer, with the visible fruits of daily almsdeeds, preferring a private and monastic life to all the riches and honours of the kingdom. Who, after he had reigned thirty years, received the religious habit by the benediction of Walter, Bishop of London, who succeeded Erkenwald. Of whom the Venerable Bede writes many things in his History of the Nation of the English." Translation from Sinclair, *Memorials*, 93.

**26** Thijms, "Sacrament of Baptism," 311–27.

**27** Whatley suggests that the unearthing of the judge's coffin beneath St. Paul's may have been suggested by the discovery of Hermogenes's sarcophagus beneath Sancta Sophia, as related in Mandeville's *Travels*: "Heathens and Saints," 349.

feature, establishing clear connections between sanctification of space and conversion of the righteous heathen.<sup>28</sup>

At heart, the many complex parallels between the salvation of the righteous heathen and the conversion of the temple rest on a relatively straightforward parallel: that between the sacrament of baptism and the consecration of a church. As Emily Dalton has noted, a key and widely recognized element of church consecration practices was "the ritual asperging of both the internal and external walls of the church with holy water and the anointing of the interior walls with chrism."<sup>29</sup> Laura Varnam has demonstrated the striking and deliberate connections between baptism and consecration, citing William of Durandus, whose *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* states that the church itself is baptized at the moment of its consecration.<sup>30</sup> As she puts it:

The church can inhabit prelapsarian innocence because at the moment of consecration it is free from sin. The ritual aspersion of the church is, therefore, a form of baptism ... The sacrament of baptism brings the individual into the community of believers and cleanses them of original sin. The ritual aspersion similarly inducts the building into that spiritual fellowship and banishes the traces of sin.<sup>31</sup>

As a number of critics have noted, the poet clearly intends to connect the process of converting pagan temples into Christian churches, begun by Augustine, to the baptism, by Erkenwald, of the pagan judge whose body is discovered during the rebuilding of the cathedral.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, this parallel casts new light on one significant critical crux: the fact that the judge is baptized by a bishop. As baptism could have been effected by any priest (or indeed, *in extremis*, by a lay person), the fact that the poet gives the task to a bishop has been seen by some as a sign that the poet is insisting on the power and importance of the church hierarchy, and that Erkenwald's particular sanctity is at issue.<sup>33</sup> However, while such critics rightly highlight the miraculous intervention that enables the baptism to take place, as well as the ecclesiological significance of the centrality of the bishop,

**28** Cathal Ó'Háinle, "‘Ab Fíréanda Fada Ó Shin’: A Detached Apologue?," *Ériu* 64 (2014): 123–43. Ó'Háinle discusses the probable influence of *Saint Erkenwald* on this poem, in which an abbot discovers the body of a judge while performing building work in a monastery. For the argument that *Saint Erkenwald* is itself influenced by Irish sources, see Rory McTurk, "St Erkenwald and the Legendary History of St Paul's," in *Old St. Paul's and Culture*, ed. Altman and Buckner, 51–71.

**29** Dalton, "Translation of Spaces and Bodies," 62.

**30** *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 63, cited in Laura Varnam, *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2018), 50n90.

**31** Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 50.

**32** One scholar has concisely observed that, from its opening lines, the poem "raises questions about the capacity of the church's rituals to effect essential transformations." Jennifer Sisk, "The Uneasy Orthodoxy of *St. Erkenwald*," *ELH* 74 (2007): 89–115 at 90.

**33** See, e.g., Sisk, "Uneasy Orthodoxy," 98–103, and William Kamowski, "*Saint Erkenwald* and the Inadvertent Baptism: An Orthodox Response to Heterodox Ecclesiology," *Religion and Literature*, 27, no. 3 (1995): 5–27.

Thijms notes that the poet actually *diminishes* the prelate's formal role at the pivotal moment, since the baptism takes effect without any active intention on Erkenwald's part: the bishop's tear falls as he utters the baptismal formula only wishing that he might have water with which to baptize the judge.<sup>34</sup> But, while Erkenwald's status as a bishop may be irrelevant to the baptism, the poet is trying to keep in balance the parallels between baptism and consecration, and it is the latter, rather than the former, that can only be conducted by a bishop.<sup>35</sup>

While *Saint Erkenwald* does not explicitly describe the consecration of the cathedral, there can be little doubt that the poet was familiar with the rituals accompanying the consecration of sacred space. As Dalton points, out, "the poem's depiction of the construction of sacred space draws on the same analogies between architectural, communal, and textual foundations evoked in rituals of church dedication."<sup>36</sup> These parallels, she shows, are nowhere more evident than in the opening account of Augustine's conversion of pagan temples:

He turnyd temples that tyme that temyd to the deuelle  
And clansyd hom in Cristes nome and kyrkes hom called;  
He hurled owt hor ydols and hade hym in sayntes  
And chaungit cheuely hor nomes and chargit hom better. (ll. 15–18)<sup>37</sup>

Varnam, moreover, has demonstrated that the consecration of a church required the casting out of demons, citing Mirk's *Festial*, which states that "God scheweth opynly how the fende be hallowing of the chirch was driven oute of the chyrch" ("God shows openly how the devil, by the consecration of the church, was driven out of the church").<sup>38</sup>

The mass conversion and consecration of pagan temples is described succinctly by the poet in a scene in which the use of alliteration is designed to evoke both a formal continuity with the structures of the past and a comprehensive rejection of it:

That ere was of Appolyn is now of Saynt Petre,  
Mahoun to Saynt Margrete othir to Maudelayne;  
The synagogue of the Sonne was sett to oure Lady,  
Jubiter and Jono to Jhesus othir to James (ll. 19–22).<sup>39</sup>

While Sisk has suggested that these acts of reconsecration "may in fact be nothing more than empty acts of nominal substitution," Dalton has argued persuasively that there is

<sup>34</sup> Thijms, "Sacrament of Baptism," 318–23.

<sup>35</sup> Durandus, *Rationale*, 61; cited in Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Dalton, "Translation of Spaces and Bodies," 62.

<sup>37</sup> "He converted temples that at that time belong to the devil, and cleansed them in the name of Christ and called them churches; he flung out their idols, and brought in saints and, most importantly, changed their names and charged them better."

<sup>38</sup> Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 48.

<sup>39</sup> "That which formerly was dedicated to Apollo is now dedicated to Saint Peter, Mohammed to Saint Margaret or Mary Magdalene; the synagogue of the Sun is dedicated to our Lady, Jupiter and Juno to Jesus or to James."

nothing empty or arbitrary in these alterations.<sup>40</sup> As Dalton explains, by "[e]xcising some letters and retaining others, these renamings enact graphically the more violent gesture of hurling out pagan idols from temple interiors, emptying them out and opening them up to new identities even while keeping their walls intact."<sup>41</sup> The greatest temple of all belonged to a "maghty deuel" ("mighty devil," l. 27), but this devil has also been driven out and the building dedicated to St. Paul. Thus, the building is already a Christian church when Erkenwald becomes bishop of London, and it is during his tenure that the decision is made to tear the building down and build it anew, a process referred to as the New Work, a phrase which was used to describe the much later period of reconstruction begun in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>42</sup> The poet is deliberately conflating a number of key moments in the building of the cathedral: its prehistory as a pagan temple, the (fictional) demolition and rebuilding of the church under Erkenwald, and the thirteenth-century renovation called the New Work.

In an important recent study of *Saint Erkenwald*, Varnam skilfully employs Foucault's concept of "heterotopia"—a space that is capable of juxtaposing several spaces or sites that are in themselves incompatible—to explicate the complex ways the cathedral functions in the poem.<sup>43</sup> Applying the concept of heterotopia to *Saint Erkenwald* enables us to understand how deftly the poem constructs the cathedral as a space in which past, present, and future can merge together, while also functioning as a conduit through which the damned soul of the pagan judge can ascend from hell to heaven. Varnam, moreover, demonstrates how Erkenwald overcomes the "profane challenge" to the sanctity of his cathedral (the discovery of a pagan body bearing the hallmarks of saintly incorruptibility) in a way that reasserts the authority of the church and reconfirms the cathedral as a sacred space for the Christian community.<sup>44</sup>

Applying this methodology will help us understand the significance of the poem's frequently overlooked allusion to Jerusalem. As Varnam has demonstrated, the consecration of sacred space involved a deliberate invocation of the events of Christ's incarnation and their location in Jerusalem, and, moreover, "all churches become Jerusalem in ritual performance."<sup>45</sup> Given that *Saint Erkenwald* never mentions Jerusalem, it is understandable that Varnam does not explore this in her analysis of that text, but the poem contains a thinly veiled allusion to the city that richly exploits the heterotopic space of the cathedral to support its complex argument about the construction of sacred

<sup>40</sup> Sisk, "Uneasy Orthodoxy," 90.

<sup>41</sup> Dalton, "Translation of Spaces and Bodies," 67.

<sup>42</sup> A clear outline of this is provided in *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Peterson, 36–38. A useful discussion, which connects this specific issue to larger questions of historiography, is Otter, "'New Werke'."

<sup>43</sup> Laura Varnam, "Sacred Space, Memory, and Materiality in *St Erkenwald*," in *Old St. Paul's and Culture*, ed. Altman and Buckner, 73–95. For a discussion of the concept of heterotopia as it applies to the construction of sacred space more generally, see Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Varnam, "Sacred Space, Memory, and Materiality," 74.

<sup>45</sup> Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 44.

space and the work of salvation. At line 37, the poet comments that the original temple on the site of St. Paul's was "abatyd and beten down and buggyd efte new" ("demolished and beaten down and built anew"). As Peterson notes, this line contains a striking echo of a passage about Jerusalem from Mandeville's *Travels*, in which he says "Jerusalem hath often tyme ben destroyed, and the Walles abated and beten down and tumbled in to the Vale" ("Jerusalem has often been destroyed, and the walls demolished and beaten down and tumbled in to the valley").<sup>46</sup> This apparent reference to Jerusalem works in tandem with (or perhaps in opposition to) the numerous references to Troy discussed in the first section. At one level, we can see a parallel between the poem's treatment of Troy and Jerusalem: the destruction of both cities heralds the beginning of a new era. But the allusion to Jerusalem is ultimately designed to point beyond the physical realm. Indeed, the reference to the temple being beaten down and built anew is also an allusion to Christ's claim, after the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–17), that if the Jews destroyed the Temple, he would raise it again in three days (John 2:18–22). Christ, of course, seeks to create a parallel between the destruction and renewal of the earthly temple and the death and resurrection of his own body, which furnishes an important context for the parallels offered in *Saint Erkenwald* between the conversion of the temple and the salvation of the judge.

In her account of the consecration ritual, Varnam has noted that "[t]he bishop's entry through the door of the church ... re-enacted Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday."<sup>47</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that such close attention is paid by the *Erkenwald* poet to the moment of the bishop's entry into the cathedral and his procession through the nave (Figure 10) to the high altar where he sings mass:

Mynster dores were makyd opon quen maten were songen;  
The byschop hym shope solemply to synge the heghe masse;  
The prelate in pontificals was prestly atyride (ll. 128–30).<sup>48</sup>

The entry of the bishop into the church is a demonstration of ecclesiastical authority, but also recalls the entry of the bishop into the church at the consecration. Throughout, the poet emphasizes the process of entering closed spaces: from the opening of the judge's tomb (ll. 69–72) to the bishop's entry into the cathedral (l. 128), to the moment *Erkenwald* approaches the place where the body has been discovered:

The prelate passide on the playn, ther plied to hym lordes;  
As riche reuestid as he was he rayked to the toumbe;  
Men vnclosid hym the cloyster wyt clustrede keies. (ll. 138–40)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Peterson, 89, note to l. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 44.

<sup>48</sup> "The cathedral doors were flung open when matins were sung, the bishop prepared himself solemnly to sing the high mass; the bishop was dressed in pontificals in priestly fashion."

<sup>49</sup> "The bishop passed over the pavement, where lords yielded to him; richly arrayed as he was he went quickly to the tomb; men unlocked the cloister for him with clustered keys."



In addition to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the moment of the bishop's entry into the church during the consecration rite also evokes Christ's breaking down the infernal gates at the Harrowing of Hell.<sup>51</sup> In *Saint Erkenwald*, the Harrowing of Hell is, for the pagan judge, a defining moment not only in salvation history but in his own salvation. For him, it is a moment of unspeakable trauma, since Christ has come to hell to redeem the Old Testament Jews, but has not redeemed him:

I was non of the nommbre that thou wyt noy boghtes,  
Wyt the blode of thi body vpon the blo rode;  
Quen thou herghedes helle-hole and hentes hom theroute,  
Thi loffyng oute of limbo, thou laftes me ther. (ll. 289–92)<sup>52</sup>

Though he experiences it as a moment of utter desolation, the harrowing is one of the events that contributes to his salvation: having witnessed it, he believes utterly in the salvation purchased by Christ on the cross. It is through this that the poet creates the theological ambiguity necessary to effect the salvation of the righteous pagan: he has demonstrated that he does believe in Christ's salvation of mankind, meaning all that remains is for him to be baptized.

The fact that the cathedral acts as a heterotopia—capable of drawing together spaces as incommensurate as Jerusalem and London, heaven and hell—is crucial to our understanding of the poet's parallel between consecration, baptism, and the conversion of the pagan. The body of the judge was laid to rest in the foundations of the pagan temple in which he was buried and remains there through its conversion to a Christian cathedral. His soul is damned, and remains in limbo from the moment of death, through the Harrowing of Hell, to the moment of baptism. Immediately before the baptism, the judge describes how his soul is in hell, exiled from the solemn feast of heaven, and "Hungrie in-wyt helle-hole" ("hungry within the pit of hell," l. 307). Immediately after the tears and words of the bishop have effected his baptism, however, the judge's soul flies to heaven, from where his final words to the bishop are spoken:

For wyt the wordes and the water that weshe vs of payne  
Lightly lasshit ther a leme, loghe in the abyme,  
That spakly sprent my spyrit wyt unsparid murthe  
Into the cenacle solemply ther soupen alle trew. (ll. 333–36)<sup>53</sup>

In this sacred space, sanctified and made holy by the bishop at the time of consecration, the soul of the judge is redeemed and passes instantaneously from hell to heaven. As Varnam has demonstrated, the cathedral's status as heterotopia enables it to evoke both

**51** Varnam, *Church as Sacred Space*, 48.

**52** "I was not of the number that you redeemed by suffering, with the blood of your body upon the bleak cross; when you harrowed the pit of hell and released them, praising you, out of limbo, you left me there."

**53** "For with the words and the water that cleanse us of punishment (damnation), a ray of light flashed brightly, deep in the abyss, that my spirit sprang quickly with unstinting joy, into the upper room where all the faithful dine."

hell and heaven, but the profane is kept at arm's length from the sacred as Erkenwald baptizes the judge.<sup>54</sup>

Of particular importance in the judge's speech is the word "cenacle" (l. 336), which he uses to describe the heavenly banqueting hall. This word seems deliberately chosen to remind readers of the cenacle in which the Last Supper (the first mass) took place, and where the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles at Pentecost. This feast, almost certainly, is the feast on which the miraculous baptism of the judge takes place, as suggested when Erkenwald celebrates the high mass of "Spiritus Domini" before visiting the tomb.<sup>55</sup> No fourteenth-century reader familiar with the cathedral could fail to notice that Erkenwald sings this high mass standing at the site of the altar at which his own relics would one day be venerated (Figure 11). Yet again, the heterotopia of the cathedral collapses distinctions between heaven and earth, Jerusalem and London, and even past, present, and future; the poet reveals himself to be remarkably sensitive to the place and time in which the action is situated, even as he emphasizes the transcendence of temporal and spatial limitations. *Saint Erkenwald* culminates with the image of the judge's soul joining a banquet hall of heavenly celebration as his body crumbles to dust and can ultimately be assimilated into the body of the temple. The poem is, without question, about the sacred space of the cathedral, but above all else it is about the communities that occupy it, and which, to a large extent, are shaped by it. Throughout the poem, we have seen throngs of Londoners gather in the cathedral (ll. 61–64, 140–41, 217–20), and the poet reminds us that the building is a civic space as well as a sacred one. The cathedral rings out with the sounds of many hundreds of citizens: so many people from every class—clerics, noblemen, burgesses, guildsmen, and labourers—that it seems to the narrator that "alle the worlde" ("the whole world," l. 64) were gathered within the walls. As they walk through the cathedral, the diverse inhabitants of London confront their own history, commune with long-dead ancestors, and celebrate their community, as they look forward to joining the communion of saints in heaven.

## Conclusion

Considering the account of Rome in Petrarch and in the *Mirabilia*, Summit argues that one effect of this focus on spaces being converted from pagan to Christian is "the emergence of a kind of history without people; if Petrarch's Rome has become a ghost town populated only by deserted structures and sites, the pagan Rome that the *Mirabilia* describes contains no actual pagans, but only buildings whose reconsecration and renaming under Christianity stands in for the conversion of populations."<sup>56</sup> By contrast, the world of Erkenwald makes it clear that these places, buildings, and histories are

<sup>54</sup> Varnam, "Sacred Space, Memory, and Materiality," 82.

<sup>55</sup> While it is not precisely stated, most critics infer that the miracle takes place on the feast of Pentecost, which seems the most likely of the three masses in the Sarum Missal which have offices beginning with "Spiritus Domini." See *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Peterson, 45–50.

<sup>56</sup> Summit, "Topography as Historiography," 316.



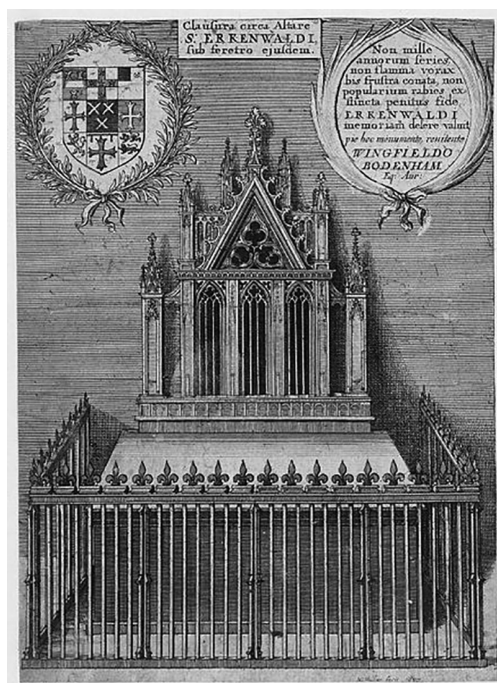


Figure 11 St. Erkenwald (monument). Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection, Plate number P2286. Used with permission of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

very much about people: the pagan judge, the people he ruled, the bishop Erkenwald, and the citizens of London who gather to wonder at the tomb and the body it contains. Of course, the destruction of the cathedral in 1666 has made it hard to imagine what it would be like to walk through the cathedral in the time of the *Erkenwald*-poet; indeed, he himself could not have known what the church looked like at the time of Erkenwald. But imagining what the space looked or sounded like is ultimately not the central concern of the poem: the cathedral, above all, is about telling the story of the people of London, something which must be imagined anew in each generation.

In an ambitious, multi-disciplinary plan, the Virtual St. Paul's Cathedral Project aims, among other goals, to enable people "to experience worship and preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral as events that unfold over time and on particular occasions in London in the early seventeenth century."<sup>57</sup> The first phase to be completed, the Virtual Paul's Cross Project, combines digital visualization and auditory reconstruction to enable viewers to imagine the experience of listening to John Donne's Gunpowder Day sermon at Paul's Cross in 1624, overcoming the loss of the building to recreate "the visual and acoustic

<sup>57</sup> The Virtual St. Paul's Cathedral Project: <https://vpcathedral.chass.ncsu.edu/>.

properties of spaces that have not existed for hundreds of years."<sup>58</sup> The concept of the cathedral as a virtual space seems entirely removed from anything that could have been imagined in the fourteenth century, but it is oddly faithful to the central idea of the poem: that a sacred building should serve to connect those who contemplate it to those who have worshipped there in the past, and to establish a wider sense of community even as it transcends the physical space.

*Saint Erkenwald* challenges the relationship between narrative and architecture, and imagines St. Paul's as a space that shapes communities through acts of worship and commemoration that rely simultaneously on the survival of the built cathedral, and faith that the physical realm can and must be transcended. As I write, plans are in place for a memorial in St. Paul's that demonstrates the cathedral's enduring capacity to reimagine the relationship between the living and the dead, time and eternity, and even physical and virtual realms. The "Remember Me" monument will be a permanent physical memorial to UK residents, of all faiths and none, whose lives have been lost during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>59</sup> Approaching the cathedral via a newly accessible entrance to the North Transept, visitors will enter a quiet space for reflection and prayer, where they can view a virtual book of remembrance commemorating those who have passed away. Launching the online book of condolence, the current Dean of St. Paul's cited his distant predecessor, John Donne, reminding us that "[a]ny man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind." Whatever the *Erkenwald*-poet might have made of the changes the last six hundred years have wrought on the history and fabric of the cathedral, St. Paul's itself has remained in many ways like the one he knew: a sacred space that draws people together and establishes communities in spite of the obstacles of time, place, and even faith.

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**58** The Virtual Paul's Cross Project: <https://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/quick-guide/>.

**59** The monument has been designed by Caroe Architects, who are also responsible for the installation of a fully accessible entrance to the cathedral, in the biggest structural changes to the cathedral in hundreds of years. "Covid-19: Campaign for St Paul's Memorial to Virus Victims," BBC News, May 1, 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/uk-56951552](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56951552).