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An Original Leaf , 1576  
1,150 words

## Justice in the Balance: The Word against the World in *Acts and Monuments*

When the Protestant Church of England was taking shape under the guidance of Queen Elizabeth I, one of the most influential books in modern Christianity was penned. John Foxe *Acts and Monuments*, often referred to as *The Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs*, was first published in 1563 by John Day. Foxe presents an extensive and well documented history of Christian martyrs from the time of Christ until his own time. The book was wildly popular, and a second, expanded edition appeared less than a decade later containing nearly 150 woodcut images. The third edition in 1576 was more compact, making it more affordable for a wider audience, but was no less rich with content and images representing the stories.<sup>1</sup> This 1576 edition contains a woodcut titled *The Vanity of the World*. This woodcut differs from many of the other woodcuts in the work, as it provides a succinct yet powerful summation of the theme of the work as a whole: the vanity of the world cannot stand against the Word of God and its true adherents.



humbly clad, barefoot saints who have placed *Verbum Dei* in the balance. The text describing the picture reads: A liuely picture describyng the weight and substaunce of Gods most blessed word, agaynst the doctrines and vanities of mans traditions <sup>5</sup> Foxe proclaims that the Word of God alone is enough to outweigh all the trappings of a corrupt church.

The 1576 edition of *Acts and Monuments*

<sup>6</sup> The subject of the image differs from most the others in the work as it is an allegory and not a representation of actual events. It concludes the first volume, which contains six bo



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