



# Ideas of Martyrdom in Early Stuart Public Debates, 1603 - 1649

Johannes Huhtinen

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization  
of the European University Institute

Florence, 12 December 2017



European University Institute  
**Department of History and Civilization**

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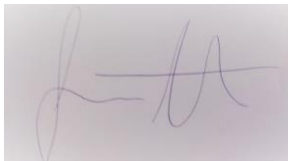
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*ABSTRACT* The first Protestant martyrology was printed at London during the spring of 1563. This vernacular work by the humanist John Foxe, entitled *Acts and Monuments*, was the largest account of martyrs produced by the Reformation movement, being dedicated to the memory of hundreds of recently executed contemporaries. It was also an innovative ecclesiastical history, aiming to supersede many traditional frames of reference, notably by situating martyrs and other theological concepts within the context of Reformation history and doctrine.

Even after the number of martyrs executed at the scaffold had diminished, educated elites, theologians, divines, and the common people still grew up surrounded by Foxe's stories. While historians have rightly situated *Acts and Monuments* within the urgent debates of the martyrologist's own time, relatively few scholars have explored the subsequent development of ideas of martyrdom in the context of the longer reformation. This doctoral thesis studies Foxe as a reformer and writer whose intellectual impact went beyond the sixteenth century. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that his works left many traces on post-Reformation literary culture, and that the Foxeian martyrs continued to exercise a strong hold over the popular imagination during the Stuart period.

This study is essentially an attempt to establish exactly how martyrs figured in historical understanding, and in what ways their example and authority determined patterns of reasoning. Focusing on a variety of literary sources written during the most famous disputes of the seventeenth century, I seek to demonstrate the crucial position that recently executed martyrs occupied within the language of historical argument. My aim is also to show that Foxe's work provided a structure for much thinking during the early modern period, and that the examples of reformed martyrs were important in shaping public opinion throughout the Stuart dynasty. In short, this is a study of martyrs, their admirers, and the uses to which their stories were put in print. On a broader level, it is a study of ideas of martyrdom in the aftermath of the sixteenth-century British Reformations.





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## *Acknowledgements*

Completion of this study would not have been possible without the help of many people. My greatest debt is to Martin van Gelderen, who guided and supported this project from its inception. I have been especially fortunate in having Martin as my supervisor. His wit, wisdom, and patience has been invaluable, as well as his intellectual and personal support. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Peter Lake for his indispensable advice and genuine warmth. Peter has been particularly generous in discussing at length the matters addressed in this work. I am very grateful to him for his immense generosity in reading and discussing my work in Florence, Nashville, Göttingen, and London. I also wish to express my gratitude to Luca Molà, who has always offered his help when needed.

I must also express gratitude to Markku Peltonen and Auvo Kostiainen, who helped me to begin this project. I would also like to thank the staff of the Department of European and World History, University of Turku. I have had the good fortune to have Leila Koivunen, Taina Syrjämaa, Pertti Grönholm, Janne Tunturi, Raita Merivirta, Heli Paalumäki, Tuomas Räsänen, and Eero Kuparinen as teachers. They have encouraged me in so many ways. Special thanks to Antti-Jussi Nygård for his technical assistance.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support that many institutions have offered to my doctoral studies. I was able to study for several years thanks to the generosity of the Finnish Academy. The material assistance of the Finnish Cultural Foundation and TOP-säätiö have likewise facilitated my research. I benefited greatly from a visit to the Department of History, Vanderbilt University, and I particularly wish to thank Sandy Solomon, who welcomed me with a warmth that one rarely experiences. Thus, it is a true pleasure to thank Sandy for her hospitality during my stay in Nashville. I am also most thankful to Matthew, Nitin, and Jacob for making my visits to Vanderbilt such an enjoyable experience.

Over the last few years I have been fortunate enough to be part of a vibrant community of intellectual historians at the European University Institute. I would like to thank Kaarlo Havu, Jonas Gerlings, Brian Olesen, Matti La Mela, Giovanni Lista, and Tommaso Giordani for academic support and constructive criticism. They have shared their knowledge with me, given me new ideas, and will always remain inspiring friends. I owe far more than the usual debt to Alex Jordan. He has been a good friend, colleague, and an outstanding guide to London. He is also a sensitive and informed reader, and I would like to offer my special thanks to Alex for his thoughtful editing.

The company of the researchers at the EUI has been a great support. A special note of gratitude goes to Haakon Ikonou, Pernille Hansen, Lauri Tähtinen, Diana Natermann, Laura Almagor, David Freis, Florian Wagner, Julia Wambach, Diederik Boertien, Nicolás Castillo, Tim Bruyninckx, Johann Leiß, Per Tiedtke, Petri Koikkalainen, Jakob Lehne, Vedran Duancic, Pablo Abascal, Andrea Warnecke, Justiina Dahl, David Kleimann, and Kalle Kananoja. And, despite years of absence, I still have friends back home. Thanks too to many friends, especially Jarmo, Juho, Elli, Johannes, Anna-Riina, Jaakko, Krista, Veera, Mika, Heikki, Elisa, Henri, Laura, Sanna, Petra, Mikko, Ruut, and Eero.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their encouragement and support over the years. To my parents and siblings I am more grateful than I could say. My brothers and sister-in-law have always offered me joy and encouragement. My mother-in-law and father-in-law have assisted this project in more ways than I can readily recall. Thus, heartfelt thanks to all my family members: they have given everything a family can give to a person.

My deepest gratitude is to my daughters, Helene, Matilda, Lovisa, and to my wife Elisa. The little ones have supported me unconditionally from the beginning to the end, and have shared the joys of the journey, even though they never saw much value in spending countless hours alone, reading, thinking, and writing. My debts to Elisa are too numerous to list. You are amazing. Für Elisa!







## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction: The English culture of martyrdom

The diffusion of Reformed Protestantism in England has been a subject of perennial historical fascination. Alongside the magisterial reforms instituted by the King, and the plethora of new doctrines advocated by catechetical preachers from below, the English Reformation was also advanced by both popular writers and effective storytellers. The importance of the martyrologist John Foxe in this process hardly needs to be emphasized. As a prominent member of the underground Protestantism of the 1550s, Foxe subsequently gave form, content, and history to the English Reformation, and situated its events within the larger international Protestant movement. Foxe's name carried weight, and the stories that he put onto paper would come to enjoy great appeal in the Anglophone world during the next two centuries. Given that his martyrology developed into a major ideological, religious, and cultural force in the post-Reformation world, it is hardly surprising that a number of writers claimed Foxe as one of their own. For this reason, Simeon Foxe, the eldest son of the martyrologist and president of the College of Physicians, found it necessary to protect the Foxeian legacy against such apparent misuse. In a biography of his father published in 1641, he cautioned his readers regarding "hearsays" and people who "had ill handled his Story", urging them to be wary of the fact that

“many of his actions were amplified above the truth”.<sup>1</sup> This doctoral thesis is primarily concerned with early Stuart writers like Simeon Foxe, who exercised control over the meaning of martyrological texts, and writers like his father John Foxe, who found the rhetoric and imagery of martyrdom to be an effective way to appeal to the larger public.

While it has become commonplace to assert that no other work attained such immense popularity in early modern England as *Acts and Monuments*, the extent of Foxe’s influence as a reformer, and the ways in which his martyrology posthumously shaded public discussions, have been understudied. Even if John Foxe was not the most authoritative reformer in his own time, he was without question the most widely respected author of the post-Reformation era, an authority in his own right, whose popularity and influence exceeded many towering figures of the sixteenth century. Exploring the texts in question reveals that Foxe became part of popular orthodoxy, and profoundly affected early modern debates on politics and religion. My general aim in this work is to situate Foxeian discourse within the cultural landscape of early Stuart England. My purpose is not to provide a balanced study of the reception of the “Book of Martyrs,” or to cover every imaginable facet of the ways in which Foxe’s revisionist history became part of the English mentality. Rather, my aim is to identify Foxe’s impact on key political debates between 1603 and 1649. My second focus is upon how the publicists of the era of James I and Charles I used martyrological material to inform, educate, and persuade the larger public of the benefits of their own political agendas, during the intense literary controversies which wracked the Stuart polity.

## 1.1 THE FOXEIAN REFORMATION

During the sixteenth-century Tudor Reformations, the years between 1553 and 1558 witnessed the most intense period of religious persecution in the history of England. Over the course of the short reign of the Catholic Queen Mary I, in just under four years, over 300 reformers were found guilty of heresy and treason, and sentenced to death upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Simeon Foxe, ‘The Life of Mr. John Fox’, in *Acts and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable happening in the church*, Vol. 2 (London, 1641), see To the Reader.

scaffold.<sup>2</sup> Mary's death on 17 November 1558 brought her regime to an abrupt end; thereafter, she was considered to be one of the great tyrants of history, and her eventful reign was brought up whenever the effects of tyrannical rule were discussed. In turn, her persecuted subjects were raised to the status of martyrs.

This collective tragedy was recorded most comprehensively by John Foxe and his publisher John Day, in a compilation entitled *Actes and Monuments* (1563), popularly referred to as *The Book of Martyrs*.<sup>3</sup> The Oxford-trained humanist and his associates were responsible for the first reformed martyrology in the British Isles, a chronicle and ecclesiastical history that sought to firmly impress the victims of the mid-1550s upon the minds of readers.<sup>4</sup> In his preface to *Actes and Monuments*, Foxe stressed the historical significance of his subject, hoping that martyrs would attain a prominent place in English culture. According to Foxe, the terrible violence of the mid-sixteenth-century regime was unparalleled in history.<sup>5</sup> Explicating the place of these martyred reformers in the history of mankind, Foxe made clear that they were not just a pious equivalent to the heroes of Greek and Latin antiquity, but were rather more glorious and more worthy of honor than “six hundred Alexanders, Hectors, Scipios, and warring Julies”. Thus, Foxe invited his audience to read about their actions, to become familiar

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Wabuda, ‘Marian martyrs (act. 1555-1558)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.eui.eu/view/theme/95582>> [accessed February 18, 2015].

<sup>3</sup> While the Foxeian project was the most influential voice in the rehabilitation of martyrs during the 1560s, there were also a number of other important contributors. For example, Henry Bull and Miles Coverdale published many of the letters of the Marian martyrs, under the title *Certain, most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true Saintes and holy Martyrs of God* (London, 1564). Another early contributor to the martyr cult was Thomas Brice, in his *A Compendious Register in Metre* (London, 1559). On the earliest Protestant manuscript networks, see Thomas Freeman ‘Publish and Perish: the Scribal Culture of the Marian Martyrs’, in Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick (eds.) *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 235–254.

<sup>4</sup> Many scholars have discussed Foxe's meticulous editorial labors, most notably Thomas S. Freeman and Susannah Brietz Monta, ‘Authorship in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments’, in Andrew Hadfield (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of English prose, 1500–1640* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Invocations of classical culture were central to Foxe's histories of martyrdom. Patrick Collinson, for example, has suggested that Foxe's general conceptions of history owed more to his Stoicism than to Christian exegesis. See, ‘Truth, lies, and fiction in sixteenth-century Protestant historiography’, in Patrick Collinson (ed.) *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 216–244. In part, this impression results from Foxe's debts to humanistic learning, and particularly the perspective brought to martyrology from his study of Roman histories. See Brian Cummings, ‘Images in Books: Foxe *Eikonoklastes*’, in Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (eds.), *Art Re-Formed: Re-assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2007), pp. 183–200.

with their characters, and to follow their example with fortitude and valor. He also expressed the hope of extending the commemoration into visual forms, encouraging his readers to decorate walls, cups, rings, and gates with their images.<sup>6</sup>

Foxe's effort to make his audience think and feel about the merits of martyrdom did not go unrewarded. After the accession of Queen Elizabeth, society was deeply influenced by the memory of the recent martyrs. The Foxeian hagiographical project received considerable support from the restoration government, as domestic martyrology caught the attention of royal councilors, who recognized its usefulness in imposing religious uniformity and showing the regime's commitment to the Protestant cause.<sup>7</sup> In their own words, it was "a work of very greate importance and necessary knowledge towching religyon and other good effects" and needed to "be made publicque". In 1571, the Privy Council ensured that Foxe's work received the widest possible circulation by commanding copies to be placed within every church in the country. The work was also widely available at various other public places, including guild-halls, schools, and libraries.<sup>8</sup>

The astonishing success of Foxeian history and its martyrs during the second half of the sixteenth century has been acknowledged by several historians. According to Diarmaid MacCulloch, for example, the memory of the mid-Tudor martyrs became an integrative force in the Protestant society created by the Elizabethan religious settlement. Notwithstanding the differences among the magisterial and more radical Protestants in interpreting the meaning of the Marian martyrs, there was a clear consensus in praising their achievements.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the posthumous legacy of the Foxeian cast of

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<sup>6</sup> John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (London, 1563), A declaration concerning the vtilitie and profite of thys history.

<sup>7</sup> It is not known whether the councilors themselves were avid readers of *Actes and Monuments*, but, according to William Harrison, copies were placed in every office in Elizabeth's court. Harrison's observation can be found in Raphael Holinshed, *The firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577), p.84.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Evenden & Thomas S. Freeman, 'Print, Profit and Propaganda: The Elizabethan Privy Council and the 1570 Edition of Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'', in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 119 (2004), pp. 1288-1307.

<sup>9</sup> In his scholarly biography of Thomas Cranmer, MacCulloch notes that figures as diverse as the Scottish reformer John Knox and Queen Elizabeth took part in this collective commemoration of martyrs; the only group who abstained from this culture of rehabilitation was the Anabaptists. Diarmaid MacCulloch *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, 1996), pp. 606-638. The role of the Marian heritage has recently been subject to considerable scholarly reassessment. It is of great importance that this legacy was already much debated

characters was, in the words of another historian, “accepted as authoritative by a broad range of protestant opinion”.<sup>10</sup> However, while scholars have unanimously allotted the concept of martyrdom an indispensable place in late Tudor historical thought, much less has been said about how these figures were perceived in the changed circumstances of the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, relatively few historians have explored the development of the idea of martyrdom within the dramatically altered context of Stuart England.

The historian Keith Thomas might well be correct in claiming that emotive celebrations of martyrdom became the hallmark of an affective Catholic piety, whereas “the Marian martyrs never generated a miraculous mythology comparable to the medieval cult of saints”.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, there is no doubting the importance of the subject to early modern Catholics. In this work, however, my aim is to show that there is much more to be said about the role and value of martyrs in the Protestant world. It would be a serious mistake to suppose that martyrs disappeared from view in the years after Queen Elizabeth’s death in 1603, or to assume that martyrdom became of merely marginal significance during the later stages of the Reformation. Instead of leaping to such conclusions, however, it is worth looking more closely at contemporary perceptions of the subject. As its title suggests, this doctoral thesis is thus principally concerned with the continuing presence and transmission of the martyrological tradition during the first half of the seventeenth century. On a broader level, it is a study of ideas of martyrdom in the aftermath of the sixteenth-century British Reformations.

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during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Although they identified themselves as Protestants, Secretary of State William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth and many divines who survived the persecutions without leaving the country were charged with having deviated from their martyr predecessors, and occasionally urged to repent of the compromises they had committed during the reign of Queen Mary. See in particular, Robert Harkins, ‘Elizabethan puritanism and the politics of memory in post-Marian England’, in *The Historical Journal*, 2014, 57, pp. 899–919. Karl Gunther has illustrated the role of the Marian heritage in debates between Protestants from the mid-1570s onward. Karl Gunther, *Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525-1590* (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Jesse Lander, ‘Foxe’s Books of Martyrs: printing and popularising the Acts and Monuments’, in Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (eds.) *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example Fred Jacob Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (Toronto, 1967); A. G. Dickens and John M. Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Oxford, 1985); Stephen A. Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought 1547-1603* (Leiden, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Keith Thomas, ‘Killing Stones’, in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 33, No. 10 (2011), pp. 13–15.

While previous scholars of Anglo-British history tended to focus on the Reforming enterprise primarily as an institutional process, more recent inquirers have adopted a more variegated approach, studying the Reformation as a tradition defined by a multitude of perspectives, and as a process of cultural transformation. Patrick Collinson, Peter Lake, Alexandra Walsham, Anthony Milton, and other historians have widened the scope of enquiry considerably, by including all manner of literary texts in their analytical framework, and thus generating a fuller historical picture of Britain's long transition from the 1530s to the 1680s.<sup>13</sup> Scholars of the northern European Renaissance have likewise found some older explanatory frameworks and linear paradigms unhelpful to our understanding of this era. For instance, the common rhetoric of modernization theory and the sociological understanding of progressive secularism, which dominated the views of twentieth-century cultural theorists, are now often identified as poor guides in explaining the historical texts and developments of these years. Brian Cummings, for example, insists that the religious and intellectual movement that arose in Continental Europe and developed in England was not only a homogenous ideology, but also a culture of complexity and diversity. If the literal works it inspired are discussed solely in postulating terms, there is a risk of impoverishing the creative and destructive anxieties of the consequential movement.<sup>14</sup> For literary scholars and historians alike, the insights of linguistic, rhetorical, and narrative approaches offer an array of possibilities in elucidating these texts, and in recovering the historical meanings specific to the intellectual frameworks of the early modern period. Like much of the research into early modern historical writing, and the explanations of events offered by those who had actually lived

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<sup>13</sup>The bibliography of Protestant scholarship is considerable. On how it transformed culture in the Elizabethan age, see Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1988). For a more connected history focusing on theological and ecclesiological change from 1600 to 1640, see Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 2002). A good deal of original research has been done by Alexandra Walsham to explain the impact that the Protestant reformation had on society and culture. See Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999). For a survey of Protestant bestsellers, book production and their role in educational institutions, see Ian Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in early modern English education* (Aldershot, 2009); *The Christian's ABC: catechisms and catechizing in England c.1530–1740* (Oxford, 1996); *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Brian Cummings, who has paid attention to Protestantism as a literary-historical phenomenon, made these remarks in *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford, 2002), and in the introduction to Brian Cummings and James Simpson (eds.) *Cultural Reformation. Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford, 2010).

through them, this study is concerned with the ways in which historical authors and agents developed their ideas by reflecting on the culture of the Protestant reformation. More particularly, it pays attention to how their writings were shaped and informed by the martyrological aspects of history.

Perhaps more than any other literary work of its period, *Acts and Monuments* has come to be seen as the textual embodiment of the English Reformation, and its compiler John Foxe as one of the most influential British Reformers. In Henry Holland's impressive catalogue *Herwologia Anglica* (1620), the so-called Protestant pantheon, Foxe was placed amongst the 65 most famous divines, scholars, statesmen, and martyrs of the land.<sup>15</sup> A fellow of Magdalen College who began his career writing comedies and translating Martin Luther's sermons, Foxe fled the Marian regime to the continent and became an exile in the 1550s. He later earned an enduring reputation as a compiler of an anthology which both depicted the physical and emotional suffering of persecuted Evangelicals, and also identified the martyrs of the Protestant world. The influence of this widely circulated, original, and frequently cited chronicle has been central to discussion of English martyrdoms. After its first appearance in 1563, it went through four extended editions during Foxe's lifetime (1570, 1576, 1583, 1596), and another four significantly revised editions were printed posthumously (1610, 1631–32, 1641, and 1684). In the course of its publication history, the book brought together a wide range of texts, images, and documents. It has been characterized as a distinctive blend of genres including speeches, poems, letters, images, biographies, examination accounts, tracts, historical documents, eye-witness accounts, spiritual memoirs, and gossiping stories. This distinctive literary mode was, in other words, a cluster of reports and reconstructions held together by the authority of the pious historian "Master Fox". For some time, it has been customary to address themes regarding martyrdom through reference to Foxe. Already in 1612, the minor martyrologist Francis Burton acknowledged his unparalleled influence, remarking that all subsequent English martyrologists ought to follow Foxe, "for it is almost impossible to bee otherwise". Ever since, writers have devoted great attention to this text.<sup>16</sup> The opinions contained therein,

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Holland, *Herwologia Anglica* (London, 1620), p. 201.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Burton, *Fierie Tryall of God's Saints* (London, 1612), p. 6.

the ways in which the text was made and remade, Foxe's editorial labors, methods, and use of sources, his deletions and additions, and the later interpolations by his successors, have together become an increasingly important object of academic inquiry.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 1.** Portrait of John Foxe (c. 1625-1640). British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings.

Alongside this longstanding engagement with Foxe, questions of martyrdom have conventionally been associated with hagiographical martyrologies, particularly in the context of the aftermath of the Reformation in the 1530s, 1540s, and 1550s, the confrontations between the Reformed and the Roman church, and ecclesiastical developments in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> This body of scholarship has

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<sup>17</sup> Being subject to numerous monographs, collective volumes, and articles has ensured that the history of martyrdom continues to be construed mainly from a Foxeian perspective. For two informative accounts of the creation of the book, see Elizabeth Evenden & Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England. The Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge, 2014); John King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge, 2006). For discussions of Foxeian themes more broadly, see collective volumes edited by David Loades, *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot, 1997); *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, 1999); *John Foxe at Home and Abroad* (Aldershot, 2004) and Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds), *John Foxe and his World* (Aldershot, 2002). There are numerous studies which cover Foxeian ground already, but the reception history of Foxe is still to be written.

<sup>18</sup> Recent works have placed great emphasis on an important but hitherto neglected aspect, namely the Catholic discussions of the topic. See, for example, Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community 1535–1603* (Aldershot, 2002); *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs* (Aldershot, 2012); Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in early Modern Britain and Ireland*



yielded valuable insights into the early English Protestant martyrological tradition, yet as a consequence of its almost exclusive focus on the sixteenth century, the theme has attained only a marginal place within the historiography of post-Reformation cultural, religious and political history.

Obviously, there are several reasons for the historiographical primacy of Tudor England. For one thing, it was without doubt the formative and most momentous period in the development of largescale martyrological chronicles (annalistic works that dealt either exclusively or primarily with martyrs). In contrast, it has often been suggested that the tradition of writing large chronicles went out of fashion during the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> In the process, the literature of martyrdom became more diverse in structure and style. Another reason is that the political authorities of the late sixteenth century simply carried out far more executions than those statesmen who governed under Stuart dynasty. Even if Elizabeth, her closest adviser William Cecil, and principal secretary of state Sir Francis Walsingham found it necessary to execute over 200 missionary priests during the most troubled decades of her rule, by the late years of the *Gloriana* in the 1590s, they had become far more cautious, seeking not to produce victims who might be identified as martyrs. Thus, there is no denying that Jacobean and Caroline England witnessed a relative decline in public executions. However, my contention here is that these points should not lead historians to limit themselves exclusively to the Tudor period. Although the Stuart era witnessed no religious bloodbaths comparable to those of the sixteenth century, questions of martyrdom continued to remain relevant. The ongoing history of the idea of martyrdom thus merits further exploration, and, as I aim to show in this work, continued to recur in the lively debates that took place in early Stuart England.

Attempts to integrate martyrdom within the broader historical narrative of later English thought have frequently been made through reference to the constructive character of Foxe's language and imaginary. In his attempt to trace the *longue durée* of this textual tradition, William Haller, for example, drew attention to Foxe's central role

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(Oxford, 2008); Peter Lake & Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow. Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London, 2011); Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Aldershot, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford, 2003).

in the construction of an English consciousness. More than any other literary work of its period, *Actes and Monuments* was “accepted as an expression of the national faith”, and as “an unanswerable defence of England’s ideological position in the contemporary struggle for national independency and power”.<sup>20</sup> The immensely influential martyrology was the leading vernacular product of its time, and disseminated discourses, historical knowledge, and beliefs that were central to society’s self-understanding. Furthermore, Foxe was able to portray England as a community with a national past, and as a polity free from papal dominion. We should not be surprised to find that Foxe – in line with most biblically articulated nationalisms at the time – sought to equate the English people with the Old Testament Israelites covenanting with the Lord. Haller, however, then went on to claim that subsequent literary history perpetuated the idea of England as an elect nation, granting Englishmen the status of “a peculiar people set apart from the rest of mankind”.<sup>21</sup> This conclusion prompted a debate, in which several commentators deemed such claims unconvincing. Haller’s thesis, his critics pointed out, was problematic, not least because there was plentiful evidence indicating that Foxe himself did not believe in such a collective entity.<sup>22</sup> Instead of English exceptionalism, he advocated universalism which transcended the borders of independent nation-states: “what is knowne in one nation”, Foxe proclaimed, “is opened to all”.<sup>23</sup> Although historians have thus largely rejected the model of national exceptionalism, and exonerated Foxe from the charge of being a vulgar nationalist, the question of how the monumental work clarified England’s boundaries as a nation has nonetheless proved to be of more enduring interest to historians than that of his supranational confessionism.

The alleged connection between Foxe’s work and national emblems has since been explored by a number of scholars interested in the process of state-formation, the growing sense of English sovereignty, and the intellectual origins of nationalism. Richard Helgerson, for example, places Foxe among those Elizabethan writers who took

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<sup>20</sup> William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of martyrs and the elect nation* (London, 1963), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Haller (1963), p. 245.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley, 1973); Patrick Collinson, ‘John Foxe and national consciousness’, in Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds.) *John Foxe and his World* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 10–34.

<sup>23</sup> John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history* (London, 1570), p. 837.

the land, the people, the institutions, and the history of England as their subject, and who highlighted the importance of martyrs as historical actors.<sup>24</sup> Literary historian David Norbrook has gone even further in interpreting the influence of Foxe's martyrology on English Protestant nationhood. In exploring the history of England's transformation from Marian tyranny into Protestant nation through reference to exemplary deaths, Foxe not only provided a highly affective martyrology, but also, according to Norbrook, an account which contributed to the development of a myth of pure religion and civil liberty.<sup>25</sup> Even in the eighteenth century, it has been claimed, this legacy continued to be felt. As one recent commentator has pointed out, after the 1707 Act of Union, Foxe's work "played a leading role in forging national sentiment and identity".<sup>26</sup> It has thus been recognized for some time that the much-cited account had a long afterlife, if not as a cornerstone of national identity, certainly as an important source in the creation of a particular kind of reformed national iconography.

In addition to efforts to nationalize the meaning of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, recent critics have increasingly paid attention to the ways in which Foxeian discourse figured in a variety of textual forms. For instance, the work provided a crucial subtext for early English lyric and dramatic literature. According to one recent commentator, whose explicit aim is that of rediscovering how the tragedians understood the significance of the martyrs, the reality of sixteenth-century executions left a clear mark upon dramaturgy. It is against the background of the political executions, David K. Anderson notes, that we can understand why this period witnessed the first major efflorescence of tragic drama, and why the scaffold became a regular subject of dramatic representation.<sup>27</sup> The traumatic events at the scaffold gave rise to theatrical stereotypes, and enabled the playwrights to enrich their works by incorporating martyrs as characters. Among the host of London dramatists who brought martyrs on to the stage were Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, John Webster, and many other writers, who

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood. The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> David Norbrook, 'The English Revolution and English Historiography', in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 234.

<sup>26</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> David K. Anderson, *Martyrs and Players in Early Modern England: Tragedy, Religion and Violence on Stage* (Aldershot, 2014).

could not resist drawing upon this powerful stock of imagery in stimulating the passions of their audiences. Similar use of physical and emotional suffering to arouse the feelings of the audience can be discerned in poems and religious lyrics.<sup>28</sup> If allusions to the virtuous spirit of martyrs were characteristic of the emerging Protestant devotional genre of the late sixteenth century, Jacobean composers of didactic verse were no less inclined to recognize their importance. Martyred characters nourished the imaginations of poetic writers such as George Herbert, John Donne, and John Milton, as well as the prolific mid-Stuart poet John Taylor, all of whom employed references to the triumphs and tragedies of martyrs and versified Foxeian imaginary in their poetic commentaries.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, the lives, actions, and deaths of the aged patriarch Thomas Cranmer, his fellow bishops Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, Robert Ferrar, and John Hooper, and prominent evangelical leaders like John Bradford and John Philpott, had a lasting place in the poetic and dramatic consciousness of the age.



**Figure 2.** “tell me who hath martyr’d thee?” the brothers of Lavinia ask their mutilated sister in Shakespeare’s play *Titus Andronicus*. Contemporary drawing of the play by Henry Peachman. The British Library collections.

<sup>28</sup> For a broader discursive-contextual approach to martyrs, see Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> For the connection between stage and scaffold in drama, see Andreas Hofele, *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Oxford, 2011); Janel M. Mueller, ‘Pain, Persecution, and the Construction of Selfhood in Foxe’s Acts and Monuments’ in Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (eds.) *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge, 1997); Musa Gurnis-Farrell, ‘Martyrs Acts: Playing with Foxe’s Martyrs on the Public Stage’, in J. H. Degenhardt and E. Williamson (eds.) *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England. The Performance of Religion on the Renaissance Stage* (Aldershot, 2011), pp. 175-194.

Furthermore, it has also been acknowledged that Foxe provided a popular source for major Elizabethan and Jacobean prose histories, whose composers chose to explain human history in martyrological terms. The geographically structured accounts of writers such as Raphael Holinshed, John Selden, William Camden, and John Speed made use of a wide range of martyrological narratives.<sup>30</sup> Here, many characters were elevated to the status of martyrs, and landmarks, physical structures, foundation stories, and other meaningful events in the history of Britain were associated with martyrdom. This preoccupation with martyrs was also present in the highly popular travel writers of the period. To name the most obvious example, Richard Hakluyt, geographer, explorer, and author of *Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589–1600), singled out Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* as a major source of his own work. Despite considerable differences in subject matter, Hakluyt shared many narrative structures and devices with Foxe.<sup>31</sup> Another maritime historian, Samuel Purchas, enlarged the martyrological canon in the mid-1620s, referring to many of his characters who struggled against the forces of nature as ‘martyrs’. To give just one example, Purchas felt justified in declaring Sir Hugh Willoughby, an English sailor in search of a northwest passage to Asia, who was found frozen in his ship somewhere near Murmansk in 1554, the “Honourable Martyr of English Northerne Discoveries”.<sup>32</sup> As much as Foxe influenced the construction of a grand martyrological narrative of Britain, he also had an undoubted impact upon those working on a smaller scale.

Neither was the memory of the reformed martyrs geographically limited to England. Indeed, as Adrian Chastain Weimer has recently pointed out, it also had a strong presence during the first English encounters with the New World. For instance, Protestant martyrologies found readers amongst famous circumnavigators such as Francis Drake, who carried a copy of *Acts and Monuments* in his ship, and also the inhabitants of English

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology and the “Light of Truth” from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto, 1990); *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 77–80.

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumous, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 4 Vols. (London, 1625), Vol. 3, p. 242.

settlements in Newfoundland, Maine, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Maryland, all of whom adopted the martyrological narratives of the Old World. Many of them valued Foxe as an author, but at the same time found it necessary to produce “a new book of martyrs”, as Hugh Peter, one of the founders of Harvard College, urged his Boston audience in 1636, “to begin where the other hath left”.<sup>33</sup> Some remarkable instances are provided by the colonial writers who fled persecution at the hands of Charles I’s regime. The Congregationalists, Antinomians, Baptists, Separatists, and Quakers who were forced to seek shelter in English America brought the martyrologies with them, and retained a propensity to view themselves as a persecuted minority. In their historical imagination, the villains of the Old Testament narratives, Philistines, Canaanites, and Amalekites, became the native Amerindians, as well as the hostile colonists of the other European empires. Nevertheless, it was not until 1702 that the “American Foxe”, Cotton Mather, could proclaim in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* that there had been martyrs in America too.<sup>34</sup>

Following the realization that Foxe was not alone in promoting martyrs to the reading public, scholars have become far more attentive to the extent to which these vocabularies existed in a wide range of genres. Using sources such as drama, poetry, and prose histories, it has been increasingly acknowledged that martyrs were not only the subject of Foxe’s martyrological chronicle, but also a common idea in the contemporary cultural imagination.<sup>35</sup> By paying attention to different realms of literary production and transgressive reading practices, we have begun to realize the extent to which Elizabethan and Jacobean intellectual culture was infused with these vocabularies. In the light of such developments, however, it is remarkable that the more argumentative works of martyrological reflection have received relatively little attention, at least so far as the seventeenth century is concerned. In the following study, I will be concerned with the entirety of these tracts and pamphlets. As I will attempt to demonstrate, it is possible to

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Francis J. Bremer, ‘Foxe in the Wilderness: The Book of Martyrs in Seventeenth-Century New England’, in David Loades (ed.) *John Foxe at Home and Abroad* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 114.

<sup>34</sup> For the colonial culture, see Adrian Chastain Weimer, *Martyrs’ Mirror. Persecution and Holiness in Early New England* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 6, 140.

<sup>35</sup> As Jessica Martin noted, many early modern writers assumed their readers to have a close enough familiarity with the martyrology to understand very glancing allusions to it. See Jessica Martin, *Walton’s Lives. Conformist Commemorations and the Rise of Biography* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 32-33.

delve deeper into contemporary attitudes, and to identify a unique seventeenth-century preoccupation with martyrs by taking a fresh look at the distinctive features of this material. While it is hardly possible to overemphasize Foxe's influence in shaping religious identity and social memory in the early modern period, we risk undervaluing the post-Reformation culture of martyrdom if we do not also make use of the unique insights provided by seventeenth-century commentators.

## 1.2 BRINGING MARTYRS INTO THE STUART PUBLIC SPHERE

Indeed, a new picture begins to emerge if we extend our analysis to the martyrological vocabularies that existed beyond conventional chronicles, and direct our attention to the ways in which the theme was discussed in early modern pamphlets. Indeed, such references are not especially hard to find. When looking at post-Reformation writings, it is striking how many of the great texts, as well as the documents of a more ephemeral character, were littered with remarks on martyrs and martyrdom. The evidence in these sources suggests that martyr narratives were a longstanding feature in the burgeoning print production of the seventeenth century. Thus, there can be no doubt that martyrs resonated strongly in this material. However, the sheer frequency of these references, and, more generally, the contemporary fascination with pursuing the theme, still require further explanation. What, for example, was the purpose of representing martyrs? Why was the attention of writers so often drawn to these figures? Why did contemporaries choose to incorporate martyrs into these texts?

Some important advances have already been made in explaining the appeal of martyrs in controversial and polemical works.<sup>36</sup> In her research on early modern print culture, Tessa Watt, for example, has noted that such references were especially abundant in anti-Catholic propaganda. The overall aim of those reformed polemicists who used martyrs as interlocutors in their works was to advance alternative models to the Catholic hagiographic culture. As Watt has observed, the counter-model that reformed casuistry

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<sup>36</sup> On reformation polemic, see Jesse M. Lander, *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006).

generated in the course of such polemical exchanges was a highly propagandist narrative, in which “the martyrs become no more than cardboard cut-outs: the supreme representations of tenacious Protestant faith”.<sup>37</sup> Alexandra Walsham adopts a similar perspective, remarking that the Protestant reformers deliberately sought to distance English martyrs from Catholic devotional hagiography. In doing so, they eschewed many of the issues that Catholics placed at the center of martyrology, and strove to separate the English martyrs from any hint of Catholic intercessional beliefs. From this demystifying perspective, it should come as no surprise that those reformers who stripped altars and destroyed images valued martyrs rather as moral examples than as vehicles of traditional sacramental languages.<sup>38</sup>

According to one reputable view, put most emphatically by the historian Thomas S. Freeman, the established martyrological tradition was converted to more political use, as writers began to adopt the figure of the martyr as a means to reflect upon the state of contemporary politics. The significant persuasive effect of martyr figures in social protest was acknowledged, especially by principled dissidents of various stripes.<sup>39</sup> They pleaded their cause by projecting their own preoccupations on to the martyrs, and also stressing the importance of martyrdom, since this had the effect of valorizing their own actions. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, Freeman claims, “there have been no equally effective means of legitimating political dissent in Europe”.<sup>40</sup> To consider martyr

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<sup>37</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 96. In recent years, scholars have emphasized that the products of the printing press were not homogenous, and have also focused on the functional varieties found amongst printed texts, as well as the interchange between different modes of writing. See, for example Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven, 1997). Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2003); Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 488–491, 516.

<sup>39</sup> This type of reflection was pivotal for those who faced the pressures of government policies. The importance of this discourse for nonconformist and separatist writings (and sectarian identity more generally) is the subject of John R. Knott’s, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563–1694* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> A point made by several of the contributors to Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds.) *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c. 1400–1700* (Woodbridge, 2007). This argument is also expressed in Thomas S. Freeman’s, “Imitatio-Christi with a Vengeance”: The Politicisation of Martyrdom in Early-Modern England’, pp.68–69. Freeman also notes the ever-narrowing range of some forms of medieval martyrdom. See Thomas S. Freeman, ‘Introduction: Over their Dead Bodies: Concepts of Martyrdom in Late-Medieval and Early-Modern England’, in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c. 1400–1700*, pp. 1–34.



narratives as a form of criticism of violent repression, or even fierce persecution by monarchy, state, and church, is an obvious point. However, the contrary, that is, polemical efforts to underwrite Stuart sovereignty with the authority of martyrs, has never been fully explored.<sup>41</sup>

It is from this perspective, it seems to me, that we can understand why the subject of martyrdom was a topic of such intense debate throughout the post-Reformation period. As much as the schemes of Foxeian history served as a unifying bond for the nation, the fact that resistance theories could and were articulated in martyrological terms ensured that the idea of martyrdom remained a contested topic.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the confessional unity of church and state should not mislead us into assuming that Reformist ideas were immediately accepted by the Erastians who, to smaller or greater extent, advocated the church instituted by the King. In fact, as Patrick Collinson pointed out long ago, the efforts of the Established church to underwrite Protestant orthodoxy proved a failure throughout the sixteenth (and much of the seventeenth) century.<sup>43</sup> In spite of the alignment of the official ecclesiastical system with core reformed leitmotifs (non-negotiable ideals such as *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *adiaphora*, or *ecclesia invisibilis*), national Protestantism remained a mix of reformed theologies and confessional identities. In other words, it was a house of many mansions, dissenting groups, competing ideas,

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<sup>41</sup> Martyrdom has remained surprisingly absent from traditional political histories. A notable exception to this trend is *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, 2002) by Peter Lake and Michael Questier, which explores the role of martyrs in post-Reformation (mainly sixteenth-century) political negotiations.

<sup>42</sup> According to Susannah Brietz Monta, “Sixteenth-century English martyrologies almost without exception represent the martyr as a figure without political intent, one who neither procures the deaths of others nor acts seditiously. The period’s martyrologists carefully separate martyrs from politics, even in cases where the separation is patently dubious”. Susannah Brietz Monta, ‘Rendering unto Caesar: The Rhetorics of Divided Loyalties in Tudor England’, in Dominic Janes and Alex Houen (eds.) *Martyrdom and Terrorism: Pre-Modern to Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford, 2014), p. 66. Many later commentators, however, have attributed a large number of political maxims to these figures. On the intellectual world of the radical reformation, the emergence of resistance theories and their political implications, see Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge, 1978).

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘Comment on Eamon Duffy’s Neale lecture and the Colloquium’, in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.) *England’s Long Reformation 1500–1800* (London, 1998), pp. 78–81. We are now much better informed about princely participation in literary endeavors. According to Aysha Pollnitz, “Despite the intentions of northern humanists and religious reformers to use letters to moderate monarchy in early modern Britain, Tudor and Stuart rulers used their discursive skills, wide reading and biblical knowledge to articulate increasingly absolute accounts of their authority over church and state.” Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 15.

and heterogeneous traditions, which grew out of the same Protestant movement. Indeed, English Protestants of all sorts shared a set of fixed beliefs, resisting subordination to Rome, refashioning the same biblical and evangelical themes, and agreeing that patristic writings afforded a key to understanding the Scriptures. However, they did not come firmly together on the issue of royal supremacy. Dissent was often common amongst people who recognized the limits and failures of the magisterial reformation, and who emphasized England's place within the Europe-wide reform movement. The most straightforward opposition to the Crown's assertion of its prerogative was offered by continental reformers, such as Theodore Beza, who in 1566 denounced the English arrangement in a letter to the Swiss Protestant Heinrich Bullinger, claiming "the papacy was never abolished in that country, but rather transferred to the sovereign".<sup>44</sup> Although these concerns were not as openly or extensively brought up in England, similar assumptions about the princely control of the church were present over the course of the long Reformation. Especially in times of national crises, it was not uncommon to blame the monarch for transforming the church into a mere branch of royal government. Nor was it uncommon in the Stuart period to see the Reformation as an advancing movement: thus, not a finite phenomenon, but an instrument of universal improvement. After all, throughout the period under consideration in this study, a substantial segment of people believed the Reformation was "a radical break with the past", as well as "the single most important event since the Apostles".<sup>45</sup> For these reasons, as Jacqueline Rose has likewise stressed, the legacy of the magisterial sixteenth-century Reformations of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I proved to be susceptible to a variety of interpretations, and continued to divide Protestants in the last decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup> With these considerations about Protestant culture in mind, the present study offers a historicizing interpretation of the ways in which martyrs were used to authorize resistant

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<sup>44</sup> 'Beza to Bullinger [September 3, 1566]', in Hastings Robinson (ed.) *Zurich Letters or the Correspondence of Several English bishops and Others with some of the Helvetian Reformers, during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge, 1846), p. 128.

<sup>45</sup> Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford, 2009), p. 283.

<sup>46</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England. The Politics of the Royal Supremacy, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 14.

voices, and, for that matter, to underwrite government's political authority, intellectual orthodoxies, and the hegemony of the Established church.

### 1.3 THE KEY-CONCEPT AND THE SCOPE OF THE WORK

This doctoral thesis will examine the history of the idea of martyrdom by focusing on disputes staged in print. As such, it is the first attempt to situate martyrs within the landscape of early Stuart public debates. This study is interested in the martyr narratives, tropes, and other related textual materials as a feature of the political and religious reform programs, and in uncovering the ways in which martyrological vocabulary was deployed in a series of discussions in the period from c. 1600 to c. 1650. The present treatment builds on the interpretations put forward by Peter Lake, Steven Pincus, Joad Raymond, and others, who have studied the reading of controversial literature within a context they call “the post-Reformation public sphere”. This non-institutional framework of communication stands autonomously apart from the state, and consists of various public actors. For them, writing pamphlets offered a means to convey their ideas, opinions, and perspectives to a broader audience, as well as to influence decision-making, and to gain mainstream acceptance of their views. These arguments were often historical, rather than strictly theological or philosophical. However, instead of making serious contributions to knowledge of previous eras, the participants were in fact trying to advance their own politico-religious agendas, by shaping historical materials to their own ends. It was, in other words, a highly rhetorical context, in which pamphleteers sought to make their claims as persuasive as possible, by magnifying and exploiting narratives that already existed.<sup>47</sup> Looking at the phenomena of martyrdom from the perspective of these seventeenth-century commentators, this study pays attention to the question of how and

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<sup>47</sup> Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford, 2011); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 26; Peter Lake & Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's lewd hat: Protestants, Papists and players in post-Reformation England* (New Haven, 2002); Peter Lake & Steven Pincus (ed.), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2008). According to Peltonen, the political learning and rhetoric that educated Englishmen employed in the public sphere owed much to the ancient authors. See Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (2012).

for what purposes the subject was taken up in works addressed to the wider public. I have built on the foundation of a rich scholarly literature regarding Jacobite, Civil war, and revolutionary England, yet I hope that by bringing together martyrdom and wider public concerns at these pivotal moments, my work will offer a new framework for understanding the special dynamic of the period. More detailed investigation of the aspect of martyrdom can clarify the nature and character of many disputes over a long period of time, and thus recover some lost dimensions of early modern history.

Before the culture of martyrdom can be analysed in more detail, some preliminary points should be made at the outset. First of all, it is useful to consider the intellectual category of martyr, by drawing attention to some contrasting descriptions and adaptations of the word. Since this study is interested in conceptions of martyrdom over more than half a century, I have found it more useful to seek a contextual definition, instead of providing an essentialist one. Already, a panoramic survey of the ways in which some prominent writers of the period defined the word reveals a rich and confusing range of meanings. In a strict sense, the Greek word *marturos* (μάρτυρός) from which the English term martyr is derived, signifies a witness. The most detailed exposition of this original Greek sense can be found in Henry Peacham's well-known dictionary of rhetorical figures and tropes, entitled *Garden of Eloquence* (1593). Here, Peacham defines the term *martyria*, or *testation*, as it is in Latin, as a figure in which an "Orator or Speaker confirmeth some thing by his owne experience".<sup>48</sup> Since the value of the act of testimony relies on the primary experience of the witness, then, by definition, the figure of *martyria* excludes second-hand experience or the accounts of others. The example Peacham provides of the use of this figure is that of a traveler, captain, or physician who confirms something by one's own experience.

This handbook definition was often reiterated by the finest theological minds of the reformed homiletic tradition, who sought to combat vague uses of the phrase with more precise theological definitions. For example, John Donne, the dean of St. Paul's

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<sup>48</sup> Henry Peacham, *The garden of eloquence* (London, 1593), p. 85. In addition to *martyria*, Peacham gives three distinctive figures of testimony – taken from Greek – that also bore some relation to the idea of argument from testimony: *apodixis* (experience from known principles), *apomnemonysis* (the commemoration of someone worthy of remembrance), *antirrthesis* (rejection of an authority, opinion, or sentence due to its wickedness).

Cathedral and court preacher to King James, was familiar with the ways in which the Caroline writers stretched the limits of the concept to include all sorts of victims, suffering, and suppressed voices.<sup>49</sup> In a sermon delivered in 1622, he admitted the anglicized form of the Greek term was slippery. What “we call more passionately and more gloriously martyrdom”, Donne insists, “is but a testimony”. Put another way, according to Donne, the word martyr could be re-translated as witness, since “A martyr is nothing but a witness”. Thus, Donne insisted upon placing martyrs under the category of testimony, and cautioned against taking such cultural attributes as bodily sufferings, personal qualities, virtuous or holy death as signifiers of genuine martyrdom. Although Donne doubted the theological value of many human testimonies, at the same time he assigned “the office of a witness” great value, since it carried a more specific role within history. Echoing St Augustine, the early fifth-century commentator of Roman martyrs, Donne proclaimed that “the office of a witness is an honourable office too”, because God’s representative on earth, the Holy Ghost testifies through these witnesses “against tyrants and persecutors”.<sup>50</sup> In attaching providential significance to testimonies, Donne was no rarity amongst his contemporaries. However, there were evident difficulties in considering the term martyr solely as a figure of speech, or as a literal translation of the original Greek term into English. The word without doubt took on wider connotations. Examining some alternative interpretations of the term may thus serve to demonstrate that its use was by no means consistent or homogenous, and that it was open to a more expansive understanding.

More generally, martyr could be simply used to refer to victims of persecutions. The term martyr took on a largely unified meaning, for example, in the range of ecclesiological writings and martyrologies in which it was conventional to describe individuals who died under persecution as martyrs. The third-century ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea, whose account of imperial brutality in late

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<sup>49</sup> He was the author of two major martyrological prose works *Biathanatos* (composed between 1607–1608) and *Pseudo-Martyr* (London, 1610).

<sup>50</sup> This statement echoes a passage in the *City of God*, according to which Divine Providence had permitted the persecution of Christians, “in order to establish and consecrate the full number of martyrs, that is, witnesses to the truth, who were instruments to demonstrate that all bodily ills must be endured in loyalty to the cause of religion and to spread the truth”. Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*. Transl. by David S. Wiesen (Cambridge Mass., 1968), Vol. 3, Book X, Chapter 32, p. 409.

antiquity was translated by Meredith Hanmer, and regularly circulated from the 1570s onwards, was extremely influential in familiarizing English readers with the Great Persecutions of the first centuries. The term martyr was similarly applied to more recent victims of persecution. In the sixteenth century, after the European Reformation had divided the continent along the confessional lines of Catholic and Reformed, the literary genre of martyrological chronicles flourished. In order to advocate their cause, both denominations produced impressive accounts of the trial, interrogation, torture, and execution of their members, in the form of ecclesiastical histories, hagiographies, and martyrological chronicles. Although their model of martyrdom was relatively similar, these works also reflected the characteristic perspectives and ideals of larger ecclesiastical bodies, and provided rival sets of dogma to their readers.<sup>51</sup> In this confessional frame of reference, it was common to eschew any strict distinction between martyr and witness, and to use the word martyr somewhat more loosely, to refer to the victims of recent conflicts. Many dictionaries registered additional layers of meaning. For example, in John Flores' dictionary *A vvorldde of wordes* (1598), the word is translated as one "suffring in wittness of another".<sup>52</sup> In his annotations to the Bible, translated and published by Parliament in 1643, Giovanni Diodati, the predecessor of Theodore Beza as professor of theology at Geneva, noted that the word "hath bin particularly applyed to those, who by punishments or violent death, did beare witnessse of the truth of the Gospel".<sup>53</sup> In a manual of theological terms published in the aftermath of the English Revolution, under the title *Critica Sacra* (1650), Edward Leigh, a member of the Rump Parliament, was well aware that "the Greek word means *any witnessse*". However, in his opinion, it did not make sense to talk about martyrs solely as witnesses, since "in all Tongues, saving Greek, a *martyr* is a loser of his life for the Gospel".<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Brad Gregory has elucidated most comprehensively the role of martyrologies in the international conflicts of the sixteenth century. See his *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge Mass., 1999). See also Katherine Vand Liere, Simon Ditchfield and Howard Louthan (eds.) *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> John Flores, *A vvorldde of wordes, or Most copious, and exact dictionarie in Italian and English* (London, 1598) p. 217

<sup>53</sup> Giovanni Diodati, *Pious annotations, upon the Holy Bible expounding the difficult places thereof learnedly, and plainly: vvith other things of great importance* (1643), Ch. XXII, p. 101.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Leigh, *Critica Sacra: or Philologicall and Theologicall Obervations upon All the Greek Words of the Nevv Testament* (London, 1650), p. 163.

The number of individuals who had suffered this fate continued to grow year by year. According to Richard Broughton, a Roman Catholic controversialist from Huntingdonshire, the shedding of Christian blood was a vice quintessential to Protestants. “Looke into the liues and deathes of ministers”, he wrote around the time of James I’s accession in 1603, “and for that 100 of martyrs you shal finde 1000 and more ministers dying infamous miserable, and beggerly deathes, for most wicked and vnnaturall offences.”<sup>55</sup> Later in the century, William King, the bishop of Dublin, went on to count the number of Protestants who had lost their lives to persecution since the earliest days of the Reformation, arriving at a total that clearly dwarfed all previous massacres in human history. If the total of one million was right, he asked, “how shall we admire the courage of the primitive Christians, since in our own days ten times the numbers of the primitive martyrs have suffered in half the time”. The distinctively Protestant conclusion he drew from this census was that “popery is ten times worse in this particular than heathenism”.<sup>56</sup>

If there was one leading opponent to the expansive use of the term martyr, it was Thomas Hobbes. Having pondered the meaning of the word as an exile in Paris in the 1640s, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* rejected the fundamental shift that had taken place in the meaning of the word within modern Christian culture, where it was increasingly used to refer indiscriminately to all religious victims of state power. What constituted a major problem for Hobbes was, above all, the tendency of recent professional polemicists to appeal to the martyrological tradition, and to claim that martyrdom existed wherever rulers made extreme demands upon their subjects. Confronting this terminological confusion, Hobbes set out to give what he called “the true definition of the word”.<sup>57</sup>

Hobbes thus sought to rescue the word from various esoteric and counterintuitive uses, by insisting upon a return to its original Greek meaning. “Martyr”, Hobbes states, “is a Wittnesse of the Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah”, for the reason that “a Wittnesse must have seen what he testified, or else his testimony is no good”. On these grounds, Hobbes was able to distinguish between eyewitness martyrs and

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Broughton, *The first part of the resolution of religion devided into two bookes, contayning a demonstration of the necessity of a diuine and supernaturall worshippe*, (London, 1603), pp. 143-144.

<sup>56</sup> William King to Henry Dodwell, 27 February 1687, in *Early Modern Letters Online*, Cultures of Knowledge, <<http://tinyurl.com/7woq3o>> [accessed April 10, 2016].

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1651], edited by Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 344.

“Witnesses of other mens testimony”, who should rather be called “second Martyrs, or Martyrs of Christs Witnesses”. Not unexpectedly, then, the alleged martyrs of more recent times were in fact little more than politically disloyal subjects, who masked their disloyalty beneath a holy guise. For Hobbes, it was clear that any “private man” who “oppose[d] the Laws and Authority of the Civill State, is very far from being a Martyr of Christ, or a Martyr of his Martyrs”.<sup>58</sup> However, Hobbes’s attempt to dispassionately rewrite the rules of martyrdom by reverting to its original meaning was controversial, in the sense that it refused to allow the subject much significance beyond the time of the earliest Christians. But while Hobbes sought to banish claims of martyrdom from his own times, we should not be surprised to find martyrdom persisting as an important category in the works of later Stuart writers. More often than not, these opinion-formers used the word in the open-ended sense that Hobbes had eschewed, endowed it with additional layers of meaning, and identified numerous martyrs within the Old Testament, apostolic, patristic, and medieval eras, as well as in their own time; from Abel slain by Cain, the stoning of St Stephen, the execution of Ignatius and Polycarp, to the more recent reformers Wycliffe, Huss, and Tyndale.

This leads directly to a second point. It is remarkable in itself that so many people used the term and referred to martyrs in such a variety of ways. Yet, for a study dedicated to contextualizing martyrological notions and comparing different ideas about martyrdom, it is equally important to devote attention to the questions of meaning and intention. Or, in other words, to read these remarks in conjunction with the broader historical circumstances in which they entered the public discourse. To study martyrdom merely as a fixed idea is to miss the point that new meanings were attributed to the idea in the course of various interpretative debates. The ways in which the stories of martyrs were told and retold in relation to contemporary developments and cultural innovations reveal much about the moral and philosophical values, religious convictions, intentions, and political preoccupations of some of the most influential politicians, writers, divines, and thinkers of the period. In order to understand the place of martyrs in the history of Jacobean and Caroline England, it is necessary to consider the performative and

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<sup>58</sup> Hobbes (1651), pp. 344–345.



constructive role of these remarks, and to ask how the writers in question attempted to adjust and modify martyrological traditions in response to the demands of their time, and also what kind of claims they made about the value of martyrs. It is also useful to bear in mind that when martyrs are placed within the complex web of religious and political debate, we are dealing with a far more eclectic realm of thinking than we might find in structurally organized martyrological chronicles, articulated doctrinal systems, or unitary church traditions.

Given that the memory of Marian and other martyrs occupied a central position in the mental world of early modern Englishmen, it is hardly surprising to discover that invoking the testimonies of martyrs was a popular strategy of argument. “The constant patience of Martyrs”, in the words of Queen’s College antiquarian Gerard Langbaine, is “the most winning Rhetoricke to perswade others”, since people were accustomed to think that “he who suffers has a good Cause”.<sup>59</sup> According to Cambridge Professor of Divinity and court preacher to King James, Thomas Playfere, suffering martyrdom “is the highest top of perfection that any mortall creature can reach to in this life”.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, contemporaries were profoundly conscious of the persuasive power of martyrs, and made extensive use of their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional force in order to win the dispute at hand. The success of this kind of persuasion is manifest in the controversial works I consider in this study: these quote martyrs as authorities, and invoke them in new and effective ways, in order to lend further authority to their own claims.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the symbol of the martyr was one of the most potent rhetorical weapons in the arsenal of controversialists, who sought to challenge established opinions and traditional forms of understanding. Yet the significance of this powerful stock of imagery should not blind us to its limitations. In fact, it would be quite misleading to suppose that arguments from the authority of martyrs could not be made for more apologetic ends too. For

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<sup>59</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *A review of the Covenant* (London, 1644), p. 60.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Playfere, *The vvhole sermons of that eloquent diuine, of famous memory* (London, 1623), p. 195.

<sup>61</sup> Especially in the context of Renaissance literature, the use of the figure of testimony to establish value depended fundamentally on its source being authoritative. On such argument from authority, see R. W. Serjeantson, ‘Testimony: the artless proof’, in Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber (eds.) *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 181-196. For the importance of contextualizing authority and action in literary history, see J. G. A. Pocock, ‘Historiography as a form of political thought’, in *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 37 (2010), p. 4.

example, references to such figures was a consistent thread in topical literature, which provided support to conventional practices, confirmed established opinions, and confuted polemical claims raised against the status quo. As we shall see, the merits of the martyrs were deployed in both accusatory and defensive modes. In summary, then, in the following study, I am concerned with the variety of points that Jacobean and later Stuart publicists expressed in a series of escalating controversies, the new elements they introduced into the martyrological imaginary, and the larger goals they thus sought to attain.

Finally, since post-Reformation martyrdom is a large and expansive theme, which might be approached in a number of different ways, it is important to clarify the focus of this work. Admittedly, my decision to draw attention to martyrs as part of a lively culture of controversy reveals only one side of a more complex picture. This deliberately limited emphasis on the polemical context in which writers articulated their ideas should not obscure the fact that this subject was also relevant to other levels of early modern life; without doubt, martyrological ideas were open to cultic, doctrinal, and scholarly interpretations, and attained more devotional meaning in private meditations than in the context of conflict and dispute. While it is beyond the scope of this study to cover all these aspects, I do not wish to reduce the significance of martyrs to an exclusively political reading. In this work, I want to suggest that martyrdom emerged as a popular and deeply relevant subject in ideological battles because it embodied many of the concerns that pervaded early modern political and religious communities. In the works in which writers commented upon affairs of governance, they used martyrs in relation to broader topics, such as the extent of the right to resistance, the relationship between ecclesiastical organization and political power, the question of legitimacy, and religious and political liberty. The figure likewise functioned as a reflective surface for concerns regarding matters of conscience, persecution, and toleration. By looking more closely into the discursive conventions and strategies of proof within these debates, it becomes possible to demonstrate what kind of authority martyrs provided in these vexed topics. In short, this is a study of martyrs, their admirers, and the uses to which their stories were put in print.

This work is arranged thematically, loosely following the sequence of events that made each subject topical. The selection of themes is inevitably somewhat

arbitrary, and cannot do full justice to all the pivotal moments and distinctive phases of the long-term context of debate. Nevertheless, the following chapters highlight the agency of authors and readers in the creation of a martyrological culture, and seek to capture some particularly intense moments of polemical activity, which were crucial in shaping the seventeenth-century political and religious landscape.

In the opening chapter, I attempt to shed new light on how Catholic and Protestant commentators debated the issue of martyrdom in the early decades of the seventeenth century. An underground mission was launched during the 1580s in order to revitalize Roman Catholicism in England. After the peace between Spain and England in 1604, the Catholic missionary project was forced to adapt to the new reality of dominant Protestantism, and to advance its goals by using print as a medium. The picture this chapter provides is twofold. On the one hand, it pays attention to English Catholic meditations on the theme in a hostile ideological terrain, their polemical efforts to overturn the English martyrological tradition, and the ways in which Catholic martyrs were used in their appeals to the public. On the other hand, it observes the Protestant response to the topics raised in such illegal books. Crucially, it seems to me, the notions put forward in clandestine literature by Jesuits, such as Robert Persons and others, constituted a major challenge to the Protestant regime. The first Stuart monarch, King James, claimed that there were no Catholics martyred on English soil. He was furious about the way these stories were used to limit the power of the crown, and went on to refer to the hagiographies in which they were glorified as “hellish instruments”. The writers who enjoyed his royal patronage placed a fresh emphasis on these assertions. Not only did they need to clarify their definitions of martyrdom against the pressure of an alternative tradition, but they also engaged more systematically with the topic in order to create a publicly acceptable account of the government’s conduct.

In chapters 3 and 4, I turn my attention to the intra-Protestant controversies of the early reign of Charles I, particularly during the 1620s and 1630s. If Catholic polemicists presented many dilemmas to the intellectual and ideological unity of the Protestant regime, the rise of Arminianism had a similar effect in the 1620s. In chapter 3, I explore conversations around martyrdom in a culture which gave rise to two identifiable parties: divine right theorists and politically attentive puritans. According to various critics of the Stuart dynasty in the 1620s, Arminianism had been allowed to creep into the

church, state, and universities by degrees, thus constituting a major threat to the legally established religion of the realm. In turn, many theologians who prospered under the leadership of King Charles asserted that bishops governed by divine right, and at the same time promoted the passive obedience of subjects. This struggle over the identity of British Protestantism was strongly reflected in theological treatises, parliamentary speeches, and pamphlets. I explore the latter in order to find out how the conflicting parties of the Arminian controversy defined themselves in relation to martyrs.

The drive towards doctrinal and organizational uniformity under the leadership of William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, provoked increasing opposition towards the end of the 1630s. In chapter 4, I move on to one of the most controversial periods of English history, and address the issues which continued to disrupt the equilibrium in the years of the King's Personal Rule. The chapter pays attention to the reforms that the ecclesiastical authorities executed, as well as to opposition to the Caroline church in pre-civil war England. Three names were particularly associated with resistance to the ecclesiastical polity: William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton. These phenomenally successful polemicists not only refused to subscribe to the Caroline innovations, but also claimed that the church had declined from its early purity. Eventually, things went beyond dispute, and these puritans were brought to trial in 1637 for writing seditious libels. By looking at the ways in which the issue of martyrdom was negotiated in a variety of polemical circumstances, the chapter argues that this recurrent theme played a much more dominant role in the clashes of the mid-Caroline period than hitherto understood.

In the ideological climate of revolutionary England, many established opinions about martyrdom were challenged. The centrality of this theme to parliamentary and royalist polemic and other related struggles during the 1640s provides the focus of chapters 5 and 6. This section focuses on the Civil War literature, and considers the uses to which martyr stories were put during these bitter years. Arguments raised in this context, I want to suggest, could hardly have been persuasive if they did not draw support from martyrs. For instance, the Scottish minister and political theorist Samuel Rutherford noted that the royalists "think they burden our cause much with hatred, when they bring the fathers and ancient martyrs against us", while Calvinist clergymen such as William

Gouge thought that the Marian martyrs were still relevant, since “Their sufferings and our freedome” were indistinguishable, and ought thus “never to be forgotten”.<sup>62</sup>

Chapter 5 revisits the root-and-branch reformation movement during the early 1640s. This disagreement concerning religious authority was expressed especially clearly in the question of episcopacy. Before the English uprising of the 1640s came to be understood as a civil war (*Bellum Civile*), it was often interpreted as an ecclesiological battle (*Episcopale Bellum*). Indeed, among the number of issues brought into public consideration during the early 1640s, the most revolutionary was the attempt to abolish the office of episcopacy, which had been part of the structure of society for more than a thousand years, and to replace bishops with lay commissioners. The question of Bishop-martyrs thus became central to the debates of the Parliamentary session, as well as in the printed works published at the height of the controversy, namely 1640 and 1641.

In chapter 6, we consider the theme of toleration. Surprisingly, the first major toleration controversy to leave a visible mark on history emerged in the course of the English Revolution. After the collapse of the Carolinian Episcopal system, Presbyterians grew in influence, and used their powers to establish an enormously influential institution called the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which sought to govern and to further reform the Church of England. Reformed unity, however, had its limits. When the new institution used its power to enforce uniformity, it provoked a group of independent writers to raise their voices against the ways in which religious reforms were implemented. However, such calls to expand the realm of toleration were received with mixed feelings. “Who would have thought”, a commentator noted in 1646, that “that monster of Toleration should ever have sprung out of the ashes of Prelacy?”<sup>63</sup> In contrast, John Milton and other independent critics insisted that the possession of true religion did not justify the oppression of an individual conscience. Free conscience was, after all, the only way to have access to any higher truths, as the fate of martyrs demonstrated. As we

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<sup>62</sup> William Gouge, *Mercies memorial set out in a sermon preached in Paul’s church* (London, 1645), p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> Anon., *Anti-toleration, or A modest defence of the letter of the London ministers to the reverend Assembly of Divines* (London, 1646), p. 5)

shall see in chapter 6, one of the most powerful means of arguing for toleration was that of appealing to histories of martyrdom.

We know surprisingly little about what happened to the idea of martyrdom in the longer course of the Reformation. It would be foolish to attempt a simple general answer to such a question. My hope is, however, that by returning to many familiar episodes during the reigns of Jacobite and Caroline England, and by looking closely at the ways in which martyrs were incorporated into these episodes, we will get a better sense of how martyrs continued to exert a hold upon English minds. As we shall see, the legacy of martyrs was very much alive in the common language of Protestantism. In different ways, then, all the individual chapters that follow help to illuminate the development of the idea in a longer temporal perspective, as well as its relevance and influence within a number of different cultural settings.

## CHAPTER 2

# The Jesuit mission and the martyrs of Jacobean England

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The broad contours of the history of counter-Reformation Catholicism in Britain and Ireland are well-known. This story has often been told either in the shadow of Protestant victories, or through the sufferings of the recusant communities.<sup>64</sup> Although the Roman Catholic religion still had a strong hold upon the lives of most Englishmen, insofar as its public influence was concerned, the early years of the seventeenth century witnessed a sharp decline in the power of the Holy See in Britain. The triumph of seventeenth-century Protestantism was sealed by the Stuart accession to the throne in 1603, secured by the peace treaty signed with Spain in 1604, and further justified by the failure of a group of provincial Catholic laymen to overthrow the King and Protestant nobility during the Gunpowder conspiracy of 1606. Over the following decades, Catholicism struggled to

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<sup>64</sup> The suffering of the English Catholic community is hardly a neglected subject of historical research. See, for example, Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England. Robert Persons's Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Aldershot, 2007), Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Ashgate, 2014). For early modern Catholic efforts to challenge the ideological marriage between Englishness and Protestantism, see Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2008).

survive. Rather than living leaders, the proponents of the Roman Catholic religion left their most profound and enduring mark upon the public domain through their martyrs.

Until quite recently, there has been a remarkable tendency to argue that the marginalization of traditional religion was inevitable. As many scholars are now recognizing, however, a narrowly triumphalist reading of the sources tends to produce a heavily distorted picture of the period. To understand the cultural and religious impact of the Reformation as rapid, smooth, and predictable would over-simplify the issues involved, and do little justice to the intellectual complexities of the reformations. In fact, much of the writing by reformers was prompted by “pastoral concern about the Reformation’s poor psychological progress and precarious hold at the parochial level”.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, it would be a serious mistake to suppose that the possibility of England returning to Rome was but wishful thinking. The rapidity with which the country had reverted to Catholicism under Queen Mary was still fresh in people’s minds, and, as Peter Lake has recently pointed out, under a system of personal monarchies, nothing was perennial: Catholicism remained a viable option, “a funeral or a couple of marriages” away from realization, at least until the early eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup> In this sense, those late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century counter-Reformation controversialists who represented the Catholic interest in print, witnessed recusant executions at Tyburn, and narrated their sufferings in prisons such as Wisbech Castle and Ely Palace, believed that the Stuart kingdoms were not yet irrevocably lost to Protestantism.

Recently, much has been written regarding the missionary expansion of Catholicism, and particularly the activities of Jesuits and other continentally trained seminarians throughout the British Isles. It is still an open question as to whether the counter-Reformation enterprise was driven by a simple desire to minister to the Catholic flock, or perhaps sought rather to promote more ambitious plans to win over heretics, or even to procure the full restoration of Catholicism in Britain. In the perspective advanced by Christopher Haigh and other revisionists, the mission is presented as a pastoral

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<sup>65</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists. Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 101.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford, 2016), p. 3.



enterprise, and discussed within the context of Catholic survivalism.<sup>67</sup> The pursuit was, above all, a project to keep alive the remnants of the Old Religion, and to reassure and comfort its faithful members. Yet, if the Catholic missionary effort in England is understood solely as an enterprise intended to protect an ecclesiological tradition within a hostile environment, we run the risk of creating an overly simplified picture of Catholic revivalism during the period.<sup>68</sup> In several respects, such a picture obscures the voluminous literature produced by the Jesuits, their agenda of persuasion, and, more generally, their numerous other forays into the English public sphere. Even if their participation in the latter was necessarily limited, these counter-Reformation controversialists willingly took their disagreements with the Protestant regime into print, and, in so doing, addressed themselves to an English readership, whom they sought to win over through their narratives and arguments.

The aim of this chapter is to shed new light on the ways in which martyrdom was negotiated within published texts during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, it will explore the potency of pamphlets in the creation of public opinion. Indeed, our understanding of the Catholic contribution to this sphere is strikingly limited. In this regard, there is scope for a more detailed investigation of the intellectual and religious influences that the Jesuit enterprise exerted upon broader literary culture, especially during the post-Armada years. Thus, my primary focus in this chapter will be alternative ways of discussing martyrdom in the popular press. In particular, I want to suggest that narratives of martyrdom were an indispensable part of the mission's literary resistance to the political and religious conventions of English society, and that the clandestine works of Jesuit authors dominated much of the discussion in this regard.

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<sup>67</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'Continuity of English Catholicism in the English Reformation', in Christopher Haigh (ed.) *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987). Michael L. Carrafiello, 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 37 (1994), pp. 761-774.

<sup>68</sup> Many recent historians have carried this discussion much further. Michael Questier, for example, challenges the revisionist approach, on the grounds that it obscured rather than clarified the question of how Catholicism was propagated in England after the 1580s. See, Michael Questier, "Like locusts over all the world": conversion, indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England', in Thomas M. McCoog (ed.) *The reckoned expense: Edmund Campion and the early English Jesuits: essays in celebration of the first centenary of Campion Hall, Oxford (1896-1996)*, (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 265-284.

<sup>69</sup> *The Catalogue of Catholic Books in English Printed Abroad or Secretly in England 1558 - 1640* by A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers lists some 932 vernacular publications printed by secret recusant presses in England and on the Continent during the years of Catholic underground activity.

At the center of this chapter is the Jesuit Robert Persons and his works, which made an unparalleled contribution to the advancement of the counter-Reformation in England. In order to gain a richer understanding of the ends to which these martyrological vocabularies were actually deployed in early Stuart pamphlets, equal attention will be paid to the points raised by apologists of the regime, and other literary commentators who wrote to uphold the intellectual hegemony of the Established church. These reactionary writers strongly disagreed with the perspective of the missionaries, and used similar strategies of persuasion to convince their readers that executed Roman Catholics were in fact no martyrs at all.

## 2.2 THE STATUS OF CATHOLIC SUBJECTS UNDER JAMES

Historians have identified a long list of Catholic subjects who were martyred on English soil during the period of the Long English Reformation (1535 – 1680). Geoffrey F. Nuttall, who compiled an index of these individuals in the 1970s, reached a total of 314. A substantial number of the names in Nuttall’s list are from the Tudor period, namely 239.<sup>70</sup> People who suffered capital punishment under the Tudors were mainly foreign-trained seminary priests and Jesuits, who had been sent on underground missions. In England, these supporters of the papal supremacy were found guilty under treason legislation, and ended their lives upon the scaffold. In contrast to the vast number of casualties in the course of Elizabeth’s so called “second reign”, it is highly significant that the number of Catholic martyrs decreased substantially during the Jacobean period. Between the years 1604 and 1618, Nuttall found a mere 25 Catholic victims of the treason laws.<sup>71</sup> After the stream of executions in the late years of the sixteenth century, the Stuart administration brought far fewer Catholics to the scaffold.

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<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall, ‘The English Martyrs 1535–1680: a Statistical review’, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 22 (1971) pp. 191–197.

<sup>71</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall (1971), pp. 191–197. The phenomenon of martyr-performances at the stake – mostly in the late sixteenth century – has been studied comprehensively by Peter Lake and Michael Questier in *The Antichrist’s lewd hat: Protestants, Papists and players in post-Reformation England* (New Haven, 2002).

Around the time that the first Stuart King of England, James VI and I, began his reign (1604), the expectations of recusants rose. James was, after all, the son of the Queen of Scots, Mary Stuart, who had been executed in 1587, and celebrated ever since as a martyr. Leaders of Catholic opinion attempted to attract the goodwill of the Scottish King, and, hoping that the new monarch would look more favorably upon their cause, sought to influence him in various ways. The King was reminded, for example, that he was “the sonne of a most glorious Christian martyr”, making it only natural to “graunt vnto your Catholik subiects, the most zelous & sincere frends of you both, their long desird comfort, and the iust feedome from their vniust distresses and oppressors”.<sup>72</sup> After James had personally promised toleration for all Catholic subjects, the latter felt deeply betrayed when they realized that, as the missionary priest John Morris remarked in his diary, “all these did vanish away”, and the King was driven to be “governed by those that had so long time inured their hands and hardened their hearts with so violent a persecution”. Morris’s diaries also reveal that James was not easily moved by emotional arguments revolving around his mother’s execution. It “grieved them much”, Morris wrote regarding the Catholic community, “when they saw no memory at all made of so memorable a mother either in word or work”, and the martyr Queen was “lying until this day obscurely in that place where her enemies cast her after cutting off her head”.<sup>73</sup>

To James Stuart, however, his reign was a transition from one era to another. He saw himself as a bringer of peace, and was convinced that his policy of *pax et concordia* had “so far exceeded that of Q. Elizabeth, in mercy and clemency”. But no matter how much the new monarch employed the rhetoric of moderation, and assured his Catholic subjects that their “Majestie never punished any papist for religion”, Catholic resistance to the English crown remained a prominent feature of Jacobean political culture.<sup>74</sup> In the first decade of James’s rule, it became clear that Jesuit missionaries were

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<sup>72</sup> Philippe Numan, *Miracles lately vvrought by the intercession of the glorious Virgin Marie, at Mont-aigu, nere vnto Siché in Braban* (Antwerp, 1606), The Epistle Dedicatorie.

<sup>73</sup> John Morris, *The Condition of Catholics Under James I: Father Gerard’s Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot* (London, 1871), pp. 24-26.

<sup>74</sup> James I, *Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus. Or An apologie for the Oath of allegiance* (London, 1607), pp. 16, 18.

one of those groups standing in the way of his vision of a single harmonious community, ruled by a unified magistracy.

Despite the claims of a host of early modern Catholics (and a number of modern commentators), who have questioned the legitimacy of the sixteenth-century regime, and tended to sanctify its victims, it is debatable whether the latter really did perish in defense of a just cause. G. R. Elton, for example, has stressed the juridical soundness of the actions of the Tudors, suggesting their opponents' fate was richly deserved. In Elton's view, the penalties the government administered were a defensive response, hardly describable as "ruthless persecution", and the implementation of statutory penalties against Catholics was carried out in accordance with traditional legal process, without "any intention to do more than punish real guilt as defined by law".<sup>75</sup> It is highly significant that Protestant rulers had altered the traditional charge of heresy to that of civic treason, thus making it easier to try and execute Catholics for ostensibly political crimes against the state. In particular, such a strategy enabled the authorities to brush aside accusations of religious persecution. But even if these executions were carried out within the limits of the law, it is also fair to point out that powerful individuals played a role in the official dismantling of Roman Catholicism. Leading state officials maintained that reasons of state dictated an alliance with Protestantism, and that the preservation of order demanded annihilation of the political and social influence of papacy. As Elizabeth's chief minister Sir William Cecil once noted, "the State could never be in Safety, where there was a Tolleration of two religions".<sup>76</sup> Although the governors might have acted within an established legal framework, it remained possible to publicly express doubts regarding the legitimacy of treason charges and political executions. One of the most effective ways to call the latter into question was to cast the victims of the scaffold as martyrs.

The driving intellectual force behind the missionary activities was the Society of Jesus, an apostolic order founded in 1540 by the Basque war veteran Ignatius

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<sup>75</sup> G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: the Enforcement of Reformation in The Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 339.

<sup>76</sup> For citation, see W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England: From the beginning of the English reformation to the death of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge Mass., 1932), Vol. 1, p. 88.

of Loyola, which, in the course of the sixteenth century, rapidly grew into an enterprise of global dimensions. In the very foreground of English affairs was the Jesuit scholar Robert Persons, who in point of literary success and fame, offers an outstanding example of an enthusiastic Catholic controversialist.<sup>77</sup> Of the sixty-four years of his life, he spent more than thirty years abroad, and returned to England only once at the onset of the mission, in order to organize a nationwide underground network of priests. Almost as soon as the Jesuits set foot on English soil in the summer of 1580, the English Catholics received their first missionary martyrs, as Edmund Campion, Ralph Sherwin, and Alexander Briant were executed in 1581. Once his fellow missionaries were captured and executed, Persons fled and made his way to France. Subsequently, Persons continued to act as the strategist of the Catholic reformation, managing and teaching at the English College in Rome, and waging war against the English monarchy with his pen. In sum, he was the leading Catholic participant in English public debate, and a creative scholastic writer with close ties to the founder of the Catholic League, the Duke of Guise, the eminent controversialist Robert Bellarmine, Philip II of Spain, and Pope Paul V, to whom Persons provided information about English affairs.

Persons' religious and political designs regarding the mission were exposed most clearly in a draft plan written around 1596. Due to its relatively heterodox nature, *The Jesuit's Memorial for the intended Reformation of England* circulated only in manuscript form.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, the text reveals the aims and preoccupations of Persons as he imagined what the nation would be like after its restoration to Catholic unity. His overreaching ideal was to put the reformatory orders of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) into full execution in his homeland. With this in mind, Persons listed practical plans for a “good reformation in England”, to be enforced by a clerical “Council of Reformation”. The list of developmental plans includes, for example, the restoration of canon law, the formation of new civil and ecclesiastical modes of governance, the introduction of an

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<sup>77</sup> Thomas McCoog: *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1589–1597: Building the Faith of Saint Peter upon the King of Spain's Monarchy* (Aldershot, 2012); Carrafiello, Michael L., 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 37 (1994), pp. 761-774.

<sup>78</sup> This near-forgotten work was rediscovered by the Protestant publicist Edward Gee, who printed it in 1690 as evidence of the Jesuits' intent to subvert the social and political order of England.

advanced education system, the restoration of monasteries, and the production of a unique ecclesiastical calendar. Interestingly, Persons had already made far-reaching plans for the rehabilitation of particular individuals and holy places. In order to mark the triumph of their cause, “when time shall serve to procure of the See Apostolick”, Persons noted, “due honour may be done to our Martyr, and Churches, Chapels, and other memories built in the place where they suffered”.<sup>79</sup>

There is no question that Persons, who supported Catholic re-conquest, and desired the elimination of Protestantism, intended to extend the missions’ influence over society. He did not offer precise instructions as to how this ought to be achieved. Nonetheless, his ambition to overturn Protestant rule seemed to rely less on public persuasion than on the aid of monarchy, namely a “Catholick King that God shall give us”.<sup>80</sup> With the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the three subsequent naval wars against Spain in 1596, 1597, and 1599, and the end of the Anglo-Spanish war (1585–1604), it became clear that Person’s imaginary vision of a Catholic Britain was not likely to be realized any time soon. Even if the famous Jesuit scholar was far from confident of the success of his plan a decade later, he kept such doubts to himself, and wrote to the new Pope Paul V, assuring him that his native land would be fertile soil for a mission. It was in England, Persons wrote optimistically, that “the preservation and revival of the Catholic religion in our time” would begin.<sup>81</sup>

This idealism was kept alive with the help of highly productive printing presses, and through an array of books and pamphlets in which Jesuits reflected on a number of controversial questions and battled against the Elizabethan and early Stuart clergy. Amongst the texts addressed to English audiences, literature regarding the miseries of persecutions occupied a central place. In the period from 1566 to 1660, over 50 works concerning the persecution of English Catholics were published in the vernacular.<sup>82</sup> The full textual corpus is much larger, if we take into account the

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Persons, *The Jesuit’s memorial for the intended reformation of England under their first popish prince* (London, 1690), pp. 2, 97.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Persons (1690), pp. 66, 101.

<sup>81</sup> Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England. Robert Persons’s Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 178, 180.

<sup>82</sup> Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 1.

controversial exchanges between Catholics and Protestants, and the other works which broached the topic indirectly.

These clandestine writers acknowledged the power of martyr narratives, and made effective use of them for a number of rhetorical and didactic purposes, such as communicating Catholic vocabulary to English audiences, introducing devotional practices, and winning over the credence of recusants.<sup>83</sup> In the decades following the Protestant settlement of 1559, there was an urgent need to produce apologetic texts, in order to counter the aggressive polemical assaults of the Protestants. At the turn of the century, the president of Douai College, Thomas Worthington, underlined the importance of refuting such accusations, since the regime persecuted Catholics, “not only depriving them by violence, of their goods, liberties, and liues: but also accusing and slandering them of hainous crimes whereof they are most free and innocent: to make them odious, or their martyrdom lesse glorious, amongst the ignorant at home and strangers abroad”.<sup>84</sup>

A common objective in the prescriptive works of missionaries was to urge English Catholics to resist the temptations of conformity. At the onset of the mission, a substantial portion of instructive texts aimed to challenge the tendency of the Catholic laity to conform to the state-religion, and to attend the services of the Established church frequently enough to avoid the penalties of recusancy. In order to encourage Catholics to eschew such passive obedience, the Elizabethan missionaries made the question “Wil you not go the Church?” into a recurrent motif in their martyrological texts.<sup>85</sup> In addition to strengthening the communal integrity of the recusants, another obvious motive for evoking the example of martyrs related to the attempt to persuade readers of the legitimacy of the Catholic cause. Stories regarding the perseverance and moral austerity of martyrs in the face of extreme persecution offered a powerful resource in this regard.

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<sup>83</sup> Occasionally, they intended their works for a larger audience, which included Catholics, potential converts, and heretics alike. For example, a clandestine work might be explicitly addressed to a broad readership of “Catholikes, protestant, and demi-Catholikes”, as pointed out by Ceri Sullivan, *Dismembered Rhetoric: English Recusant Writing, 1580-1603* (Madison, 1995), p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Worthington, *Relation of sixtene martyrs glorified in England in twelve moneths* (Douai, 1601), preface.

<sup>85</sup> Alexandra Walsham (1993), p. 32.

The practice of listing martyred individuals sprung from a conviction that persecutions served as proof of the truthfulness of the church, and that the perseverance of recusants was a credit to the Catholic cause in its entirety. According to the Roman Catholic historian Richard Broughton, who was one of the mainstays of the mission during the Stuart era, “the glorie, honor, and temporall felicity of the persecuted religious Catholiks, haue far exceeded the pompe and prosperity of their persecutors”. Considering the ongoing Protestant reformation a fleeting phase, he instructed his readers to pay attention to how little the Protestant historians had to cite against the Catholics, and to simultaneously imagine “what glorie will Catholike and Religious times affoorde vs”.<sup>86</sup> Similar honorific language was used by another famous Jesuit, Robert Southwell, who was known before his execution in 1595 mainly as an author of widely read devotional handbooks. The Jesuit poet cast earthly life as a pale shadow in the face of an eternity of heavenly bliss, and assigned considerable significance to the testimonies that arouse in the midst of suffering: “What greater preeminence is there in God’s church, than to be a martyr? What more dignity, than to die in this case [cause] of the Catholic faith?”.<sup>87</sup> In the same fashion, Robert Persons wrote that martyrdom and persecution were “more glorified then anie other humane meanes or actions in the woorld”.<sup>88</sup> Nothing did more to reinforce the conviction that providence supported the Catholic cause than persecutions, whose very existence offered ample proof of the legitimacy of its proceedings. In the view of Persons, the English nation suffered for the heresies it had committed since the Henrician break with Rome: “no other Nation in the World, on hath laid whom God the scourge of Heresie”, Persons asserted, “hath received so many helps and graces to resist the same, as England hath done, which is evident by the multitudes

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<sup>86</sup> Richard Broughton, *The first part of the resolution of religion devided into two bookes, contayning a demonstration of the necessity of a diuine and supernaturall worshippe*, (London, 1603), pp. 143-144.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Southwell, *An epistle of comfort* (London, 1587), p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> [Robert Persons] to [Thomas Wright] [Post August 1607]’, in Ginevra Crosignani & Thomas M. McCoog & Michael Questier (eds.) *Recusancy and Conformity in Early Modern England. Manuscript and Printed Sources in Translation* (Rome, 2010), p. 374. In a letter to Thomas Wright, Persons also offered a vision of a society in which no martyrs and persecutions existed, thanks to the elimination of organised heresy: “For if there were noe heresie, or schismes there would be noe persecution amongst Christians, if noe persecution noe tryall, noe venture or losse of goods or lyfe for gods service, noe Confessours noe Martyrs.” Robert Persons (1607), p. 374.



of valour of English Martyrs”.<sup>89</sup> If the existence of martyrs was seen as a sign of divine intervention, it was also conversely believed that providential retribution worked against the persecutors. For instance, Peter Canisius, a Dutch Jesuit and translator of a catechism that appeared around the time of Queen Elizabeth’s ascension to the throne, proclaimed that those princes who “put the holy Martirs to death: for confessing Christ and the holy Catholike faith” were equivalent to murderers, together with those who “kill the soules of the people with Heresie, or wicked doctrine, or counsel, wherby [they] are brought to damnation”.<sup>90</sup> As these examples suggest, missionary writers drew extensively on the language of martyrdom, in order to affirm the status of Roman Catholicism as a true church. In this sense, Persons, Southwel, and numerous other contemporaries were convinced that martyrdom was above all a source of honor and glory for the Catholic cause.

### 2.3 MARTYRED ROMANISTS CHALLENGE THE LEGITIMACY

#### OF THE GOVERNMENT

Martyrs added weight to the claims of Rome, and the circulation of their stories was a highly effective way of gaining support for the Jesuit mission, while also raising public awareness of its proceedings. As a single concrete example of the persuasive power of martyrs, we might take Edmund Campion, the pioneer of the English mission, who was publicly executed shortly after entering England.<sup>91</sup> According to Henry Walpole, a young law student present at the execution on 1 December 1581, Campion’s suffering at the hands of the authorities had a powerful impact on the population, causing reactions in England and overseas: 10,000 individuals were converted on the spot (himself included), verses fostering devotion to martyr saints were circulated in the streets and fixed on doors,

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Persons, *A manifestation of the great folly and bad spirit of certayne in England calling themselues secular priestes* (Antwerp, 1602), p. 58.

<sup>90</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Wholesome milk and strong meat: Peter Canisius’s catechism and the conversion of Protestant Britain’, *British Catholic History*, Vol. 32 (2015), p. 304.

<sup>91</sup> The execution of the missionary-martyr Edmund Campion and his fellows provoked the composition of three martyrological accounts: Thomas Alfield’s *A true reporte of the death & martyrdom of M Campion*, William Allen’s *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of Twelve Reverend Priests Father Edmund Campion and His Companions* and Robert Persons’ *An Epistle of Persecution*, all published in 1582.

and young men struck by the event travelled to the continental colleges in order to later return as missionaries.<sup>92</sup> Cardinal William Allen, an exiled Oxford academic and director of the missionaries, likewise highlighted the importance of martyrdom to the restoration of Catholicism. As Allen pointed out, the performance of Campion as a Tyburn-martyr was more effective for the Catholic cause than his activity as a controversialist.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, the execution surely captured people's attention, and gave new life to the Catholic cause, thus adding weight to Campion's last words: "if you esteem my religion treason, then I am guilty".<sup>94</sup>

The impact that the punishment of missionaries had on contemporaries has been a subject of perennial historical fascination. Did the gruesome penalties undermine the influence of the Old religion and draw the population away from its orbit, or did it rather strengthen its adherents in their beliefs and convictions? How did people perceive government policies? In order to understand the significance of the executions, it is somewhat unhelpful to apply the etiology famously provided by Michel Foucault in his *Surveiller et punir* (1975). In the Foucauldian model, public execution and torture are seen as rites of violence that rulers exercise in order to demonstrate the power of the state, and to reinforce their dominion over their subjects. It is true that power over life and death was crucial to the machinery of government in the early modern period. However, Foucault does not take into account the fact that such propagandist performances sometimes had the opposite effect. It is unclear, for instance, whether show-executions really served to reinforce the monarchy's power. Recently, Peter Lake and Michael

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<sup>92</sup> Michael E. William, 'Campion and the English Continental seminaries', in Thomas M. McCoog (ed.) *The reckoned expense: Edmund Campion and the early English Jesuits: essays in celebration of the first centenary of Campion Hall, Oxford (1896-1996)* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 290-291.

<sup>93</sup> Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 75. Eamon Duffy, 'William, Cardinal Allen, 1532-1594', *Recusant History*, 22 (1995), pp. 278-279.

<sup>94</sup> John Bossy, 'The Society of Jesus and the Wars of Religion', in Judith Loades (ed.) *Monastic studies: the continuity of tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp. 234-240. At times, the aura around the English martyrs was so pervasive that it raised doubts amongst the Jesuit leaders. Claudio Acquaviva, the Superior General of the order, acknowledged the galvanizing force of the English martyrs, but reminded his students that their true vocation was to serve as missionaries. In a letter to Cardinal William Allen, the *ex officio* leader of the English Catholics, Acquaviva emphasized that the task was to provide missionaries rather than martyrs, pointing out that the salvation of the missionary's soul was not the purpose of the enterprise. A similar message was sent to Persons, who was at the time in Rouen writing a hagiography of Edmund Campion (a book which he never finished), urging him to focus on Campion's missionary career in his biography.

Questier have suggested that the theatre of the gallows was far more complicated than traditional accounts indicate, and that it was often difficult for onlookers to deny the reality of martyrdom, provided the protagonists played their part well. When an executed felon “walked like a martyr and talked like a martyr, the natural conclusion to draw was that what had taken place was, indeed, a martyrdom”.<sup>95</sup> These public spectacles potentially had the capacity to affect initially hostile observers, and, as John Donne once noted, at many executions “half the company will call a man an Heretique, and half, a Martyr”.<sup>96</sup>

When Catholic polemical historians began to produce largescale martyrological accounts, they were above all interested in conveying the English experience to European readers. The martyrlogies drafted during the fiercest years of the Elizabethan persecutions, such as Richard Verstegan’s *Theatrum Crudelitatum haereticorum nosti temporis*, Thomas Bouchier’s *Historia Ecclesiastica de Martyrio*, Robert Persons’ *Relacion de Algunos Martyrios*, Nicolas Sander’s *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*, and Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s *Historia ecclesiastica del cisma de Inglaterra*, offered dark depictions of the persecution of the Catholic population at the hands of the government. Written to call attention to the persecutions, they rendered horrific scenes in written and pictorial forms, in order to warn and raise awareness of the drastic consequences of heretical rule, and the dangers of the Protestant reformation. According to Brad Gregory’s calculation, between 1580 and 1619, the continental Catholic press published 163 works regarding the persecution of Catholics in England.<sup>97</sup> This kind of martyrological genre, which placed the impiety of heretics at its center, was effective in winning support for the Catholic cause internationally, and in determining both scholarly and popular perceptions of English politics for a long time. To readers of these works and viewers of their gruesome images, it became increasingly easy to believe

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<sup>95</sup> Peter Lake & Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, 2002), p. 281; ‘Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England’, in *Past & Present* No. 153 (1996), pp. 64-107; ‘Puritans, Papists, and the “Public Sphere” in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context’, in *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 72 (2000), pp. 587-627.

<sup>96</sup> John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, Vol. 2 (London, 1955), p. 59.

<sup>97</sup> In contrast, between the years 1563 and 1630, Gregory comes up with some 20 vernacular martyrologies for the lay Catholics. Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake. Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge Mass., 1999), p. 4.

that the country was passing through a living nightmare. It is thus unsurprising that counter-Reformation missionaries were the objects of cults in Spain, Italy, and other European countries. According to Richard Carpenter, who received his education at the overseas seminaries (although he soon recanted after returning to his homeland), these laudatory accounts were composed to “flatter the senses of people”, and were indeed taken up with great enthusiasm. In Spain, Carpenter told his audience, English missionaries enjoyed enormous prestige, and had such influence that locals virtually equated them with martyrs. When people saw future missionaries in the streets, they “run to them, and kisse their garments; thinking they will all very suddenly be Martyrs”.<sup>98</sup> In England too, executed Catholics were subjects of sacred cults, which continued to be a source of discomfort to the government.<sup>99</sup>

A host of contemporaries were thus painfully aware of the counter-productive nature of the recent executions. The widely read French political philosopher and champion of absolutism Jean Bodin, for example, in the second edition of his *Les six livres de la république*, recalled how he had personally warned Queen Elizabeth and the Parliament of England about their response to the recusant problem, emphasizing the need to avoid harsh punishments, since: “the more they are forced, the more forward and stubborn they are, and the greater punishment that shall be inflicted upon them, the lesse good is to be done”.<sup>100</sup> The issue came to the fore in Francisco Suárez’s *Defensio Fidei Catholicae* (1613), in which the Iberian Jesuit underlined some of the problems stemming from King James’ absolute account of his authority over church and state. In a realm where the temporal ruler had usurped spiritual power and subordinated the institutional church to his royal authority, Suárez argued, the question of martyrs was somewhat paradoxical. It was remarkably unclear to the Jesuit theorist precisely whom James Stuart, as head of these two institutions, could plausibly call martyrs. As Suárez put it: “Those

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<sup>98</sup> Richard Carpenter, *The downfall of Anti-Christ* (London, 1644), p.234.

<sup>99</sup> During the first twenty years of the mission vernacular martyrologies were relatively absent in England. There may have been different reasons for this, but it seems the leading hagiographers of the Society were at the time more concerned with providing accounts to international audiences. See Thomas M. McCoog, ‘Construing martyrdom in the English Catholic Community’, in Ethan H. Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 103-106.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas H. Clancy (1964), p. 171.

in his sect or for it were killed”. More importantly, James could hardly afford to ignore the criticism that Suárez levelled against the doctrine of the divine right of Kings. In this regard, Suárez’s incitement to resist tyrants drew directly on the English persecutions, linking the making of martyrs with tyrants and despots. While justifying the papal right to excommunicate secular rulers, he questioned the duty of obedience to persecuting rulers, and acknowledged the right to depose those rulers who had degenerated into tyrants. Suárez illustrated his remarkably radical concept of popular sovereignty with a wealth of martyrological material. In his *Defensio Fidei Catholicae*, he alluded to the historical examples of martyrs more than 300 times.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, it was not only Roman Catholics who acknowledged that executions of people willing to die for their beliefs served to further the counter-Reformation, and to keep it alive in the public consciousness.

The theories of resistance that circulated on the international stage represented a formidable challenge to Jacobean rule and fatally damaged the reputation of the regime abroad. At the time, much of Europe took note of what was happening in the British Isles, and it was widely recognized just how unwise the execution of high profile dissidents was. The turbulent first decade of Jacobean rule spurred the antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton to underline the counter-productive effect of executions. In a tract addressed to King James in 1613, he warned that gruesome punishments ought to be avoided for reasons of state: ferocious repression drove men to radical beliefs, and made the recusant resistance stronger. In particular, martyrological works drew their force from the actuality of these events. If the “Persecution is fresh in memory”, warned Cotton, then the community was sure to be “most zealous” in exploiting it.<sup>102</sup> The Roman hagiographers drew legitimacy from their harsh punishments, and relied on their sensational value in order to move the minds of the people. All sorts of inflammatory rhetoric against England was propagated around the world, even displayed on “the very walls of their Seminary College at Rome”, where portrayals of the disemboweled Edmund Campion and other martyred English Jesuits were made into a set of mural

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<sup>101</sup> Francisco Suárez, *Defense of the Catholic and Apostolic faith against the errors of Anglicanism*, trans. Peter L. P. Simpson [Naples, 1613], p. 134.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Cotton, *Cottoni posthuma divers choice pieces of that renovvned antiquary Sir Robert Cotton* (London, 1651), p. 130-131.

scenes, “crying out of Cruelty and Persecution”.<sup>103</sup> If the experience of persecution served only to reinforce their cause, then a prudent response would be to moderate the punishments. In the case that “the penalty of death be changed into a simple indurance of prison”, Cotton suggested, then the Catholics would have nothing with which to legitimate their cause: “what moat in our eyes can they finde to pull out? or with what Rhetorick can they defend their obstinate malapartners?”<sup>104</sup>



**Figure 3.** The execution of Edmund Campion by Niccoló Circignani in *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (1584). Folger Shakespeare Library, Folger Digital Image Collection.

Even some Protestant dissidents recognized the galvanizing effect that Stuart persecution had upon the Catholic cause. The nonconformist vicar John Rogers,

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<sup>103</sup> Mural paintings by Niccoló Circignani illustrated the most graphic scenes of the English martyrs. Out of the 36 murals, 9 were recently executed Englishmen, including the disemboweling of Edmund Campion. Paintings by G. B. Cavalleri also circulated in *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea*. Kirstin Noreen, ‘Ecclesiae militantis triumphus: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 29 (1998), pp. 98, 689-715.

<sup>104</sup> Cotton (1651), pp. 130-131.

for example, was entirely aware of the dangers posed by the Catholic mission, and denounced the executed Roman Catholics as common criminals, who were no more “Martyrs” than “those of our own, that be executed for their theft and murder”. Baptist layman Leonard Busher, in contrast, expressed far more compassion regarding the harshly treated papists, particularly in a tolerationist tract published in Amsterdam in 1614. Here, he addressed James I and Parliament, drawing their attention to the fact that England had become a graveyard of Roman Catholic martyrs. As long as the power of the state was wielded against the recusant, the outcry against the English Protestants was unlikely to go away. For one thing, “the persecution of Christians by Christians doe not onely justify Papists, and teach the Jewes and Pagans to persecute Christians; but also do teach the Papists and others (...) to persecute those that persecuted them”. Such exercise of political power provoked “deadly hatred against the King and State and urgeth all them to treason and rebellion”. However, it is important to note that Busher’s plea for a more conciliatory policy towards the Catholics was related to his criticisms of the uniconfessional Episcopalian state. Disturbed by the oppressions practised by the prelacy of Canterbury, Busher was dangerously critical of the ecclesiastical governors of the church, namely “those Bishops, and Ministers which perswade the King and Parliament, to burn, banish, hang, and imprison, for difference of Religion”. In his view, both reformed and Catholic martyrs had the effect of diminishing the authority of the Church of England. Drawing on the examples provided by Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, Busher was able to point out that even the celebrated Henrician and Marian martyrs had clearly been disobedient, and had refused to conform to the prelatical ecclesiastical regime even at penalty of death. To Busher, who wanted to exclude prelates from ecclesiastical government altogether, it was rather unclear whether the Stuart establishment thought the celebrated Foxeian martyrs “should have obeyed the King and Queen, rather then have suffered death”.<sup>105</sup>

As much as the Jesuit mission had inspired the English Catholics, succeeded in conquering the minds of foreign audiences, and generated pressure upon the English government, the recusants themselves were not entirely satisfied with the Catholic reform

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<sup>105</sup> Leonard Busher, *Religions peace: or, A plea for liberty of conscience* (London, 1646), pp. 14-15.

movement. The presence of the Jesuits also stimulated controversy among the self-conscious proponents of the Old religion, implying that the community was more fragmented and demoralized by the persecutions than those in charge implied. The limitations of the missionary project became increasingly visible after a traumatic rupture between the Jesuits and more consensual Catholics in the so-called Appellant controversy of 1598 – 1602, and its issues continued to divide the Catholic community thereafter. In this regard, it is also worth bearing in mind that the intellectual *avant-garde* of the English mission was not the priests who lived in gentry households and took part in risky grassroots pastoral enterprises, but rather their colleagues who worked mostly abroad, teaching students in the intellectually rigorous Colleges of Rome, Douai, St Omer, Valladolid, and Seville, and commenting upon English affairs through their publications. Thus, the articulation of the Catholic experience was performed to a large extent by polemical rather than pastoral theologians. Thus, the Jesuit version of events, in which the English Catholic community drew strength from the experience of persecution, was only one side of the story; according to other voices heard from the 1590s onwards, the recusants did not share the goals of the mission, and claimed that the general condition of Catholics had worsened since the first missionaries set foot on English soil.

Such anti-Jesuit sentiment gathered force especially among a host of seculars (priests who did not belong to a religious order), who resented the missionary enterprise, and raised criticisms of the Society's mandate in England. At the center of their complaints was Robert Persons, who was accused of pursuing a personal agenda at the expense of the recusant community, and the Jesuits, who forged a new identity for the English Catholic community, and whose activities provoked the government to intensify its persecution. As the clash escalated, the opponent party leaders had much to reveal about the motives of the Jesuits and the Society, affirming the stereotype of them as a fifth column of resistance who were preparing for the re-catholicisation of England by force. Some writers argued that the Jesuits used religious motives only for Machiavellian reasons, accusing them of promoting the growth of the Spanish Empire, and owing allegiance to the latter rather than the English monarchy. The Continental Colleges, in which the new generation of Catholic clergy was trained, were portrayed in even more hostile terms, as the "very schoole of Machiauellisme". The essence of the disagreement was summed up in a joint libel written against Robert Persons, in which its authors,



William Clark, Francis Barneby, and William Clarionet, wrote how they “hartily pray God to deliuer him from all incursions of the deuill, and all Atheisme, and Machiauelisme, that he may sincerely see, how he hath offended God by his plots, and practises in abusing his poore afflicted church in our Country, and setting dissension, and diuision in his Clergy, for the compassing of his policies, and designes, which so long as he, and his shal practise, we cannot but still intreate Cath[olic]: to forbear the sending of their children vnto the schooles, where such maisters, as Fa[ther] Parsons, and his associates, shall be teachers, and gouernours”.<sup>106</sup> These Appellants openly dissociated themselves from the Jesuits, considered them as illegitimate advocates of the Catholic cause, and, like the Protestant supporters of James’s royal supremacy, explicitly called for their expulsion from the country.

It is noteworthy that the theme of martyrdom did not thus serve exclusively as a unitive force amongst the English recusants. One of the complaints levelled against the Jesuits, as the Appellant tracts reveal, concerned the disregard that the Jesuits showed towards the secular clergy, who were arrested, tortured, and executed for the same reasons, but whose sufferings were omitted from the record. This omission drove the secular priest William Watson, for example, to complain about the Society’s selectivity in identifying Catholic martyrs, and the way in which it gave the impression that only Jesuit missionaries “were persecuted, and not the Seminary Priests”. Despite the fact that the clergy of the old church provided pastoral encouragement to the population and played a major role at the grassroots level, these “glorious martyrs” were defamed by the Jesuits.<sup>107</sup> A related and equally strong statement was made by the secular priest Thomas Bluet, who expressed his disappointment over the continuous neglect of “the designed Martyrs of our country”. The Society was able to develop cults around its own martyred members, but the past decades had shown that many other Roman Catholics were even

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<sup>106</sup> William Clark, Francis Barneby & William Clarionet, *A replie vnto a certaine libell, latelie set foorth by Fa: Parsons* (London, 1603), pp.43-44.

<sup>107</sup> William Watson, *A decacordon of ten quodlibeticall questions concerning religion and state* (London, 1602), pp. 5-6.

“more ready then the Iesuits... to suffer their dearest blood to be shed rather then one soule amongst you should perish by their meanes”.<sup>108</sup>

The stand of these so-called Appellant-loyalists was abhorred by Persons, who was furious about those writers who harbored open hostility towards the Jesuits. In particular, their disrespectful comments risked damaging the pious reputation of the mission. Not only had they taken their disagreements into print, but they had opened their mouths in a “most violent spirit to impugne the true martyrs of our country”. The course they had taken in order to achieve a degree of royal toleration, by “flattering the state and betraying their companions”, was a scheme of wishful thinking, unlikely to succeed, and more likely to “make other men martyrs by bringing them into trouble”. According to Persons, no greater disservice could be done to the English mission than the lobbying campaign of the anti-Jesuit party. If anything, their criticisms frustrated the mission, and served to justify “the cause of the persecutors & do lay the fault vpon the persecuted”.<sup>109</sup> A number of Protestants followed these intra-Catholic controversies with keen interest. Such leaks were important for the reception of the Jesuit mission and its alleged martyrs, and there is reason to believe that such tracts circulated more widely than Catholic texts usually did, since the spokesmen of the Appellants were allowed to publish in London, under the patronage of Richard Bancroft, a bishop in the Church of England.

In their publications addressed to English audiences, the Jesuits were always extremely careful to avoid any avowal of their political intent, or to commit such views to paper which might affirm the treason charges levelled by the government. To the contrary, they often accused leading Protestant reformers of being fermenters of political unrest by teachings people how to judge their rulers. At the onset of the mission, Robert Persons accused John Wycliffe of believing that “subiectes may rise against [the prince] and punishe him”, Martin Luther that “Christians are free & exempted from al Princes lawes”, and Jean Calvin that “Princes lawes binde not subiectes to obedience in conscience”. Furthermore, Persons also pointed out how John Knox had denied the

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Bluet, *Important considerations, vvhich ought to moue all true and sound Catholikes* (London, 1601), epistle, pp. 42-43.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Persons, *A manifestation of the great folly and bad spirit of certayne in England calling themselues secular priestes* (Antwerpen, 1602), pp. 37, 77.

legitimacy of Queen Mary in an unprecedented fashion. In contrast to the Protestant reformers who justified subjects' resistance to monarchy, the Catholics consistently taught their flock "true obedience to their Princes, for Conscience sake, euen as vnto God him selfe".<sup>110</sup> The Appellant controversies, however, cast a shadow over the Catholic cause and all its martyrs. In particular, they enabled the writers of anti-Jesuit pamphlets to question the Jesuits' reputation on the basis of recusants' own testimonies, and also to accuse the Jesuits of the use of dubious methods and ideological manipulation. Henry Mason, for example, exhorted his readers to notice that even "the Secular Priests doe charge Father Persons with a continuall practice of lying".<sup>111</sup> In 1611, Francis Burton noted in a similar fashion that the "milde sort" of Catholics admitted the Jesuits were hardly passive victims, and affirmed that the latter had gone to their deaths "guilty of such crimes, haue deseruedly been punished".<sup>112</sup> For his part, the academic puritan Robert Bolton warned onlookers not to be deceived by the performances of the "*Popish* Traytors" at the scaffold. Even if they "ordinarily at their Ends expresse a great deale of confidence", onlookers ought to be aware that their actions were "plotted before-hand, and formally acted", and their speeches "composed upon purpose to seduce the simple".<sup>113</sup> Frustrated at Catholic nobles and Jesuit missionaries, Sir Francis Hastings, the second earl of Huntington, suggested sarcastically that they might as well consider the casualties of the Catholic risings against the Tudors "to be godly, iust and honorable", and, by the same token, canonize "the Northren Rebels for Martyrs".<sup>114</sup>

## 2.4 MARTYRDOM AFTER THE POWDER PLOT

The discovery of the plot by thirteen Roman Catholic gentlemen to annihilate the King and nobility by blowing up the House of Lords in 1605 was a crucial event in the reception of the Jesuit mission. The leading conspirators were hunted down, tried, and executed for

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Persons, *A brief discours contayning certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to goe to church* (Douai, 1580), The epistle dedicatory.

<sup>111</sup> Henry Mason, *The nevv art of lying* (London, 1624), pp. 99-100.

<sup>112</sup> Burton (1611), pp. 4-5.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a right comforting afflicted consciences* (London, 1631), p. 75.

<sup>114</sup> Francis Hastings, *An apologie or defence of the watch-vvord, against the virulent and seditious ward-vvord published by an English-Spaniard* (London, 1600), p. 106.

treason in 1606, and the defeat of the plot was made the subject of annual commemorative ceremonies. The Jesuits' involvement in this affair was controversial. Henry Garnet, a long-term missionary who had been the Jesuit Superior in England since 1586, was linked to the conspiracy, and executed soon after its ringleaders. If Protestant critics saw the failed assassination attempt as a confirmation of all they had predicted, there was little doubt of Father Garnet's innocence on the Catholic side. According to a diarist of Douai College, the impeccable Garnet was "falsely arraigned by the heretics for treason and conspiracy", and, when he was put to death, his martyrdom was validated by "a true miracle, as being wrought outside the order of all created nature, and that by it the martyr was justified by divine judgement".<sup>115</sup> The leading recusant pamphleteers worked hard to distance the Society from the conspiracy, and to resurrect the reputation of Father Garnet, who had been unjustly vilified by the government and re-named as "Powder-martyr" by the hired pens of King James. In contrast to the official trial records and the other incriminating evidence disseminated in public, Persons maintained that Garnet gave "no consent or cooperation to the treason", and although Garnet admittedly knew about the plan, he was bound by the secret of the confessional not to reveal what he had been told. In principle, upholding independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and "dying for this truth in England novv", was "no vvorse, then if he had dyed a thousand yeares gone for the same", since "Princes temporall lavves, must not alter the case or substance of truth".<sup>116</sup>

Such attempts to justify Garnet's cause were refuted by government spokesmen in a series of printed tracts. The sincerity of his cause was called into question by the controversialist Joseph Hall, who wrote a libel against Garnet's self-imposed journey to the scaffold, and mocked the Jesuit Superior who "lived to proclaim himself a Martyr". According to Hall, onlookers had little reason to view Garnet in a positive light. If martyrdom was solely about death, and not about the cause, then "there should be no difference in guilt and innocence, error and truth". More than a decade after the executions, Hall continued to nullify the supposedly sacred aspect of Garnet's death, and to ridicule those who credited him a martyr, particularly those Jesuits who made claim

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<sup>115</sup> Burton, E.H. & Pollen, J.H. (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries: Third, Fourth, and Fifth, 1598–1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579–80* (London, 1911), p. 345.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Persons, *An ansvere to the fifth part of Reportes lately set forth by Syr Edvvard Cooke* (St Omer, 1606), The epistle dedicatory.

miracles. Such writers, Hall asserted, did little more than to “tresh out a miracle for translating Father Garnet from a Traytor to a Martyr”.<sup>117</sup> Francis Burton, another Protestant critic writing against the Gunpowder Plot, attacked John Wilson, the director of the St Omer press in the Spanish Netherlands, for listing Garnet and some other recently executed Catholics as martyrs in the *English Martyrologe*. Like Hall, Burton cast a skeptical eye on the miracles that supposedly supported their claim to martyrdom, presenting them as “grosse and palpable lying wonders”. By reading this martyrology, however, “many simple Papists being seduced by their false teachers giue out to haue suffered onely for Religion and their conscience”. Furthermore, the accusation levelled against the monarchy of religious persecution was dubious in light of the Marian Catholic regime of 1553–1558, which, only a few decades earlier, had martyred hundreds of Protestants, and made hundreds of thousands of English subjects suffer for their religion. Indeed, during this period, Burton could not recall that any “seducing Priest or Iesuite had accused their Soueraigne of cruelty”.<sup>118</sup> The eminent convert Theophilus Higgon urged his confused contemporaries to be guided by “the industrious pen of Master Fox” whose narratives about the several martyrs demonstrated most clearly the cruelty of Catholic regimes.<sup>119</sup> The calculation of the puritan divine Thomas Taylor was likewise supported by the Foxeian martyrology. In *A mappe of Rome*, he recounted the number of executed victims, and recommended attention to the total number of casualties, so as to find out “which of our religions be more vnmercifull”. Whereas the Catholic chroniclers found 193 victims of the English scaffold in the last fifty years, John Foxe had recorded 300 in only five years.<sup>120</sup>

Pressure on the Jacobean recusant community increased rapidly after the failed coup. To prevent other subjects from following their example, the government enforced anti-Catholic legislation, and formulated an oath designed to foster loyalty to the crown, as well as to force dissidents out of the country. The oath required that subjects

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<sup>117</sup> Joseph Hall, *The honor of the married clergie* (London, 1620), pp. 192-193.

<sup>118</sup> Francis Burton, *The fierie tryall of Gods saints as a counter-poyze to I.W. priest his English Martyrologie* (London, 1611), pp. 2, 16-18.

<sup>119</sup> Theophilus Higgon, *Mystical babylon, or Papall Rome* (London, 1624), p. 110.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas Taylor, *A mappe of Rome liuely exhibiting her mercilesse meeknesse, and cruell mercies to the Church of God* (London, 1620), p. 22.

swear public allegiance to the King, also denying the papal right to excommunicate secular rulers, and thus pushed recusants to conform to the state-religion. In the view of Pope Paul V, the Oath of allegiance was not only a usurpation of the spiritual authority of the pontif, but also an instrument of religious persecution, and he therefore urged Catholics to refuse it. Many Catholic authors pointed out that the compulsion to take the oath was an important reminder of the dangers of overly powerful government, claiming that the very idea of a temporal ruler exercising authority over the church was comparable to the brutish behavior of the most wicked ancient Emperors. Robert Persons, acting once again as an intermediary between Rome and England, denounced the oath for its religious implications, and made the refusal to swear allegiance into a point of conscience. Evoking the example of the ancient martyrs against the growing autocracy of the English crown, Persons recalled that the early Christians “were forced, vnder paine of damnation, to stand out to death against all humaine power, vexations, torments, and highest violence, rather then to doe, say, or sweare anything against their Conscience.” It is remarkable that Persons was also able to cite John Foxe in support of the English recusants, noting that Foxe had placed limits on the ability of princely power to act against conscience through compulsion. As Persons noted, Foxe had believed that the “forcing of Consciences is the highest Tyranny that can be exercised vpon man”.<sup>121</sup>

After imposing the oath of allegiance in January 1606, James also intervened in the controversy surrounding the oath, claiming, with some justification, that the Jesuit mission posed a clear and present danger to the stability of the regime. Moreover, he also made some nervous remarks regarding the ramifications of the doctrine of *potestas indirecta*, that is, the papal right to depose heretical monarchs. In the kingdom of Great Britain, James argued, the obligation to uphold the supremacy of the pope had several damaging consequences. For example, such convictions led to “Inuasions against her whole Kingdome, The forraine Practices, The internall publike Rebellions, The priuate Plots and Machinations, poysonings, murthers”, all of which were encouraged by the pope using “temporall Bribes” and promises of “eternall felicitie”. James did not give much credence to the Jesuits’ labors, lamenting how much time was spent in tracking

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Persons, *The iudgment of a Catholicke English-man* (St Omer, 1608), pp. 21, 38.

down their conspiracies. More importantly, James was able to provide an essentially evangelical rationale for his actions, claiming that comparisons with the persecutors of the past was mistaken, since, unlike the Roman emperors, he shunned superstitious practices. “Iulian persecuted the Christians because they would not commit idolatrie”, whereas the Roman controversialists called his Majesty a persecutor because he “will not admit idolatrie”. James’s distaste for Jesuits was largely driven by practical and pragmatic considerations, and the answer he offered to their persecution-argument was clear and simple: if his adversaries wished to see a prince free from bloodletting, King James in turn wished to deny the Jesuits’ claims to “the Honor of Martyrdome”.<sup>122</sup>

In order to draw his readers’ attention to the Jesuits’ cynical use of martyrdom, James published the letter Robert Bellarmine had sent to George Blackwell, the Archpriest of English Catholics. In what came as a surprise to everyone, Blackwell, who was captured in the aftermath of the Powder Conspiracy, was willing to take the oath. Shocked by this turn of events, Rome’s foremost theologian, Robert Bellarmine, had tried to persuade Blackwell to recant and die with dignity. He suggested that Blackwell, who had drawn so “neere unto the glory of Martyrdome”, ought to follow in the footsteps of Thomas More, and join the company of all those other Catholic martyrs who had preferred Petrine succession over Royal succession. James did not miss the opportunity to publish the letter as evidence of the Jesuits’ craving for martyrs, and their active engagement in their making. Since Blackwell refused to follow the path counselled by Bellarmine, it is no wonder that James felt a pressing need to circulate the news. For the governmental campaign to persuade recusants to take the oath, Blackwell’s consent was a propaganda coup, implying that the Archpriest accepted the sovereignty of King James, and simultaneously compromising the authority of Rome. To some degree, this event served to nullify religious resistance to the oath. Some writers, such as William Barlow, argued that Bellarmine’s attempts discredited true martyrs, and made “Death for Treason to be the most rejoyceful kind of Martyrdom”.<sup>123</sup> Thomas Morton, a royal chaplain and future bishop of Durham, similarly opposed the argument that “Priests may resist by

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<sup>122</sup> King James I, *An apologie for the Oath of allegiance* (London, 1609), pp. 17-18, 80.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Bellarmine to George Blackwell’, in King James I, *Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus. Or An apologie for the Oath of allegiance* (London, 1637) p. 37.

force Kings oppressing Religion”, and that “dying in such a quarrell they are not to be accompted Traitors, but Martyrs”. In stark contrast to contemporary papists, Morton maintained that “all ancient holy Popes, Martyrs, [and] Fathers” had submitted to the temporal authorities, even “when they had force to resist the violence of Tyrants, Hereticques, and Apostates”.<sup>124</sup> In this regard, St Peter’s successor failed to live up to the standards of their early ancestors.

The government’s spokespersons employed the printing press in order to counter the threat posed by the Jesuits, painting them as political agitators, offering lurid accounts of their conspiracies, and attempting to discredit the supposedly religious and pious aspects of their deaths. One argument that dominated these responses was that of disobedience to the monarchy. To press the point that their mission was carried out with treasonable intent, James had an anti-Jesuit tract by César de Plaix translated into English, in which the Society was accused of having encouraged the Catholic François Ravailac to assassinate Henri IV of France in 1610. As de Plaix insisted, it was no coincidence that popular tumults against rulers tended to occur at places where the Jesuits were present. Indeed, there was much evidence to support the claim that a number of Jesuits sheltered radical political convictions. For instance, de Plaix traced arguments supporting political assassinations in the works of prominent Jesuits such as Ribadenera, Scribanus, Bellarmine, Gretzer, Tolet, Mariana, and Balthasar Lippius, all of whom had clearly spelled out their subversive intentions. In short, rulers ought to heed the fact that “the people is instructed by these Doctors, to seeke the glory of Martyrdome in the villanie of murther”.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Thomas Morton, *A full satisfaction concerning a double Romish iniquitie* (London, 1606), pp. 40, 66.

<sup>125</sup> César de Plaix, *Anti-Coton* (London, 1611), p. 30.





**Figure 4.** Artist unknown. From *Fierie Tryall of God's Saints* (1611). The Folger Shakespeare Library.

In their efforts to blacken the reputation of the Jesuits, the government was aided by ex-recusants and renegade priests. These included Richard Sheldon, a former Jesuit who, after spending a few dramatic years in England, became an opponent of the Society, and even took part in Archbishop Abbot's campaign against forces of popery. Sheldon wrote against the supremacy of the Pope in temporal matters, on the grounds that the power to depose Kings was in fact against the true interest of the Catholic church. In the past, Sheldon claimed, "Bishops ought to haue beene more ready to haue suffered Martirdome, then to haue enforced Princes to order", whereas now they were little more than opportunists, "many Bishops and Priests, being more forward to armes then to Martirdome". They thought "Heresie might easily bee oppressed by armes, while themselues in the meane time held their owne course of life, that is, cherished their owne former pleasure and slothfulnesse".<sup>126</sup> One of the most successful responses to the

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<sup>126</sup> Richard Sheldon, *Certain general reasons, prouing the lawfulnessse of the Oath of allegiance* (London, 1611), pp. 36-37.

problem of dual allegiances was provided by the poet-theologian John Donne, another ex-recusant and prominent opponent of the Jesuits, who undertook a comprehensive critique of the so-called martyrs of his age.

In his *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne laid out his argument against the Jesuits, seeking to warn his readers about the “corrupt desire of false-Martyrdome”, and to convince them that the catholic martyr-argument was without foundation. A crucial rhetorical goal of the work was to diminish the Jesuit influence among the recusants, and to persuade them to take the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>127</sup> One striking feature of the text is the highly personal point of view that Donne exploited in his narrative. In the opening of the book, for example, Donne informed his readers that his outlook was inevitably shaped by his own experience. The turmoil of the counter-Reformation had been the background to Donne’s whole life, and, since he grew up in a family that had always been “kept awake, in a meditation of Martyrdome”, he understood the psychological torments of recusancy. “I believe, no family”, Donne wrote, “hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine”.<sup>128</sup> In addition, Donne came from a Catholic family who descended from the most famous victim of Henry VIII’s Treason Act, Sir Thomas More. Donne himself had visited recusants in prison during his youth, and his younger brother Henry had died in Newgate in 1593, where he had been incarcerated for having harbored a missionary. Donne could also find support for his claims in his own experience of the Jesuit leader Robert Persons. Donne’s mind, as he explained, had been shaped by the theological and moral prescriptions “layde upon my conscience” by the famous Jesuit, “who by nature had a power and superiority over my will”.<sup>129</sup>

Nonetheless, as Donne emphasized, the work was composed primarily in order to defend private conscience against the promoters of the Jesuit mission like Persons, who made heavy demands upon his followers. According to Donne, it was often difficult to differentiate a true martyr from a fraud. As he went on to point out, martyrdom meant far more than the mere willingness to die for the interests of Rome. In this sense,

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<sup>127</sup> John Donne, *Pseudo-martyr* (London, 1610), p. 119.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, An Advertisement to the Reader.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, the preface.

suffering in defense of things indifferent (*adiaphora*) did not constitute genuine martyrdom at all. In short, he argued, despite the range of issues over which Catholics attempted to claim the title of martyr, it was only bearing witness to very basic truths that really entitled one to it. The real calling of each individual was to fulfil one's duties with patience. In this sense, people "are not sent to this world, to Suffer, but to Doe, and to performe the Office of societie, required by our severall callings."<sup>130</sup> The Protestant response to the martyr question was most often to blacken the reputations of the supposed martyrs with vituperative rhetoric, but, as the case of Donne indicated, there was also room to develop more theologically rigorous answers.

During the years of high panic that followed the Powder Conspiracy, it became common for those in favour of an English Catholic episcopate to claim that the disaster would never have occurred if there had been a Catholic bishop in England.<sup>131</sup> The secular priest Matthew Kellison, who had been appointed president of Douai College in 1613, complained about the dominance of the Jesuits, and made a strong case against allowing the English Jesuits to work outside the diocesan framework. Against the Jesuit claim that the restoration of a traditional ecclesiastical structure was possible only after England had returned to the Catholic faith, Kellison insisted that the lack of a church hierarchy was contrary to an even more ancient convention. Justifying the need for Catholic bishops, Kellison claimed that holders of the office were nominated not only at times of peace and stability, but even during the worst periods of history. The roots of the tradition were traceable to ancient Rome, where martyrdom was a distinctive marker of the office. As Kellison put it, "from the cruell Tyrant Nero to the Clement Emprour Constantine the Greate, the was scarce any bishop of Rome who was not a Martyr". According to Kellison, the lack of a traditional structure of episcopal hierarchy posed a considerable challenge to the Catholic community. For one thing, its absence allowed the Jesuits too much influence. As the example of St. Thomas of Canterbury demonstrated, "a true Martyr" was willing to die not only "for the righte of the Church", but also "for

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<sup>130</sup> John Donne, *Pseudo-martyr* (London, 1610), the preface.

<sup>131</sup> Michael Questier, 'Arminianism, Catholicism, and Puritanism in England during the 1630s', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49 (2006), p. 63.

defence of the Hierarchie of the church, which consisteth principallie of Bishops”.<sup>132</sup> This intra-Catholic quarrel rumbled on until the spring of 1623, when William Bishop was appointed bishop of Chalcedon by the aged pontif Gregory XV. However, what is striking is that one of the most powerful weapons in the Jesuits’ polemical arsenal, the concept of martyrdom, had been turned back against them.

## 2.5 CATHOLIC MARTYRS IN REFORMED CULTURE

To the counter-Reformation controversialists, dissident Catholics and the hired polemicists of King James arguably posed less of a threat than the general populace’s slow drift into conformity with Protestantism. According to some controversialists, the prevailing Protestant identity remained fragile. Despite the signs of outward religious conformity, they argued, the number of committed Protestants was in fact small, and, in practice, a large proportion of the English population remained ambiguous in their convictions. However, while the Jesuits certainly did not need to create a readership entirely from scratch, there is no escaping the fact that the promoters of the counter-Reformation faced an uphill struggle in England. Indeed, the process of Protestantization had left a heavy mark upon the cultural environment, and the diffusion of reformed ideas had a strong influence upon the way in which contemporaries understood a number of crucial concepts, including that of martyrdom.

As is well-known, the early reformers had expanded the category of sainthood dramatically, particularly through literal-minded interpretation of biblical texts. All of the main reformed confessional statements, the Lutheran *Confessione Augustana* (1530), the Calvinistic *Confessiones Helveticae* (1536), and the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England (1563), dismissed the customary Roman cult of the saints as a lamentable error, and rejected pontifical canonization as the basis of sainthood. John Foxe, who put these ideas into currency in England, considered the Roman Catholic propensity “to canonize for Saintes, [those] whom Scripture would scarce allow for good

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<sup>132</sup> Matthew Kellison, *A treatise of the hierarchie and diuers orders of the Church against the anarchie of Caluin* (Douai, 1629), pp. 357, 366-367.

subiectes”, as a custom that served to “blaspHEME the deare Martyres of Christ”.<sup>133</sup> Of course, this retreat from Roman Catholic theology to scriptural reasoning included the rejection of the intercessory role of the saints, and the veneration of their relics and images. However, the reformers took their critique still further, attacking the idea of saints as models of virtue, as well as the associated notion of sanctification by good works. Although virtuous ethics were deemed crucial to reformed piety, Protestantism was not a religion of works and meritorious deeds. Thus, the reformers raised doubts about the perfectibility of human beings, and denied that either saints or good works had the power to improve the human condition. One of the leading ideas of the reformers was to emphasize a salvific relationship with Christ as the sole condition of sainthood. Thus, the Protestant anthropology of the sinner redeemed by grace alone served to expand the boundaries of sainthood, while simultaneously downplaying the virtues attributed to prominent martyrs and saints.

These sixteenth-century precepts were followed throughout the Stuart era by writers of all ranks, who relied upon such formulations in denouncing the Jesuits’ beliefs regarding martyrdom. According to John Ball, a nonconforming writer from Oxfordshire, it was right to commemorate the dead and to celebrate their memory, but not to ascribe divine attributes to the martyrs, since “the passions of the Martyrs are of no value to merit anything”. These supposedly saintly characters “were not free from sin, [and] neither did they suffer for the expiation of sinne”<sup>134</sup>. Although the martyred saints were deeply venerated by Protestants, they were not objects of cultic attention, and were assigned a minor role in public rituals. The ascription of sacred powers to holy men and women was regularly condemned. In the words of the Jacobean bishop Robert Abbot, the lives of martyr saints ought to be brought up for the purpose of “the honourable remembrance of their names, not the religious worship of their persons”.<sup>135</sup> This denunciation was echoed by George Palmer, according to whom it was a horrid blasphemy to maintain that “the merits, intercession, and blood of the Saints and Martyrs,

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<sup>133</sup> John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history* (London, 1570), see, To The Trve And Faithfvll Congregation of Christes Vnuuersall Church.

<sup>134</sup> John Ball, *A Short Treatise Containing All the Principal Grounds of Christian Religion* (London, 1617), pp. 85-86.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Abbot, *A defence of the Reformed Catholicke of M. W. Perkins* (London, 1606), p. 173.

are mixed as satisfactory with [the] blood, merits, and intercession of Christ”.<sup>136</sup> In England, traditional conceptions of sanctity and miracles became a source of ridicule, which Protestant theorists habitually countered with subversive laughter. The dangerous content of these tales was brought up by Alexander Cooke, the vicar of Leeds, who accused Catholics for filling their martyrologies with “fooleries, and blasphemies, and falsities” and simultaneously purging “Bibles and other good writers, from much good matter contained in them”.<sup>137</sup> Richard Hooker, the prominent late Elizabethan theologian, remarked in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* that as a consequence of the Roman veneration practises, “the church is now ashamed of nothing more then of Saints”. While it was true that “the reading of the acts of Martyrs” was tolerated during the time of the great persecutions, “afterwards legends [had] growne in a manner to be nothing els but heapes of friuolous and scandalous vanities”, written by “some brainlesse men”.<sup>138</sup> Given such attitudes, it was surely no easy task for counter-Reformation controversialists to overcome the reformed confessional framework.

Alongside the famous continental reformers, the favourite target of Jesuit polemicists was John Foxe, and particularly his martyrology, which was attacked more often than any other work of its period. Given the importance of Foxe’s influence, it is unsurprising that Catholic controversialists saw it as so crucial to challenge his ecclesiastical calendar. For example, looking back from the mid-seventeenth century, the Protestant minister Thomas Manton recalled that catechetical instruction and martyrology had served as “two of the most succesfull engines against Popery”.<sup>139</sup> In the opening years of the century, Robert Persons made a similar observation, albeit from a contrasting point of view, claiming that Foxe’s martyrology “hath done more hurt alone to simple soules in our countrey ... then many other the most pestilent bookes together”.<sup>140</sup> Since *Acts and Monuments* had attained such an influential place in popular orthodoxy, it was imperative for the missionary writers to undermine its doctrines, and to challenge its

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<sup>136</sup> George Palmer, *Sectaries vnmasked and confuted* (London, 1647), p. 40.

<sup>137</sup> Alexander Cooke, *Yet more vvorke for a Masse-priest* (London, 1622), pp. 18-19.

<sup>138</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the lawes of ecclesiasticall politie, The fift booke* (London, 1597), pp. 34-35.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Manton, *Englands spirituall languishing* (London, 1648), p. 29.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Persons, *A treatise of three conversions of England from paganisme to Christian Religion*, (Douai, 1604), Part III, Ch. 18, p. 400.

iconography. Indeed, a highly critical reception of *Acts and Monuments* can be discerned amongst a long chain of critics, such as Nicholas Harpsfield, Richard Verstegan, Nicholas Sanders, and William Reynolds. For his part, Persons joined these critics with a comprehensive history of the church in England, entitled *Treatise of Three Conversions of England from Paganisme to Christian Religion* (1603-1604), a three-volume work in which he sought to challenge the vulnerabilities of Foxe's ecclesiastical history.

One of the principal polemical aims of Persons was to refute the well-established opinion that the victims of the Marian executions were martyrs. In this sense, the *Treatise of Three Conversions* covered a considerable number of problems related to Foxe's martyrology. In addition to meticulously scrutinizing every detail of the account, there were several more general points of criticism. Foxe was accused of constructing an Anglo-Protestant reform movement out of earlier anticlerical writings, making martyrs out of heretics, downplaying the heterodox and radical currents of reform, and slurring over the disagreements between Edwardian bishops. For example, Persons challenged his readers to reconsider the best-known and most famous reformed martyr, Thomas Cranmer, who was burned at the stake in the ancient university town of Oxford in 1556. According to Persons, it was absurd that such an individual was celebrated as a martyr, since while Cranmer held office and power, he had been a ruthless persecutor himself. Under Mary, he had already signed his recantation, and only submitted to his fate after realizing that recanting would not save him. Persons also employed even more vituperative rhetoric, alleging that the leading reformed martyrs had been deficient in the virtue of chastity. Among their "cheefest Saints", "every one had his woman", and even the puritan martyr John Hooper, the reformed bishop of Gloucester and Worcester who was executed in 1555, made no secret that he "had his Burgundian sister to keep him dayly company". Persons also drew attention to Foxe's caricatured view of proto-reformers such as Jan Huss and John Wycliffe.<sup>141</sup> Being a skilful storyteller, Foxe had

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<sup>141</sup> For most of the sixteenth-century, Hussites were regarded as separatist. A long succession of English humanist writers, including Reginald Pecock, John Fortescue, John Skelton, and Thomas More, had condemned the Czech Hussite movement, and consistently painted its leaders in the blackest light possible; the standard view of them was as a bunch of rebels revolting against the order ordained by God. King Henry VIII was a fierce critic of the country, which had become a hideout for reformers. His orator, the Dean of Windsor, John Clark, referred to the "perpetual lurking holes of Bohemia". This disreputable portrait of Bohemia was strongly revised in Foxe's account during the latter half of the sixteenth century. See René

omitted their more unpalatable opinions. According to Persons, the only rationale for making such heretics into martyrs was “their contradiction against the Catholike Church”.<sup>142</sup> In *A revievv of ten publike disputations or conferences* (1604), Persons took aim at Foxe’s editorial practises, accusing him of misrepresenting the disputes that had led to the executions of reformers under Mary. According to Persons, Foxe’s intention was “to bring the reader into doubt and confusion, putt in to deface the Catholike party, and to giue creditt to his sectaryes”, whereas, in reality, “we haue nothinge of these disputations, their arguments or aunswers, but only such as pleaseth Iohn Fox to deliuer and impart with vs”.<sup>143</sup>

As part of his effort to counter the influence of Foxe’s martyrology, Persons juxtaposed true martyrs with Foxeian ones, whose title was based solely on the subjective judgement of the martyrologist. The whole concept of a reformed martyr, Persons claimed, was “a ridiculous vaine definition, or rather fiction of IOHN FOX”.<sup>144</sup> In Foxe’s vague use of the term, “the Doctors of the ancient Church” had been replaced with ordinary laypeople, that is, the ostensible martyrs of Marian times, who not only lacked learning, but also died merely “for their owne disagreeinge fancyes”. In Persons’ account, and by Foxe’s own confession, there “were nothinge eminent in vertue aboue the common sort of men and weomen”.<sup>145</sup> These “accounted Saints of the new making by Fox”, Persons went on, “doe walke vp and downe, talking of their beleefe, but lay their hand vpon no good external worke at all by obligation”. In comparison to Catholic martyrs, who voluntarily chose to surrender their liberty, Foxe’s martyrs had no hope and charity – they were rather stones without free will. The only proof of their martyrdom was, as

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Wellek, ‘Bohemia in Early English Literature’, in *Slavonic and East European Review. American Series*, Vol. 2, (1943), pp. 114-146.

<sup>142</sup> Robert Persons, *A treatise of three conversions of England from paganisme to Christian Religion* (Douai, 1604), Part III, Ch. 18, p. 404.

<sup>143</sup> Robert Persons, *A revievv of ten publike disputations or conferences* (St Omer, 1604), p. 254.

<sup>144</sup> It is difficult to discern how strongly these remarks influenced readings of Foxe, but for the martyrologist himself, the heterodoxy of his subject was not necessary a problem. As Freeman has suggested: “Foxe was also quite capable of taking arguments printed by fellow Protestants that he felt limited in their theological range and converting them into syllogisms which not only made them appear irrefutable but also something that their original authors might well have regarded as rich and strange.” Elizabeth Evenden & Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of John Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 183.

<sup>145</sup> Robert Persons, *A treatise of three conversions of England from paganisme to Christian Religion*, (Douai, 1604), Part III, Ch. 17, pp. 370-371.



Persons pointed out, “their peculiar spiritt of their election, predestination, and assurance they had thereof by the inward testimony”.<sup>146</sup> In contrast to Foxe’s partisan and homegrown account, Catholics had succeeded in situating their martyrs within an ancient lineage, and the transcendent teachings of a long line of patristic authors.

To counter the slow drift towards conformity with Protestantism, it was particularly important for Persons to demonstrate that reformed faith had trivialised theology, and, by implication, impoverished the paradigms of martyrdom. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of the word, Persons affirmed that the Greek concept originally meant “witness”. Thus, “Matyrdome” did not signify “euery testimony or bearing of witness”, but rather “only such a testimony as is giuen by dying for God in the defence of some truth belonging to our faith”. In this sense, Persons informed his English readers that an expression of Roman Catholic faith was a basic requirement for becoming a martyr. However, while essential, it was not the only defining characteristic. In the case that the individual did not die in defense of any article of faith, the victim might still be considered a martyr on account of one’s cardinal or theological virtues, such as chastity, obedience, or justice. This was apparent, for example, in the case of John the Baptist, who did not profess any article of faith, but could still be called a martyr for his suffering for the sake of righteousness. According to Persons, these distinguishing characteristics were applicable to those Catholics of the British Isles who had experienced vicissitudes at the hands of the state for refusing to swear allegiance to the Established church, for attending heretical services, or for having been ordained into the priesthood on the Continent.<sup>147</sup>

The criteria that Persons employed bore a striking resemblance to the uniform standards articulated by the Council of Trent.<sup>148</sup> In keeping with the Tridentine criteria, Persons asserted Rome’s monopoly over the making of saints, and denied the possibility of martyrdom to Protestants, whose separatist model of religion was strongly

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>147</sup> Robert Persons, *A discussion of the ansyvere of M. VVilliam Barlovv, D. of Diuinity, to the booke intituled: The iudgment of a Catholike Englishman liuing in banishment for his religion* (St Omer, 1612), p. 206.

<sup>148</sup> For the Tridentine tripartite structure of martyrdom, see Simon Ditchfield, ‘Tridentine worship and the cult of saints’, in Po-Chia Hsia (ed.) *The Cambridge history of Christianity, Vo. 6: Reform and expansion 1500–1660* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 201-226.

at variance with the Roman catholic faith. As we have already seen in this chapter, the publicists hired by the Protestant regime sought to refute this conclusion. From the perspective of these commentators, the Roman model was not universal, the current Roman church was a corrupt version of ancient Catholicism, and its martyrs did not live up to primitive examples. According to Richard Bernard, the puritan clergyman from Workshop, none of the martyrs within the first six hundred years after Christ's death suffered for the points formulated recently in the articles of Tridentine.<sup>149</sup> To grant the title of a martyr to all those who died in support of Rome was a betrayal of apostolic ideals: to call "every pretence of the Pope, Catholique faith, and to bleede to death for it", John Donne wrote, "is a sicknesse and a medicine, which the Primitive Church never understoode".<sup>150</sup> The same thought was expressed more bluntly by the Leicestershire minister Anthony Cade, according to whom the "ancient Martyrs suffered not for the Doctrines of this Papacy, but for the Doctrines which the Protestants hold".<sup>151</sup> The most powerful expression of the principle *martyrem non facit poena sed causa* came from King James, who was concerned over the counter-Reformation saintly cults and their influence within the British isles. In his judgement, the Jesuits, who allotted sainthood to convicted criminals, were hijacking the glorious name of martyrdom, in order to fabricate an argument for religious persecution. It was indeed "the reputation of martyrdom" that drove certain individuals to "take a pride boldly to endure any torments, or death itself". However, their willingness to sacrifice themselves did not stem from "the justness of their cause", but rather "a false shadow". As James assured Parliament in 1609, "it is a sure rule in Divinitie, that God never loves to plant his Church by violence and bloodshed".<sup>152</sup>

Towards the end of Jacobean reign, executions of Catholics diminished significantly. The fact that more and more missionary priests went unpunished was reflected in the Catholic accounts of the period. It is indicative, for example, that in the 1630s, when John Clare, a Jesuit missionary from Wiltshire, spoke of martyrs whose

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<sup>149</sup> Richard Bernard, *Looke beyond Luther: or An ansvvere to that question, so often and so insultingly proposed by our aduersaries, asking vs; where this our religion was before Luthers time?* (London, 1623), p. 22.

<sup>150</sup> John Donne (1610), The Preface.

<sup>151</sup> Anthony Cade, *A iustification of the Church of England* (London, 1630), Table §7, pp. 4-8.

<sup>152</sup> James I, *The vvorkes of the most high and mightie prince* (London, 1616), p. 414.

“names and memories [are] euen to this day fresh and liuing”, he was referring primarily to “former persecutions in Queene Elizabeth”.<sup>153</sup> After years of temptations and suffering, the 1620s and 1630s constituted a relatively tolerant period towards Catholics; as long as they swore the oath of allegiance, James was willing to grant limited religious toleration in return. However, the popish threat never ceased to be an acute political issue in the public sphere. The later seventeenth century witnessed two remarkable periods of persecution of Catholics. The first occurred during the English civil wars (1641–1646), with 24 convicted of treason; and the other followed at the time of the Exclusion Crisis (1678–1680), during which 24 Catholics were executed.<sup>154</sup> It is significant that these sporadic executions took place at times of national urgency, during which anti-Catholic rhetoric was exploited to the maximum.

It is fair to say that missionaries enjoyed far greater success in the New World, Asia, and other parts of the Europe than in England, where Jesuits utterly failed to restore the traditional allegiance to Rome. However, as Alexandra Walsham has pointed out, it is remarkable that the methods the Jesuits used in Britain were similar to those employed in Bavaria, the Upper Rhine Palatinate, and other parts of the Holy Roman Empire, where the counter-Reformation prospered.<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, even if the English realm proved difficult to reach, the Jesuit enterprise still managed to keep alive numerous customs and traditions for more than a century, despite the pressures towards

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<sup>153</sup> John Clare, *The conuerted Iew or Certaine dialogues betweene Micheas a learned Iew and others, touching diuers points of religion, controuerted betweene the Catholicks and Protestants* (The English secret press, 1630), p. 76.

<sup>154</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall (1971), pp. 191–197. One of the most striking aspects of these statistics concerns the Puritan regime. Though the puritans are often associated with religious zeal, on the contrary, the policies of Oliver Cromwell’s England turn out to be relatively tolerant towards the traditional religion, with only two victims. This tendency seems to accord with John Coffey’s recent claim that “a group of writers emerge from within the puritan community who argued passionately for the toleration of *false* religion”. See John Coffey, ‘Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution’, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41 (1998), pp. 961–985.

<sup>155</sup> Yet in contrast to continental Catholicism, the English remnants of the Old Religion formed a minority Church which lacked political support and episcopal infrastructure. Alexandra Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46 (2003), p. 781; “‘Domme Preachers’? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print’, *Past and Present*, No. 168 (2000), pp. 72–123; ‘Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation’, *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), pp. 288–310. For the fight over the control of the Low Countries, see Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Cambridge, 2011). For the Bohemian context, see Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia. Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge, 2009).

confessional conformity. In the course of their protracted struggle to resist the Stuart ecclesiastical polity, and to prepare the ground for restoration, the early Stuart Catholics became, in the words of John Bossy, “a branch of the English nonconforming tradition”.<sup>156</sup> The ability of Catholics to protect the interests of Rome and to mitigate the increasing dominance of Protestantism by force of argument alone was of course limited. They were excluded from membership of the political community, had no legal base in England, and, as an oppressed minority, lacked the institutional and political power enjoyed by their rivals. Regardless of their illegal status, however, the Society of Jesus created an intellectually vibrant opposition movement, whose members managed to draw the regime into continual discussion and debate. In the eyes of many commentators, the Jesuits were the main intellectual and religious adversaries of the Protestant reformation. King James associated them with disobedient puritans, suggesting they were “nothing other than Puritan-papists”. Nonetheless, papist libels were so successful in informing the British public about the shortcomings of Calvinism and Protestantism that the bishop of London, Henry King, went on to proclaim in 1621 that such writings functioned as a kind of persecution. The charges levelled against leading reformers constituted a species of violence offered not to the body, King told his audience, but “to the Good Name”. These slanders and calumnies had not only “strived to darken the glorious truth of our Church and Religion”, he wrote, but also to traduce its most famous martyrs.<sup>157</sup>

In this regard, it is not surprising that currents of Catholic renewal had lasting repercussions on English post-Reformation culture. That the central characters of the mission had become well-known to the public was a sure sign of their ability to reach an audience behind enemy lines. Although the leading Jesuits were hardly cited as authorities amongst the Protestant controversialists, they were nonetheless acknowledged as interlocutors. In fact, the frequency with which their writings were invoked indicates that the influence of the mission also extended to its enemies. The literate Protestant

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<sup>156</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (Oxford, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> John King, *A sermon preached at Pauls Crosse* (London, 1621), p. 48. Peter Marshall, ‘John Calvin and the English Catholics, c. 1565-1640’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53 (2010), pp. 861-862. For example, most of the early modern biographies of Calvin were written by Jesuits. See Irena Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe: Lives of Reformers by Friends, Disciplines and Foes* (Aldershot, 2008), p.126.

clergy, who wrote to defend the English church against Roman Catholic polemicists, considered answering the Jesuits to be their main intellectual task. The apologetic works they drafted were often written in dialogic form, refuting the audacious claims of the Jesuits chapter by chapter. As an unintended consequence of this dialogue, the semi-official positions of the Church of England were often defined in opposition to the arguments put forward by the Jesuits. Regardless of their failure to restore Catholicism, it can be argued that the Jesuits made a vital contribution to Stuart culture through print and debate. Thus, in addition to their success in communicating the conceptual framework of the counter-Reformation to an English-speaking audience, their textual output served to challenge Protestant ideas, concepts, beliefs, and ideologies, thus ensuring that reformed theology continued to be written in dialogue with the Jesuits for much of the long seventeenth century.

Protestant clergymen acknowledged with alarm the Jesuits' adroitness in utilizing the press, the wide availability of clandestine literature, and its growing influence in late Jacobean England. Being well-aware of the fact that contemporary readers were not immune to its content, they issued numerous warnings regarding the pernicious influence of such literature. The first effort to list these clandestine publications was made by the Lancashire minister John Gee in his *The foot out of the snare* (1624). Urging his readers to pay attention to "the swarmes of their book, which you may heare humming vp and downe in euery corner both of City and Countrey", he also sought to warn his readers of "how laborious and vigilant our Aduersaries now are".<sup>158</sup> Around the same time, the Leicestershire minister Anthony Cade witnessed "a generall inclination of many sorts of peole to returne againe to the Old Religion", being especially concerned about the "falling away of persons of so Noble birth and place". Despite having received a good education, he claimed, the latter were nevertheless unable to resist the Jesuits' "strong perswation, that the Protestants Religion was new".<sup>159</sup> The political and religious allegiances of the Stuart upper class were shifting during the early decades of the Jesuit mission, and influential Jesuit texts often had far-reaching effects. For instance, Robert

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<sup>158</sup> John Gee, *The foot out of the snare with a detection of sundry late practices and impostures of the priests and Iesuits in England* (London, 1624), pp. 23-24.

<sup>159</sup> Anthony Cade, *A iustification of the Church of England* (London, 1630), The epistle dedicatory.

Persons captured the imagination of the great Enlightenment historian Edward Gibbon, who owned a copy of Persons' *Conversions*, and became inclined towards Roman Catholicism. This, he wrote, was due to the efforts of Persons, who "had urged all the best arguments in favour of the Roman catholic religion".<sup>160</sup>

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored the process of Catholic renewal during King James' tenure in office. As we have seen, the Jesuits were far from quiescent in their religious and political practice. Examples from the writings of James illustrate that those Catholics who raised noise, resisted, fought, and were reluctant to accept the new Protestant identity represented a formidable challenge to the governing circles of the monarchical polity. Especially, the twin issue of the Gunpowder plot and the Oath of Allegiance dominated Catholic and Protestant polemic in the early years of seventeenth century.

As I have observed, those missionaries martyred on English soil served to limit monarchical power and sovereignty, rather than to reinforce the authority of the government. For James, the dilemma was twofold. Against parliamentary pressure to enforce the laws against recusants and Jesuits, the King needed to convince his own subjects of the justness of proceedings in his realm. "I have been far from persecution", James wrote in 1624, "for I have ever thought that no way more encreased any Religion than persecution".<sup>161</sup> In reponse to the diplomatic problems that each execution generated, it was necessary to create a publicly acceptable account of the government's conduct. One obvious solution to this challenge was to use the press to blacken the reputations of the supposed martyrs. As a consequence, however, the line between a martyr and a seditious person remained remarkably unclear throughout the early Stuart period.

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<sup>160</sup> For the several high-profile conversions that were attributed to the influence of Person's works, see Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Frankland, *The annals of King James and King Charles the First* (London, 1681), p. 102.

This chapter has studied the efforts that were made to reach an English-speaking audience through a number of clandestine works. It is important to stress the role of emotive martyr stories in the Jesuit mission and its various goals. Alongside efforts to find new supporters and to make the Romanist agenda and cultic terminology more accessible to a wider public, one of the leading polemical purposes of Jesuit publications was to diminish the theological authority of the Church of England. Much of the success of the Catholic cause in England depended upon whether contemporaries believed that executed Romanists were common criminals or martyrs. In such accounts, endurance of pain and suffering demonstrated the truth of Roman Catholic doctrine. As the Jesuits systematically pointed out, it also diminished the credibility of the Protestant regime, and undermined its ability to produce martyrs and to assert its right to the name of true church.

Given the significance of martyr-narratives in the post-Reformation public sphere, it is hardly surprising that a central goal of the Jesuit enterprise was to convince the public that the Reformation had diminished faith and impoverished the paradigms of Christian martyrdom. Thus, we cannot afford to ignore the vehement attack launched upon just about every imaginable aspect of the Protestant heritage, and especially against Foxe's work and its supposed incoherencies. This was done forcefully in 1604 and 1605 by Robert Persons, who attacked the credibility of John Foxe, and questioned the hagiographical tropes set forth in his work. Indeed, this strategy was later continued by other writers, who sought to slow down the spread of Foxeian narratives regarding the Reformation. The credibility of the Reformed martyrological tradition was questioned, for example, by Persons' fellow Jesuit, "John Clare," who, during the late 1620s, spoke of Foxe as "the Canonizer of the Pseudomartyrs of his Religion".<sup>162</sup>

Although the printed word is a potent weapon, even mightier than the sword, and there is little reason to question the Jesuits' ability to incite intellectual curiosity amongst the population, some doubts might be raised as to whether Catholicizing a whole nation without the aid of a prince was ever a likely prospect. As the great controversialist Robert Persons himself put it, the restoration project ultimately relied on a "Catholick King that

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<sup>162</sup> John Clare, *The converted Iew or Certaine dialogues betweene Micheas a learned Iew and others* (The English secret press, 1630), p. 50.

God shall give us”.<sup>163</sup> Of course, suitably persuasive books could do much to influence wide segments of the population, and to bring about changes in the fabric of society. Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon, for example, acknowledged the viral potential of distributing ideas in print. In his opinion, three main factors drove the creation of dissident movements. They could be planted either with the help of “the sword”, or “by the eloquence and wisdom of speech and persuasions”, or “by the power of signs and miracles”.<sup>164</sup> These forces could bring about considerable change when directed against the establishment, since “nothing is more popular” than “opposing of authority established”. In fact, the Catholic recusants of Jacobean England had used all the options that Bacon had identified. However, Bacon actually had in mind the “speculative heresy” of Arminianism, which was making itself known to English audiences during the 1620s.<sup>165</sup> This will be the theme of our next chapter.

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<sup>163</sup> Robert Persons (1690), pp. 66, 101.

<sup>164</sup> Bacon considered martyrdoms as miracles, since the suffering of intolerable pains “seem to exceed the strength of human nature”.

<sup>165</sup> Francis Bacon, *The essayes or counsels, ciuill and morall, of Francis Lo. Verulam, Viscount St. Alban* (London, 1625), pp. 334-335.



## CHAPTER 3

# Martyrdom during the Carolinian controversies of the 1620s

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sir Humphrey Lynde, a church historian and member of Parliament for Brecknockshire during the late 1620s, was genuinely dismayed by what he found within a recently published polemical treatise. He reported his concerns to a friend, urging him to examine this “new Booke, freshly published, which proued the Martyrs and Reformers of our Church to be professed Arminians”.<sup>166</sup> The publication he had in mind was John Ailward’s *An historicall narration of the iudgement of some most learned and godly English bishops, holy martyrs, and others* (1631), which contained passages from such reformed martyrs as Thomas Cranmer, John Hooper, and Hugh Latimer, attempting to prove that these martyrs harbored beliefs similar to those held by the clerical favorites of Charles Stuart. The counsellors and favorites of King Charles had been strongly criticized for their opinions during the late 1620s, since these appeared to resonate with those ideas

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<sup>166</sup> William Prynne, *A quench-coale* (Amsterdam, 1637), p. 24.

that had recently driven the United Provinces to the brink of civil war. Lynde himself had been an active member of the Religious Committee of Parliament, which, throughout the 1620s, had condemned all theological works with such leanings as dangerous to the stability of the nation and the unity of the church. The suggestion that the reformed martyrs of the 1550s had approved such subversive ideas was particularly serious, since it called into question their status as true sons of the English reformation.

For some time, it was customary to see the troubled years from 1625 to 1629 through the shadow of the revolutionary wars of the 1640s. The view of the 1620s as a decade in which the country divided itself into two opposed factions is a very old one, first advanced by the Victorian historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner, who famously placed the starting point of what he called the “Puritan Revolution” in 1625. This was seen as the key turning-point in the emergence of those puritans who began to challenge and undermine royal authority, long before the armed clashes between cavalier and roundhead took place. Such adversarial politics were evident in Charles I’s Parliaments of 1625, 1626, and 1628, particularly regarding the question of granting Tonnage and Poundage, the failed expeditions to help the Huguenots and to relieve the Palatine, the political dominance of the allegedly crypto-Catholic Duke of Buckingham, the Petition of Rights of 1628, and the suspension of Parliament in 1629. While Gardiner understood the ever-widening gap between Charles and his Parliaments as a prelude to the “Puritan Revolution”, Nicholas Tyacke has recently offered a different explanatory framework. According to Tyacke, the reawakening of puritanism was set in motion by the promoters of a reformed theology known as Arminianism.

This line of thought was given expression by a number of ceremonialist divines, such as Richard Montagu, Richard Neile, John Cosin, John Buckeridge, William Laud, Lancelot Andrewes, Francis White, and Augustine Lindsell, all of whom rose to prominence under Charles, and began to reform the church at the expense of more conventional orthodoxies. Thus, the truly radical agenda was not that of the Stuart puritans, but rather that of the Durham House divines, who rejected the stricter elements of reformed doctrine, especially by minimizing the importance of the conventional predestinarian tenets of Calvinism, and by instituting many unwelcome changes to church rites and customs. A striking outcome of this struggle over doctrinal integrity was the birth of two opposing ideological blocs. “When Arminianism succeeded”, Tyacke

concludes, “Puritan opposition to the established Church was reignited”.<sup>167</sup> Thus, according to Tyacke, it was precisely in these tensions that the roots of the radicalization of conformist Calvinism, and the consequent revolution of the 1640s, can be found.<sup>168</sup>

Arminianism is usually understood as a Dutch theological movement, and a significant step away from the Calvinist theology of the will. In terms of its reception in England, the historiographical focus has generally been on certain distinctive ideas: namely, theories of predestination, and the related disputes around themes such as the doctrine of reprobation, the nature of the Sacraments, and points of justification. While these questions are interesting, the current chapter will explore another aspect of the debate, namely the extent to which the ideological conflict extended into the realm of martyrological histories, the very foundation of popular Protestant thought. In chapters 3 and 4, I am especially interested in the ways in which the opposed parties wrote about martyrs, and how they sought to gain support for their views from the Foxeian tradition and the testimonies of martyrs. Historians now generally agree that the suppression of Calvinism was one of the primary underlying causes of the political breakdown that led to civil war and revolution. As we shall see, martyrological narratives reflected some of the most powerful trends in the party politics and controversies that accompanied the rise of the anti-Calvinist faction. Focusing on the inflammatory writings of the 1620s, chapter 3 aims to show that Arminian speculation and confessional segregation opened up a new interpretational framework for ideas of martyrdom, as some writers began to appropriate martyrs as the acceptable face of Arminianism.

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<sup>167</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>168</sup> How far this framework actually captures the relationship between theological factions has been much disputed. The argument offered against Tyacke’s account is that there was no Calvinist consensus in the first place. For a different view of the character of the period, see Peter White, *Predestination, policy, and polemic: conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992). For an argument regarding the relatively slight public interest in the predestinarian question, see Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 284-298. See also Sheila Lambert, ‘Richard Montagu, Arminianism and Censorship’, in *Past & Present*, No. 124 (1989), pp. 36-68; Peter Lake, ‘Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635’, in *Past and Present*, No. 114 (1987), pp. 32-76. Conrad Russell does not consider the heated debates in Parliament and print during the decade before the civil war as particularly relevant to the fights over sovereignty in the 1640s. See Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), p. 4. Despite a number of criticisms, Tyacke’s interpretation remains widely accepted, and the most frequently offered explanation for Charles Stuart’s policies.

### 3.2 THE RISE OF THE ARMINIAN PARTY AND THE BATTLE

#### FOR ENGLISH PROTESTANTISM

Institutionalized hostility towards Roman Catholicism was the traditional basis for religious consensus in late Tudor and early Stuart England. It was as an outlook shared by the crown, Parliament, and people. However, under the pressure generated by continental warfare, this status quo began to falter at the end of James' rule. The first conspicuous public disagreement related to the possibility of achieving peace through a marriage treaty with Catholic Spain. After the return of Prince Charles from Madrid in 1623, without a Spanish bride, the people could stop worrying about the return of a Roman catholic monarch such as Mary Tudor. At the time that Charles sat upon the throne of England, the atmosphere was galvanized by the spread of theological innovations, which certainly represented a change in churchmanship. However, these were by no means representative of mainstream opinion.

In the eyes of some critical commentators, Charles' religious regime was quietly altering some of its crucial ideas and convictions. Moreover, these changes stemmed from certain views regarding freedom of will, divine foreknowledge, and reprobation, as attributed to Jacobus Arminius, a professor of theology at Leiden. This Dutch theologian taught that human freedom was incompatible with divine determinism, and went on to challenge several aspects of Calvinist teaching regarding free will and the doctrine of unconditional predestination. These doctrinal clarifications had significant consequences for reformed Europe. Even though the man who had given the tradition its name had died in late 1609, Remonstrant theology was rejected at a gathering of reformed divines in Dortrecht in 1618–1619, its chief spokesman, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, was executed in 1619, and its more notorious disciples were driven out of the Dutch reformed church. Thus, the confessional conflict between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants continued to disrupt the unity of western Protestantism.

The movement away from Calvinist orthodoxy that began in English universities during the late sixteenth century became an issue of popular debate, and a major source of discord, during the 1620s, thus providing a context to many of the works

written during the reign of Charles Stuart and beyond. The Arminian troubles came to the attention of Parliament in 1621 and 1624, predominantly as an issue related to Dutch politics.<sup>169</sup> The official articles of the Synod of Dort did not appear in English until 1623. In the meanwhile, puritans wrote vernacular polemics refuting such doctrinal innovations, and Roman Catholics were happy to circulate detailed accounts of the religious strife in the United Provinces, in order to demonstrate how factionalized the Western reformation movement had become.<sup>170</sup>

The controversial exchanges between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants also set the scene for the regime of Charles I, who acceded to the throne of England on March 27, 1625. The churchmen that the new monarch preferred in his household differed from those elevated to royal posts during the decades of the Jacobean anti-Romanist controversies. Charles, who did not cultivate churchmen with strong Calvinist credentials, was accused of becoming the patron of ecclesiastical ceremonialism and sacerdotalism, and thus an ally of the Roman Catholics. In addition to elevating increasingly powerful churchmen, Charles' government relied on George Villiers, the duke of Buckingham, and his closest advisor, whose wife and mother had converted to Catholicism in the early 1620s. Charles' unwillingness to act against recusants stimulated speculation that the monarch had chosen to side with the forces of counter-Reformation.

Charles' religious policies diverged sharply from those of his father, who had skillfully maintained the balance between different religious factions, and never allowed any one party to prevail. Although James VI resisted Presbyterianism in Scotland and puritanism in England, and feared the spread of doctrinal division, he did not ban discussion over predestinarian theology in the country at large, and was willing to tolerate people with strong puritan credentials at his court. Most importantly, James sided theologically with the Calvinists: he sent a delegate to the international synod of Dort, personally wrote a pamphlet against the Remonstrant Conrad Vorstius, the successor of

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<sup>169</sup> According to Russell, the topic caught the attention of country parishes due to the officially imposed Laudian reforms in the 1630s. Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), p. 30.

<sup>170</sup> The famous Catholic martyrologist and newswriter Richard Verstegan provided a lengthy account of the Dutch controversies in his *Observations concerning the present affaires of Holland and the United Prouinces* (St Omer, 1621), pp. 98-131.

Arminius as professor of divinity at Leiden, and organized the burning of his books in England. Such diplomatic skills were less evident in the actions of Charles Stuart, who eventually grew into – in the words of Tyacke – “the architect of an Arminian revolution”. Historians have speculated that when Charles came under the influence of high church ceremonialists, their guidance shaped his outlook more strongly than his sternly Protestant upbringing. As Aysha Pollnitz, for example, has remarked, James had “allowed puritans and Scottish Presbyterians to dominate Charles’s household between 1612 and 1618”. However, when faced with the revolt in Bohemia, the Palatine crises, and the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, James took a different tack, placing Hispanophiles and high-church ceremonialists around his son and his favorite Buckingham.<sup>171</sup> Such moves were indeed crucial in preventing zealotry and wars of religion. However, one should also take into account the fact that Remonstrant ecclesiology was particularly appealing to monarchs and churchmen. As Nicholas D. Jackson has pointed out, it provided theoretical justification for extending civil authority into previously clerical territory and brought along an opportunity for a younger generation of clerics to switch “from Jacobean calvinist to Caroline Arminian” in order to boost their careers.<sup>172</sup>

Interestingly, the English public debate of the 1620s focused less on Arminius than on Richard Montagu, a canon of Windsor and royal chaplain, whose writings ostensibly shared common ground with the positions held by the Dutch Remonstrants. Many came to view him as a major troublemaker and English Remonstrant, particularly after he published two suspect theological works, *A Gagg for the new Gospell* (1624) and *Appello Caesarem* (1625). These apologetic works served to bring recent trends in Protestant thought across the English Channel, and would remain at the center of controversy for some time. Although Montagu became the main instigator of the English debate, his works were not explicit reflections on the works of the Dutch theologian. The first was a piece of anti-Catholic propaganda, written to refute a Roman Catholic tract by the Douai-trained theologian, Matthew Kellison; the latter was a highly defensive tract, which Montagu wrote in response to the accusations that had been made

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<sup>171</sup> Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 335-336, 368.

<sup>172</sup> Nicholas D. Jackson, *Hobbes, Bramhall and the Politics of Liberty and Necessity: A Quarrel of the Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 26-27.

against him. Apart from a few inflammatory writings, the literature actively promoting theological Arminianism during the 1620s was minimal. In public debate, the Dutch theologian was no source of authority, and his name was rather taken up only as a derogatory label. It was used, for example, in the context of the Amboyna massacre of 1623, in which Dutch officials executed ten English merchants in Indonesia; in English accounts, the barbarous carnage was soon associated with the allegedly Arminian leadership of the Dutch East India Company.<sup>173</sup> Apart from Montagu's own self-defense, there were no written apologies or strong statements in favor of Arminian doctrine.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, English churchmen never admitted to Arminianism in doctrine, insisting that their theological innovations were merely a restatement of old-fashioned principles. Even if, as it seems, some ceremonious and patristic-inspired English Protestants agreed with Arminius in some points, they did not align themselves with the Dutch theologian in public, and were wise enough not to put their beliefs into words. The divines close to the King did not represent a static intellectual system: for them, the question was always whether the threat of radical puritanism outweighed that of Roman Catholicism.

Notwithstanding the lack of an articulated doctrinal program, many theologians affiliated with the York House group exhibited features and arguments which were directed against second-generation Calvinist scholasticism or theological determinism of puritans. Their effort to alter the confessional tone was obvious in their willingness to minimize the importance of conventional predestinarian tenets, and to treat this keystone of Calvinist thought as a mystery rather than a clarified doctrine. For example, to bishop Lancelot Andrewes, one of the leading vicars of the ceremonial and sacramental brand of Stuart ecclesia, the question of God's eternal decree was of merely secondary importance. As Andrewes informed his audience, while the Almighty no doubt had both a "secret will" and a "revealed will", it was not for humans "curiously to enquire

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<sup>173</sup> Anthony Milton, 'Marketing a massacre: Amboyna, the East India Company and the public sphere in early Stuart England', in Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (eds.) *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 168-190.

<sup>174</sup> Joseph Hall, the bishop of Norwich and a member of the English delegation to Dort, wrote a tract entitled *Via Media. The way of Peace in the Five Busy Articles Commonly known by the Name of Arminius*, in order to improve the relationship between the competing factions. However, this was suppressed by the authorities, and published only after his death in 1660.

and search out God's secret touching reprobation or election, but to adore it".<sup>175</sup> In worship, the general trend among the high church party was to privilege sacramentalism and other ritual practices. They never defined the sacraments as adiaphora, but occasionally voiced disquiet regarding the extreme predestinarianism that informed conventional reformed doctrine, holding that this was in fact harmful to the church establishment.

While the members of the high church faction were decidedly wary about explicitly raising such controversial themes, the content of Montagu's books, deliberately or not, resembled, in many respects, salient Arminian teachings. In such universal matters as salvation and reprobation, Montagu held views which seemed to be incompatible with Calvinistic orthodoxy as expressed at the synod of Dort. For instance, Montagu committed himself to an anti-predestinarian theology of grace, particularly by emphasizing that Christ had died for all of humankind. Likewise, Montagu also argued that God had not passed a verdict for the reprobates before the beginning of time, and that therefore none of his creatures were predestinated to damnation. Moreover, he maintained that divine grace could be refused, thus leaving open the question of perseverance in faith.<sup>176</sup> Finally, Montagu also emerged as a Protestant defender of human freedom and choice, writing: "Wee cannot deny freedome of will: which who-so doth, is no Catholique: no nor Protestant".<sup>177</sup>

Notwithstanding that his works clearly signaled a rejection of some central Calvinist tenets, Montagu denied any connection with Arminius, or indeed with any other non-orthodox tradition. Against those who claimed that his remarks about free will were influenced by the works of the Jesuits, Montagu claimed that freedom of will was not an inherently Roman Catholic doctrine. Similarly, against those who thought his views were based on a reading of Arminius, he stated that he barely knew the man, and had certainly

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<sup>175</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, in John Henry Parker (ed.) *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes, Vol. 5* (Oxford, 1843), p. 409.

<sup>176</sup> For a fuller discussion of this, see Freya Sierhuis, *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy: Religion, Politics, and the Stage in the Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 2015); Martin van Gelderen, 'Arminian trouble: Calvinist debates on freedom', in Quentin Skinner & Martin van Gelderen (eds.) *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 21-37; Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford, 2002), p. 408.

<sup>177</sup> Richard Montagu, *A gagg for the new Gospell?* (London, 1624), p. 116.



not consulted with him. In a private letter to John Cosin, his patron and a trusted friend, Montagu convincingly claimed that he had not read any of Arminius' works until he had received a copy from Cosin. "I thank you for your Arminius", Montagu wrote, "I never sawe him before".<sup>178</sup> Similarly, Montagu later assured Parliament that this was the first time he had troubled himself with reading the controversial theologian.<sup>179</sup>

Even if Montagu was as ignorant of Arminius as he claimed, this begs the questions as to why his works bore such a striking resemblance to those of the Dutch theologian. Montagu offered several explanations, all of which came down to claiming that such supposed consonance was merely an invention of his enemies. For one thing, Montagu claimed, his adversaries could not compete with him in patristic studies, and thus resorted to accusing him of Arminianism. What is more, his opponents might equally have assimilated his writings to Lutheranism, since, in many respects, he shared more common ground with Luther and Melancthon than with Arminius. Nonetheless, his opponents deliberately chose to associate him with the latter, knowing that the name of Arminius carried overwhelmingly pejorative overtones.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, it was simplistic for his adversaries to suggest that the instability of the United Provinces resulted from a mere scholastic dispute, rather than much broader, non-theological forces. Indeed, Montagu doubted that issues of free will, final perseverance, and predestination had so much political significance as to bring an entire state to the brink of collapse. Such claims, he argued, were just as absurd as those of the primitive "Pagan Idolaters", who had blamed the rise of Christianity for bringing about "all those calamities which befell mankind".<sup>181</sup> Nonetheless, and despite his protestations, Montagu's critics refused to believe that he was as ignorant as he claimed. Thus, they continued to maintain that his *Gagg for the new Gospell* in fact went considerably beyond its avowed purpose, amounting to something resembling a justification of Remonstrant theology.

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<sup>178</sup> May 19, 1626, Richard Montague to the Bishop of Durham. *The Correspondence of John Cosin, D.D., Lord Bishop of Durham: Together with Other Papers Illustrative of His Life and Times*, Part 1 (London, 1869), pp. 90-91.

<sup>179</sup> Richard Montagu, *Appello Caesarem* (London, 1625), p. 11.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 40.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Although less controversial, the points that Montagu made regarding martyrdom were no less interesting. These were expressed most clearly in his *Invocation of saint* (1624), in which he elaborated upon this theme at some length. The work was based upon an earlier sermon, which had led to Montagu being accused of showing leniency toward Rome. Thus, in the published version, Montagu set out to refute such accusations. Here, he wrote that martyrs ought to be considered extraordinary among the saints, having obtained a special standing through their *vera pietates milites*, and “enjoying more privileges from God, with Christ in glory”. As such, all true martyrs ought to be held in great respect. However, Montagu was offended by certain aspects of the Roman Catholic cult of the saints, and particularly its emphasis upon primitive testimonies. According to Montagu, the idea of a martyr as an oracle of truth or a source of doctrinal beliefs was mistaken, since the martyrs of hagiographies were in fact literary constructs, whose words had been composed using the classical rhetorical device of *prosopopoeia* (giving a voice to another person). In effect, the so-called testimonies of the primitive martyrs were orations, written to comfort the persecuted church during the first centuries. In this sense, canonical truths could not be derived from testimonies, since the latter revealed nothing more than fragmentary aspects of their composers’ minds.<sup>182</sup>

However, it is important to note that such views were hardly limited to high church ceremonialists. For instance, a thinker of a very different stamp, the Calvinist divine George Hakewill, likewise warned against placing too much emphasis on the testimonies of primitive martyrs. In his riposte to Godfrey Goodman, the crypto-Catholic Bishop of Gloucester, Hakewill warned placing too much emphasis on the testimony of St Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage who died during the persecution of Valerian in 258. Notwithstanding his undoubted “piety”, “learning”, and “neernesse to the pure and primitive times”, his testimony was merely “humane” rather than “divine”.<sup>183</sup> In emphasizing the relative ontological value of human testimonies, both Montagu and Hakewill were following the prescriptions of the early sixteenth-century humanist Erasmus. The latter had considered the place of human testimonies within sacred histories

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<sup>182</sup> Richard Montagu, *Treatise of inuocation of saints* (London, 1624), pp. 158, 116-117.

<sup>183</sup> George Hakewill, *Apologie Or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God* (Oxford, 1635), pp. 60, 189.

in his *De copia*, and deemed martyrs to be a poignant example of the rhetorical practice of *sermonicatio* (putting speeches into the mouths of historical figures). In Erasmus' view, writers could ascribe words to their characters, real or imagined, and incorporate messages into testimonies, because "a similar practice is seen in the history of the seven Maccabees and is followed by others who have written the lives of the martyrs".<sup>184</sup>

Montagu's notions did not mean a revolution in the hagiographic genre. This is not to say, however, that his critics did not have good reason to be suspicious about his remarks. For instance, Montagu made no secret of his dislike of the first exclusively Protestant work of history, the *Centuries of Magdeburg*, which had been compiled by second generation Lutheran scholars seeking to vindicate the history of church, particularly by emphasizing the continuous persecution of witnesses who had combatted the superstition of the medieval church. This historical corpus was also a major source and model for John Foxe's martyrology. Montagu, however, denounced this massive anti-Catholic compendium as the work of "forlorne Hereticks" and "mis-begotten Innouators".<sup>185</sup>

The views of the Calvinist archbishop George Abbot regarding the succession of the church differed significantly from those of an Arminian-leaning divine like Montagu. In contrast to the latter, Abbot made abundant use of the *Centuries of Magdeburg* and *Acts and Monuments*, particularly in order to confirm their positions regarding the historical succession of the church, a most troubling question to post-Reformation Protestants.<sup>186</sup> Abbot's chaplain and licenser, Daniel Featley, likewise called the martyred proto-Reformers to witness against Roman catholic tradition. As is well-known, Foxe had compiled the story of the Reformation from heterodox materials, and had framed it as an oppositional and persecuted movement. According to Featley, members of the true church were persecuted "vnder the names of Berengarians, Lyonists, Henricians, Petrobrusians, Albingenses, Waldenses, Wickleuists, Thaborites, Hussites,

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<sup>184</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas (De utraque verborem ac rerum copia)*, Donald B. King & H. David Rix transl. (Milwaukee, Wis., 1963), p. 99.

<sup>185</sup> Richard Montagu, *Treatise of inuocation of saints* (London, 1624), p. 168.

<sup>186</sup> See George Abbot, *A treatise of the perpetuall visibilitie, and succession of the true church in all ages* (London, 1624), p. 63.

Lutherans, Calvinists, and Hugonots, and the like”. Testimonies of “higher rank Protestants”, such as Calvin and Beza, as well as martyrologists such as Foxe and the Magdeburgian centuriators, demonstrated that these proto-Protestants had “walked with a right foot in that way of Truth, which since Luther (blessed bee God) hath beene much more cleerely discouered, and trodden, then in former times”. In his view, there was no substantial difference between these people and the “Martyrs suffered in the first Ages of the Church”.<sup>187</sup>

Elsewhere, Featley also condemned Montagu’s historico-theological writings for their anti-Calvinist tendencies. Though Montagu’s heavy citation of patristics might fool a “vulgar reader”, Daniel Featley wrote, he was hardly as innocent as he claimed, and his rehabilitation of the primitive church was clearly intended to legitimize his own theological project. At the root of the latter, Featley claimed, were Montagu’s Pelagian inclinations. As in the case of Arminius, who “diggeth Pelagius out of his graue”, Montagu also savored the teachings of the fourth-century British monk, who had not only opposed the idea of predestination, but relied upon an innate human ability to attain salvation through freedom of will. Thus, the guise of patristic rhetoric did not hide Montagu’s obvious debt to these old errors.<sup>188</sup> It is not difficult to see why Montagu’s genealogies seemed to be at odds with more conventional orthodoxies. As some staunch defenders of evangelical doctrine pointed out, if the historical continuity of the Church of England was vindicated solely within patristic discourse, then the victories of the Reformation would be effectively sidelined. The Scottish minister and historian David Calderwood, for example, claimed that some writers working within a patristic framework preferred “the meanest that carrieth the name of Antiquitie unto the vvorthiest

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<sup>187</sup> Daniel Featley, *The Romish Fisher caught and held in his owne net* (London, 1624), pp. 161-162, A REMONSTRANCE sent in a letter [51].

<sup>188</sup> Montagu’s works were situated within a patristic framework, and were generally in keeping with Protestant efforts to draw inspiration from the first centuries, using the latter to provide support for the doctrines and ritual practices of the Church of England. For the Stuart investment in scholarship, see Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford, 2009). For a brief overview of sacred history within early modern histories of intellectual change, see Dmitri Levitin, ‘From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to Enlightenment’, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 55 (2012), pp. 1117-1160.

instruments of that blessed vvorke of Reformation".<sup>189</sup> For Featley and Calderwood, if not also for many of their contemporaries, there was no Protestantism without martyrs.

There is no denying that Montagu revealed little sympathy for the reformed martyrs, and his idea of the succession of the church was not explained in Foxeian terms. In this regard, too, it is not difficult to see why contemporaries deemed his historical-theological writings as only half-step away from popery. A similar conclusion regarding the proto-Protestant pedigree was reached by the rival theologians of Roman Catholicism. For example, Richard Verstegan, a Catholic exile and martyrologist, passed information about the Protestant segregation for English readers, and willingly took part in the anti-Calvinist pamphlet campaign in his former homeland. Wishing to make contemporaries rethink their relationship with the Protestant reformation and their own deeply seated prejudices, he urged them to realize how John Foxe had usurped martyrs from the Hussites and Lutherans alike, and had incorporated them into his martyrology. Indeed, Foxe's narrative had a significant role to play in creating the myth of a unified Protestant movement, and Englishmen were used to relying "vpon the resolutenes of their Foxian, Martirs". In due course, they came to believe that "their sufferance for their Caluinistical cause were a marvelous, great argument of the goodness" of their cause. Verstegan, however, found Foxe's method unfair, not only towards the executed Catholics, but towards others as well. The number of executed reformers on whom the Calvinistic cause rested was in fact exceeded even by the executed Anabaptists, "perhaps ten for one".<sup>190</sup> In sum, then, such speculation about whether the heroic martyrs of the Protestant reformation had not in fact been little more than a lamentable band of heretics often struck contemporaries as papist.

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<sup>189</sup> David Calderwood, *The pastor and the prelate, or Reformation and conformitie* (Holland?, 1628), pp. 19-20.

<sup>190</sup> Richard Verstegan, *A toung-combat, lately happening, between two English soldiers* ([Mechelen], 1623), pp. 87-88.

### 3.3 INVOKING THE TESTIMONY OF MARTYRS AGAINST THE INNOVATIONS OF ANTI-CALVINISTS

Montagu's studies of early ecclesiastical history annoyed fastidious readers, and met with massive resistance from many quarters during the 1620s. His more liberal account of the doctrine of reprobation was offensive to religious sensibilities, an assault on tradition, and signaled an alarming departure from the doctrinal foundations of the Reformation.<sup>191</sup> The general problem for those harnessing anti-Roman polemics for the needs of the monarch was, as Jean-Louis Quantin has suggested, "just where to stop in the assault on tradition before it began to damage the Church of England's own case".<sup>192</sup> One particularly influential group of critics were those theologians who sought to preserve the continuity of the Calvinist consensus of the Jacobean church. In a number of tracts published before King Charles finally banned public discussion of predestination in 1626, they confronted Montagu over the questions of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. In underlining the importance of these Calvinist doctrines, they often sought support in the testimonies of martyrs, substantiating their own positions through reference to the latter. For many of Montagu's early critics, martyrs lent an almost inviolable authority to the essentially reformed doctrines for which they had died, and thus provided a means to defend the identity of the English church against ceremonialists who wished to restore the notion of real presence in Eucharist.

Since sixteenth-century reformed theology had been strongly colored by predestinarianism, and the most famous reformers had attacked the notion of free-will as a popish and unscriptural doctrine, it was easy to accuse the regime of having rejected a theological discourse that had been central to English Protestantism from its beginnings. There seems to have been a consensual understanding among the literate populace about the reasons why the sixteenth-century martyrs had decided to disobey the civil sovereign.

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<sup>191</sup> Of course, it is questionable how noticeable the crumbling of Calvinist hegemony was, how aware learned opinion was of the Arminian theological system, and how divided people were regarding the providential traditions. According to Peter Lake, for example, Calvinist predestinarianism had become the dominant strain of theological opinion in the Elizabethan church. See *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), p. 187.

<sup>192</sup> Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford, 2009), p. 299.

The development of a unanimous understanding owed no small part to John Foxe's martyrology, which had provided a classic description of several central theological concepts. It is certainly true, as Susannah Brietz Monta has suggested, that John Foxe contributed significantly to popularizing the doctrines of election, as well as the related doctrine of assurance.<sup>193</sup> People often took for granted that the leading martyrs held beliefs similar to those of early reformers such as Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin, and later Protestants such as Beza, Vermigli, Bucer, and Perkins. Writing in the mid-1620s, William Prynne asserted that faithfulness to reformed doctrine had earned England many providential favors, and pointed out that the Reformation martyr John Bradford, once chaplain to King Edward VI, had written no less than three separate works on predestination (*Defence of Election, A Treatise of Election and Free-will* and *A Brief Sum of the Doctrine of Election and Predestination*), and claimed that anyone who read the writings of the martyr Hugh Latimer would see that he concurred with "our Anti-Arminian Conclusion".<sup>194</sup>

In pursuit of proof in the rightness of their beliefs, there was a widespread tendency to rely on martyrological material. As one of Montagu's early opponents, Richard Bernard, pointed out, Montagu was mistaken in his conviction that stern perseverance in faith was "manifest in all holy and constant Martyrs in all ages". Impeccably Calvinist in theology, Bernard insisted that the endurance of martyrs demonstrated that so "great is the power of faith in desperate cases... [that] it cannot be lost".<sup>195</sup> Thomas Taylor, the curate at St Mary Aldermanbury, was convinced that the example of "all the glorious Martyrs that euer suffered" provided ample proof that the elect were willing to "suffer the extremest losse rather than lose [their] Religion", and

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<sup>193</sup> Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 18-20.

<sup>194</sup> William Prynne, *The Church of Englands old antithesis to new Arminianisme* (London, 1629), p. 55. In fact, some of the sixteenth-century martyrs featured in *Acts and Monuments* had rejected predestinarianism, but Foxe simply airbrushed them from his martyrology. Thomas Freeman, 'Dissenters from a dissenting Church: the challenge of the Freewillers, 1550-1558', in Peter Marshall & Alec Ryrie (eds.) *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002). Peter White has also asserted that when exploring the sixteenth-century sources, Prynne did not find "exactly what he wanted when he combed the works of the early Reformers". See Peter White, *Predestination, policy, and polemic: conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 39.

<sup>195</sup> Richard Bernard, *Rhemes against Rome* (London, 1626), pp. 314-315.

that for such individuals, death was “but a sweet and easie passage”.<sup>196</sup> And, in 1627, the Cambridge Hebraist Joseph Mede claimed to have been “deepely taken with the solide simplicity and powerfull spirit” of those Henrician and Marian martyrs “who [had] watered the garden of reformation with their owne bloud”. In particular, Mede discerned the “light of reformation” in the writings of the Henrician martyr John Frith, and the Marian martyrs John Bradford, Rowland Taylor and John Philpot.<sup>197</sup>

The only English bishop who took a public stand against Montagu in print was George Carleton, the bishop of Chichester and a former delegate to Dort. As he reminded his colleagues and other readers, one of the unsettling questions that Montagu had raised related to the core Calvinist teaching of the perseverance of the elect. Whereas committed Calvinists maintained that faith, once given to a saint, could not be lost, Montagu found such notions of perseverance objectionable, insisting that it was possible “by a wicked life [to] fall away from God”. Furthermore, Montagu noted that if his critics did not agree on this point, they “must hold that all men who are baptized are saved”.<sup>198</sup> In responding to the claim that the universal efficacy of baptism negated absolute predestination, Bishop Carleton was willing to deny the outright necessity of baptism. “We graunt”, Carleton noted, “that Martyrdome may be in stead of Baptisme”. After having drawn a distinction between faith and sacraments, he went on to underline the reformed principle of *sola fides* as the basis of salvation. Without faith, Carleton contended, “what is Martyrdome but plaine punishment [?]” In this sense, Montagu’s ideas constituted a departure from the established reformed tradition, being dramatically different to those of Protestants like Martin Bucer, Thomas Cranmer, and Peter Martyr. As “long as those worthy Bishops liued who were employed in the reformation”, Carleton wrote, there were no frictions, and “vniformity of Doctrine was held in our Church without disturbance”.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Thomas Taylor, *The parable of the sovver and of the seed Declaring in foure seuerall grounds* (London, 1621), pp. 318-319.

<sup>197</sup> Anon., *The Book-Fish, contayning three treatises which were found in the belly of a cod-fish* (London, 1627), pp. 27-28.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Montagu, *Appello Caesarem* (London, 1625), pp. 36.

<sup>199</sup> George Carleton, *An examination of those things wherein the author of the late Appeale holdeth the doctrines of the Pelagians and Arminians* (London, 1626), pp. 4-5, 103-104.



One notable figure in this theological countermovement was Daniel Featley, Archbishop Abbot's chaplain and a licenser of the theological press. Featley also drew inspiration from Montagu's remarks regarding baptism, denying that every baptized person was saved. Moreover, he contended that baptism was not a necessary instrument of salvation. In its absence, a simple desire for baptism, a profession of faith, or martyrdom would be more than sufficient. As a poignant example of salvation without baptism, Featley took up the biblical story of the Massacre of Innocents, in which the infants of Bethlehem were put to death by the tyrant Herod. Furthermore, Featley also attacked the sacramental reorientations that Montagu was bringing to English religious life. To Featley, Montagu's belief that Eucharist constituted an additional source of grace provided evidence of his departure from the doctrine of election, also being an error against the accepted explanation of sacraments as signs and tokens of Christ's sacrifice. In response to Montagu's claim that the sacramental differences between Rome and England were exaggerated, Featley referred to *Acts and Monuments*, pointing out that "most of our Martyrs dyed rather then they would acknowledge the Popish reall presence".<sup>200</sup>

Another writer in defense of Calvinism was the Ipswich minister John Yates, who managed to link Arminian ideas with the practice of persecution. According to Yates, the underlying problem of Montagu's theology was its latent antinomianism, the insistence that the moral law does not bind the elect. Its practitioners had "become wise without a rule and good without a Law", and therefore went on to create their own laws. For Yates, this kind of radical antinomianism, which trusted postlapsarian reason to distinguish right from wrong, was the underlying cause of all bloodshed. Behind persecution, there were always reprobates who had turned against the Creator and His laws. In support of his point, Yates invoked the story of the Israelites suffering under the reprobate Pharaoh. As he told his readers, "when God sent Moses and Aaron unto him", "the Law of their God [shining] forth cleerly in their works", Pharaoh became an "enraged Persecutor", who "caused so many Martyrs to lose their lives". The message addressed to Montagu was that the precepts of divine law ought to be preferred to free will, since

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<sup>200</sup> Daniel Featley, *A second parallel together with a vvrif of error sued against the appealer* (London, 1626), pp. 19-20, 88.

such a moral code not only opposed corruption, but was also “just and good because it limits mans liberty and stayes the current of his passions and desires”.<sup>201</sup>

In 1626, Montagu’s remarks regarding the freedom of the will were taken up by the clergyman Anthony Wotton. According to Wotton, such ideas owed more to the Jesuits than to Protestantism, and thus could not serve as the basis of an agreement between England and Rome.<sup>202</sup> In particular, he wondered why Montagu redefined theological doctrines on the model of the Council of Trent rather than the Articles of the Church of England, and lamented Montagu’s willingness to take lessons in logic from the Iberian scholastic philosopher Francisco Suárez, who “hath no old learning nor logick so good as Ramus”, the French Protestant humanist.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, it was surely no coincidence that Wotton published an edition of Peter Ramus’ *The art of logick* (1626) the very same year. As Wotton pointed out on the title page, Ramus had not only been a better philosopher than his Catholic neo-scholastic contemporaries, but had also been “martyred for the Gospell” in Paris during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre.<sup>204</sup> Finally, in addition to the question of free will, Wotton listed seventeen further points in which Montagu had expressed Arminian or Catholic leanings, and which threatened to undermine some of the fundamental assumptions of Calvinist soteriology.

For his part, King Charles was highly disturbed by the development of such debates. In order to promote peace among his subjects and to avoid the spread of controversial theology into the pulpit, he issued a proclamation on June 14, 1626, prohibiting discussion of the theme of predestination, and thus effectively limiting theoretical objections and clerical polemics against Arminianism. Without doubt, this measure did much to prevent the more intransigent predestinarians from reaching a larger audience. Nonetheless, the battles of the church parties received a good deal of attention in Parliament, where many members continued the struggle to uphold the orthodox doctrine against subversion. Here, the debate was far from being purely doctrinal controversy. Indeed, it is a moot point to exactly what extent members truly understood

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<sup>201</sup> John Yates, *Ibis ad Caesarem. Or A submissive appearance before Caesar* (London, 1626), pp. 54-55.

<sup>202</sup> Anthony Wotton, *A dangerous plot discovered* (London, 1626), p. 58.

<sup>203</sup> Anthony Wotton, *A dangerous plot discovered* (London, 1626), p. 77.

<sup>204</sup> See, Peter Ramus, *The art of logick* (London, 1626).

the theological intricacies and philosophical premises of the topic.<sup>205</sup> In effect, far more attention was paid to the political repercussions of Arminian priestcraft. Under these circumstances, the remonstrant theology was often lumped together with the Catholic cause, or seen as an unpatriotic and treasonous ideology and prelude to popery. Framing the divines close to Charles as Arminians was potentially dangerous to the accused. After all, for many early modern theorists, changing religion was a legitimate reason to disobey the civil sovereign.

### 3.4 CONSERVATIVE REACTIONS: PARLIAMENTARY APPEALS TO REFORMATION LEGACIES

During the 1620s, Parliament witnessed numerous attempts to resist the centralizing policies of Charles. The leaders of the Commons denounced the idea that a group of increasingly powerful clerics might modify spiritual matters with no serious debate, or abandon an article of faith by relying on royal authority. The leading exponent of the countervailing forces was the Devon MP John Pym, who sought to act as the guardian of the laws and customs of the country, and claimed that the English remonstrants had turned their backs on the international Reformed tradition. Pym continually assured the House of Commons that Montagu's work was nothing more than a conspiracy to bring in the remonstrant agenda by the back door. His fellow members of the parliamentary committee on religion broadly concurred with Pym, declaring that "Arminians may truly be styled the Jesuits of the Protestant religion".<sup>206</sup> Against the political pressure that Parliament put on Arminian clerics, Charles was keen to stress the purely theological nature of Montagu's works, arguing that these were of concern solely to the church and its royal governor. He deemed religious conformity a matter not of conscience, but rather of submission to royal authority. However, despite the closed ear of the monarch,

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<sup>205</sup> See *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 130. As Freya Sierhuis has emphasized, the question of God's eternal decree was both a difficult and dangerous subject, and was not brought into open debate prior to the Arminian controversy, nor conducted in the vernacular, nor addressed to a larger lay audience. See Freya Sierhuis, *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy: Religion, Politics, and the Stage in the Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 2015), p. 34.

<sup>206</sup> 11 June 1628, in Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole & William B. Bidwell (eds.) *Commons Debates 1628*, Vol. 4: 28 May - 26 June 1628 (New Haven, 1977), p.257.

Parliament did not grant him exclusive control of the church, and considered the confessional orientation to be of concern to the whole commonwealth. Indeed, in the speeches of parliamentarians, Arminianism was portrayed as no less than a capital enemy of the entire kingdom and commonwealth. In opposition, they sought to uphold the legally established Protestant religion, “the soul of a kingdom”, against all treasonable currents of thought. Given that the early modern martyrs were famous for their resistance to the assertion that religion is simply the will of the civil sovereign, it should not surprise us why the controversialist of the 1620s were prone to raise martyrological materials in their works. Their example constituted both an attractive and legitimate argument to raise against absolute accounts of royal authority over church and state.

The most striking expression of divine-right monarchism can be found in the sermons preached by royal chaplains, particularly after Charles and Parliament had drifted into dispute regarding lifelong grants of Tonnage and Poundage. The tension was particularly acute around the end of 1626, when seventy-six members opposed the forced loan demanded by the monarchy. These MPs were convinced that the loan was illegal and violated the liberties of subjects, and were even willing to suffer imprisonment for their opposition. Having been subject to arbitrary arrest and confiscation of property, these members could easily be portrayed as martyrs. Such a prospect was of concern to royal chaplains such as Roger Maynwaring, Robert Sibthorpe, and Matthew Wren, who provided valuable intellectual support to the Crown’s absolutist pretensions by combatting such political disobedience. What these clergymen had in common was their willingness to cow resistance through threats of eternal damnation, and to emphasize the doctrine of passive obedience within a larger scheme of salvation. One of their favorite tactics was to point out that submission was a divinely ordained duty, an argument that they illustrated through reference to the primitive martyrs.

The most outspoken defender of the Tonnage and Poundage was Roger Maynwaring, the royal chaplain, who, in the summer of 1627, delivered two sermons defending the royal right to raise finance without Parliament’s consent. In order to reinforce loyalty to the King, he used the early Christian martyrs as a prime example of the necessity of absolute obedience to the sovereign. In the course of Maynwaring’s sermon, it became clear that his argument was directed against those who had offended Charles by opposing his financial demands, and “thinke themselues *Martyrs*”. From the

pulpit, Maynwaring reminded the King's subjects that only by "patient and meeke suffering of their *Soueraignes* pleasure, they could become glorious *Martyrs*", and concluded with a warning about the dramatic consequences of a failure to do so. Subjects guilty of "resisting of *His will*", Maynwaring stated, "should for euer endure the paine, and staine of odious Traitors, and impious Malefactors".<sup>207</sup> The same assumption underpinned the message of the royal chaplain Isaac Bargrave, dean of Canterbury, who hoped that "there were none to tell vs that to obey our Prince is to betray our country", as well as that "there were none among vs who place their conscience too much in their will; who are all for faith and the first table, nothing for obedience and the second table".<sup>208</sup> Matthew Wren, the ceremonialist who accompanied Charles to Spain, provided similar support in a sermon delivered in February 1627. Although he did not make any explicit references to martyrs, one of his intentions was to clamp down on puritan sermons, and the related forces of "contempt and disobedience, in schisme and faction, both Ecclesiasticall and Civill".<sup>209</sup>

This denunciation was echoed around the same time by Robert Sibthorpe, vicar of Brackley, asserting in his *Apostolike Obedience* that it was sacrilegious to resist the political authorities. As had been the case with Maynwaring, this piece of pulpit rhetoric echoed the priorities of the crown, particularly in encouraging a more docile attitude towards the indefeasible rights of the Stuart dynasty, and in using martyrs as a strategy against anti-magisterial tendencies. Indeed, Sibthorpe declared that that he would personally rather die like the ancient martyrs of Antioch, or burn his hand like the martyred Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, than turn disobedient to his King.<sup>210</sup> According to Sibthorpe, by disobeying Charles, the targets of his polemic were imperiling their own salvation: anyone who "resisteth the Prince resisteth the power and ordinance of God, and consequently shall receive damnation".<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Roger Maynwaring, *Religion and alegiance in tvvo sermons* (London, 1627), pp. 18, 48-49.

<sup>208</sup> Isaac Bargrave, *A sermon preached before King Charles* (London, 1627), p. 18.

<sup>209</sup> Matthew Wren, *A sermon preached before the Kings Maiestie on Sunday the seventeenth of February* (Cambridge, 1628), pp. 23-24.

<sup>210</sup> Robert Sibthorpe, *Apostolike Obedience* (London, 1627), pp. 20-21.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

There is no doubt that the picture painted by these chaplains was likely to cause protests. The decision to raise martyrs as warning exemplars against disobedience was highly controversial, especially when members of Parliament were faced with a stark choice between conformity and the Tower while resisting the increasingly absolute accounts of the royal authority. In the first place, the plan to publish Maynwaring's sermons did not enjoy broad support among Charles' theological advisors. The Calvinist Archbishop George Abbot eschewed the strong absolutist tendencies of Maynwaring, and refused to license his sermons, with the consequence that he was ostracized from court. The task was then appointed to his nominal subordinate, William Laud, then serving as bishop of London, who also acknowledged the problematic nature Maynwaring's text, considering it to be unnecessarily provocative. However, Laud was overruled by the King. Abbot not only disliked the orientation of these sermons, but even believed they were engineered by his enemies, the Duke of Buckingham, the most powerful politician in the country, and the bishop of London, William Laud, to bring about his downfall.<sup>212</sup> In the end, the sermons played a crucial role in his fall from royal favor. However, for William Prynne, Abbot's efforts were sufficient reason to raise him to the company of "learned worthies" such as William Tyndale, John Fox, John Jewel, John Reynolds, William Perkins, and many others who had opposed the creeping influence of Rome in the past.<sup>213</sup>

As soon as members were summoned again, both Houses expressed their deep resentment of the claims that had been put forward by the clerical defenders of the unpopular forced loan.<sup>214</sup> In the limelight was Maynwaring, whose language and intimidation through reference to martyrs was deemed scandalously offensive. In his rendering of the Pauline doctrine of non-resistance, members argued, Maynwaring was twisting the meaning of Romans 13: 1–2 and I Peter 2:13, using martyrs to promote

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<sup>212</sup> Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford, 1987), p. 62; Johann P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 119-124.

<sup>213</sup> William Prynne, *A briefe suruay and censure of Mr Cozens* (London, 1628), epistle.

<sup>214</sup> The most famous contributor to the debates was Oliver Cromwell, then a relatively unknown East Anglian gentleman, who used his first known public speech to condemn Maynwaring's verbal abuse.

submission to absolutism.<sup>215</sup> For the parliamentary committee on religion, Maynwaring's words were a source of great anxiety. What made the sermons especially provocative was Maynwaring's incitement to give the "power to the King to take the goods of his subjects", and his simultaneous attempt to lay the blame on dissidents, particularly by putting a "scorn of martyrs upon those that shall be imprisoned for refusal".<sup>216</sup> Those churchmen who provided justification for unlimited royal authority were collectively condemned by Parliament in 1628, and escaped impeachment only through the personal intervention of the King.

In addition to being pardoned, Sibthorpe was rewarded with the vicarage of Burton Latimer, and Maynwaring was made bishop of St David's in 1636. Similarly, in 1628, when the Arminian debate was at its height, Montagu's efforts had been rewarded handsomely by Charles, who had elevated him to the bishopric of Chichester, formerly occupied by Montagu's Calvinist adversary George Carleton. The steady advancement of bishops who shared theological positions with Montagu represented a decisive setback for the Calvinist party. The promotion of new bishops in 1626, 1627, and 1628 guaranteed both the success of the Arminian circle and the decline of the influence of Archbishop Abbot and others with strong Calvinist credentials. As the balance within the ecclesiastical hierarchy changed, the Calvinists not only lost their grip on the King, but found themselves portrayed as instigators of popular disorder by those who now occupied the key positions in Charles' government. To consolidate their hold on power, the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy re-labelled the "old conformists" as puritan troublemakers and Presbyterian sympathizers, whose disruptive social behavior threatened the equilibrium of the nation. At one end of the spectrum we find Montagu, desiring a church that would "stand in the gapp against Puritanisme and Popery", and Charles' leading minister, the Duke of Buckingham, assigning William Laud the task of marking out the "orthodox" and "puritan" members of the senior clergy. At the other end, we find an upholder of Calvinist orthodoxy such as Samuel Ward, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, filling his notebooks with the terms "Remonstrant" and "Contra-

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<sup>215</sup> Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 175-76.

<sup>216</sup> Monday 5 May 1628, in Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole & William B. Bidwell (eds.) *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 3: 21 April - 27 Marý 1628 (New Haven, 1977), p. 262.

Remonstrant”.<sup>217</sup> Also on this side, George Carleton, a former delegate to the Synod of Dort and bishop of Chichester, maintained that the supposed puritan threat was nothing but a fabrication. As he put it, “hitherto there was no Puritane Doctrine”, the real “disturbers” of “vniformity” being the Cambridge Professors of Divinity, William Barrett and Peter Baro, who had begun to circulate alternative ideas regarding conditional predestination.<sup>218</sup>

The critique of Arminianism thus constituted a prominent feature of the movement known as Caroline puritanism. However, an even more significant symptom of the 1620s was the promotion of ceremonialist divines, which had the effect of broadening the category of nonconformity to include a much larger group of clergy. The historian John Spurr, for example, has paid attention to the widening spectrum of nonconformity, and noted that “many who saw themselves as merely Protestants at the beginning of the decade would see themselves, and be seen by others, as puritans before its close”.<sup>219</sup> The nominations made by Charles encouraged the belief that the King had become the patron of those theologians who opposed rigid predestinarianism. The latter were seen to be obtaining more and more power under Charles, and enjoying royal protections against Parliament. However, they were also establishing a new orthodoxy, one which identified Calvinism with puritanism, and thus dangerous to social and political stability.

A vivid reminder of such deep tensions arose when John Cosin, a chaplain in Durham and a member of the York House group, came under attack for his Arminian leanings. Cosin was also an editor and co-author of *Appello Caesarem*, and, like his friend Montagu, soon found himself censored for similar reasons. This clerical favorite of Charles came to public attention after he published a prayer book entitled a *Collection of Private Devotions in the Practice of the Ancient Church*. Originally, the idea had come from King Charles, who took a strong interest in the Catholic piety then current at the

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<sup>217</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘The Myth of the English Reformation’, in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1991), p. 4; Margo Todd, “‘All One with Tom Thumb’: Arminianism, Popery, and the Story of the Reformation in Early Stuart Cambridge”, in *Church History*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (1995), p. 576.

<sup>218</sup> George Carleton, *An examination of those things wherein the author of the late Appeale holdeth the doctrines of the Pelagians and Arminians* (London, 1626), pp. 5-6.

<sup>219</sup> John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603–1689* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.79.



court of Queen Henrietta Maria, and instructed Cosin to put together a new book of prayers for court ladies. According to Cosin, his work was intended as a reply to those who “accuse [us] here in England [of having set] up a new Church”.<sup>220</sup> Nevertheless, the result was a work that was self-consciously indebted to ancient forms of piety and devotion, taken mainly from the third century African bishop Cyprian, defender of the episcopal office, and martyr under Emperor Valerian.

The critics of Cosin’s prayer book placed great emphasis on its Popish leanings, which risked desacralizing the church. William Prynne, for example, deemed Cosin’s preference for liturgy over preaching alarming, and identified no less than 20 evidently popish points in the work.<sup>221</sup> A particularly striking feature in this regard was its prayers for the dead. Another complaint made against the book was its omission of Protestant martyrs. The *Collection of Private Devotions* included a calendar listing a set of “Gods true Martyrs”, but skewed towards the testimony of the ancients, to the extent that no reformed martyrs were included. Cosin’s emphasis on the medieval saints, it was asserted, inevitably served to downplay the role of the reformers and martyrs. Many of Cosin’s martyrs could not be “found in *rerum natura*, and others of them were neuer Sainted but at Rome”.<sup>222</sup> This generally served to underline the fact that Arminian clerics imbibed their hagiography from sources other than Foxe. Henry Burton, who had served as a chaplain in Charles’ household during his youth, wrote a lengthy rebuttal of Cosin’s work in 1628, in which he deemed the latter suspiciously popish. It was, Burton wrote, an attempt “to bring in Popery and the papacy againe into this State and Church”. Another crucial point of disagreement was that Cosin’s work was not in line with “the truth whereof hath beene sealed with the blood of so many Martyrs”.<sup>223</sup>

It had thus become common to associate those who supported the royal prerogative, or who occupied a key position in Charles’ government, with this disastrous legacy. Due to the rise of clerics who endorsed divine right definitions of monarchical power, Parliament began to take the preservation of the church as one of its principal

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<sup>220</sup> John Cosin, *A collection of private deuotions: in the practise of the ancient church* (London, 1627), Preface.

<sup>221</sup> William Prynne, *A quenck-coale* (Amsterdam, 1637), p. 22.

<sup>222</sup> William Prynne, *A briefe suruay and censure of Mr Cozens* (London, 1628), p. 6.

<sup>223</sup> Henry Burton, *A tryall of private deuotions* (London, 1628), pp. [63-64].

responsibilities. Leading parliamentarians were not only eager to uncover Arminians in high places, but saw it as equally important to censor the claims made by the royal chaplains. In the light of England's reformed heritage, it was claimed, Montagu's performance had offended against the laws of the kingdom. It was also feared that his "illegible inducements" might draw men into the church of Rome. It is highly interesting that when the parliamentary committee on religion produced a list of execrable opinions that its members had found in Montagu's work, martyrs were a focus of their attention. When Montagu "charges our religion to be doubtful and uncertain", the committee stated, he had in effect abused the English martyrs, denying them "the warrant of the martyr's death".<sup>224</sup>

Such accusations reached a peak in parliamentary speeches during the years between 1628 and 1629.<sup>225</sup> The resurgence of interest in Marian martyrs went hand in hand with an emphasis on the allegedly crypto-Catholic theology of the King's supporters. Many speakers exploited the potent language of Protestant martyrdom, and developed analogies between Arminian and Marian rule, in order to win sympathy for the truths they saw themselves as defending. The most notorious politician to use the Protestant heroes in this way was, once again, John Pym. For instance, he called upon Parliament to return to the reformed doctrine imposed under Edward VI, particularly as embodied in the articles of 1552, the Catechism of Edward VI, and "the constant profession sealed by the blood of so many martyrs, as Cranmer, Ridley, and others".<sup>226</sup> Another prominent politician who considered Arminianism as one of the schemes of the Jesuits, who were supposedly preparing for the re-catholicisation of England, was Francis Rous. In a pointed statement, this forthright opponent of remonstrance claimed that behind their anti-Catholic mask, its supporters were in fact a company of extremists, who harbored much darker intentions. "[W]e may look into the very belly and bowels of this Trojan horse", Rous warned, "to see if there not be men in it, ready to open the gates to Romish tyranny and Spanish monarchy; for an Arminian is the spawn of a papist". In

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<sup>224</sup> 11 June 1628, in Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole & William B. Bidwell (eds.) *Commons Debates 1628*, vol. 4: 28 May - 26 June 1628 (New Haven, 1977), pp. 257, 261-262.

<sup>225</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 133.

<sup>226</sup> Cobbet, William & al. (eds.), *The parliamentary history of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, Vol. 2, 1625-1642, (London, 1807), p. 446.

the face of this deeply subversive threat, Rous saw fit to appropriate the legacy of the executed Protestants, and to remind his audience of the peace and prosperity which had ever since been “streaming downe to us in the bloud of the Martyrs”.<sup>227</sup> A similar message was embodied pictorially in 1628, most likely by the Dutch printmaker, Friedrich van Hulsen. This picture illustrated a fight between truth and heresy, about to extend into outright civil war. At the center of the picture is a Jesuit friar, whose whispers are transmitted through Arminius to England. The visual message was reinforced with an accompanying text, which warned that the “Netherlands ruine” would be brought across the channel, “to change religion, and subuert vs all”.<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 5.** John Russell, *The spy discovering the danger of Arminian heresie and Spanish trecherie*, (Amsterdam, 1628).

<sup>227</sup> It was delivered in January 1629, but published in 1641, as Parliament began to propagate its proceedings more widely. Francis Rous, *A religious and worthy speech spoken by Mr. Rovse in Parliament concerning the goods, libertjes, and lives of his Majesties subjects* (London, 1641), pp. [4-5].

<sup>228</sup> Anon., *Great king protect vs with thy gracious hand, Or else Armenius will o're spred this land* (Amsterdam, 1628).

In the course of these disputes, the more recent victims of the House of Habsburg were also brought up. For instance, Sir Walter Raleigh, the last Elizabethan to be sacrificed for the Spanish cause in 1618, was invoked as a victim of imperial plotting around the time that the controversy was reaching its peak. Raleigh's early biographer, Lewis Stucley, remarked that the renowned anti-Spanish explorer might not have been the most obvious candidate for a martyr's glory, since his personal piety did not quite reach the usual standards. Indeed, he was better known for his other endeavors, which "verie much called his Saintshippe into dispute".<sup>229</sup> Nonetheless, in the face of open ideological disagreement, it was deemed appropriate to elevate this veteran of the Armada Wars to the status of a martyr. For example, John Russell situated Arminianism in the context of Spanish conspiracies, appealing to the memory of the notoriously hispanophobic Raleigh.<sup>230</sup> Another character whom Russell took up was the recently deceased Protestant preacher Thomas Scott. Scott has been perhaps the most prominent anti-Spanish polemicist, who, at the time when reconciliation with Spain seemed to be an option, had produced a stream of pamphlets warning his countrymen about a recurrence of a Roman Catholic monarch like Mary Tudor. It is remarkable that Scott had given a highly patriotic meaning to the term puritan, considering the puritan to be one who "counts himself a Martyr glorified; who in this cause suffers and condemnes All dangers in his way... [and who] condemnes All such as Traytors be to Church and state, who... for particular ends, and private aymes forsake their Countrey".<sup>231</sup>

These comments reflect the parrhesiastic emphasis that characterized public speech during the 1620s. Candid speech and bold action, regardless of likely consequences, were expected from those within the puritan tradition.<sup>232</sup> The act of speaking freely, even when facing persecution, was commended by the Cambridge puritan William Perkins, a robustly Calvinist writer, who urged willingness to heed the

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<sup>229</sup> Lewis Stucley, *To the Kings most excellent Maiestie* (London, 1618), p.16.

<sup>230</sup> John Russell, *The spy discovering the danger of Arminian heresie and Spanish trecherie* (Amsterdam, 1628).

<sup>231</sup> Thomas Scott, *The interpreter wherin three principall termes of state much mistaken by the vulgar are clearly unfolded* (Edinburgh?, 1622), pp. 4-5.

<sup>232</sup> See David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 7-8 and Ch. 1. For an overview of puritan politics, see Nicholas Tyacke, 'The Puritan Paradigm of English Politics, 1558 – 1642', in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (2010), p. 543.

call of martyrdom. Exhorting his readers to familiarize themselves with “Histories of sundry Martyrs, in the daies of Queene Mary”, he called upon them to obey the civil magistrate in all sufferings, simultaneously reminding them that refusal of this divinely assigned duty carried serious consequences.<sup>233</sup> The 1620s saw numerous public figures make similar appeals to the commonwealth. For instance, the puritan churchman John Preston, who had clashed in court with the royal favorite Buckingham, told his audience that they would win only rejection, persecution, tribulation in this world, and encouraged them to see themselves as martyrs. Preston was not only intellectually captivated by the world of Protestant martyrs, but even came close to becoming a martyr himself during the early 1620s, when he clashed with the ecclesiastical authorities over his supposed nonconformist tendencies, and eventually found his way into Samuel Clarke’s martyrology in the 1650s.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, the puritan churchman presented martyrdom as a positive choice, reminding his audience that “we are willing to aduventure our selues vpon it, to aduventure our goods, our name, our life, our liberty, that if a man bee brought to Martyrdome, hee can aduventure himselfe, and put all that hee hath vpon it”.<sup>235</sup> The significance of martyrs is often seen as part of moral and religious, rather than political, discourse. During the early years of Charles’ reign, however, the equation of reformed martyrs with the parliamentary cause, and the patriotic glorification of all sorts of martyrs, became an established feature of public discourse.

The significance of this rhetoric, which linked nobility with anti-monarchical action, was fully understood by Sir Robert Filmer, who lamented the growing opposition between discourses of martyrdom and obedience. Rejecting the idea that someone who defied the magistrate was a martyr, he wondered why many of his fellow Englishmen were “fooled into this Faith, that a man may become a *Martyr* for his *Country*, by being

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<sup>233</sup> William Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience distinguished into three books* (London, 1606), p. 377.

<sup>234</sup> It was bishop Lancelot Andrewes who informed the King about Preston, then a fellow of Queens College, Cambridge, describing him as a “very dangerous man”, who ought to be expelled from the university. However, it was suggested that such harsh action against him would be unwise, since it would serve to make him into a martyr. Indeed, instead of being expelled, Preston was made chaplain to Prince Charles a year later. John Preston stayed at the center of puritan politics, continuing to promote the Protestant cause until he clashed in court with the royal favorite Buckingham. See Thomas Ball, *The life of the renowned Doctor Preston* (London, 1885), p. 55.

<sup>235</sup> John Preston, *The breast-plate of faith and love* (London, 1630), pp. 38-39.

a *Traytor to his Prince*". This hardline royalist rejected the tendency to associate patriotic feeling with disobedience, and accused his countrymen of provoking a "most unnatural" political division, whereby men were considered to be either royalists or patriots.<sup>236</sup>

Around the time that Filmer was writing his *Patriarcha*, a similar semantic and conceptual separation between patriotism and martyrdom was suggested by the Northamptonshire clergyman Robert Bolton. In the context of an increasingly politically assertive puritanism, Bolton found the association between theologically justified patriotism and reformed martyr narratives tenuous. Thus, he warned against using the term in political persuasion, since people often failed to distinguish between martyrdom and public valor. In this sense, Bolton called upon his readers to consider whether the Roman virtue of self-sacrificing fortitude could really be reconciled with Christian paradigms of martyrdom. In particular, he argued that a virtuous life, a strong morality, and a willingness to die for one's cause did not in themselves make one a martyr. Undoubtedly, martyrs provided examples of fortitude in troubled times. However, "fortitude in this case, doth not arise, from any inspired religious vigour or heavenly infusions; but from the severer instigations of naturall conscience, and acquired manhood of a meere morall Puritane. Many such morall Martyrs have beene found amongst the more generous, and well-bred heathen".<sup>237</sup> Indeed, with the ascendancy of parliamentary puritanism in the 1620s, and the parrheistic rhetoric in which its supporters expressed their cause, the boundaries between civil and religious categories had become increasingly blurred.

The mounting controversy rose to such a point that the King found it necessary to fend off anti-Arminian allegations. In particular, Charles sought to put an end to the controversy in early 1629, by suppressing Montagu's *Appello Caesarem* through a royal proclamation. As the latter pointed out, Montagu's book was the "first cause" which had "much troubled the quiet of the Church", and it was thus being suppressed in order to avoid further dispute. However, this move did not prevent Parliament from meddling in ecclesiastical affairs, nor from speculating about the future of reformed religion. A few

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<sup>236</sup> Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or, The natural power of Kings* (London, 1680), p. 8.

<sup>237</sup> Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a right comforting afflicted consciences* (London, 1631), pp. 68-69.

months later, a dramatic session in Parliament, during which Sir John Eliot condemned both Arminianism and the continuing collection of ship money, led King Charles to dissolve Parliament, and to impose a system of Personal Rule designed to lessen his dependence on parliamentary approved taxation. When discussions reached a climax, it is indicative that John Pym was so concerned about the apparent triumph of crypto-popery at the royal court that he was willing to grant Tonnage and Poundage to the King, on the condition that Arminianism would be purged from the kingdom.<sup>238</sup>

### 3.5 RESISTANCE AGAINST CEREMONIALISTS

The above controversy did not remain within the walls of Westminster. In the pamphleteering campaigns, the disastrous legacy of the Dutch theologian was condemned on the grounds that it was paving the way for popery, promoting persecution, and threatening to loosen the bonds of both Jacobean Calvinism and reformed religion more generally. Among the literate, there was a widespread tendency to associate Arminianism with popery, and to emphasize the corrosive effect that High church ceremonialism was having upon the status quo. In 1628, the rector of St Matthew's, Henry Burton, called attention to the dangers that alternative teaching presented, alleging that there was much common ground between the European Jesuits and the English Arminians, to such a point that it had become difficult to distinguish between them. From here, it was but a short step to portraying Arminianism as the offspring of Jesuitism, particularly since the "Jesuited Arminians" seemed to subscribe to the philosophy of free will that had been propounded by the Spanish Jesuit scholar Luis de Molina. This kind of theological compromise was nothing less than anathema to Burton, whose intention was to call upon the King and Parliament to resist "the whole mystery of Arminius", which "foundeth man salvation not upon Gods free grace in predestinating, but in mans free will foreseen". Drawing inspiration from martyrs, he recalled the dangers of free will, strongly insisting that all Popish and Arminian doctrines be silenced, since both were against the "uniform

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<sup>238</sup> Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), p. 406.

doctrine of the Church of England”, “sealed by the blood of so many Martyrs, witnessed by so many Worthies of our Church”.<sup>239</sup>

Among those who invoked martyrs against the new theological currents was the legal scholar William Prynne, who emerged as one of the more fervent critics of Arminianism. In an appendix to one of his works, he published a list of people who had been touched and infected by the latter, and, in his eclectic reflections on the council of Dort during the later 1620s, he railed repeatedly against “an old condemned heresy”, raised by the “Jesuits and infernal spirits to kindle a combustion in all Protestant states and churches”. As an alternative, Prynne suggested that his readers “submit our spirits to the spirits and doctrine of all those famous Martyrs, Prophets, and Fathers of our Church”.<sup>240</sup> Prynne made effective use of the memory of reformed martyrs, particularly as a bulwark against alternative teaching. According to Prynne, the latent Arminianism of the Caroline religious program threatened to cancel out the entire inheritance of reformed theology, as well as to obliterate the memory of the early evangelical opponents of the papacy. In Prynne’s teleology of freedom, the turning point occurred at the nation’s liberation from the papal yoke of ignorance and tyranny. In this sense, Prynne acknowledged the Protestant martyrs not only as victims of Catholic oppression, but also as the most evident illustration of the free spirit of English reformers. He expressed concerns regarding the current ecclesiastical regime and its leaders, who were compromising the legacy of the English reformation, and driving the country back to papal subjugation. Since the execution of the biblical translator William Tyndall by the Henrician government in 1536, the Reformation had followed in the footsteps of persecuted theologians, who would not have recognized the innovations that were currently being introduced. In Prynne’s reflections, there was a desire to show that high-church conformists were turning their backs upon the martyrs of the past, and were planning to “dis-inherit them of their ancient Freedome”, and to “shoulder them out of our Church”. In short, calling into question the theological positions which had been confirmed through the martyrdom of reformers was an insult to their memory. “Shall we

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<sup>239</sup> Henry Burton, *The seven vials* (London, 1628), preface, pp. 58-59, 109-111.

<sup>240</sup> William Prynne, *The Church of England’s Old Antithesis to New Arminianism* (1629), To the Christian Reader.



thus repay our blessed Martyrs for all their glorious sufferings”, Prynne asked rhetorically, adding that “disputing or doubting these Theological positions” amounted to “dis-martyr, yea uncrowne, and tread them vnder foot”.<sup>241</sup>

In the years during which the Arminian speculation was gaining momentum, many became alarmed by the English church’s apparent discrimination against the puritan clergy. At least for some Englishmen, it was a persistent concern that the implementation of the Arminian doctrine might lead to the suppression of its opponents at any time. The lawyer Christopher Sherland, for example, warned against overlooking the deeper message of the Arminians, who had “sought the ruin of the Low Countries”, and, in England, “flatter[ed] greatness to oppress the subject”.<sup>242</sup> Bearing recent developments in mind, Robert Bolton reminded his audience about the natural human impulse to persecute, which could manifest itself in many different forms. By way of example, he cited not only those who had persecuted openly by hand, such as the Marian bishops Edmund Bonner and Stephen Gardiner, but also, and even more insidiously, the “politicke and reserved” agents of oppression, who tormented with tongue, in heart, and in gesture. Bolton advised his audience not to sit passively awaiting persecution. The most effective way to counter such wicked men was not submission, the old minister suggested, but rather to insist that they should fear the consequences of their actions.<sup>243</sup>

At a time when puritan preachers and controversialists were being silenced, deprived of their livelihoods, and, in some cases, forced to flee abroad, the hotter sort of Calvinist began to appear, claiming that the ecclesiastical governors were on the point of becoming papist oppressors. William Ames, for instance, identified compelling similarities between the contemporary Caroline bishops and the Marian bishops of the 1550s: “Prelates”, he wrote, “may be likened unto that of Queene Maries Prelates, who when they condemned the Martyrs, sayd they did it with greife”.<sup>244</sup> In his anti-Arminian tract *The seuen vials*, Henry Burton associated Arminianism with a wrong-headed

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<sup>241</sup> William Prynne, *The Church of Englands old antithesis to new Arminianisme* (London, 1629), The Epistle Dedicatorie.

<sup>242</sup> Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), p. 379.

<sup>243</sup> Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a right comforting afflicted consciences* (London, 1631), pp. 66-68.

<sup>244</sup> William Ames, *A fresh suit against human ceremonies in God's vvorship* (1633), pp. 108-109.

toleration of Catholicism. For Burton, it was a cause of wonder that the regime granted toleration for a powerful Catholic minority, while simultaneously persecuting Calvinist preachers and pastors. He doubted that the papists had lost their will to torture and oppress, since so many instances of the latter had recently been manifested. Moreover, Burton claimed that contemporary Catholics still saw the reign of queen Mary as a missed opportunity, and were still driven by the same self-interested passions as their predecessors, as was evident in their “affection, approbation, allowance of the crueltie of their fore fathers”. Even if “our present English Papists will say (...) they are not the offspring of those whose hand were imbrued in the blood of Martyrs”, Burton asserted, they “will deny those to be Martyrs of Christ who were put to death in Queene Maries dayes”.<sup>245</sup>

Indeed, a consequence of promoting ceremonialists like Laud, Cosin, and Wren was the repression of those who stood in the way of the high-church faction. Several notorious examples occurred during the late 1620s. Perhaps the most prominent victim was the old churchman Peter Smart, chaplain in Durham Cathedral, who joined the anti-Arminian outburst in a highly controversial sermon delivered in 1628. Here, Smart commented upon the theme of Psalm 31: “I hate them that hold of superstitious vanities”. This effectively sealed his future in the Caroline church. Smart was clearly troubled by the changes brought in by bishop Neile and his fellow chaplain John Cosin, and, in his sermon, accused them of hijacking the Reformation for their own purposes: “they call it a Reformation but it was indeed a Deformation”. Moreover, Smart expressed his unease regarding the erection of an altar, and the introduction of sensual rites and ceremonies, into Durham Cathedral, all of which he identified as symbols of Arminian corruption. In the course of his sermon, he cited the response that the Italian reformer, Pietro Martire Vermigli, had given to the Marian bishop Stephen Gardiner, “what use is there of an altar where no fire burnes, nor beasts are slaine for sacrifice”, and invoked those primitive martyrs who had rejected altars. In this sense, he ridiculed the idea of a reformed church with a material altar, under which “Martyrs soules” would be “crying some of them sixteene hundred yeeres”.<sup>246</sup> Consequently, Smart was sentenced to a long term of

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<sup>245</sup> Henry Burton, *The seven vials* (London, 1628), preface, pp. 58-59, 109-111.

<sup>246</sup> Peter Smart, *A sermon preached in the cathedrall church of Durham* (Edinburgh, 1628), pp. 30-31.

imprisonment by order of the High Commission. Somewhat later, in 1640, the newly elected parliamentarians praised him as the “first confessor of note in the late days of persecution”, and endorsed him as “a proto-martyr”. He was then released in January 1641.<sup>247</sup>

Another famous anti-Arminian silenced by the authorities was the puritan preacher Alexander Leighton. Not long before Leighton found himself in prison in 1630, he had organized a petition for the abolition of episcopacy, including the names of some 500 ministers. Although Leighton never revealed the names on his list, realizing the likely political consequences, he chose to appeal to the King and Parliament in a tract, in which he called attention to the implications of Arminianism. For Leighton, who had little respect for the hierarchies and institutions of episcopacy, martyrs provided inspiration, particularly through their long history of opposition to the latter. What had happened in 1553–1558, Leighton claimed, was now happening again. Looking back at the reign of Mary Tudor, and her attempt to re-establish Catholicism, he argued that the current bishops of the Church of England were little different from their Tudor predecessors, such as Stephen Gardiner, Edmund Bonner, and Thomas Woolsey, all of whom had condemned reformers as heretics, and burned them at the stake. Then, as now, “they usurp the same power and jurisdiction and exercise the like tyranny over Ministers and people”. Once again, Leighton stated, the holy were being persecuted by the hierarchy.<sup>248</sup> As a consequence of his outspokenness, Leighton was mutilated and imprisoned for life in November 1630. Parliament released him in January 1641, and appointed him keeper of Lambeth Palace.

In the first months of Charles’s Personal Rule, a relatively unknown London preacher, Thomas Salisbury, was ousted from the ministry. Undeterred, he left his mark by waging a war against Arminianism, particularly in a sermon which led to him being forcibly silenced in 1629. In his inflammatory preaching, he denounced those persons who turned “against Reason in the state”, and condemned the “late impermixt Religion

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<sup>247</sup> Cobbet, William & al. (eds.), *The parliamentary history of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, Vol. 2, 1625–1642, (London, 1807), p. 725.

<sup>248</sup> Alexander Leighton, *An Appeale to the Parliament, or, Sions Plea Against the Prelacy* (Amsterdam, 1629), pp. 21, 68-69.

in our Church”. Furthermore, Salisbury encouraged his audience to be aware of the commonwealth’s uncertain future, particularly due to the threat of absolute monarchy. For instance, he used highly classical examples of patriotism to encourage his audience to defend their liberties. “Even the heathen Spartans”, Salisbury asserted, had been willing “to sacrifice themselves in soe good a cause as the liberty of their country... Are not our Libertyes as deare to us as theirs [?]”. While Salisbury warned his fellow-patriots about the threat of a factious takeover of the government by certain courtiers, he nevertheless encouraged his hearers to suffer all things in a “passive fortitude”.<sup>249</sup>

### 3.6 DEFENDING THE ROYAL CHURCH AGAINST POPULIST LIBELLERS

The most extreme challenge to Calvinist orthodoxy came from the Oxford theologian Thomas Jackson. Arminian positions had been expressed perhaps most evidently in the works of Richard Montagu, and the studies of Jackson were shaped by similar views, as contemporaries were quick to point out. Sir Robert Harley, for example, who, in 1628, collected a list of those who “pretend they are reformed religion and Church of England”, found a new target for his allegations, considering Jackson not only far more dangerous than the recent divine right preachers Cosin, Sibthorpe, and Maynwaring, but even “no less dangerous than Montagu”.<sup>250</sup> Jackson was a doctor of divinity and future president of Corpus Christi, who wrote in a philosophical tone, and offered a liberal account of the doctrine of reprobation. In his *Treatise of the Divine Essence and Attributes* (1628), he was far from subscribing to the notion of absolute predestination, and instead considered the whole doctrine to be simply “ignorant”.

Particularly given the fact that there was very little self-conscious promotion of Arminian dogma, and that the ceremonialists were decidedly wary about raising certain controversial themes, it is all the more remarkable that Jackson undertook to demonstrate that these supposedly innovatory ideas had in fact long been present within Protestant discourse. To prove that the anti-predestinarian theology of grace was not in

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<sup>249</sup> Salisbury’s remarks cited in David R. Como, ‘Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud’s London’, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2003), pp. 270-272.

<sup>250</sup> Robert C. Johnson & al. (eds.) *Proceedings in Parliament 1628*, vol. 2 (New Haven, 1977-1983), p. 86.

the least bit innovatory, Jackson presented John Hooper, the reformed bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, who had been martyred under Mary Tudor, as an illustrious predecessor of such beliefs. This was a strategic move by Jackson to use John Hooper as a legitimizing example, since Hooper was widely known as one of the forefathers of vestiarian non-conformity, having refused to wear the traditional vestments at his consecration. By claiming to be following the prescriptions of Hooper, Jackson was able to turn a martyr usually associated with radical Protestantism against his adversaries.

In the first part of *Divine Essence and Attributes*, Jackson invoked a passage from Hooper's preface to *Ten Commandments*, in order to counter rigid understandings of total deprivation, and to demonstrate, with an authentic martyr's voice, that there was nothing shockingly new about the doctrine of general redemption. Hooper wrote:

*“Every man is in Scripture called wicked, and the enemy of God, for the privation and lacke of faith and love, that hee oweth to God. Et impij vocantur, qui non omnino sunt pij; that is, They are called wicked, that in all things honour not God, beleve not in God, and observe not his commandements as they should doe; which we cannot doe by reason of this naturall infirmity, or hatred of the flesh, as Paul calleth it, against God. In this sense taketh Paul the word wicked”.*<sup>251</sup>

Jackson used this passage to provide a rationale for his understanding of the magnitude of the fall of man, before moving on to underline the unconditional effects of salvation for the whole fallen humankind. From Hooper's writing, Jackson noted, one could clearly observe that the “Father doth love all mankind without exception”. From this it followed that “the Sonne of God did redeeme not some onely of all sorts, but all mankind universally”. A comparable argument was put forward by Christopher Potter, the translator of Paolo Sarpi and a royal chaplain to Charles, who also aligned himself with the martyr Hooper, recommending the latter as a guide to vexatious theological dilemmas, which “wit of man cannot better determine”. Furthermore, Potter judged the Tudor martyrs to be far more charitable in the way that they debated theology than his own

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<sup>251</sup> Thomas Jackson, *Treatise of the Divine Essence and Attributes* (London, 1628), pp. 180-181.

contemporaries. Unlike present-day Caroline puritans, “our owne blessed Martyrs in the daies of Queene Mary, in their very prisons freely disputed and dissented in these opinions”.<sup>252</sup>

Not long afterwards, the scrupulous Calvinist scholar William Twisse entered the debate, seeking to counter Jackson’s Arminian tenets. Remarkably, Twisse called Jackson not only “more fowle than Arminius himselfe”, but also deemed his reading of Hooper highly misleading, mainly because it failed to distinguish between his own views and those of Hooper. In this sense, Jackson had disingenuously written “as if [his] opinions were confirmed by [Hooper’s] martyrdom”. In short, Twisse did not share Jackson’s analysis at all. According to him, Hooper’s brief passage was not in the least bit antagonistic to the Calvinist theology of grace, and was strictly synonymous with Twisse’s own understanding of the latter. Out of all “you have transcribed out of Bishop Hooper”, he informed Jackson, “I finde nothing that contradicteth any of these assertions of mine”.<sup>253</sup> In the lengthy rebuttal that followed, Twisse traced in scrupulous detail the limitations of Jackson’s claims. If Jackson’s intention was to draw authority from Marian martyrs, then the example of Hooper was oddly chosen. In sum, Twisse found it highly unlikely that Hooper would have agreed with Jackson and the bishops of the Caroline Church.

Twisse doubted, for example, whether Jackson would endorse Hooper’s doubts regarding the episcopal foundations of Church government. Indeed, the martyred bishop had written as if he was advocating Presbyterianism rather than Episcopalianism. As Twisse pointed out, Hooper had condemned “Bishops of his dayes, for arrogating to themselves so much wit as to rule & serve in both states, in the Church and in the Civill policie; and to the contrary professeth, that one of them is more then any man is able to satisfie”. Twisse doubted that even Jackson could “expect that all the Bishops in England should bee of his judgement”.<sup>254</sup> In short, Twisse argued that Jackson was an

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<sup>252</sup> Christopher Potter, *A sermon preached at the consecration of the right Reverend Father in God Barnaby Potter DD. and L. Bishop of Carlisle* (London, 1629), pp. 69-70.

<sup>253</sup> William Twisse, *A Discourse of D. Jackson’s Vanity* (Amsterdam, 1631), pp. 3, 578.

<sup>254</sup> William Twisse, *A Discourse of D. Jackson’s Vanity* (Amsterdam, 1631), p. 575.

untrustworthy guide to Hooper, who offered a selective reading and tendentious misinterpretation of his thoughts, and who ascribed to him many of his own beliefs.

Hooper was taken up once again in a notorious Arminian work by a writer using the penname “John Ailward”, very probably John Andrewes.<sup>255</sup> This was perhaps the single most audacious work in the polemical genre that sought to argue that allegedly Arminian innovations in fact had a long, reformed pedigree. Here, Ailward adopted essentially the same rhetorical strategy as Jackson. Against the widely-held assumption that all renowned Protestant martyrs had been predestinarians, Ailward sought to associate the most celebrated Foxeian martyrs, Hooper, Cranmer, and Latimer, with Arminian points of view. This effort was particularly effective, since “None of Them could iustly bee Charged, or Branded, with any Hereticall, or damnably-Erroneous Doctrine”. Nor was it feasible that the early Protestants could have been anti-Arminians, since “these holy martyrs for [the] gospel of Jesus” knew nothing about “Remonstrants in Leyden”, who had never even been born at the time of the Marian persecutions. Indeed, no one could accuse them of having been unfaithful to the Church, or having originated heterodox doctrines. Their example rather pointed to the conclusion that at the center of contemporary attention was the “same Doctrine, that was long agoe deliuered by These Holy Martyrs and Fathers of our Church”.<sup>256</sup>

While Ailward’s aim was to demonstrate that supposedly Arminian arguments could be found among martyred bishops, his target was the popularized version of divine foreknowledge. This highly rhetorical charge was pressed against those who embraced the doctrine of predestination as a legacy of the martyrs, but who at the same time ignored the views of Marian bishops regarding this doctrine. Critical of the puritan emphasis on predestination, Ailward drew attention to John Knox as an author of this deterministic position.<sup>257</sup> Knox was regarded as the founding father of sectarian

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<sup>255</sup> Anthony Milton, ‘Martin Edward’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004) [accessed April 10, 2014]. The work was licensed by Edward Martin, the president of Queen’s College, in October 1630.

<sup>256</sup> J. A. of Ailward, *An historicall narration of the iudgement of some most learned and godly English bishops, holy martyrs, and others* (London, 1631), Epistle to the Reader.

<sup>257</sup> After his mentor George Wishart was burned as a heretic in January 1546, the radicalized Knox began to write extensively on the theme of resistance to political authorities. He was known not only for his seditious preaching against Mary, but also for allowing the godly people to resist idolatrous tyrants. Knox

radicalism and a firebrand predestinarian, and represented as nothing more than a stark and heathen determinist.<sup>258</sup> According to Ailward, the Scottish reformer had replaced the traditional concept of Providence with the Stoic concept of Fortuna. For instance, Knox was said to have declared in the 1550s that “whatsoever the *Ethnicks* and *Ignorant* did attribute unto *Fortune*, *WEE* assigne to the *PROVIDENCE* of *GOD*”. By drawing on heathen narratives of providence, Knox had taken predestination to extremes. Pursued to its logical conclusion, Ailward insisted, Knox’s notion served to diminish human agency, and to promote the belief that men were inevitably inclined to treason, conspiracy, and other evils. One part of his strategy was to show that this heathenish understanding of providence could slide towards fatalism, and thus have calamitous effects on the whole commonwealth. In Ailward’s mind, it raised a fundamental question about whether this current of thought was not in fact behind all misfortunes and political crises. If these teachings had destroyed Rome in ancient times, Ailward asked, “who seeth not the Destruction of England to follow this Doctrine?”<sup>259</sup> For Ailward, it was a short step from Knox’s view, in which providence determined and necessitated everything, to encouraging people to think that resistance to temporal authority was divinely mandated from before the beginning of time.

Having made this point, Ailward went on to invoke the counter-example of Hugh Latimer, the Edwardian bishop of Worcester and Gloucester, who had been martyred in 1555. As Ailward pointed out, Latimer’s comments regarding the role of predestination were very different to the views that puritans commonly attributed to the early reformation. In particular, Latimer had recommended leaving aside this contentious subject, which was, in any case, beyond all human comprehension, and had thus urged his readers to: “avoyd the scrupulous, and most dangerous question of the Predestination

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was also Foxe’s friend and co-exile in Frankfurt, and he also wrote a martyrological account of the Scottish reformation, which focused on the sufferings of the godly reformers. It is perhaps needless to say that his name carried an overwhelmingly negative charge among the members of the Caroline high church party.

<sup>258</sup> Ailward undoubtedly gave a misleading impression of Knox, who had, in a tract called *On Predestination* (1560), condemned the providential determinism advocated by the Hellenistic philosophers: “We plainely do affirme, that the opinion of the Stoikes is damnable and false”. See John Knox, *An Answer to a great number of blasphemous cavillations* (London, 1560), p. 19.

<sup>259</sup> J. A., of Ailward, *An historicall narration of the iudgement of some most learned and godly English bishops, holy martyrs, and others* (London, 1631), p. 38.



of God”.<sup>260</sup> Thus, according to Ailward, puritans were in fact adopting a position diametrically opposed to that of the godly martyr Hugh Latimer.

*An historicall narration of the iudgement of some most learned and godly English bishops, holy martyrs, and others* was a brilliant propaganda coup against puritans, confronting them on their own ground. It is also highly interesting that similar accounts about the problems and dangers of the puritan view were put forward by Roman Catholic publicists. The author of *An apology of English Arminianisme* (1634), for example, informed his readers that “the former Protestants” such as John Foxe would agree on points of salvation with the fashionable Arminian theologians. In a work printed at the Jesuit press in St Omer, the anonymous writer both greeted the recent current of theological thought as a positive development, and denounced the desperate doctrines of Calvin which gave rise to the view that “God was the Author of their disobedience”.<sup>261</sup> In a similar way to the leading clerical members of the Stuart monarchy, Roman publicists thus alleged that the true enemies of the King’s government were the puritans, who challenged and undermined royal authority. The idea that second-generation Calvinist theology inevitably led to political subversiveness is of course contentious. However, there can be no doubt, as Anthony Milton has observed, that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination tended to undermine sacramental efficacy, and thereby institutional authority in general.<sup>262</sup> Some contemporaries indeed suggested that the regime had every reason to be wary of the destabilizing influence of the puritans, and had an obligation to suppress the determinist and predestinarian position associated with them. As Samuel Brooke, master of Trinity College, Cambridge, told William Laud in 1630, the “doctrine of predestination is the root of Puritanism, and Puritanism the root of all rebellion, and disobedient intractableness in Parliaments, and all schism and sauciness in the country, nay in the church itself.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>261</sup> O. N., *An apology of English Arminianisme* (St Omer, 1634), pp. 139, 159. 169-170.

<sup>262</sup> Antony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 554.

<sup>263</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Series of the Reign of: Charles I 1629-31*, ed. John Bruce (London, 1860), Vol. 177, pp. 410-422.

Such attempts to appropriate martyrs and other seminal Protestant thinkers as the acceptable face of Arminianism was deeply deplored by some readers, such as the historian Sir Humphrey Lynde. Reluctant to admit Ailward's thesis, Lynde offered a more careful assessment of the text in question, and, with the help of experts, was able to claim that it was in fact a forgery. This and other similar efforts to retrospectively align the heroes of the Reformation with an anti-predestinarian position were deeply contested towards the end of Personal Rule. For example, in the late 1630s, William Prynne provided a refutation of Ailward's work, which, he claimed, was a discredit to the piety of martyrs, and, furthermore, had really been written by a recently converted Roman Catholic priest.<sup>264</sup> The revolutionaries of the 1640s accused Ailward's work of representing a major attempt to generate an Arminian hagiography, and to thus pollute the memory of the reformed martyrs. The Scottish Presbyterian Robert Baillie, who served as a regimental chaplain during the Scottish invasion of northern England, and who wrote a number of anti-prelatical tracts, accused the Laudian senior clergy of having attempted to turn "the first reformers and Martyrs of England into Arminians". According to Baillie, equally absurd was the more recent claim, to the effect that the "martyred Reformers, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, were of Luthers Schoole, and from him had learned those things, wherein the *English Church* did differ from the other Reformed of Calvines framing".<sup>265</sup>

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

My objective in this chapter has been to revise our understanding of the ways in which ideas of martyrdom were voiced at the beginning of the reign of Charles Stuart. An Arminian England might have been inconceivable to most Englishmen during the early 1620s. However, towards the end of the decade, the idea of a company of clerics turning Charles away from the international Reformed cause seemed to have become a reality. Nonetheless, we still have a great deal to learn about the development of radical positions

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<sup>264</sup> William Prynne, *A quench-coale* (Amsterdam, 1637), p. 23.

<sup>265</sup> Robert Baillie, *Ladensium autokatakrisis, the Canterburians self-conviction* (Amsterdam?, 1640), p. 31.

and nonconformity, hostility towards clerical favorites, and the first stage in an ideological transition that would reshape Stuart politics, and encourage active thinking about the locus of ecclesiastical sovereignty. After the period of the creative compromises of James' reign, the confessional tone changed under his son, whose reign was marked by deepening theological polarizations, church jurisdictional conflicts, and schisms between Parliament and monarchy. These developments owed much to the rise of high church conformists, and their unpopular clerical program, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, ultimately failed to transform traditional religious mentalities.

The issue of Arminianism gave rise to a very considerable body of polemical literature during the 1620s, but, apart from this name, English developments did not owe much to the Dutch theologian. If, as it seems, the Caroline ecclesiastical hierarchy agreed with him in some points, it did not align itself with him in public, or promote its religious policies in positively Arminian terms. Even if the accused theologians never admitted to Arminianism in doctrine, their speculations reached well beyond the ecclesiastical realm into Parliament and popular pamphlets, where royal policies were often condemned as an attempt to redefine the identity of the Church. In the realm of public debate, the issue was fraught with ideological distortions of its own. Both anti-Calvinist churchman and puritans attempted to discredit each other in the eyes of the wider public. Often, the puritan equation of free will with popery was countered with an equation of predestination with puritanism.

The overarching intention of this chapter has been to focus on what could be done with martyr-narratives during the debates of the 1620s. The figure of a martyr, like many other theological concepts at the time, was fraught with tensions. On Parliament's side, there was outright political victimization. As Sir Robert Filmer pointed out, the 1620s gave rise to the division between royalists and patriots, and the idea that "a man may become a *Martyr* for his *Countrey*, by being a *Traytor* to his *Prince*".<sup>266</sup> In addition, parliamentarians returned time and again to the sixteenth century, in order to make propaganda capital out of its martyrs. In a conscious reaction against anti-Arminian writing, the apologists of the church establishment used the prestige of reformed martyrs

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<sup>266</sup> Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or, The natural power of Kings* (London, 1680), p. 8.

to tone down allegations regarding doctrinal innovations, and to insist that their theological guidelines were merely a restatement of old-fashioned principles. In short, their major strategy was to raise the testimonies of early reformers such as Luther and Melanchthon, and English martyrs such as Philpot and Latimer, and use them to counter deterministic understandings of predestination. Such endeavors led to persistent allegations of a conscious manipulation of the legacy reformed martyrs.

Taken together, the evidence examined in this chapter indicates that the efforts of the ecclesiastical authorities to re-shape the confessional tone, and gradually to extend civil authority into clerical territory, was not a painless process, even when provided with large-scale institutional support. Charles' religious regime could not abandon a generalized theory about providence without serious debate. Yet the tension between church teaching and popular belief during the 1620s was only the start of a long debate, by which the authority of the Stuart monarchy was eroded. One of the theologians who prospered under Charles was William Laud, who had, in his own words, "nothing to do to defend Arminianism", but, at the same time, desired more thoroughgoing changes to the church structure. This controversial Archbishop did not disguise his dislike of popular Calvinist divinity, and was no friend of those puritan preachers who claimed that "the true saints of God may commit horrible and crying sins, die without repentance, and yet be sure of salvation". Laud was equally critical of the idea that "God from all eternity reprobates by far the greater part of mankind to eternal fire, without any eye at all to their sin", and took pains to dissociate himself from such obscurities, since they made "the God of all mercies, [out] to be the most fierce and unreasonable tyrant in the world".<sup>267</sup> In the next chapter, we will consider another dimension of this ideologically loaded affair. As soon as the high-church ceremonialists began to reshape the church in their own image and to weed out non-conformists, their actions immediately provoked dissent.

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<sup>267</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*. Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1847), p. 267; *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 6, Part 1 (Oxford, 1847), pp. 132-133.

## CHAPTER 4

# Remembering Marian martyrs during the Personal Rule of Charles I

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Around the time that the famous puritan trials took place, John Bastwick, one of the three prominent puritans who suffered mutilation for defying Laudian censorship in 1637, offered an illuminating example of the fundamental distinction that underlay the tensions and conflicts within the Caroline Church. What underpinned the new establishment as a whole, Bastwick claimed, was its hostility to the Protestant martyrs of the Marian period (1553–1558). Explaining why the leading theologians of the time had become alienated from the reformed tradition, Bastwick cast aspersions on the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, where, he claimed, young students perceived martyrs as “fanaticall and brainsick fellowes”. According to Bastwick, however, such deeply embedded hostility towards martyrs was a predictable consequence of the teaching of the Professors of Divinity, who largely undermined the authority of the martyrs, and often overlooked them just as the papists did, describing them as “rather mad than judicious”. In this changing theological climate, it was hardly surprising that the leading churchmen tended to diminish the importance of the testimonies of martyrs. However, Bastwick developed his analysis further: the Caroline clergy was actually in two minds when it came to those who

had suffered martyrdom during the burnings of the 1550s. Diligent ministers and prelates skillfully embellished their speeches, Bastwick complained, so that when it proved convenient, they deployed and much praised martyrs to the public at large. Yet behind their lavish praise, they really neglected, and even “immortally hate[d]” the latter, just as they hated the Genevan reformer Jean Calvin.<sup>268</sup>

Bastwick’s claim that Caroline church authorities undervalued martyrs while at the same time employing them in the service of current orthodoxy remains interesting.<sup>269</sup> But instead of taking his accusation at face value, it is perhaps more revealing to place this remark in the ideological and cultural context in which it was made. Viewed thus, it gives a clue as to the character of the divided Carolines, and provokes a series of intriguing questions about the role martyrs played in *ecclesia anglicana*. Did the Laudian program attempt to marginalize the sixteenth-century reformation and to downplay the significance of its martyrs? How was the legacy of the Tudorian martyrs variously exploited by the Laudians and puritans? Answers to these questions are not self-evident. My aim in this chapter is to provide a fuller picture of the issues that shaped the ideological landscape of Protestant culture during Charles’ Personal Rule, particularly by exploring the tensions reflected in, and articulated around, Foxe’s protestant martyrology. After looking at the parameters within which Foxeian discourse was conducted, I wish to recover some lost aspects of the trials of the famous puritan dissidents William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton, all of whom refused to submit to the norms of the Caroline church, and ultimately ended up debating with Laud himself. It is not insignificant that the opponents of the Stuart monarchy alleged that the leading Caroline theologians had become hostile to the values of the Protestant reformation in keeping with their campaign to remodel the Church. After all, Laud’s turn “against our own English martyres, the Professors of the Protestant religion in all ages and so by consequence against our Religion it selfe” was the reason given for Laud’s execution in January

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<sup>268</sup> John Bastwick, *The vanity and mischeife of the old letany. Or A further answer of John Bastwick* (Leiden, 1637), Third part, pp. 14-15.

<sup>269</sup> On universities in the seventeenth century, see Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, Vol. 4: *Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (1997); David Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity in Cambridge, 1590-1644* (Woodbridge, 2007); John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625 – 1688* (Cambridge, 1990).

1645.<sup>270</sup> What I want to suggest in this chapter is that when the clash between popular religion and ritualism occurred, the puritans were the major beneficiary of the martyrological narratives.

#### 4.2 LAUDIAN RITUALISM AND ITS OPPONENTS

The sudden dissolution of Parliament in March 1629 ensured the smooth functioning of the political system for 11 years. Turning our attention to the years of Personal monarchy (1629–1640), we find that the concerns and matters described in the previous chapter did not suddenly disappear, nor did the autocratic system manage to entirely rid the public of controversy. If Richard Montagu was the principal villain of the 1620s, during the following decade he was supplanted by the ceremonialist theologian William Laud, whose career was strongly promoted by Charles Stuart. His position as the leading clerical adviser to the monarch, the bishop of London, the chancellor of the University of Oxford, and the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, after his appointment to the seat of England's episcopacy in 1633, made him a natural target for various dissidents. Laud was known to his critics already by the late 1620s as “the main and great root of all those evils which are come upon us and our Religion”.<sup>271</sup> For his part, Laud made the very same point regarding the puritan Calvinists, whose competing opinions he found completely sectarian, calling them the “root of all the mischiefs which have befallen Church or State for some years past”.<sup>272</sup> It is important to note that at the center of the mutual antagonism between puritans and Laudians was not only the prestige, authority, and the self-serving careerism of the primate, or the zealotry of the puritans, but also the question of government, religious worship, and the supreme authority of the monarch over the national church. Although Charles remained conspicuously silent in the 1630s, there is

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<sup>270</sup> William Prynne, *Canterburies doome, or, The first part of a compleat history of the commitment, charge, tryall, condemnation, execution of William Laud, late Arch-bishop of Canterbury* (London, 1646), p. 193.

<sup>271</sup> Citation from William Cobbett & al. (eds.) *The parliamentary history of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, Vol. 2, 1625–1642 (London, 1807), p. 457. See also Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 136n, I 83.

<sup>272</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 7 (Oxford, 1847), p. 396.

no reason to suppose that Charles did not approve of Laud's actions. According to Laud himself, he was really a secondary target, whereas the real object was the monarchical head of the church. As he noted in a letter to his close ally Thomas Wentworth, the earl of Strafford, in 1637: "when this business is spoken of, some men speak, as your Lordship writes, that this business concerns the King and government more than me".<sup>273</sup>

The imposition of liturgical uniformity has long been taken as an ideological leitmotif of this era. Indeed, looking at the English radical imagination before the three rebellions of 1637–1642, we notice that critical interest had turned away from Arminianism, and towards questions surrounding the rites of worship in the Caroline Church. What generated much of the heat, and sparked many polemical responses, was the project of ecclesiastical reform known as "the Beauty of Holiness". This was quintessentially a ceremonialist agenda, devoted to restoring the liturgical significance of the sacraments, and to embellishing practices of worship without surrendering to a Roman notion of tradition. Laud justified ceremonial observance on the grounds that it formed a "safeguard against the natural weakness of human devotion", and the use of a "set form of prayer" was, Laud urged, "little less than *traditio universalis*, an universal tradition of the whole Church".<sup>274</sup> According to a paradigmatic *res adiaphorae* principle, the Laudians often repeated, the Church had the right to determine the outward form to be followed, particularly in things which were indifferent to the substance of religion, and which were not specifically prescribed by scripture (such as formal structures of religious worship and rituals). This distinction between essentials and inessentials was not shared by everyone, and it was precisely the non-essential questions of rites, gestures, and ceremonies that raised the most ferocious opposition as Personal Rule progressed. The ecclesiastical project appeared in a very different light to some contemporaries, who accused the leading members of the hierarchy of seeking to alter the established patterns

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<sup>273</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud, sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford, 1847) Vol. 6, Part 2, p. 498.

<sup>274</sup> Jonathan Sheehan, 'Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century' *Past & Present*, 192 (Aug., 2006), p. 50. William Laud, *The works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, eds. William Scott and James Bliss (Oxford, 1847–60), Vol. 6, p. 117.



of religious life, and to aggressively impose conformity upon those who refused to conform to the *Book of sports* (1633) and the Scottish *Book of Common Prayer* (1637).

The Caroline era of ecclesiastical reform has also been seen as the period of the Great Migration, since no less than 60,000 people left the Stuart kingdoms.<sup>275</sup> While the bulk of the populace undoubtedly conformed to Laudian orthodoxy, some chose the path of circumspection, or took themselves off to a voluntary exile abroad, in order to escape oppressive demands for conformity. Among these individuals, the most notorious were the eccentric lawyer William Prynne, the physicist John Bastwick, and the former royal chaplain Henry Burton, the only one of the trio to have received a professional training in theology. Their highly controversial interventions in public debate earned them an unsavory reputation, and led to them being charged with having written seditious libels against the Church. By the mid-1630s, they had also become the most vocal critics of elaborate devotional life. William Prynne was perhaps best known for his *Histrio-mastix* (1633), Henry Burton for his *A divine tragedie lately acted* (1636), and John Bastwick for *the Letany* (1637). In their attitude towards religious ritual, they can loosely be called Calvinists, or “experimental Calvinists”, to use R. T. Kendall’s term, since their theological emphasis had somewhat receded from the teachings of the Genevan reformer.<sup>276</sup> In this, they stood apart from the adiaphorist views of conformist Calvinists, who might have been hostile towards the Caroline innovations, but who were more flexible in adjusting to the restrictions under which they lived.

The framework of idolatry is crucial to making sense of the English experience of the 1630s, also providing an essential backdrop to the intentions of those nonconforming puritans who were pushed underground by the Stuart government. Indeed, vituperative rhetoric against decorous devotions found a special place in the libels

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<sup>275</sup> It is obvious that many chose migration and settlement for reasons unconnected to Laudian reforms. It has been estimated that 40,000 went into exile in mainland Europe, mainly to the Dutch republic, while another 20,000 went to the communities in North America and the Caribbean. Christopher D’Addario, *Exile and Journey in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 36. For more on the puritan exodus of the 1630s, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York, 2012), pp. 365-416.

<sup>276</sup> See R. T. Kendall, *Calvinism and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979). The most comprehensive account of the new aspects of worship is Kenneth Fincham & Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford, 2007). See also Graham Parry, *Glory, Laud and Honour: The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation* (Woodbridge, 2006).

of the latter. Like Bastwick who maintained that “to worship the creature for the creator” was nothing less than “superstition” and “palpable idolatry”, the other puritans constantly pointed out that the Laudian style signaled a return to the superstitious and sensuous habits of popery.<sup>277</sup> As John Coffey has underlined, it is important to understand the importance of the theme of idolatry to the Calvinist opposition movements, since it was, after all, what made Calvinist resistance theory distinctively Calvinist.<sup>278</sup> By extending this theme to the rest of the Laudian reforms, puritans and Calvinists were able to associate themselves with the earlier struggle against popery, and also to claim that the bishops were acting against the lawful religious settlement which had outlawed idolatry. Thus, the most damaging pamphlets written against the elaborate devotional life are best understood within the context of the reformed theology of idolatry. However, for historians, the difficulty has been to understand just how appealing the arguments raised against William Laud’s administration were for contemporaries. According to Kevin Sharpe, the above-mentioned puritans in fact had little influence upon the tenor of English life, the latter being dominated rather by the agents of magisterial Protestantism. Instead of a period of mounting popular unrest, the religious and governmental culture of the 1630s was comparatively unified. Thus, without retrospective knowledge of the failure of the Laudian project, the period of Personal Rule appears harmonious and consensual in character.<sup>279</sup>

In a context in which both parties were accusing each other of revolutionary intent, it is illuminating to look more closely at writings of Laud and his circle, and also those of their opponents, and to ask exactly what was being revised in the Stuart church during the 1630s. One of the challenges facing all the writers who commented on clerical affairs was to define “orthodoxy” in relation to the reformed Protestant tradition. Since adaptation of the sixteenth-century inheritance was crucial to these efforts, it is worth considering in more detail how these figures interacted with its authoritative sources. If

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<sup>277</sup> John Bastwick, *The letany of John Bastvick* (Leiden, 1637), p. 144.

<sup>278</sup> John Coffey, ‘The language of liberty in Calvinist political thought’, in Quentin Skinner & Martin van Gelderen (eds.) *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2013), p. 303.

<sup>279</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 758–765. For a strong case against Prynne, see Mark Kihlansky, ‘A Whipper whipped: the sedition of William Prynne’, in *The Historical Journal*, 56, (2013), pp. 603–627.

the Established church was turning its back on the reformed martyrs, as Bastwick suggested, then the obvious place to look for evidence for this shift is of course *Acts and Monuments*. How did the new ecclesiastical establishment approach this Protestant martyrological tradition? What did Laud think about the reformed martyrs? Was Foxe deemed incompatible with a redefined orthodoxy? Was his *Acts and Monuments* a dividing line in the Caroline Church? Situating Foxeian themes within the context of the disputes of the 1630s can answer some of these questions. While Laud's own perception of the reformed tradition and its martyrs is only to be found between the lines, other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were generally more open. As Anthony Milton has observed, these polemical apologists sought to distance themselves from Laud, who personally chose to sidestep heated debates, and left his protégés to speak for him in public.<sup>280</sup> The most programmatic statements can be found in the works of such clerics as Peter Heylyn, John Pocklington, James Buck, Christopher Dow, and Francis White, who followed in the footsteps of Laud, and took an active role in the effort to restore ecclesiastical loyalty and the general reputation of the church's bishops. In addition to raising controversial issues, and echoing the priorities of the establishment, it should be noted that when the Laudian writers intended to quash criticism or to see off the puritan threat, they were capable of writing in ways that enabled them to reach a wide audience.

#### 4.3 FOXEIAN THEMES IN CAROLINE CHURCH REFORM

Even if the sixteenth-century martyrologist John Foxe was theologically somewhat fluid, a man of universal vision and ecumenical conviction, his martyrology nonetheless provided a deep and firm foundation for polemical argument. Its author's prominent place in the puritan literary tradition often raised suspicion. For example, when William Prynne requested books to his cell in 1634, the Lord Chief Justice Richardson replied, probably with a hint of irony, "let him have the Book of Martyrs, for the Puritans do account him

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<sup>280</sup> Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 539-40; Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645* (London, 1962), pp. 112-113.

a Martyr”.<sup>281</sup> In addition to the association of Foxe with the moderate puritans of the Elizabethan period, there were also many themes and events in Foxe’s narrative which did not sit comfortably with the ethos of Laudian Church reform.<sup>282</sup> The conflict between Queen Mary and the Protestant reformers was revived during the early 1630s, as a new edition of Foxe’s famous anthology was published, after having been out of print for some time. Responding to the defeats suffered by Protestants during the Continental Wars, the main promoters of the new 1631–1632 edition, Adam Islip, Felix Kingston, and Robert Young, found it necessary to address their readers with an open request to “prepare to suffer martyrdom”.<sup>283</sup> In this regard, it is not surprising that the new material in this edition was principally related to the persecutions suffered by reformed communities throughout Europe.

The edition was published during the tenure of Archbishop George Abbot, but within only a few years a rumor had begun to circulate that the new Archbishop had been unwilling to grant a license to yet another edition of *Acts and Monuments*. This disclosure was brought up most forcefully by William Prynne in 1637, rebuking Laud’s censorship policy for not allowing passages against the Papists, Jesuits, and Arminians to be printed, while also drawing attention to the Archbishop’s refusal to grant a license for a new edition of Foxe because its materials ran counter to his own ideas.<sup>284</sup> It is certainly possible that Laud, who approved books prior to their publication, might have considered reprinting Foxeian histories as unsuitable to the current climate.<sup>285</sup> It is equally plausible that such puritans who were eager to plunge Laud into deep controversial waters simply

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<sup>281</sup> John Rushworth, *Historical Collections. Containing the Principal Matters: Vol. 2, 1629-38* (London, 1680), p. 248.

<sup>282</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘John Foxe and National Consciousness’, in Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds.) *John Foxe and his World* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 10.

<sup>283</sup> John King, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 145–151.

<sup>284</sup> William Prynne, *Canterburies doome, or, The first part of a compleat history of the commitment, charge, tryall, condemnation, execution of William Laud, late Arch-bishop of Canterbury* (London, 1646), p. 184. See, also John Rushworth (London, 1680), p. 450; John Milton, *Animadversions upon the remonstrants defence against Smectymnuus* (London, 1641), p. 14.

<sup>285</sup> Even if it is not possible to say anything certain about Laud’s transgressions in the 1630s, since much of the evidence is retrospective, it is nonetheless telling that the eighth edition of the *Book of Martyrs* appeared in 1641, and that this edition of three separate volumes was for the first time in its printing history funded by Parliament. In his trial, Laud claimed that he had only prevented the publication of a pirated version of the martyrology. See Elizabeth Evenden & Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England. The Making of John Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 320-347.

invented the story as evidence of Laud's hostility to Protestantism. Laud himself shattered this allegation in his own retrospective notes, claiming that it was but a myth, the reality being that he had only prohibited the printing of a shorthanded version. Thus, his intention was to protect the martyrology by preventing the efforts to bring "the large book itself into disuse". Even if he had licensed an abridged version, Laud explained, his opponents would have found another reason to accuse him of manipulating the work.<sup>286</sup> Although there is no conclusive evidence, it is worth looking at the surviving sources, and considering whether there were conceivable reasons for the ecclesiastical regime to disparage Foxean themes, and to distance itself from the worldview articulated by Foxe.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, it is interesting that some Jesuits likewise paid attention to such changing perspectives on the past, and associated the new interpretation with the Laudians. Compared to its predecessors, the Caroline regime was not nearly as critical towards Roman Catholic genealogical accounts. The corruption of the church by the papacy had earlier been one of the most prevalent genres of historical writing. However, as the Jesuit controversialist Matthew Wilson acknowledged in 1636, the effect of Laud's conciliatory policy had been that the old Protestant chronicles fell out of fashion.<sup>288</sup>

We know that Archbishop William Laud owned a copy of *Acts & Monuments*, and probably knew its contents well enough to be able to cite it on occasion. However, we also know that he was not remarkably interested in evoking martyrs in support of his policies, and preferred to avoid direct communication with Foxe in his writings. It is interesting in itself that Laud did not engage much with English historical

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<sup>286</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*. Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1847), pp. 264-267.

<sup>287</sup> A significantly different treatment of the "holy reformation" was provided by the court historian and well-known translator of Tacitus, John Hayward, who wrote the first biography of the King and his court in his *The Life, and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth* (1630). Hayward was not afraid to compare King Edward VI to Nero, and also resituated the Tacitean world of power politics into the mid-sixteenth-century context. Hayward's decision to focus on the popular uprising and factious court battles, rather than the dawn of English Protestantism and the achievements of the Edwardian commonwealth men, makes the thrust of his narrative clear enough. As such, as one recent historian has noted, this revisionary account was designed to counter some customary perceptions of the memory of the turbulent days of the Edwardian era, and to question both the legal standing of Edward's reign and its rapid ecclesiastical reforms. Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 2002) pp. 15-17. For an overview of John Hayward's work, see Lacey Baldwin Smith, 'Foreword', in Barrett L. Beer (ed.) *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth by John Hayward* (Kent OH, 1993).

<sup>288</sup> Matthew Wilson, *A direction to be observed* (printed secretly in England, 1636), pp. 23-25.

precedents. When he did, he did so in equivocal terms, stating that during the reformation, “princes had their parts, and the clergy theirs”. In his view, the work of reformation was to be left to the supreme magistrates. Indeed, magisterial control of practices of worship, and the use of royal supremacy to advance religious reform, were nothing revolutionary. Unlike those who maintained that bishops and laymen were equal within the process of Church reform, Laud provided a specious evangelical rationale for his officially imposed reforms, claiming to be following the precepts of Martin Luther himself, and pointing out how the German reformer had checked the enthusiastic Andreas Karlstadt, who was about to pull down the images in churches, that “the work of reformation was to be left to the supreme magistrates”.<sup>289</sup> At the same time, Laud insisted that not everything that had been unleashed by the movement against Rome was necessary. For instance, the early Protestant positions on certain subjects were not set in stone, and so the verbal expressions of the reformers ought to be considered merely relative. Laud also pointed out that reformation was “so difficult a work, and subject to so many pretensions”, that it was “almost impossible but the reformers should step too far”. One of the common errors of individual reformers was their pretension “to reform superstition”, while in practice resulted in sacrilege.<sup>290</sup>

In contrast to the Elizabethan and Jacobean authorities, who found John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* a useful bulwark against Catholic antagonists, Laud did not deem use of the book to be essential. At least during the late 1620s, Laud was more concerned by the fact that references to the Foxeian martyrs had served to intensify disagreement, and to reinforce the dividing line, between Protestants and Catholics. In other words, the memory of the martyrs tended to frustrate the late Stuart policy of minimizing the differences between the English and Roman Churches, and placing both denominations under the rubric of the universal apostolic Church. In this sense, Foxe, for whom the martyrs had come to represent the true church, offered little assistance in downplaying the formal schism between England and Rome. For the leading high church conformists, it was clearly difficult to reconcile the memory of the reformed martyrs with

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<sup>289</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 6, Part 1 (Oxford, 1847), p. 16.

<sup>290</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 2, Part 2 (Oxford, 1847), pp. 172-174.

a belief in the structural Catholic continuity of the established Church of England. When debating with the Jesuits as to whether the Protestant Church was in all ages visible, Laud noted that separation “from Church unity is a most damnable sin which cannot be made lawful for any cause”. The unity of the church was so crucial, he admitted to his Jesuit opponent, that such faults could not be “washed away” even by martyrdom.<sup>291</sup> Thus, it cannot be stressed enough how much the dichotomous opposition between England and Rome owed to Foxe’s scheme of ecclesiastical history, in which the blood of martyrs justified the whole reformed cause, and provided a genealogy of visible Protestant succession.

Nor did Foxe’s cosmology, which strongly reflected the apocalyptic mindset of early Protestantism, fit easily into the conceptual structure of the new ecclesiastical establishment. According to Eamon Duffy, by the 1570s, an entire generation “believed the Pope to be Antichrist”.<sup>292</sup> This deeply entrenched polemical framework remained crucial during the early seventeenth century. King James, for example, gave public endorsement to apocalyptic teaching, writing a published commentary on Revelation, urging his scholars to write treatises with titles such as *Antichristi demonstration, Mystical babylon, or Papall Rome*, and *Papa Antichristus*, and using the papist threat as a justification for royal supremacy. Notwithstanding the fact that anti-papal exegesis was perhaps one of the most widely propagated ideas of the Protestant reformation, the polemical doctrine of the papal antichrist was clearly on the retreat during Laud’s tenure.<sup>293</sup> The Archbishop, who considered the pope as nothing more than an Italian bishop, and thought “the Pope was good, both *nomine et re*”, was skeptical about the reformed identification, and did not permit publication of books dealing specifically with the topic.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 2, Part 2 (Oxford, 1847), Appendix, no 3, p. 23. The main motivation for publishing Laud’s version of the conference during the late 1630s was to provide proof of his Protestant credentials against Roman Catholic conspiracies.

<sup>292</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 2005), p. 593. See also Peter Lake, ‘The significance of the Elizabethan identification of the pope as Antichrist’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, (1980), pp. 161-178.

<sup>293</sup> Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 120.

<sup>294</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1847), p. 383.

While Foxe identified the pope as antichrist and rejoiced in the victory over him, the eschatology set down by Foxe was not millenarian, since he placed the millennium within the first thousand years of the church, and thus in the remote past.<sup>295</sup> In Stuart England, however, it was common for writers to use the Foxeian martyrology as a resource in constructing their own millenarian models.<sup>296</sup> Among the seventeenth century writers, the Foxeian inheritance was integrated into progressive eschatology most forcefully by the Amsterdam exile and Presbyterian spokesman Thomas Brightman. Although his *A revelation of the Apocalypse* (1611) owed much to Foxe's chronicle, Brightman's scope was much narrower, and his method more progressive. As G. J. R. Parry has observed, Brightman challenged more traditional approaches by portraying events and individuals of the Reformation as fulfillments of an apocalyptic prophecy.<sup>297</sup> Since the press had been closed to apocalyptic literature through censorship, it is difficult to discern the extent to which eschatological perspectives influenced the interpretation of Foxeian martyrs. To a staunch Presbyterian divine like Thomas Goodwin, who voluntarily went into exile in the Netherlands following his resignation from the Trinity Church in Cambridge in 1634, history and Apocalypse were inseparable. To Goodwin, Foxe's chronicle was, above all, a narrative of millenarian action. "[Y]ou may collect out of Mr Foxe's Martyrology", Goodwin wrote, "[that] there hath been these three hundred years as glorious a succession of godly witnesses and martyrs as any other nation can produce". All the Foxeian martyrs were prized as trophies of the victory over Antichrist, but the real protagonists of Goodwin's historical-eschatological struggle against Rome were the exiles, who were behind "the first erection of the English church at Frankfort, in Queen Mary's days", and also two proto-martyrs, the late fourteenth-century Oxford theologian John Wycliffe and Jan Huss of Prague. In a spirit of eschatological anticipation, the Caroline church was described as a "Court which is without the

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<sup>295</sup> Rodney L. Petersen, *Preaching in the Last Days: The Theme of "Two Witnesses" in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>296</sup> Alec Ryrie, for example, has suggested that in the early modern mind the act of martyrdom was an apocalyptic event and writing martyr-themed text was an apocalyptic statement. See, 'The Unsteady Beginnings of English Protestant Martyrology', in David Loades (ed.) *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 52-66.

<sup>297</sup> G. J. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 74.



temple”.<sup>298</sup> As Goodwin went on to explain, the dark days of persecution mentioned in *Revelation* 6: 9-10 did not signify literal martyrdom, but rather the bloody laws and superstitious worship practices of the current ecclesiastical regime.<sup>299</sup>

The use that eschatological thinkers made of Foxeian martyrs in forging an association between episcopal polity and persecution may help to explain why the apocalyptic explanation of church history was largely dropped from Laudian vocabulary. For example, the leading church historian Peter Heylyn thought the legacy of proto-reformers was rather irritating and their significance trivial in longer institutional history of the Church. Although as a young Oxford historian Heylyn had acknowledged the huge influence martyrologies had on the diffusion of Protestant reformation, but already in his disputation in the divinity school in 1627 denied the visible succession apart from Rome.<sup>301</sup> In one of his more bitter responses to his puritan adversaries in the late 1630s, Heylyn expressed his dislike of the tendency to present proto-reformers as opening the way to a more complete reformation. “Wiclif, Hus, the Albigenses and the rest which you use to boast of”, he suggested, “keepe it to your selfe”.<sup>302</sup> For his part, Laud was alarmed by fervent millenarians who identified the *Revelation*’s apostate church of Laodicea with the *ecclesia anglicana*. Having nothing but contempt for accounts which fused martyrs with eschatology, he sought to discourage the millenarian hope that “Christ shall come and live here upon the earth again”, and to eliminate the pernicious doctrine that “the martyrs shall then rise, and live with Him a thousand years”.<sup>303</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that schemes of eschatological history were highly unfashionable in later Stuart public theology, they never entirely disappeared from sight, largely because Foxe’s martyrology served to keep them alive. Foxe had, in the words of the historian William Lamont, “domesticated the Apocalypse”, and “made the pursuit of the Millennium

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<sup>298</sup> Thomas Goodwin, ‘An Exposition of the Book of Revelation’, in John C. Miller (ed.) *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, Vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1861), pp. 103, 198.

<sup>299</sup> “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (*King James*, Revelation 6: 9-10).

<sup>301</sup> Peter Heylyn, *Mikrokosmos A little description of the great world* (Oxford, 1625), p. 312.

<sup>302</sup> Peter Heylyn, *A briefe and moderate answer* (London, 1637), p. 72.

<sup>303</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 6, Part 1 (Oxford, 1847), p. 132.

respectable and orthodox”. Eventually, Lamont continues, “Puritans turned more and more to Brightman’s vision of a reformation that would come, via neither Crown nor Bishop, but via a ‘Godly People’”.<sup>304</sup>

There is some evidence of Laud displaying downright discomfort regarding *Acts and Monuments*. On one identifiable occasion in 1633, Laud was provoked by the parishioners of the St Gregory church in London, who protested against moving the communion table back to the east end of the church, and turning it towards the altar. What attracted Laud’s attention was the fact that the parishioners used the discourses of John Foxe and John Jewell, the bishop of Salisbury, who wrote a classic defense of the Church Settlement under Elizabeth, to back up their claims. Laud, however, found no place for such sentiments, and was said to have declared that “If this be the use they make of these Book Jewell & Fox, I desire they may be taken out of Churches”. This local protest also caught the attention of the King, who authorized a lengthy letter approving the actions of his bishop, which was then circulated in defense of the altar policy. Laud afterwards commented that he had nothing in principle against Foxe and Jewell, as “these two were very worthy men in their time”. However, he continued, their words did not constitute the “doctrine of the Church of England”, and their texts ought not to be taken as prescriptive to Church leaders, who might “upon good reason depart from their judgement in some particulars”.<sup>305</sup>

Also in the early 1630s, Laud took a hostile view of the efforts of two puritans, Henry Gellibrand and William Beale, to promote calendric piety on the Foxeian model. In particular, Gellibrand and Beale had published a new calendar, in which they replaced the martyrs and saints of olden times with those of Foxe. In response, Laud brought both men to the High Commission for questioning, after Queen Henrietta Maria had expressed her dislike for the omission of traditional saints from the work. Although there were complaints afterwards that the two men “hardly escaped finding for an Heretick”, it seems they were both eventually acquitted, on the grounds that similar works

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<sup>304</sup> William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603–60* (London, 1969), pp. 33, 94-95.

<sup>305</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1847), pp. 226, 267.

had been produced over previous years.<sup>306</sup> However, what appears to have captured the attention of puritans was the fact that Laud had allowed Roman Catholic courtiers to buy and demolish these almanacs. Among these was the notorious apologist for the Caroline church, John Pocklington, who, having seen the calendar, deemed its decision to erase true martyrs and replace them with “Traitors, Murderers, Rebels, and Hereticks” to be downright nefarious.<sup>307</sup> Subsequently, however, this occurrence, along with Pocklington’s comments, would serve as evidence of the Laudians’ intentions, spelling out clearly enough their intention to eliminate Foxe’s influence.

Another obvious reason for the incompatibility of Foxe’s account with the Laudian program was the former’s construction of a community of believers that existed beyond the limits of an Established Church. It has been suggested that for Laud, an extreme partisan of the doctrine of magisterial reformation, true doctrine could not exist outside of the episcopal succession. Accordingly, he deemed all preachers and communities operating independently of both Church and Crown to be suspicious, and insisted upon their outward conformity. This view was reflected in his policies in 1633, when he encouraged the government to dissolve a voluntary association called the Feoffees for Improvements, labelling it a Presbyterian conspiracy. Laud was no less intolerant towards the English churches in Holland and the French Huguenots in Canterbury and London, restricting their rights, and demanding that their worship conform to the public rituals of the Church of England. Moreover, Laud preferred to see the tumultuous events of the mid-sixteenth century as an institutional, rather than a spiritual, movement, and the advent of Protestantism, the evangelical crises, and the upheavals and purges of the 1530s and 1550s as a process of magisterial reformation, rather than an uprising against the idea of royal supremacy. In general, Laudian writers demonstrated little interest in the antecedents of Protestantism, or the dissenting groups and conventicles that arose at the onset of the European reformations. To the contrary, they seemed reluctant to accept the idea of a proto-protestant true church, emerging in the middle ages.

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<sup>306</sup> Henry Burton, *A replie to a relation, of the conference between William Laude and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (Amsterdam, 1640), p.67.

<sup>307</sup> John Pocklington, *Altare Christianum: or, The dead vicars plea* (London, 1637), p. 92.

In contrast, many nonconformists followed Foxe in believing that the persecuted had managed to preserve the “true religion” in the late medieval period, and that the reformed church had been most visible among the persecuted underground Protestants of the Tudor era. Henry Burton, for example, denied that the Reformation had been initiated by “the Bishops” of the “Church of England”. To the contrary, its real originators had been small groups of reformers, “hunted among the Woods” by leading clerics. In these early days of exile and persecution, Burton wrote, one “might have found halfe a dozen poore soules under some Tree shading them from the present *heat of persecution*, where they did solace their soules with having among them some few leaves of St. *Pauls* Epistles”.<sup>308</sup> For those puritans who rejected the prevailing doctrine of the institutional continuance of the church, Foxe stood essentially as a vindicator of this underground tradition. For such puritans, the hagiographical trope of the age of the great English martyrs also provided a useful means to justify their own resistance to the Caroline ecclesiastical order. John Bastwick, for example, sought to substantiate his position by referring to martyrs, insisting on the primacy of their testimony over ecclesiastical hierarchy. When the Laudians made determined attempts to enforce communal uniformity, they transgressed against the true representatives of the Protestant English church, and failed to follow their example. If, Bastwick asked, “they will not be tyed to the authority of the Martyrs themselves”, “why then should wee be tyed or constrained to allow all that they did or commanded”?<sup>309</sup> In Bastwick’s opinion, reform led by the magistracy, which failed to defer to the superior spirit of the Marian theologians, could provide no sure guide to other questions. In sum, drawing on the Reformation tradition of martyrs served to justify his nonconformity, and simultaneously to put pressure on the clerical regime.

If Foxe’s influence was so powerful, why then did Laud not acknowledge it, and challenge the attempts of nonconformists to appropriate it? One of the rare occasions on which Laud chose to reflect on the reformed martyrs was in a text written in 1639, this being a published version of the dispute that he had carried on against the

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<sup>308</sup> Henry Burton, *A replie to a relation, of the conference between William Laude and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (Amsterdam, 1640), p.368.

<sup>309</sup> John Bastwick, *The vanity and mischeife of the old letany. Or A further answer of John Bastwick* (Leiden, 1637), Third part, p. 15.

prominent English Jesuit John Percy during the 1620s. Although Laud's comments arose originally in the context of an anti-Catholic disputation, to his opponents, his choice of words demonstrated his intention to manipulate the testimonies of Marian martyrs. Henry Burton, who had a keen eye for significant details, was quick to notice that when the Archbishop cited Foxe to defend the sacramental life of the Church, he was exploiting martyrs to his own advantage. In the first place, Laud had invoked these religious champions in a disreputable manner, particularly when he underlined their clerical learning and erudition, referring to them as "the learned of those zealous Queen Maries dayes". Second, Burton accused the Laud of resituating bishop Ridley, Archbishop Cranmer, and pastor Firth within the framework of a semi-Catholic sacramental theology, and implying that they had met their deaths as crypto-Catholics. In the light of Laud's comments, it was hard to understand why the Marian martyrs had refused to conform to the practices of the Marian Church. As Burton insisted, their theological value ought to be seen within the horizon of their martyrdom, not reduced to mere evidence of the legitimacy of Caroline innovations regarding the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist. If the martyrs had found so much common ground with Roman sacramentalism, Burton asked, why then did the issue of sacramental theology cost Ridley, Cranmer, and Frith their lives? More generally, the real effects of the doctrine of transubstantiation were clear to see: "How many Martyrs hath it made? How much innocent blood hath it spilt?"<sup>310</sup>

The Caroline effort to restore the beauty of holiness to the Church did not rely on Protestant martyrs. According to its critics, not only did it not produce any major works on martyrs, but it also prevented the publication of two versions of *Acts and Monuments* and the martyrology of Centuriators of Magdeburg.<sup>311</sup> The only exception was Peter Heylyn's account of the career and posthumous reputation of a Roman officer martyred under Diocletian, entitled *History of St. George of Cappadocia* (1631). This, however, placed martyrdom in a somewhat different intellectual tradition. Unlike Cosin, in his *Collection of Private Devotions in the Practice of the Ancient Church*, Heylyn did

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<sup>310</sup> Henry Burton, *A replie to a relation, of the conference between William Laude and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (Amsterdam, 1640), pp. 350-351.

<sup>311</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1847), p. 352.

not write in a devotional genre. Nor did the work display a deep commitment to Protestant theology, since its author's intention was to offer a more congenial view of England's patron saint, in opposition to Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, Martin Chemnitz, and the Cambridge puritan William Perkins, all of whom had sarcastically dismissed St George as a fable. Heylyn's biographical revitalization of St George is perhaps best characterized as a tribute to the chivalric Order of Garter – a civic guild of which King Charles and hardline royalists were exceedingly fond. In Heylyn's account, St George was singled out as an exemplary martyr, "No Saint in all the Calendar, the glorious Company of the *Apostles* excepted onely; scarce any of the *Noble Armie of the Martyrs*, able to shew a cleerer title to the Crowne of Martyrdome".<sup>312</sup> For William Prynne, Heylyn's work was a provocation, and the very fact that an "Arminian writer" had been permitted to transform an alleged Arian into a martyr revealed the true nature of the Caroline Church. Nevertheless, aside from Heylyn's work, there were no major Laudian contributions to the martyrological genre during the period of Personal Rule. Moreover, Foxe's glorification of the sufferings of evangelicals under Queen Mary did not fit easily with the Laudian program. But even if Laud himself did not identify positively with the English martyrological legacy, and made little use of its authority, he never dared to venture any explicit criticism of Foxe in public.

#### 4.4 PURITANS, LAUDIANS AND THE ELECTRIFYING APPROPRIATION OF FOXEIAN MARTYRS

In contrast to Laud's cohort, nonconformists made far greater use of the authoritative sources of the sixteenth-century reformations. When searching for historical precedents for the misdeeds of the Caroline regime, they found a great deal of common ground with its most famous individuals and events, and exploited Foxeian narratives in order to advance their own cause and mount critique on the episcopate.

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<sup>312</sup> Peter Heylyn, *The historie of that most famous saint and souldier of Christ Iesus; St. George of Cappadocia asserted from the fictions* (London, 1631), pp. 5, 43-48.

In their view, the Reformation had reached its apogee following the reforms of the Henrician era. After the coronation of Edward VI and the consequent turn towards Protestantism, new forms of worship were enforced, liturgies revised, and continental reformers encouraged to settle in England. No less laudable were the new regime's efforts to purge the Church of Roman corruption. The most memorable account of these six short years of cultural revolution was surely that of John Foxe, particularly in the opening passage of book 9 of *Acts and Monuments*, in which Foxe alluded to the Old Testament King Josiah, who had cleansed the land of idolatry, and purged the temple of pagan deities. Like Josiah, the boy-king Edward had eradicated "Idolatrour Masses and false inuocation, reduced agayne Religion to a right sinceritie", and destroyed the "corruptions, drosse, and deformities of Popishe Idolatrie crept into the Church of Christ of long time". However, Foxe admitted that the premature death of Edward, combined with popular resistance to reform, had hindered the progress of Evangelism. As he put it, "more would haue brought to perfection if life and tyme had aunswered to his godly purpose".<sup>313</sup> But even if the Edwardian settlement had not been entirely perfect, leaders such as Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer continued to enjoy extraordinarily high prestige, for both their efforts to extirpate false religion and their refusal to swear the Oath of Supremacy under the subsequent Marian regime.

The veneration of the achievements of the holy reformation was nowhere more evident in the 1620s and 1630s than in the long list of martyrs who had served to keep the Church pure in times of danger. Supposedly, a continuous line ran from the beginnings of the English reformation to the more recent reformers. The compilation of such lists was often partially motivated by a desire to illustrate the distance between the Caroline church and the best of the reformed tradition. For Henry Burton, for instance, appealing to the ecclesiological legacy of the Reformation was closely tied to his criticism of Laud's vision of the Church. As he asked his readers: "Where is the spirit of those ancient Bishops and Martyrs, and learned Champions of thy truth, as of Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Bucer, Peter Martyr, Iewel, and other faithfull witnesses, whose eyther bloud hath beene the seed, or preaching and writing the watering of this thy noble

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<sup>313</sup> John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (1570 edition), HRI Online Publications (Sheffield, 2011), pp. 1521. < <http://www.johnfoxe.org> > [accessed March 6, 2016].

Vineyard?'.<sup>314</sup> It was not uncommon to find providential beliefs attached to the reformed martyrs, in an attempt to present them as the true founders of English Protestantism. Hugh Latimer, for example, was endowed with a prophetic status, being characterized, in an edition of his sermons issued in 1635, as a providential “deliverer” of divine truth, sent to open the eyes of those deluded by the “deceitfull craftes of the popish prelates”. Indeed, “[if] England ever had a prophet, he was one”.<sup>315</sup>



**Figure 6.** *Faiths victory in Rome's cruelty* (c.1630). British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, Satires.

<sup>314</sup> Henry Burton, *The Christians bulwarke, against Satans battery* (London, 1632), Dedicatory.

<sup>315</sup> Anon., *Fruittfull sermons preached by the right Reverend Father, and constant martyr of Iesus Christ, Master Hugh Latimer* (London) 1635, The Epistle.



Around the same time, a similar ideology was apparent in visual form in the portraits circulated by the puritan print-seller Thomas Jenner.<sup>316</sup> In a picture entitled *Faiths victory in Rome's cruelty* (c.1630), the Protestant reformed tradition is embodied by the mid sixteenth-century martyrs. The picture displays a group of leading reformers standing around a bonfire. Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was placed in the middle, holding his hand into the flames in order to prove the firmness of his faith, surrounded by other significant reformed theologians, such as Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Hooper, John Philpot, John Bradford, John Rogers, Laurence Saunders, Rowland Taylor, Robert Ferrar, Thomas Bilney, and Robert Glover.<sup>317</sup> The fire in the picture is a metaphor for the Marian regime, but also attains larger significance as a divine fire, thus implying the presence of providence. Thus, it has a double meaning, signifying that the church had been both purged and refined in the Marian flames. Moreover, this pictorial representation also serves to bind together prominent reformers from different times under a single cause. In this sense, such images were intended to preserve the memory of a heroic Protestant past. Surveying the “very pictures of the fires, and Martyrs”, the father of Ipswich puritanism, Samuel Ward, noted in a sermon, “cannot but warme thee”.<sup>318</sup> Finally, there was also scope for more critical readings of the picture. To Thomas Brightman, the Presbyterian ideologist and celebrated latter-day prophet, Cranmer, who “gave his body to be burned for the trueth”, was indeed “a notable Martyr”. However, Brightman was more interested in Cranmer the martyr than Cranmer the prelate, noting that the Tudor churchman was worth remembering not only because he had power over fire, but also because he had repented of his subscription “to a wicked opinion”. Indeed, Cranmer had put his right hand into the flame as an expression of regret: after all, “it had ben so ready an instrument of wickedness” during his tenure as a prelate.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> More about Thomas Jenner's images, see Alexandra Walsham, 'History, Memory and the English Reformation', *The Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 899-938.

<sup>317</sup> Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts. Religion, Secularity, & Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 92-132.

<sup>318</sup> Samuel Ward, *A Coale from the Altar to kindle the holy fire of Zeale*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1627), p. 49.

<sup>319</sup> Thomas Brightman, *A revelation of the Apocalypse* (Amsterdam, 1611), p. 407.

In the context of the return of altars, critics were swift to point out that the removal of altars and their replacement with communion tables had been one of the official reforms of the exceptional Edwardian government. As the puritan exile William Ames noted in 1633, “our Martyr book doth give sufficient testimony, how diverse of the Godly Martyrs, did absolutely condemne all humane Ceremonies in Gods worship”.<sup>320</sup> Whereas the iconoclastic inheritance of Edward’s reign remained a constant reference-point for some puritans, to many other seventeenth-century writers, the evangelical stripping of altars and burning of idolatrous images remained a source of embarrassment, and even a sacrilege comparable to the Henrician dissolution of monasteries. The antiquarian John Weever, for example, embraced the restoration policies of Charles and Laud, and, in his *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631), lamented the passing of the period in which images of Christ, the saints, and the martyrs had been “delineated, wrought, or embroidered”, this having left religion “naked, bare, and unclad”.<sup>321</sup> Fortunately, Weever noted, the new establishment was now restoring the altars to their rightful place.<sup>322</sup>

In sum, the eradication of the altars remained a disputed question, giving rise to a number of divergent opinions. It was not clear who had been behind the reforms carried out in the name of Edward VI. It could have been the boy-king himself, or his uncle Edward Seymor, or the bishops who counselled him. According to the Foxeian version, Edward VI had been a committed evangelical monarch, supported by men who shared his aims. In this account, Nicholas Ridley, while serving as the bishop of London, had ordered the destruction of the stone altars, and only the intervention of the Privy Council had prevented him from bringing this to pass. When dealing with this question, the disputants of the 1630s often imposed an explanatory narrative of their own invention upon historical events.

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<sup>320</sup> William Ames, *A fresh suit against human ceremonies in God’s vvorship* (Amsterdam, 1633), p. 30.

<sup>321</sup> Cited in, Kenneth Fincham & Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), p. 142.

<sup>322</sup> The traces of the Laudian project to restore holy beauty were most evident in the prestigious cathedrals of Durham, York, Winchester, Canterbury, and St Paul’s, and also visible in the college chapels and parish churches. See Kenneth Fincham & Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 227-273.

The Ninth Booke, containing the Acts  
and things done in the raigne of King  
EDWARD the sixth.

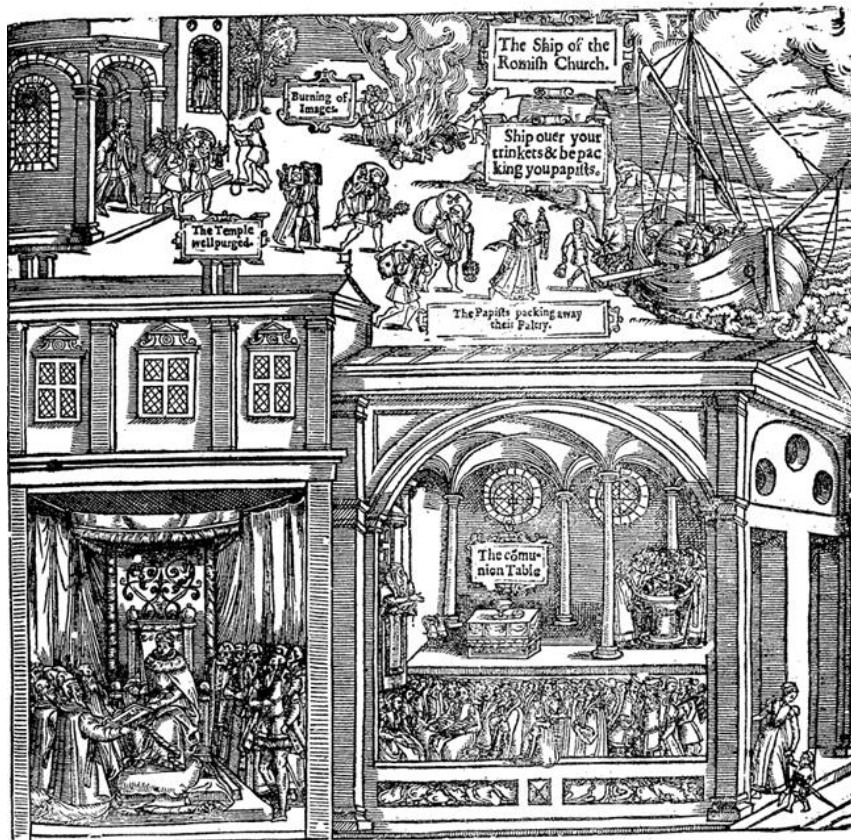


Figure 7. Setting up a communion table in the reign of Edward VI. *Acts and Monuments* (1631–1632).

Henry Leslie, the Church of Ireland bishop of Down and Connor, chose to accuse the puritan bishop-martyr John Hooper of having been the first to oppose ceremonial religion within the Church of England. In Leslie's version of events, however, the emphasis was upon the efforts of other reformers to talk Hooper down from his iconoclastic intentions. According to Leslie, prominent reformers such as Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr, and even Calvin himself had sought to defend the authority of the magistracy, and to persuade the bishop to "conforme himselfe for obedience sake", on the grounds that "those [who] teach the people obedience [ought not] to bee themselves examples of disobedience".<sup>323</sup> The Laudian historian Peter Heylyn chose to sidestep

<sup>323</sup> Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (London, 1637), p. 103.

technicalities, claiming that it was the factious councilors of the 1550s who were behind the destruction of the altars. From them, bishop Ridley had received an order to take down the altars, and could not, as an obedient bishop, do anything to prevent the act.

The critical potential of martyr discourse was further explored by Prynne, particularly as he began to interrogate the origins of reformed modes of worship. In the midst of competing claims about what had caused the dissolution of the altars a century before, Prynne suggested that the celebrated martyrs of the early 1550s had been responsible. Thus, he managed to trace the impetus back to the mid sixteenth-century theologian John Hooper, the bishop who had refused to wear traditional vestments at his consecration, identifying him as the man who had first persuaded King Edward to take action. Allegedly, Hooper's call for this reform had occurred in the course of a sermon on the Prophet Jonah, published in 1551. Subsequently, the same stance was adopted by Ridley and Philpot. Hooper and other root-and-branch reformers of the Edwardian era thus provided proof for Prynne's claim that the destruction of altars had been a reform demanded by the major figures of the Edwardian Church, before the altars had been restored by the regime of Queen Mary.

Prynne, who saw himself as defending the historic position of the Edwardian reformers, took great pains to persuade his audience that the construction of new altars was a highly significant development. From his standpoint, if the altars were "kept in the church as things indifferent", it risked leading people to believe that "they will be maintayned as things necessary". Establishing altars thus potentially encouraged misleading ideas, and would pave the way to a restoration of Roman Catholic theology. As "long as the Altars remaine", Prynne claimed, these man-made reminders of the Roman sacrificial mass would encourage priests to "dream alway[s] of Sacrifice". The replacement of stone altars with wooden tables had been a remarkable development, and was fundamental to the Reformed religion. According to Prynne, the primitives of the first centuries had no altars, for they knew "the use of them was taken away", a belief also held by the Edwardian reformers. As the age of sacrifice had come to an end, there was no need to emulate pagan mysteries by erecting altars, nor did the Church have authority to re-introduce such superstitious practices. The only sacrifices required of an individual were 1) thanksgiving, 2) beneficence and liberality to the poor, and 3) mortifying of one's own body. In addition to offering Reformation precedents for his claims, Prynne found

an outstanding example of these teachings in archdeacon John Philpot, one of the martyrs of the 1550s, who had argued that Christ was the only altar, and, for that reason, no material altar was required.<sup>324</sup>

The very meaning of the loaded and contentious term “altar” was already bitterly contested, as suggested by the title of the leading Episcopalian John Williams’s *The Holy Table, Name and Thing*. To Laud, who once called altars “the greatest place of God’s residence upon Earth”, and to the high-church party more generally, the defense of worship practices against liturgical nonconformists became more urgent as the 1630s progressed.<sup>325</sup> In the eyes of nonconformists, alterations to church structures and architectural spaces, and the liturgical use of pictures, images, clerical garbs, religious sculpture, and crucifixes were evidence that the Caroline bishops were planning serious ceremonial innovation.<sup>326</sup> In response, they strove to persuade the public that church leaders had polluted holy spaces with abominable vestiges of medieval ritualism, which amounted to the reintroduction of Roman Catholic liturgy into divine worship. Anyone who studies puritan terminology will notice the extent to which the term “altar” was associated with old pagan temples, and even the literal sacrifice of Christian martyrs. In the age of heathen sacrifices, William Ames noted in 1633, the Romans had “*sacrificed men* unto their Idols”. The same strategy of association was used with reference to the Marian regime, which had committed similar crimes in the “*burning* of so many godly *Martyrs* for the maintenance and promoting of their Idolatry”.<sup>327</sup> Similar rhetoric was employed by Henry Burton, who noted that the “Prelaticall or Hierarchicall Church” had often condemned “*Christs true Church* for an *Heretike*”, before “delivering it over to the secular power for a *burnt sacrifice*”.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> William Prynne, *A quench-coale* (Amsterdam, 1637), pp. 46-51, 56, 132.

<sup>325</sup> William Laud, *A speech delivered in the Starr-Chamber* (London, 1637), p. 47.

<sup>326</sup> As Keith Thomas has noted, “the Elizabethan Church never formally prohibited all religious imagery as such. This made it possible for aristocrats and collegiate institutions to have images and painted glass in their private chapels and for the Laudian clergy to bring them back into the churches in the 1620s and 1630s”. Keith Thomas, ‘Art and Iconoclams in Early Modern England’, in Fincham & Lake (eds.) *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 18.

<sup>327</sup> William Ames, *A fresh suit against human ceremonies in God's vvorship* (Amsterdam, 1633), p. 518.

<sup>328</sup> Henry Burton, *A replie to a relation, of the conference between William Laude and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (Amsterdam, 1640), p. 368.

Faced with such an acute terminological dispute, Heylyn, Pocklington, and other royal chaplains responded by recasting the examples used by the puritans in a very different light. The Irish bishop Henry Leslie, for example, pointed out that “diverse Martyrs” had used the exact same surplices and chalices as were used in the popish mass, because they understood that there was nothing inherently idolatrous about such objects. Indeed, this was also the case with altars.<sup>329</sup> For his part, John Pocklington defended the policy of replacing communion tables with stone altars, noting that the early Christian martyrs had often referred to altars, whereas communion-tables were never mentioned at all.<sup>330</sup> The schoolmaster Thomas Goodwin, in an often printed work entitled *Romanae historiae anthologia*, confirmed this observation about the ancient customs. Goodwin identified three notable terms for the places in which the heathen offered their sacrifices (Scrobiculo, Ara, Altare), “which we in English terme altars”.<sup>331</sup> Against the puritans, many defenders of the Caroline religious program thus denied that altars had been unknown to the early Christians.

Among those who studied early Christian texts for evidence of correct worship was the Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede. This conservative ceremonialist claimed that the practice regarding altars was more complicated than the puritans believed. Mede, whose private letters reveal that he did not embrace many of the other reforms of the Laudian church, took a strong stand against the anti-altar lobby, particularly in his *The name altar, or thysiasterion, anciently given to the holy table* (1637). In an informative rather than persuasive or polemical tone Mede demonstrated here that the “ALTARS of the true God and the ALTARS of Idols” were entirely different things during the first centuries. In both belief and practice, the primitive church clearly condemned pagan sacrifices in pagan temples, whereas altars in ecclesiastical buildings were held in high esteem. The words for “holy table” and “altar” were used indifferently, whereas idolatrous altars were referred to specifically as “ARA”.<sup>332</sup> On the basis of his historical study, Mede thus denounced the popular

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<sup>329</sup> Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (London, 1637), p. 137.

<sup>330</sup> John Pocklington, *Altare Christianum: or, The dead vicars plea* (London, 1637), pp. 5-6.

<sup>331</sup> Thomas Goodwin, *Romanae historiae anthologia* (Oxford, 1638), pp. 20-24.

<sup>332</sup> Joseph Mede, *The name altar, or thysiasterion, anciently given to the holy table* (London, 1637), pp. 5-7.

misapprehension that the first Christians had rejected the notion of altars, or that they had not been used by Christians during the pre-Constantinian centuries.

It was not unusual to refute the claims of puritans through reference to Foxe, and to thus re-appropriate the conceptual resources of his work in defense of ceremonialism. Peter Heylyn, for instance, expressed his views in a Foxeian tone, and cited passages of *Acts and Monuments* in support of Caroline rituals. He thus sought to turn discussion in a different direction, demonstrating how the concept of an altar had been known to many Marian martyrs. Contrary to the claims of puritans, martyrs had laid down their lives for serious causes, not for trivial matters such as altars. For instance, they had “suffered death for their opposing of the grosse & carnall Doctrine of Transsubstantion”. Moreover, Heylyn pointed out, Foxe’s martyrs were not consistent in their terminology. Many martyrs had continued using words such as Altar, the Lord’s Supper, Sacrifice, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Indeed, Heylyn singled out John Frith, John Lambert, Nicholas Ridley, and Cranmer as examples.<sup>333</sup> And, according to Heylyn, even Foxe himself, in a marginal note, had remarked that tables could be called altars.<sup>334</sup> In Cranmer, the Archbishop of the Edwardian reformation, Heylyn found a true defender of altars, challenging his opponents: “can you shew us anywhere that at the terme of phrase of sacrament of the altar he did take offence[?]”<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, the word altar had found its way into the first official document produced by the English reformation, the 1549 prayer book. This vernacular work of ritual and ceremony was not only the first public doctrinal step towards Protestantism, but had also been composed by the very same individuals who later suffered the fate of martyrdom. When the word altar was removed from the revised second edition of 1552, it was supposedly due to Calvin’s influence. A similar conclusion was drawn by John Pocklington, who aimed to prove that the Foxeian account was not inherently incompatible with the Laudian restoration of altars. If the puritans rejected altars, Pocklington argued, then they ought also to reject those Foxeian martyrs who had spoken positively of them.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Peter Heylyn, *A coale from the altar* (London, 1636), pp. 14-16.

<sup>334</sup> Peter Heylyn, *A coale from the altar* (London, 1636), p. 37.

<sup>335</sup> Peter Heylyn, *Antidotum Lincolnense* (London, 1637), pp. 88-89.

<sup>336</sup> John Pocklington, *Altare Christianum: or, The dead vicars plea* (London, 1637), p. 135

In holding the view of church as a national body over which the King had supreme authority, the Laudians came to see the Church of England as more and more separate from the general story of the Reformation. The Middlesex clergyman and enthusiastic ceremonialist William Page, for example, sought to legitimize certain rituals through reference to their primitive context, but simultaneously asserted that the Stuarts did not need to stand in the shadows of the ancient world. Writing in the early 1630s, he argued that “the greatest, if not the only cause of these manyfold distractions in religion” was the failure of his contemporaries to “hearlento to these ancient Fathers”. Page refused to compromise the reformed status of the Church of England, wondering why so many looked abroad to the rituals practiced in other Reformed countries, as if these were somehow closer to ancient customs. For those who wished to bring England more into line with the Northern European churches, Page asserted the right to differ in ecclesiological laws and customs. Insisting on the uniqueness of the reformatory experience in England, Page argued that there was no need to look elsewhere for ecclesiological inspiration. In the future, Page urged, non-episcopal Continental churches “must come neerer to the Church of England”. Even though the writings of the leaders of the early church could provide a resource for the defense of ecclesiological practice, it was not in fact necessary to invoke any external authority in support of the current system. As Page put it, “you shall never be able to proue that we are so limetted and confined to the auncient Fathers (...) that the church now cannot say or doe any more but iust what they either sayd of did”. Moreover, he frankly admitted that the study of ancient customs did not lead to normative conclusions, since “the present Church hath the power to adde, euen in point of doctrine, much more in matters of discipline and ceremony, to those things the fathers haue left vs”.<sup>337</sup>

Although the corporate memory of the burning at the stake of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley was dear to puritans, and supplied them with a usable Protestant past, it would be wrong to suppose that their legacy was not appropriated from other angles. Attempting to shape Foxeian history to their own ends, many clerics denied that the puritans were the rightful heirs to this legacy. They not only noted that the martyred

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<sup>337</sup> William Page, *A treatise or iustification of bowing at the name of Iesus* (London, 1631), pp. 18. 136-139.



bishops had not opposed the Erastian reformation, but also praised their unswerving loyalty to the magistrates. In 1635, John Terry, for example, placed Cranmer squarely within the parameters of the Episcopal church, citing the martyred Archbishop as a salutary example of how to work within a church where bishops were appointed by the Prince. In fulfilling his duties, Cranmer had provided a “patterne for all Pastors, yea an Idol for all Bishops to imitate”.<sup>338</sup> This was also the view held by Peter Heylyn, who rejected the association between martyrs and puritans, and objected to the way in which the Oxford martyrs were often appropriated. Heylyn insisted that the “holy men” of Edwardian England had not, after all, wanted to “make a new Church”, but rather to “reforme the old”.<sup>339</sup> It was also suggested that puritans had re-created the Marian martyrs in their own image and liking, and confused their legacy with subsequent continental influences. While Geneva had certainly given sanctuary to the persecuted reformers of Mary’s reign, the teachings of such evangelical exiles had not been in accordance with the beliefs of the English martyrs. “If objection be made”, Giles Widdowes, the rector of St. Martin, Oxford, wrote in 1630:

“the most Reverend Archbishop Cranmer, the Right Reverend Bishop Ridley, Father Latimer, and other learned and Holy Martyrs were burned to ashes for their constant profession of the doctrine and discipline of this reformed Church, Answer must be made that the Holy Mother Geneva hath better doctrine and discipline than Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer ever knew”.<sup>340</sup>

Some went even further, claiming that the puritans had nothing in common with the reformed martyrs at all. One royal chaplain, Christopher Dow, associated the puritans instead with the hundreds of exiles who had escaped the Marian regime by fleeing to other Protestant countries. In his view, those martyred under Mary and those who escaped abroad had little in common. Even after their return to England, the latter continued to

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<sup>338</sup> John Terry, *The defence of protestancie proving that the Protestant religion hath the promise of salvation* (London, 1635), p. 219. More about Cranmer’s defense of royal supremacy, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘Archbishop Cranmer: concord and tolerance in a changing Church’, in Ole Peter Grell & Bob Scribner (eds.) *Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 199-215.

<sup>339</sup> Peter Heylyn, *A briefe and moderate answer* (London, 1637), p. 72.

<sup>340</sup> Giles Widdowes, *The lawlesse kneelesse schismaticall Puritan* (London, 1630), pp. 6-7.

look to Geneva for inspiration, and to support and popularize a number of dangerous beliefs regarding church practice and authority.<sup>341</sup> In Dow's words, it "was one of the greatest evils that ever happened to this Church, that in the infancy of the reformation... many for conscience sake and to avoyd the storm of persecution which fell in the dayes of Queen Mary, betaking themselves to the reformed Churches abroad, and especially to Geneva, were drawn into such a liking of the forme of discipline then newly erected by Master Calvin there, that returning home, they became quite out of love with that which they found here established by Authority".<sup>342</sup> In particular, such toxic legacies included precepts regarding resistance to royal authority.

The most influential achievement of the exiled Protestant scholars was the Geneva Bible, published in 1560. Though often read, it was never granted official approval. The text of the Geneva translators was used alongside the authorized version of the Bible, produced by the Stuarts in 1611. Perhaps the most striking difference between the two was the fact that the King James version did not refer in its introduction to the recent "cruel murder of Gods Saintes", or condemn the Marian regime for its "dumme and dead idoles", whereas the Geneva edition did.<sup>343</sup> The most famous refugee from Marian England was, of course, John Foxe, who sojourned in Frankfurt, Basel, and Strasbourg, where he began to compile his massive work, before returning to England after Elizabeth's accession. It was of course hard to separate Foxe from the rest of these exiles. John Knox, for example, had been responsible for seditious doctrines regarding resistance to royal authority.

It was also widely alleged that the aversion to altars was due to the influence of the Genevan reformer Jean Calvin, and his successor Theodore Beza. Defending this interpretation, Peter Heylyn blamed Calvin, rather than the Marian martyrs, for the dissolution of the altars during the 1550s. Calvin and his English disciples, Heylyn argued, had meddled excessively with the liturgical practices of the Church of England.

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<sup>341</sup> A study of the biographies of the Marian exiles has been provided by Christina Hallowell Garrett, *The Marian Exiles. A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938).

<sup>342</sup> Christopher Dow, *Innovations unjustly charged upon the present church and state* (London, 1637), pp. 193-194.

<sup>343</sup> See *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva, 1560), introductory epistle entitled "To Ovr Beloved in the Lord the Brethren of England, Scotland, Ireland".

“It had beene happy for this Church”, he wrote, “if [Calvin] and Beza could have kept themselves to their meditations, and not beene *curiosi in aliena republica* as they were too much”.<sup>344</sup> William Page was no less forthright, declaring that “the authority of the Church of England is to be preferred before many Calvins”.<sup>345</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that while the little-compromising Laudian churchmen understood the continental influence in negative terms, they appear to have made few explicit attacks on the martyrology compiled by the most famous Genevan exile, John Foxe. The Edwardian church as portrayed by Foxe was a *bête noire* for the Laudians, but as Damian Nussbaum has rightly observed, “Laud may not have challenged Foxe directly, but neither did he champion him”.<sup>346</sup> This was, I want to suggest, in large part due to the fact that Foxe’s martyrology was a powerful source of popular orthodoxy, and its moral authority was logically and emotionally beyond criticism.

#### 4.5 PURITAN TRIALS POLARIZE THE CONSENSUS IN RELIGION

The year 1637 marked the culmination of several years of controversy between the Laudian high-churchman and the puritans. The leaders of the church decided that the time for firmer measures had arrived, and sought to put an end to seditious writing by bringing the loudest puritan nonconformists to trial. Among the latter, by far the most notorious were William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton, all of whom had been explicitly critical of the episcopacy in a range of unlicensed publications. By the time that they were impeached and sentenced to life imprisonment by the court of the Star Chamber on June 14, 1637, they had become cultic figures, being referred to as the puritan triumvirate. The harsh measures taken against these agitators reinforced their image of themselves as martyrs, and transformed their religious opinions into a matter of public concern.

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<sup>344</sup> Peter Heylyn, *Antidotum Lincolnense* (London, 1637), p. 110.

<sup>345</sup> William Page, *A treatise or iustification of bowing at the name of Iesus* (London, 1631), pp. 20-21.

<sup>346</sup> Damian Nussbaum, ‘Laudian Foxe-Hunting? William Laud and the Status of John Foxe in the 1630s’, in *The Church Retrospective*, Studies in Church History XXXIII (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 339-340, pp. 339-340. In contrast, Peter White had suggested that “neither Prynne nor Heylyn found exactly what he wanted when they combed the works of the early English Reformers”. See Peter White, *Predestination, policy, and polemic: conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 39.

Again and again in their writings, the triumvirate sought to justify their own cause, and to delegitimize that of the authorities, by presenting themselves as martyrs. There is little doubt that such claims were a sincere expression of their own self-image. In an autobiographical passage, Burton claimed that he had suffered no less than the apostle Paul, who “suffered death, by being beheaded, with the sword, under Nero at Rome”. “I”, Burton continued, “suffered that on the pilary in England, my native country, which was more painful, and no more lesse, if not more disgracefull, then such a death”.<sup>347</sup> For his part, Bastwick told his readers that he was preparing for a better world, stressing how “our lives are not onely irksome unto us, but our being and living a very burden, so that death is most welcome, for that and that onely we are set at liberty”.<sup>348</sup> According to Bastwick, “the Subjects co[n]dition” was now “worse, & they are in a farre more deplorable predicament then they were in under the Pope”.<sup>349</sup> Similarly, almost every work produced by William Prynne during the 1630s involved a comparison between himself and the martyrs of the reign of Queen Mary. In fact, in Prynne’s view, there had not been such persecution against the people and ministers of England since the 1550s.<sup>350</sup> In opposition, Laud expressed bewilderment regarding the extent to which the puritans exaggerated the mild punishments they had suffered. As he put it, in Queen Elizabeth’s reign, separatists had been put to death “for less than is contained in Mr. Burtons book”.<sup>351</sup>

The members of the triumvirate were also among the more enthusiastic exploiters of the Foxeian legacy, deploying its imagery in support of their case against regal tyranny. For instance, claims to spiritual kinship with the Foxeian martyrs played a central role in the speech that Prynne delivered prior to his torture and mutilation at the scaffold. The unusually large crowd could hardly have missed Prynne’s presentation of himself as a representative of the people against the autocratic tendencies of the government. First, he announced that he and his fellow martyrs were struggling “for the generall good and Liberties of you all, that wee have now thus farre engaged our owne

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<sup>347</sup> Henry Burton, *A Narration of the Life of Mr. Henry Burton* (London, 1643), p. 35.

<sup>348</sup> John Bastwick, *A more full answer of John Bastwick* (Leiden, 1637), p. 5.

<sup>349</sup> John Bastwick, *The answer of John Bastvick* (Leiden, 1637), p. 25.

<sup>350</sup> William Prynne, *Newes from Ipswich discovering certaine late detestable practises of some domineering lordly prelates* (Edinburgh?, 1636), p. [6].

<sup>351</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1847), p. 391.

Liberties in this cause”. Moreover, Prynne asked: “If all the Martyrs that suffered in Queen Maries dayes, are accounted Hereticks and Factious Fellowes: What shall wee looke for?”.<sup>352</sup> Similar assumptions were reflected in Bastwick’s writings, in which he drew a parallel between the Marian era and his own encounters with the Caroline episcopacy, claiming that the true libelers of his age were publicists such as Heylyn and Pocklington, who were allowed to write inflammatorily “against all the Martyrs that suffered in Queen Maries dayes calling them Schismaticall Hereticks”.<sup>353</sup> While such martyr-narratives provided the puritans with an indispensable tool for mobilizing support, they posed a considerable challenge to the regime, threatening to cast a shadow of persecution over its religious policy.

It is often forgotten that the puritan trials forced Laud onto the defensive. In particular, despite his general reluctance to engage in negotiation and compromise, and his refusal to debate the regime’s most radical critics in person, Laud eventually felt moved to offer a public response to their criticisms, and a justification of his own actions. In doing so, Laud made a calculated appeal to the people, in order to win their support for his policy of conformity, to reassure them of his Protestant credentials, and to drown out the claims of seditious pamphleteers. Furthermore, he also went out of his way to deny the latter’s claims to martyrdom. Generally, Laud argued that the Stuart monarchy had not inflicted any unreasonable punishments during recent years – this applied to Roman Catholics, as well as to nonconforming Protestants. As Laud put it, “there was never any *Law* made against the *life* of a *Papist*”, since it was against the principles of the state to “*put any man to death for Religion, but for Rebellion and Treason onely*”. Indeed, this was no less true in the case of puritan subjects.<sup>354</sup>

Laud’s response focused upon the libelous, schismatic tendencies of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton. For all their pious rhetoric, Laud argued, the latter harbored deeply subversive intentions. Their affected sympathy for the martyrs of the Marian era was little more than empty theatrics, since they themselves lacked the stuff

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<sup>352</sup> Anon., *A briefe relation of certaine speciall and most materiall passages, and speeches in the Starre-Chamber* (Amsterdam, 1637), pp. 20-21.

<sup>353</sup> Anon., *A briefe relation of certaine speciall and most materiall passages, and speeches in the Starre-Chamber* (Amsterdam, 1637), p. 21.

<sup>354</sup> William Laud, *A speech delivered in the Starr-Chamber* (London, 1637), p. 37.

from which real martyrs were made. “There were times”, Laud pointed out, “when Persecutions were great in the Church, even to exceed Barbarity it selfe: [yet] did any Martyr or Confessor, in those times, Libel the Governours?”. In his view, the writers of sharp-edged libels blackmouthing the government could not be thought of as martyrs. In the case it could be shown that the puritan publicists were punished by High Commission for their “Vertue and Piety”, he wrote, “there is all the reason in the world *we* should bee *severely punished* our selves”. Laud likewise rejected the accusation that he had been introducing liturgical innovations. In his short defense of ceremonialism, he accused his opponents of disrupting his efforts to maintain unity. Due to such behavior, it was in fact the puritans who were “the chief *Innovators* of the *Christian world*”. How dare they, Laud declared, “accuse us of *Innovation*”. In the end, it was the church that was suffering patiently, under the assault of these defiant sectarians and their provocative writings. By Laud’s own account, the regime was not forging a new identity for English Protestants, nor transgressing any generic rules of reformation. Rather, his real aim and desire was the restoration of religious unity and settling the church in accordance with “the Rules of its first Reformation”.<sup>355</sup>

Laud was not alone in vindicating the government’s religious policies and stressing obedience to clerical authority. The same cry against the corrosive effect of nonconformism was taken up by the Suffolk divine James Buck. “[W]hat Persecution there can be”, Buck asked, when “the supreme Magistrate is a defender of the true antient Faith?”.<sup>356</sup> Moreover, Buck also opposed efforts to associate suffering nonconformists with the martyrs of past eras. True martyrdom, he argued, manifested itself in suffering for righteousness’ sake, as exemplified by biblical characters such as the prophets and John the Baptist, but also in the lives of ordinary people, who suffered for Christ’s name’s sake in the course of everyday life. In *A treatise of the Beatitudes*, Buck provided idealized images of suffering, under subheadings such as “Of persecution for righteousness”, “That the best of men have been most persecuted”, and “Touching the joy requisite in suffering”. These passages, as one might expect, were written with an eye to contemporary sectarianism. In particular, Buck repeatedly stated that “shame

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<sup>355</sup> William Laud, *A speech delivered in the Starr-Chamber* (London, 1637), pp. 2, 5-6, 74.

<sup>356</sup> James Buck, *A treatise of the Beatitudes* (London, 1637), p. 330.

persecutes more then paine”, and that libelers were the “base persecutors of higher powers”. Such “grosse absurdies and disorders” were contrary to Christian piety, and “the whole Church of England bee by them and their associates without compare persecuted”. Furthermore, Buck rejected puritan claims to the legacy of Marian martyrs, arguing that Ridley and Cranmer were in fact “children of our good mother, the holy and ancient Church of England”.<sup>357</sup>

Henry Leslie, a bishop and member of the high commission in Ireland, also mounted a defense of the measures taken against puritan dissidents. At the center of his argument was the claim that individual conscience was not a sufficient reason to revolt against Church ordinances. Against the puritans, who so often took such a course, Leslie maintained that lawful ordinances could not, under any circumstances, be resisted merely on the basis of one’s own inner convictions. Citing the martyred Church Father Cyprian, Leslie contended that resisting lawful ordinances was nothing less than sin. Furthermore, it was an even more heinous error to incite others to faction and division. According to Leslie, all the questions that puritans had raised during past years “hath beene answered to the full”. Despite the fact that their errors had been systematically exposed, the puritans nonetheless continued to follow their own private fancies. Instead of appealing to true reason, they were driven by “Passion, a desire to please the people, and (as you are pleased to terme it) your conscience”. On these grounds, Leslie equated the puritans with Donatists, who “glory much in their sufferings, challenge unto themselves the honour of Martyrs, whereby they did confirme the hearts of simple people in their errors, and rend the Church with schismes and divisions.”<sup>358</sup>

Thus, Laud and his clerical associates provided a range of reasons as to why the actions of Prynne and his fellow convicts were far from being sincere. However, such attempts to dismiss these puritans as false martyrs were ultimately unsuccessful. In the aftermath of the trials, it was easy to portray the puritans as martyrs, and to present their sufferings as emblematic of a broader anti-formalist cause. Yet it has been difficult to quantify the effect of these show trials, and particularly the extent to which they provoked

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<sup>357</sup> James Buck, *A treatise of the Beatitudes* (London, 1637), pp. 285, 310, 331-332.

<sup>358</sup> Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (London, 1637), pp. 100-102.

resistance, and mobilized popular opinion, against Caroline policy. When the puritans came to be mutilated, the news-letter writer Edmund Rossingham recorded, “[t]he humours of the people were various (...) some wept, some laughed, and some were very reserved”.<sup>359</sup> To what extent did their mutilation weaken the authority of the episcopate and the government in Caroline England? How far were the puritan triumvirate seen as representative of popular religion? In other words, while all historians agree that the trials of 1637 backfired, it is hard to conclude with any certainty as to how representative these nonconformists were of mainstream Protestant opinion.

Many historians of the early Stuart period have seen puritanism as populist, and have even suggested that the writings of the triumvirate were uncommonly influential. William Lamont, for example, has drawn attention to the shift in perception that occurred within a mere few years. In Lamont’s words, “the event of 1637 made an impact upon public opinion that those of 1633 had failed to do: Prynne’s exile to the Channel Island became a triumphant progress”.<sup>360</sup> Other historians have gone even further, underlining the capacity of radical Calvinism to inspire the people. Annabel Patterson, for instance, took these “show trials” to be a major turning point in the emergence of “a polarized culture”, and considered them to be one of the primary underlying causes of the subsequent political crisis. By making Prynne a martyr, Patterson argues, “Charles took an irrevocable step toward civil war”.<sup>361</sup> Similarly, David Cressy has argued that the puritans’ release from prison, “the return of martyrs”, was “the first major crowd event of the English revolution”.<sup>362</sup>

However we interpret the evidence in question will involve a large degree of speculation. It seems clear, however, that most English observers did not see the show trials in the way that those who had devised them had intended. To the contrary, they accepted the version of the puritans, to the effect that the trials proved the authorities to

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<sup>359</sup> Quoted in David Cressy *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000), p. 225.

<sup>360</sup> William Lamont, ‘Prynne, William’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.eui.eu/view/theme/95582>> [accessed February 18, 2015].

<sup>361</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and interpretation* (Madison, WI, 1984), p. 115.

<sup>362</sup> For the reception of the triumvirate see Ch. 13 in David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000).



be both ruthless and uncompromising. In the years following the trials, it became eminently clear that the Laudian approach to the problem of religious diversity had been seriously mistaken. This was acknowledged most clearly by Laud himself, whose correspondence expressed alarm regarding a wide-ranging puritan conspiracy. For instance, shortly after the delivery of the verdict, Laud remarked in his diary that someone had circulated a libel against him, characterizing him as the “Arch-Wolf of Canterbury”, and accusing him of “persecuting the saints and shedding the blood of martyrs”.<sup>363</sup> Indeed, there were strong signs of panic in Laud’s mind when he acknowledged the emotionally charged mass meetings that were taking place around these dissidents. This was also the moment at which Laud came to realize that his own life was in danger, and that some of his adversaries were plotting his death. As he informed his correspondent Wentworth, “if some speedy order be not taken”, he would have “cause to think that mye life is aimed at”. According to Laud, it had been a mistake to allow “Prynne and his fellows” to use the occasion of their punishment to such great dramatic effect. For instance, it had been foolish to permit them to “talk what they pleased while they stood in the pillory and win acclamation from the people, and have notes taken of what they spoke, and those notes spread in written copies”. Furthermore, Laud agreed with Wentworth that such enthusiasm had the potential to generate political unrest. “[T]hese men do but begin with the Church”, he stated, but “they might after have the freer access to the State”.<sup>364</sup>

The impression of a growing divergence between magistrate and people is confirmed by further contemporary testimonies. Observing the English absolutist experience in 1637, the only danger the Venetian ambassador Anzolo Correr could see on relatively harmonious society was presented by the puritans, who were exasperated by the new forms of worship.<sup>365</sup> Remarkably, many writers indicated that the mutilation of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton had aroused indignation among lay people, while also resonating with wider groups in society. For example, John Lilburne, a distributor of illicit

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<sup>363</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1847), p. 228.

<sup>364</sup> William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 6, Part 2 (Oxford, 1847), pp. 497-498, 500; William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 7 (Oxford, 1847), p. 342.

<sup>365</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, ‘The Puritan Paradigm of English Politics, 1558 – 1642’, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53 (2010), pp. 546-547.

pamphlets, described the punished puritans as “three renovvned living marters”. Soon after the trials, on July 13, several people walked out of a church in Shoreditch, when the minister announced that anyone who supported the puritans could expect damnation in the afterlife. According to Edmund Rossingham, the misfortunes of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton deeply affected “the common people”, who were “extremely compassionate towards them”.<sup>366</sup> Whatever role the trials played in undermining the foundations of absolute rule, it is unlikely that puritanism would have captured so much attention without the rapid growth of radicalism in Scotland, and the widespread public resistance to the collection of ship money.

The Scottish mood of resistance was expressed most strongly by minister David Calderwood, who wrote from his exile in Low Countires, revolting against the strict episcopal structure before the riots broke out in Edinburgh. Calderwood took a hard line against the effort to subordinate “presbyteries to synods, and synods to generall assemblies”, because eventually these changes in governmental structures of the Scottish Kirk would lead to a “tyrannicall oligarchie”. He encouraged to stay steadfast in the face of current ecclesiastical oppression and reminded that the “reformation of the Church within this realm was not obtained without the martyrdome of some, and the hazard of the lives and estates of many other of our worthie predecessours”.<sup>367</sup> The news of the puritan mutilations soon arrived in Scotland, where it caused a sensation among the Presbyterians, who, as the documentary historian John Rushworth reported, identified strongly with the English Puritans. Only five weeks later, the Scots began their resistance against the episcopate in St Giles Cathedral, when market-trader Jenny Geddes allegedly threw “a Stool at the Head of the Bishop, crying a Pape, a Pape, Antichrift, Antichrift”.<sup>368</sup> Nonetheless, the puritan pamphleteers were kept in prison, where they continued to

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<sup>366</sup> John Lilburne, *A worke of the Beast or A relation of a most vnchristian censure* (Amsterdam, 1638), p. 14. Quoted in David Cressy *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000). p. 226.

<sup>367</sup> David Calderwood, *A re-examination of the five articles enacted at Perth anno 1618* (Holland, 1636), To the Reader.

<sup>368</sup> John Rushworth, *Historical Collections. Containing the Principal Matters: Vol. 2, 1629-38* (London, 1680), p. 385.

accumulate evidence against the ecclesiastical hierarchy, until the Long Parliament finally released all three from their sentences in 1640.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has invited us to reconsider familiar evidence from the Personal Rule of King Charles, and to pay attention to its martyrological features. It has explored a series of initiatives to exploit the popular typology of tyranny: the reign of Catholic Queen Mary (1553–1558) and its sacralized victims, the Marian martyrs. As has been pointed out above, the Foxeian history could not be sidelined when the confrontation between clerical discipline and nonconformity intensified, and the ecclesiological legacy of the Reformation was brought under discussion.

The received tradition of English martyrs also played an important role within the religious polemics of the Jacobean church, and particularly its discussions of worship and the place of altars. As we have seen, the precedent of martyred reformers was used by puritans as a tool to revile the current ecclesiastical regime. Moreover, martyrs also played an important part in the puritan attempt to convince the public that Laudian reforms signaled a radical break with the past. One of the strongest accusations that puritan critics put forward was the claim that the innovations promoted by Laud had transformed worship practices beyond recognition, and had surrendered the church to Roman notions of tradition.

It is true that the Laudians' debt to idiomatically Protestant sources such as Foxe's martyrology was minimal. Moreover, the importance of martyred reformers to Laudian self-definition was equally slim. However, it would be wrong to follow puritan critics entirely, and to attribute this merely to a hatred of the reformers and martyrs of Britain. Even if there were inconsistencies between the programs of Caroline and Edwardian reformers, as the puritans suggested, there is little indication that the high-church conformists said anything directly against the Oxford martyrs. An examination of the polemical works produced during Charles' Personal Rule indicates that Laudian writers were in fact far more creative in adapting this reformed legacy, and chose to assimilate and reinvent the period instead of abandoning it. Like John Bastwick in the late

1630s, twentieth-century historians have tended to view the Laudians' purported allegiance to the reformed religious leaders of the 1550s as a rhetorical smokescreen. In the words of Diarmaid MacCulloch, for example, these writers "did their best to put their own positive gloss on Foxe's picture of the English martyrs, but one gets the feeling that this was because they felt it politic to do so, rather than out of any genuine enthusiasm".<sup>369</sup>

Yet, there is a nearly universal consensus among historians that Charles' reformation was a failure. It became eminently clear in the years following the trials that the Laudian solution to the problem of religious diversity within the Church of England had turned out to be a serious mistake. As the crisis of the Stuart dynasty deepened, and Charles' ministry finally lost control of the debate, the balance of power swung in the opposite direction. Due in no small part to the harsh governmental response to the nonconformists, more and more people during the early 1640s were convinced that the ecclesiastical polity was in a need of a fundamental reordering. Robert Greville, a Warwick aristocrat and member of the House of Lords, for example, affirmed the growing unease regarding "prelatical persecution", and testified that the people had gradually grown suspicious of episcopal authority, particularly after having recognized that the nonconformists may have had a point. According to Greville, who was highly critical of the ways in which the problem of nonconformity had been addressed, the movement against Laudianism had progressed from a small number of individuals to the political mainstream, largely due to the imprudent actions of bishops. Great emphasis was laid upon "our Bishops Commotions", which had promoted a movement towards a "New Non-Conformity, or Separatisme". Moreover, Greville argued, the public torture inflicted upon Laud's critics had also had a formative influence on attitudes towards the episcopacy. As he put it, "I will not say, as the Fathers did of old, Ex martyrum sanguine pullulat Ecclesia; yet I must confesse, I begin to think there may bee perhaps somewhat more of God in these (which they call new Schismes,) than appeares at first glimpse". As a result of the harsh conduct of the Laudian authorities, there was little reason to view the

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<sup>369</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *All Things Made New: The Reformation and Its Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 265.

rule of Caroline ecclesiastical governors in a positive light. “I cannot”, Greville wrote, “but hold our Episcopacy an intolerable Tyranny”.<sup>370</sup>

These tensions will be explored further in the next chapter. Pursuing the story onwards will demonstrate that the parameters within which the discussion about martyrdom was conducted changed significantly during the 1640s, as many writers began to challenge the monarchy’s religious power more directly, to put forward radical visions of ecclesiastical reform, and to look back to the previous decade as an age of oppression under Archbishop Laud. Under these circumstances, the Laudian canons, and much of the ecclesiastical policy of Charles I, were dismantled: Parliament ordered the removal of altar rails, communion tables were to be placed in the middle of the church, and the High Commission was abolished. Now, the Archbishop and his associates were in trouble with the parliamentary authorities, who brought them before revolutionary courts, ejected them from their livings, and prosecuted them on account of their writings and actions during the period of Personal Rule.

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<sup>370</sup> Robert Greville, *A discovrse opening the natvre of that episcopacie* (London, 1641), pp. 71, 99.



## CHAPTER 5

# Church government and bishop-martyrs during the Bishops' Wars

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the mid-seventeenth century, nearly one hundred years after the end of the Marian regime, John Foxe's martyrology was still read with enthusiasm by educated elites throughout the land. In one of his sermons, William Gouge, the wealthy rector of St Anne, Blackfriars, emphasized that Foxe's classic work remained a subject of perennial fascination. In Elizabethan times, he noted, there "was scarce a Family of note" who did not own the martyrology. Moreover, looking back to his own youth, Gouge recalled that it "was usual to spend the long Winter evenings reading it carefully". Reflecting on the significance of "the constancy of Martyre therein set out", Gouge told his listeners that "people were much encouraged to stand to that faith which was sealed by their blood". Finally, Gouge called upon his audience to preserve the memory of the martyrs. "Their sufferings and our freedome", he declared, were indistinguishable, and should thus "never to be forgotten".<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> William Gouge, *Mercies memorial set out in a sermon preached in Paul's church* (London, 1645), p. 22.

Similar praise regarding Foxe was also apparent in the works of other popular divines during the 1640s. For instance, Stephen Marshall, an Essex vicar famous for his printed sermons, asked whether “any book written in our Mother tongue, hath brought more glory to God, and stirred up more zeale for Christ, and encouraged people more to a holy life, and to own Gods Cause couragiously, than Mr. Foxes books of Martyrs”.<sup>372</sup> For his part, the clerical historian Thomas Fuller confessed that his life-long fascination with martyrs had been stimulated by looking at their images during his childhood. From an early age, Fuller had been drawn to the English martyrs, who, he explained, had taken “possession of my soul”. Like Gouge, this reader of Foxe was also inclined to see the persecuted reformers in highly idealized terms, and to imbue them with transcendent meaning, calling them “more than men” for having paid the ultimate price “for the profession of the truth”. While Fuller himself was nostalgic for the martyrs, he feared that the sense of admiration that had animated previous generations of readers was beginning to subside. In his words, there had occurred a “strange alteration in the world’s valuing of those learned men who lived in that age”. Nowadays, Fuller claimed, “they have been much cried down in the mouth of many”, some having “found them little better than *felons de se*, dying in their own blood”.<sup>373</sup> How had this come about? To explain what stimulated such comments, we need to look more closely at the pamphlet wars unleashed by the collapse of the Personal Rule of Charles Stuart.

The following chapter will consider those prose works written at the time that the question of the hierarchy and authority of the national church were provoking deep controversy, particularly during the parliamentary sessions of 1640 to 1642. This debate was to a large extent concerned with the true meaning of the Greek word *episkopos*. It was also a struggle against monarchical powers since, as Charles Prior has pointed out, the “bishops were the channels through which the Crown’s sovereignty over the Church was exercise”.<sup>374</sup> Here, the human testimonies of martyrs also figured prominently. On the one hand, we will study those writers who aimed to secure the continuation of the Episcopal structure, and to defend its ceremonial traditions, through

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<sup>372</sup> Stephen Marshall, *A sacred record to be made of Gods mercies to Zion* (London, 1645), pp. 62-63.

<sup>373</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge, 1642), p. 291.

<sup>374</sup> Charles W. A. Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603–1625* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 113.



reference to the martyrs of the 1550s. On the other hand, we shall also consider the anti-prelatic writers, including the Smectymnians and their allies, who were competing against the Episcopalians, and wished to diminish their clerical influence. In the process, it will be shown how many such polemical texts modified the martyrological tradition, and reformulated the meaning of the Foxeian legacy.

## 5.2 SCOTTISH TROUBLES IN ENGLAND:

### THE FURY AGAINST EPISCOPACY

For a time, Charles, as the reigning monarch of England, Scotland, and Ireland, had been able to avoid the destructive confessional conflicts that had convulsed the German states and other parts of Europe. However, in January 1639, he realized that Britain could not entirely escape the wars of religion. Efforts to assert English ecclesiastical hegemony over the Kirk of Scotland provoked a rebellion, and, as soon as Parliament was convened in response, events took another unpredictable turn. Contrary to Charles' intentions, some peers and elected representatives in fact expressed sympathy with the defenders of Scottish autonomy, and admiration for their willingness to resist the conjoint rule of King and bishop.

Before contemporaries had conceptualized the early English uprising of the 1640s as a civil war (*bellum civile*, a war fought between the citizens of same polity), it often came to attention as a primarily ecclesiological conflict. "What then, must have been the title of the warre", the parliamentarian chaplain Jeremiah Burroughs noted in 1641, "but this, Episcopale Bellum".<sup>375</sup> On the other side of the divide, the King's chaplain, Henry Ferne, grudgingly admitted in 1642 that people usually called the English conflict "The Bishops Warre".<sup>376</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, ecclesiastical concerns had had a central place in the final years of Personal Rule. The Scottish wars intensified this opposition, bestowed a new potency upon polemical works, and evoked powerful reactions against Charles and his ministers all over the kingdoms of Britain. The

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<sup>375</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Sions joy* (London, 1641), p. 40.

<sup>376</sup> Henry Ferne, *The resolving of conscience upon this question* (Cambridge, 1642), p. 39.

Scottish Covenanters were the first to openly challenge the ideological, intellectual, and religious uniformity of the Caroline monarchy. Before long, similar presbyterian agitations broke out at Westminster.<sup>377</sup> At the outset, the quarrel was defined by different interpretations of church governance. Eventually, these ecclesiastical controversies grew into full-blown resistance against the English crown, and led to a war which severed the church from the monarchy. By 1643, Edward Bowles, a chaplain in the parliamentary army, could claim that “the warre must be called Bellum Ragale, and not Episcopale, and the Scots persecuted, not as men dis-affected to Episcopacy, but to Monarchy”.<sup>378</sup>

Perhaps the most influential apology for the Caroline church was provided by Joseph Hall, the bishop of Exeter and anti-Jesuit controversialist, in a work entitled *Episcopacy by Divine Right*. While the work was composed by Hall, who did not have an anti-puritan record, its content was arguably supplied in a more or less concerted fashion by William Laud and Matthew Wren, both of whom edited and revised it before publication.<sup>379</sup> It was intended for many audiences, providing a theoretical justification against the Scottish covenanters, an erudite account of the origins of the national church in England, and a polemical defense of its hierarchy and authority. Fearful of the revival and popular success of presbyterianism, Hall warned against attempts “to encourage any Secular Powers” to “abolish not only the Order of Bishops, but that of Priests in all the Christians States”.<sup>380</sup>

The work outlined the merits of the office of bishop, chronicled its long history as an ecclesiastical institution, and defined episcopacy – the order of bishops – as a form of church government required by divine law. In opposition to the Covenanter claim that churches were originally governed by councils of presbyters, Hall emphasized

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<sup>377</sup> For a broad overview, see Mark Charles Fissel, *The Bishop's Wars. Charles I's Campaigns against Scotland, 1638-1640* (Cambridge, 1994); Ian Michael Smart, ‘The Political Thought of Scottish Covenanters, 1638-1688’, *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 1 (1980), pp. 167-193.

<sup>378</sup> Edward Bowles, *The mysterie of iniquity yet working in the kingdomes of England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the destruction of religion truly Protestant discovered* (London, 1643), p. 18.

<sup>379</sup> For more about the ways in which Hall tailored his message to his readers, see Peter Lake, ‘The moderate and irenic case for religious war; Joseph Hall’s *Via Media* in context’, in S. D. Amussen and M. Kihlansky, (eds.) *Political Culture and Culture Politics in Early Modern England*, (Manchester, 1995), pp. 55-83, and Peter Lake & Ken Fincham, ‘Popularity, prelacy and puritanism in the 1630s; Joseph Hall explains himself’, in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111 (1996), pp. 856-881.

<sup>380</sup> Joseph Hall, *Episcopacie by divine right* (London, 1640), The preface, iv.

the solid foundations of the system in which bishops obtained exclusive authority and constituted a ministerial order distinct from presbyters. This kind of ecclesiastical hierarchy had deep roots in the Apostolic and Primitive church, Hall assured his readers. In particular, he drew attention to the first-century church leaders Timothy and Titus, designating them as bishops. Furthermore, Hall drew additional support from the testimonies of a succession of church fathers, from Cyprian to Ignatius and Tertullianus, and even the founder of ecclesiastical history, Eusebius of Caesarea. Another of Hall's guiding lights was the first-century "holy martyr" Ignatius of Antioch. In opposition to those who tried to blur the boundaries between different offices, Hall pointed out that Ignatius had identified three distinct orders of church government in his epistles, namely presbyters, deacons, and bishops.<sup>381</sup> However, following its appearance in 1640, Hall's work turned out to be the last Laudian effort to justify its ecclesiastical policy. From this point onwards, debate was dominated by educated laymen: supporters and opponents of episcopacy as well as more radical puritans who were willing to alter the fabric of the half-reformed polity and the organisation of the church.

The war against the Scots prompted varying responses from the members of the Short and Long Parliaments. As the parliamentary historian Thomas May retrospectively observed, the latter had behaved in the way they had because "Their owne sufferings made them easily believe that the Scots were innocent, and wronged by the same hand by which themselves had been oppressed".<sup>382</sup> Driven by their own experience of Personal Rule, citizens and legislators launched withering attacks upon the more extreme elements of the royal ecclesiastical program, rejected the church canons, dismantled the reforms of the 1630s, and began to release the victims of the ecclesiastical courts. Parliament also set up a committee to investigate how the faithful had been subjected to harassment in the pre-civil war universities.<sup>383</sup> Archbishop Laud was arrested on November 21, and the divines around him were imprisoned for "unlawful innovation". The flaws of Laud were summed up by the parliamentary leader John Pym, who accused the Archbishop of having "set division betweene the King and the subjects, and [having]

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<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>382</sup> Thomas May, *The History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647), p. 31.

<sup>383</sup> David Hoyle, 'A Commons Investigation of Arminianism and Popery in Cambridge on the Eve of the Civil War', in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 29 (1986), pp. 419-425.

gone about to bring in Innovations into the church, and [having] induced the King to warre with the Scots”.<sup>384</sup> In the view of Harbottle Grimston, the second baronet of Bradfield Hall, Laud’s tenure had failed to meet the standards of good governance. As he put it, “the Common-wealth hath bin miserably torne and macerated, and all the proprieties, and Liberties shaken: the Church distracted, the Gospell and Professors of it persecuted”.<sup>385</sup> In 1640 and 1641, Parliament used its power to remove the chief representatives of the Caroline establishment from positions of authority: by the end of 1640, thirteen bishops had been impeached for treason, and, during the next year, another dozen.<sup>386</sup> Alongside the debate on military, legal, and fiscal questions, and the accusations against Charles’ leading ecclesiastical and lay advisors, many publicists began to demand sweeping changes to church government.

Notwithstanding the fury against the the Stuarts’ monarchical-episcopal arrangement, it is unclear how far members of Parliament were opposed to the episcopacy as an institution, or how united they were in their desire to recuse temporal authority from spiritual authority.<sup>387</sup> Many participants in the debates attributed the blame for the current conflict to the Laudian bishops, without calling the episcopal order itself into question. After admitting the shortcomings of the Laudian policies, they went on to propose moderate changes to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, while seeking to maintain the existing structures fundamentally intact. Some protested against particular church practices or clerical pretensions, or simply wanted to remove the bishops from the House of Lords. There were also some more radical proposals, for instance, to exclude the clergy from any role in secular governance, and to abolish the office of episcopacy, replacing bishops with lay commissioners. In the wake of the military conflict of the early 1640s, these questions captured the imagination of numerous writers, thinkers, and politicians, all of

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<sup>384</sup> *Articles exhibited in Parliament against William Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1640), p. 4.

<sup>385</sup> Harbottle Grimston, *Master Grimston his worthy and learned speech* (London, 1641), p. [5].

<sup>386</sup> John Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (Longman, 1993), p. 56.

<sup>387</sup> See, e.g. John Spurr, “‘A Special Kindness for Dead Bishops’: The Church, History, and Testimony in Seventeenth-Century Protestantism”, in Paulina Kewes (ed.) *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (Huntington Library, 2006), pp. 307-328. According to Nicholas D. Jackson, antiepiscopecy was “less a matter of ‘principle’ or religious scruple than a matter of personal envy of and hostility towards clerical favourites.” See *Hobbes, Bramhall and the Politics of Liberty and Necessity: A Quarrel of the Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 11.

whom campaigned to reform both church and society, not knowing that civil war lay just around the corner.

The revolutionary ferment also encouraged the development and circulation of more radical ideas. Historians have offered several explanations for the latter. John Morrill, for instance, placed religion at the heart of political affairs, famously labelling the conflict of the 1640s as “the last of the Wars of Religion”, and claiming that the ecclesiastical program of Laud and Charles was “offensive to most lay and much clerical opinion”. Subsequent religious disagreements then “drove minorities to fight, and forced majorities to make reluctant choices”.<sup>388</sup> Richard Tuck, in turn, has adopted a longer-term perspective, arguing that English and Scottish developments reflected more general currents of thought in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, whereby peoples challenged governments, magistrates, and princes, in order to establish Congregationalist organizations. As Tuck puts it, “what Calvinists all over Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries wished to do was to capture their monarchs and to use their power to establish a Presbyterian system of church government”.<sup>389</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, Englishmen resisted episcopal subordination, and pressured the monarch for reforms. It is, however, important to note that this trajectory, while common, was by no means predominant in England. As Jeffrey Collins has pointed out, many English thinkers took the preservation of Erastianism far more seriously than their continental or Scottish peers. In the end, those suspicious of unrestrained clerical power, and supportive of the supremacy of the state over the church, outnumbered those who attempted to introduce a Genevan-style system through Parliament. As Collins puts it, the “Revolution was dedicated to preserving an Erastian church settlement far more than a Calvinist one”. In this sense, it was, “in fundamental ways, a struggle to protect the ecclesiological legacy of the Reformation.”<sup>390</sup> As we shall now see, despite their many differences, all of these different currents of thought which fuelled the ideological confusions and enthusiasms evoked the legacy of martyrs in support of their cause.

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<sup>388</sup> John Morrill, ‘The Religious Context of the English Civil War’, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 34, (1984), p. 157; *The Nature of the English Revolution* (Longman, 1993), p. 53.

<sup>389</sup> Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1571-1651* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 203.

<sup>390</sup> Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, 2007), p. 7.

### 5.3 MARTYRDOM IN THE DEBATE OVER CHURCH GOVERNANCE

The “Warre was begun in our streets before the King or Parliament had any Armies”, the puritan divine Richard Baxter wrote some twenty years after the event.<sup>391</sup> In contrast to Thomas Hobbes’ famous and thoroughly Erastian account of the origins of the English civil war, which focused upon the role of dissident schoolmasters and Presbyterian publicists, the puritan Baxter offered a different explanation. He placed the blame for the failure to reach a compromise regarding governance firmly at the feet of Erastian churchmen who thought the episcopacy was by the authority of civil sovereign, and the Elizabethan theorist Richard Hooker, whose guidance they followed. Baxter recalled that although he was only a young man during the early 1640s, he was nonetheless aware of “how Hookers principles began our warres”. In particular, the underlying cause of the English war “was a parliament of Episcopall men and Erastians, [and] an Army of such Commanders”.<sup>392</sup> It is certainly the case that Hooker’s ecclesiological views influenced the discussion far more than those of any other single author. The royal governor of the church, King Charles, for example, had “three great authors”, as Sir Philip Warwick wrote in his memoirs a half decade later, identifying William Laud, Lancelot Andrewes, and Richard Hooker as the leading lights behind the monarch’s ecclesiological schemes. Unlike Laud and Andrewes, under the conditions of the 1640s, Hooker was a more fruitful source for apologetical purposes than the two arch-ceremonialist divines. Indeed, his argument that episcopacy existed by divine right was re-articulated in pamphlet polemics, providing intellectual justification for all those longing for a return to a pre-Laudian version of episcopacy, or battling the recent departure from the traditional position, or willing simply to subordinate the church to the ruler in Erastian fashion.<sup>393</sup> Like Hooker,

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<sup>391</sup> Richard Baxter, *A holy commonwealth, or Political aphorisms* (London, 1659), p. 457.

<sup>392</sup> Citation from, William Lamont (London, 1969), p. 82.

<sup>393</sup> According to Condren, Hooker’s influence was profound in both printed rhetoric and polemic, since he provided a means to demonstrate that “episcopacy could stop short of papacy and its temporal aggrandizement”. See Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 282.

such thinkers also invoked martyrs in defense of the Established church and against the revival of presbyterianism.

If John Foxe was the most famous memorialist of English martyrs, the most important interpreter of their ecclesiological significance was Hooker. Writing a quarter of a century after Foxe, Hooker provided a vitally important description of the governing principles of the Church of England in his *Treatise on the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Originally, the overall aim of this meticulously documented work was to secure the religious settlement of Queen Elizabeth's regime, by formulating a consensual version of reformed doctrine in opposition to those who denied the legitimacy of royal supremacy. As part of this objective, Hooker made an effort to incorporate martyrs into the structure of the English church, and underlined the importance of controlling the meaning of martyrdom. This famous defender of the state-church establishment made his claims not only against Catholics, who rejected the religious authority of the civil magistrate, but also separatists and dissidents like Walter Travers, Thomas Cartwright, and John Penry, all of whom similarly denounced the magistrate's superiority over the church in ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>394</sup>

In response to these criticisms, Hooker made two central claims regarding the ecclesiological use of martyrs. First, he asserted the church's right to define its own martyrs. Second, he insisted that the testimonies of the latter could not be turned against the proceedings of church government. In this sense, Hooker thought of martyrs in essentially apologetic terms as characters whose authority was institutional rather than personal. In his opinion, the "honour of martyrdom" was the exclusive property of the visible church.<sup>395</sup>

During the 1640s, Hooker's *iure divino* arguments, and his institutional reading of the significance of martyrdom, were subjected to considerable challenge. In defiance of episcopal orthodoxy, dissidents began to revive the ideas of the defeated Elizabethan Presbyterian movement. An account of the trial of the Elizabethan

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<sup>394</sup> For full consideration of the rival positions, see Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982).

<sup>395</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the lawes of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke* (London, 1597), pp. 34-35.

presbyterian martyr John Udall was made available in 1643, and the writings of Udall's co-conspirators, John Penry and Job Throckmorton, were republished. Moreover, the re-assembly of Parliament prompted new editions of the works of other Elizabethan and Jacobean presbyterians, in which it was asserted that martyrs had really been on the presbyterian side. The presbyterian leader Walter Travers, for example, had disagreed with Hooker's conclusions, insisting that martyrs "dyeth for no other cause, but for a good, iust, and holy cause, and namely, for wittnesse bearing to true Religion; as for refusing to worship Idols". Travers was convinced that like those primitive Christians who had met their deaths for bearing witness to the "Corruptions of Christian Religion" during the pre-Constantine imperium, the late reformed martyrs had been called to witness against the malignant powers and corrupt practices of the ecclesiastical system.<sup>396</sup> Similarly, the writings of the Calvinist separatist Henry Ainsworth aroused fresh interest and obtained new contextual relevance during the 1640s. This notorious Jacobean opponent of episcopacy admitted that "Martyrs in Q Maries daies did indeed by their faithfull testimonies and patient suffrings, throw downe a great part of Antichrist church", while, at the same time, pointing out that "many grosse abuses which those Martyrs abhorred" were still "mainteyned and practised in your church". To Ainsworth, while his adversaries might appropriate the victims of Marian persecutions for their own apologetic ends, and "boast so much of their martyrs", the fact was that the "blood" of the latter "cries against them".<sup>397</sup> Thus, the fall of the Laudian royal licensing system facilitated the circulation of the writings of both long-dead shepherds of Presbyterianism and newer polemicists, all of whom resisted the Erastian subordination of church to ruler.

The most vocal campaigners for a more participatory form of church government were those ministers who defined themselves as Smectymnuans. This group included Stephen Marshall, Edward Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstow, all of whom met regularly at Calamy's home in St Mary Aldermanbury, in order to discuss contemporary issues behind closed doors. They pointed to the liturgical and ecclesiological failings of the English church, insisted upon

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<sup>396</sup> Walter Travers, *Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London, 1630), pp. 68-80.

<sup>397</sup> Henry Ainsworth, *Covnterpoyson considerations touching the poynts in difference between the godly ministers and people of the Church of England* (London, 1642), pp. 21, 118.



the removal of the clerical hierarchy, and were convinced that abolishing the institutional structure of episcopacy would solve the problem of church authority. Thus, they believed that they had been entrusted with convincing the governors of the realm that bishops and their courts ought to be “FOR EVER ABANDONED OUT OF THE CHURCH OF GOD”.<sup>398</sup>

This circle found a powerful ally in John Milton, particularly after the poet returned from his grand tour to France and Italy in 1639. Like the members of the Calamy house group, Milton did not give much credence to pastoral hierarchy, and wished to diminish the privileges of prelates, and to make bishops into ordinary citizens. Indeed, no single author contributed more to the debate than Milton. In May 1641, Milton made his views known in his first tract, *Of Reformation*, which served to put him squarely in the radical camp. Another five works on the same topic then followed. Another important contributor to the debate was William Prynne, the long-standing critic of Arminianism and episcopacy, who, after his release from prison, spoke with renewed confidence about the evils of the clerical estate. In the following section, we shall examine their revolutionary suggestion that the most famous reformed martyrs had in fact died for something less than the truth.

#### 5.4 THE TESTIMONY OF DEAD BISHOPS

In the months following the opening of the Long Parliament in November 1640, ecclesiological questions played a key part in political dispute at Westminster. Matters came to a head at the end of 1641, when a petition to root out bishops was signed by fifteen thousand inhabitants of London. The same year, a similar anti-episcopal petition was signed by seven hundred ministers. These demonstrations in turn prompted conformists to write in defense of their principles, and to develop new rhetorical strategies aimed at bringing their message to a wider audience. Unlike in the previous decade, the authority of government rested on opinion. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the prospect of success in the popular debate of the 1640s increasingly depended

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<sup>398</sup> The Smectymnuans, *An Answer to a Booke entituled An Humble Remonstrance* (London, 1641), p. 32.

upon their ability to appeal directly to the people. When defending the idea of episcopacy, the high church party could no longer rely on the unquestioning support of King Charles, who struggled to maintain his authority against those MPs who challenged his exclusive control of the church. Charles had swiftly ditched William Laud as soon as public opposition to bishops had become widespread, and it was certainly within the realm of possibility that the royal court would make further changes to the church constitution in response to popular pressure.<sup>399</sup>

In May 1641, these themes were powerfully addressed by Sir Thomas Aston, a major lay apologist for the Caroline episcopacy.<sup>400</sup> In commenting on the debate, this aristocratic member of Parliament employed a rhetoric of peace and unity, warning that the hierarchical and ritual structure of episcopacy was necessary to the preservation of the state. As a staunch defender of the Elizabethan and Jacobean settlement, Aston was profoundly concerned about the ever-increasing number of publicists, whose “desire is to introduce an absolute Innovation of Presbyteriall Government”. Aston tried to win over his classically minded readers by citing Lucan, presenting the “desire of libertie” as “the originall of Tyranny”, and arguing that the desire of “being too free” would lead to everyone “becomming a slave”. While defending episcopacy as an institution of apostolic origin, Aston accused the Presbyterian model of resembling “merely papall” clericalism, particularly for granting every pastor boundless powers within his parish. Furthermore, he claimed, in “monarchy we can finde nothing incongruous to the faith or liberty of a true Protestant”. Finally, like many others in the 1640s, Aston provided a list of the glorious martyrs of the Church of England, arguing that the episcopal church constitution had been “sealed with blood of martyrs”.<sup>401</sup>

A different perspective was provided by Baron Robert Greville, a keen campaigner for a new religious settlement, who considered “Episopacy” to be incompatible with “Civill Government in State Policy”. Unlike Aston, who had claimed

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<sup>399</sup> On Charles’ commitment to episcopacy, see Martin Dzelzainis, ““Undoubted Realities”: Clarendon on Sacrilege”, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33 (1990), pp. 515-540.

<sup>400</sup> For further discussion of Aston’s defence of bishops, see Charles W. A. Prior, *A Confusion of Tongues: Britain’s Wars of Reformation, 1625-1642* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 172-197.

<sup>401</sup> Thomas Aston, *A remonstrance, against presbitery* (London, 1641), The Remonstrance, A survey of Presbyterie sections 8, 9, 16.

that while the presbyterian “charges seriously”, the episcopalian “suffers silently”, Greville claimed that the exact opposite was true.<sup>402</sup> According to Greville, whenever bishops were unable to refute the arguments of their adversaries, they began to “swear by the *Faith of their Body*”, and to claim that “All This was but a Prologue to That Tragedy, whose Epilogue was Flame and Fagot”. To Greville, such rhetoric was ridiculously overheated. In opposition, he expressed his sincere “wish, that Fire and Fagot may not determine this Controversie”, promising that his episcopal rivals would “not be dealt with as were some of the Martyrs in Queene *Maries daies*”.<sup>403</sup>

Arguments on behalf of episcopacy could be made on various grounds. The most obvious was to claim dogmatically the divine-apostolic origins of the office: if the bishops existed by divine right they could not be banished. Other, more humanistic justificatory strategies was also offered in favor of this position. For example, in his survey of the benefits of episcopacy, *Episcopall inheritance* (1641), Gerard Langbaine, a fellow of Queen’s College, invoked Bacon, Aristotle, and Calvin on his side. Langbaine made a distinctively humanist argument in support of his views, using Aristotle and Bacon to claim that bishops were “citizens in a Commonwealth”, whose “learning, knowledge and wisdom” lay beyond the ordinary man, and thus ought to be represented in government. Langbaine also drew upon a more confessional argument, claiming that plans to exclude the clergy from political affairs mirrored the Jesuit idea that “Papacy” ought to be “above Kings and Princes”.<sup>404</sup>

The opponents of the root-and-branch reformers were often keen to stress their own debts to Protestant Scholasticism. Here, the challenge was to prove that episcopacy was in fact a crucial ecclesiological legacy of the Protestant reformation and not a mere remnant of popery. In a sermon preached in 1640, the future bishop of Chichester, Henry King, pointed out that Calvin had approved the principles of the prayer book, and that key members of the Edwardian regime, such as Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli, had considered it in “every way consonant to the Word of God”.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Thomas Aston, *A collection of svndry petitions* (London, 1642), The Collector to the Reader.

<sup>403</sup> Robert Greville, *A discovrse opening the natvre of that episcopacie* (London, 1641), pp. 65, 104.

<sup>404</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *Episcopall inheritance* (London, 1641), pp. 19-22.

<sup>405</sup> Henry King, *A sermon preached at St. Pauls March 27* (London, 1640), pp. 45-47.

Similarly, Thomas Aston published a paragraph of a letter by Theodore Beza, in which Beza had approved the English reforms of the mid-sixteenth century, writing that “the restauration of Christian Religion hath been sealed with the Bloud of so many excellent Martyrs”.<sup>406</sup> As the Irish bishop and ecclesiastical antiquarian James Ussher pointed out, Beza had also written of how Timothy had been “ordained the first Bishop of the Church of the Ephesians”.<sup>407</sup> For his part, Joseph Hall cited a range of continental Protestant authorities in support of episcopacy, including Jean Calvin, Martin Luther, Philipp Melanchthon, Theodore Beza, Jerome Zanchius, Pierre Du Moulin, John Bogerman, Adrianus Saravia, and Isaac Casaubon.<sup>408</sup> Given that “Geneva it self praiseth our Government”, there was little reason to give ground to “ignorant or spitefull Sectaries”.<sup>409</sup> In short, whereas the Laudian high clergy had frequently denounced Calvinism, the conformists of the 1640s were keen to appropriate it in support of the episcopal cause.

An especially common way to defend the retention of the Anglican hierarchy, and to disarm criticism against its rituals, was to raise arguments based on custom and tradition. In this perspective, episcopacy was one of the oldest institutions in the land, while its critics were dangerous innovators. According to Henry Ferne, for instance, the bishopric was “simply the best” form of authority, since it had functioned as a crucial bond holding the church and society together from “the first receiving of the Christian Faith in this land”.<sup>410</sup> Alongside such historical arguments, it was also common to invoke the memories of persecuted bishops who would be well known to the readers. For example, in his *The Sacred Order and Offices of Episcopacy Asserted and Maintained* (1642), William Laud’s protégé Jeremy Taylor wrote that “if the church of martyrs, and the church of saints, and doctors, and confessors, now regnant in heaven, be fair presedens for practices of Christianity, we build upon a rock”.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Thomas Aston, *A remonstrance, against presbitery* (London, 1641), A survey of Presbyterie section 3.

<sup>407</sup> James Ussher, *The Judgement of Dr Rainolds Touching the Original of Episcopacy* (London, 1641), p. 5.

<sup>408</sup> Joseph Hall, (London, 1640), pp. 7-17.

<sup>409</sup> Joseph Hall, *An humble remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1641), p. 33.

<sup>410</sup> Henry Ferne, *The resolving of conscience upon this question* (Cambridge, 1642), p. 39.

<sup>411</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *The Sacred Order and Offices of Episcopacy Asserted and Maintained* (Oxford, 1642), pp. 252-253.

In a tract published in 1641, James Ussher, the Archbishop of Armagh, employed similar rhetoric. Here, the Primate of Ireland proposed a compromise between episcopal and Presbyterian elements, whereby bishops would be confined to spiritual rather than political matters. In order to show that bishops had always been part of the ancient fabric of church government, Ussher recycled various patristic quotations from bishop-martyrs, whose authority served to support his own views. For example, he raised the example of Polycarpus, who had “held his Episcopall office unto the time of his Martyrdome”, and also the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, a bishop famous for “his glorious Martyrdome at Rome”. To add weight to the claim that Timothy had been appointed bishop of the Ephesine Presbytery, Ussher cited two ancient treatises entitled the *Martyrdome of Timothie*.<sup>412</sup> There was particular strategic value in drawing on the testimonies and memories of well-known bishop martyrs. In addition to the near universal consensus as to the positive value of martyrs, it was often asserted that their willingness to seal a testimony with their own blood offered proof of its truthfulness. As an anonymous minister asserted in 1641, “the memory of those industrious-pious-learned Bishops” ought to be prized highly, since they “sealed the testimony of the Gospel with their blood”.<sup>413</sup> Perhaps the most important reason for leaning on this material was the fact that the bishop-martyrs were certainly not Presbyterians.<sup>414</sup>

The crises regarding church government inspired many members of Parliament and laymen to take up the testimonies of martyrs, using them to safeguard the future of the episcopate. For example, George Digby, the second Earl of Bristol, considered the bishopric “the most venerable and sacred Order Ecclesiastical”, having been “glorified by so many Martyrdoms in the Primitive times, and some since our own

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<sup>412</sup> James Ussher, *The iudgement of Doctor Rainoldes touching the originall of episcopacy more largely confirmed out of antiquity* (London 1641), pp. 5-9.

<sup>413</sup> H. P., *Unitie, truth and reason* (London, 1641), pp. 3-4.

<sup>414</sup> There are signs that arguments regarding the restoration of the ideals of primitive episcopacy held considerable sway over the mind of contemporaries. The writings of patristic authorities provided a major stimulus even to those who did not endorse the doctrine of the divine right of episcopacy. For example, the Cheshire clergyman Samuel Torshell, although he subsequently converted to the anti-prelatical cause, and claimed that he had always seen through those scholars who claimed episcopacy was a divinely sanctioned institution, confessed that he found the pedigree of scholarly and historical claims difficult to overcome. Torshell saw the traditional system rather as “the most antient and most pruentiall way of government”, and the reading of Cyprian, he wrote, “made me stumble in the point of Episcopacie”. Samuel Torshell, *The hypocrite discovered and cvred* (London, 1643).

blessed Reformation”.<sup>415</sup> In seeking to exploit the historical reputation of martyrs in this way, Digby was like many other members of Parliament. After all, the most famous martyrs of Britain were those bishops who were, in the words of Alexander Ross, “our first reformers, holy men, learned divines, blessed martyrs”.<sup>416</sup> While supporting the punishment of Laud and his strongest supporters, Sir Benjamin Rudyerd doubted whether “a Popular Democratical Government of Church” was the best way forwards, and exhorted MPs to study the Edwardian ecclesiastical governors as models of official piety. “Let us remember”, he declared in Parliament on February 8, 1641, “those glorious Martyr-Bishops who were burn’d for our Religion in the times of Popery”.<sup>417</sup> According to the Yorkshire baronet Sir Francis Wortley, the “personal errors” of one bishop could not justify the destruction of “an Institution so ancient & sealed with the bloud of so many blessed Martyres”.<sup>418</sup> For his part, Edward Dering readily admitted the errors of Charles’ Personal Rule. However, he then challenged his adversaries over the question of episcopacy, asking: “shew me any thing more agreeable to the holy word: Shew me any thing more honoured by the holy Martyrs of the first and the latter times: Shew me any more rationall and prudentiall way of government, and I yeild unto you”.<sup>419</sup> Thus, it was not uncommon to present the prayer book, the religious settlement, and the martyred bishops of the sixteenth century as emblems of the traditionalist cause. This point was neatly encapsulated by a member of Parliament in 1642, who claimed that to “alter the church government amongst us” would “do an injury to the memory of those learned men who had first framed the Book of Common Prayer and settled the frame of our church government in the days of E. 6 and afterwards suffered martyrdom”.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> The Lord Digby’s SPEECH about the London Petition and Bishops, in John Rushworth (ed.) *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: Vol. 4, 1640-42* (London, 1721), p. 173.

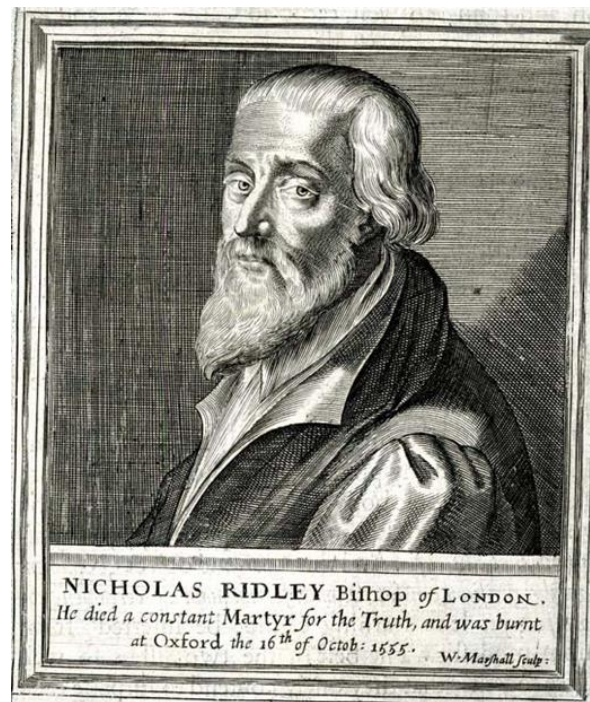
<sup>416</sup> Alexander Ross, *Gods house made a den of theeves delivered in a second sermon in Southampton* (London, 1642), pp. 8-9.

<sup>417</sup> Sir Benjamis Rudyard’s Speech, in John Rushworth (ed.) *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: Vol. 4, 1640-42* (London, 1721), pp. 183-184.

<sup>418</sup> Francis Wortley, *Eleutherosis tes aletheias* (London, 1641), preface.

<sup>419</sup> Edward Dering, *A collection of speeches made by Sir Edward Dering* (London, 1642), p. 129.

<sup>420</sup> See, Anne Steele Young and Vernon F. Snow (eds.), *The Private Journal of the Long Parliament: 2 June to 17 September 1642* (New Haven, 1982), p. 146.



**Figure 8.** Portrait of Nicholas Ridley (c. 1625-1640). British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings.

While it seems clear that gentry and noblemen favoured the traditional ecclesiological system, there are signs that the episcopal cause enjoyed more grassroots support in many parts of the land than had once been assumed.<sup>421</sup> One sign of this was the deep attachment to the *Book of Common Prayer* in county communities. A large section of the population mounted a vociferous petitioning campaign in support of the Established church structures. Perhaps the most widespread objection to altering the liturgy rested on the assumption that it was the work of martyred reformers and providence. We “humbly beg”, the people of Rutland wrote, “to leave us in that state the Apostles left the Church in; That the three Ages of Martyrs were governed by; That the thirteen Ages since them have alwaies gloried”. Similarly, the inhabitants of Cheshire sought to defend “Our pious,

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<sup>421</sup> Judith Maltby, Petitions for episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer on the eve of the civil war 1641-1642, in Stepher Taylor (ed.) *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Church of England Miscellany* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 103-168; *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 91. On the use of petitions as evidence of wider provincial or popular politics, see John Walter, ‘Confessional politics in pre-civil war Essex: Prayer books, profanations and petitions’, *The Historical Journal* Vol. 44 (2001), pp. 677-701.

laudable, and ancient forme of Divine Service, composed by the holy Martyrs, and worthy Instruments of Reformation”. In Lancashire, petitioners also called “for the maintenance and continuance of our Church Government, and solemne Liturgy”, since these had been “Composed (according to the Primitive Patterne) by our blessed Martyrs”. For their part, the petitioners of Southwark urged the authorities to “maintaine the same Religion, which we understand to be the same, that was by King Edw. 6, of famous memory, refined and reformed from Popery ... [and] afterwards persecuted by the Papists in the Raigne of Queen Mary”.<sup>422</sup> As these petitions by parish Protestant conformists indicate, memories of martyrdom had not passed out of the popular imagination, and played an important role in Anglican attempts to defend the episcopacy. To a generation that had been brought up reading *Acts and Monuments*, martyrdom remained a very emotive subject, and the invocation of its canonical figures made an important contribution to strategies of proof.

The celebration of those bishops who were killed in office reached its climax in the pamphlets written by Joseph Hall in 1641 and 1642. Here, Hall made no secret of his sympathies with the reformed martyrs of the 1550s, calling them “our Orthodoxe Bishops”, and assuring his readers they had gone to the stake in order to preserve the Protestant religion. In accordance with Hooker’s prescriptions, Hall situated martyrs within the tradition, structures, and customs of the Established Church of England, insisting that they ought to be seen as part of the church, rather than against it. Hall also exploited fears of subversive sectarians, associating Presbyterianism with the corruption of the monarchical state. Without the discipline provided by the episcopal system, Hall warned, heresy would flourish, and a multitude of sects would proliferate. First, bishops functioned as a bulwark against popery. “Did not Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and numbers more of religious and learned martyrs”, Hall asked, “seale their departure from the Church of Rome by their dearest blood [?]”. Subsequently, the restoration of the English church after the Marian period “owed to the learning and industry of our *Bishops*; some whereof being crowned with *Martyrdome*”. Facing the prospect of

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<sup>422</sup> Thomas Aston, *A collection of syndry petitions presented to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie* (London, 1642), pp. 15, 21, 30; Anon., *To the high and Honourable Court of Parliament* (London, 1642), p. 6.



public execution, the current bishops were willing follow their predecessors, who had paid the ultimate price for their testimony.<sup>423</sup>

Furthermore, Hall used the martyrdom of the bishops at Oxford to validate the ceremonial conventions of the church. In response to growing anti-formalistic agitation and calls for the dissolution of ceremonies, Hall presented the Edwardian bishops as representatives of a church whose “publique service wee now enjoy”.<sup>424</sup> The origins of English confessional practices could be found in the Edwardian period, and particularly the acts of those bishops who had drafted liturgies and prayer books, before facing persecution under Mary.<sup>425</sup> Opposing demands to suppress the English prayer book, Hall stressed that the latter had been “contrived by the holy Martyrs and Confessors of the blessed Reformation”.<sup>426</sup> For instance, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had held a highly positive view of ceremonies and rituals, had also been the author of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In this sense, Hall called for the preservation of the style of worship scripted by “our holy Martyrs”, who “went to heaven with Litany in their mouth”.<sup>427</sup> Furthermore, Hall attacked anti-prelatical writers for relativizing themes “hitherto esteemed sacred”, and thus acting as if they had “not seen Mr Foxes Acts and Monuments”. In sum, Hall argued that bishops were indeed capable of advancing the Protestant cause, and functioning as instruments of godly reform. In contrast, the so-called “Lay Presbitery” represented a departure from the foundations of the Reformation, since it “never had footing in the Church of God till this present age”.<sup>428</sup> As we shall now see, the emphasis placed on bishop-martyrs by Hall and other conformists proved to be a source of alarm for the proponents of radical reform.

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<sup>423</sup> Joseph Hall, *A survey of that foolish, seditious, scandalous, prophane libell, The protestation protested* (London, 1641), pp. 7-8; *A defence of the humble remonstrance* (London, 1641), pp. 7-8, 38, 163-164.

<sup>424</sup> Joseph Hall, *A survey of that foolish, seditious, scandalous, prophane libell, The protestation protested* (London, 1641), pp. 7-8.

<sup>425</sup> For a broader historical background to the liturgical debates, see Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Vol. 2: From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690* (Princeton, 1975); G. J. Cumming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (London, 1982).

<sup>426</sup> Joseph Hall, *A defence of the humble remonstrance* (London, 1641), pp. 21-22.

<sup>427</sup> Joseph Hall, *An Humble Remonstrance* (London, 1641), pp. 8-9, 16.

<sup>428</sup> Joseph Hall, *A defence of the humble remonstrance* (London, 1641), pp. 23, 38, 136, 163-164.

## 5.5 RADICAL REFORMATION AND THE HERITAGE OF BISHOP-MARTYRS

Efforts to summon the memory of bishop-martyrs did not go unchallenged. In response, various writers sought to expose the vulnerabilities of such apologetic propositions. For example, one of the ringleaders of the anti-prelatical faction, Jeremiah Burroughs, in a sermon preached before Parliament in late 1640, reminded his listeners that they should not have too much faith in martyrs. It was “frigid, empty vaine”, he argued, to take glory from the martyrdom of others, since “the virtue of others cannot perfect us”.<sup>429</sup> However, there is no escaping the fact that the fame and prestige of bishop-martyrs represented a challenge to the shepherds of presbyterianism. Notably, it was highly risky to suggest that the famous martyrs had in fact been guilty of upholding popery. Nonetheless, anti-prelatical writers attempted to respond to the hagiographical challenge, penning critical commentaries that drew attention to the flaws and shortcomings of the bishop-martyrs. In these accounts, the idea of a bishop-martyr was complicated, and the mistakes of the bishops as social agents mattered more than their fortitude at the scaffold.

According to John Milton, for example, Hall’s endeavor to enlist martyrs on the side of conformism was little more than an attempt “to distract and stagger the multitude” with “fragments of old martyrologies and legends”.<sup>430</sup> In this sense, Milton mocked Hall as one of those men who “rely upon the Martyrs as Patrons of his cause”.<sup>431</sup> He also found Hall’s reference to John Foxe profoundly paradoxical. Until recently, Milton pointed out, the establishment had devoted much energy to downplaying the merits of home-grown martyrs. Histories of clerical corruption and persecution had been “so hateful to the prelates, that their story was almost come to be a prohibited book”. According to Milton, the bishops had even openly regretted the existence of Foxe’s martyrology, and if it had not been for “some honest men” who had labored “at times of

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<sup>429</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Moses his self-denyall delivered in a treatise upon Hebrewes* (London, 1641), pp. 18-19.

<sup>430</sup> John Milton, *Of prelatical episcopacy* (London, 1641), introduction.

<sup>431</sup> John Milton, *An apology against a pamphlet call’d A modest confutation of the animadversions upon the remonstrant against Smectymnuus* (London, 1642), p. 31.

advantage”, the work would never have seen the light of day.<sup>432</sup> Now, however, the supporters of episcopacy had abruptly changed their tune, citing martyrs as reliable precursors of their own activity.

Although the contribution of the bishop-martyrs to the preparation of the English liturgy was hard to deny, there was nonetheless room for counterarguments. Like the oldest puritans, the Parliamentary apologist Henry Parker, for example, claimed that the *Book of Common Prayer* had been formulated as a temporary compromise. First, the sixteenth-century liturgies were incomplete. Using the words of Foxe, Parker noted that “the first Liturgy had a Morall, though not a Mathematicall perfection in it”. If Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley had been unclear on many ritualistic points, it was because they “were necessitated to use these words conversing with Papists at that time”. Therefore, “our English Martyrs” had not been entirely able to escape the concepts and vocabularies of their Roman Catholic adversaries. In this sense, the first prayer books were not definitive statements of intention or belief, but rather mere temporary compromises. If the authors “had had power, and further time to perfect their designes”, Parker speculated, then they would have conformed more closely to the continental Reformed tradition.<sup>433</sup>

This was also the view held by John Milton, who considered the Edwardian prayer books to be an artefact of a half-reformed age. Moreover, according to Milton, the common belief that the Edwardian bishops had authored the vernacular liturgies was a misconception, since the words their drafters used were not their own, but rather translations of anonymous medieval Latin missals. Seeing the prayer book merely as a translation of the traditional Catholic Mass into the vernacular, Milton preferred to speak of Edwardian bishops as the translators, but not the authors, of its errors. A parallel explanation was advanced by the Smectymnians, who claimed that the English service was presented in such a way that even the pope “would claim it as his own”. If “these holy Martyres that once so reverently used the Liturgy” could see the litany approved by Parliament a century later, they would think “England had forgotten her self”. It was also noteworthy that the Marian bishop Edmund Bonner, one of the most brutal persecutors

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<sup>432</sup> John Milton, *Animadversions upon the remonstrants defence against Smectymnuus* (London, 1641), pp. 14-15.

<sup>433</sup> Henry Parker, *The altar dispute* (London, 1642) p. 19.

of the English reformers, had been satisfied with the ceremonies and clerical hierarchy of the Edwardian period, considering them the first step in England's reconversion to Roman Catholicism.<sup>434</sup> In sum, Root and Branch reformers argued that the prayer book was invalid, and that the Edwardian bishops had failed to purify the English temple.

Anti-prelatic writers also had to confront the fact that John Foxe himself had glorified these bishops, making their heroic deaths a key event in *Acts and Monuments*. In a fast sermon preached to the Commons, the puritan controversialist Francis Cheynell protested against those "mass-priests" who advocated the *iure divino* liturgy, this being a foreign practice, strange to the "English-heart", and no different to a mass. Cheynell was furious about the narratives put about by "black-mouthed Priests", in which "Foxes-Martyrs" were cast as authors of popish rituals. In reality, he claimed, the "English Martyrs did sacrifice their lives in protesting against the sacrifice in the Masse".<sup>435</sup> In the view of the Essex minister Richard Ward, there was no contradiction between the bishop martyrs and the Calvinist tradition as such. Citing Foxe, Ward pointed out "the grievous harms our Ceremonies have done". At the same time, he sought to associate the martyrdoms of "Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, Farrer" with the presbyterian movement, claiming they had defended such key Calvinist doctrines as "the certainty of our salvation, the perseverance of the Saints, the sweet doctrine of Predestination, the heavenly gift of Faith, the free grace of salvation, and the inward worship of the Spirit", all of these having "been sealed unto us, by the blood of many holy Martyrs".<sup>436</sup> It is indicative that the heavyweight puritan iconoclast William Dowsing owned three different editions of Foxe's work, adding cross-references to its pages as he cleansed churches from idolatry during the early 1640s.<sup>437</sup>

The Marian bishop-martyrs could also provide support for the argument that the clergy ought not to hold civil offices. For example, Sir William Thomas drew attention to the shortcomings of the Edwardian bishops as administrators, in order to illustrate the

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<sup>434</sup> Smectymnuus, *An answer to a booke entitvled An hvmbly remonstrance* (London, 1641), pp. 4, 75.

<sup>435</sup> Francis Cheynell, *Sions memento, and Gods alarum* (London, 1643), pp. 32-33.

<sup>436</sup> Richard Ward, *The principall duty of Parliament-men* (London, 1641), pp. 29, 61.

<sup>437</sup> John Morrill, 'William Dowsing, the Bureaucratic Puritan', in John Morrill, Paul Slack and Daniel Woolf (eds.) *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G. E. Aylmer* (Oxford, 1993), p. 183.

disadvantages of uniting ecclesiastical and civil authority in one office. Rather than anti-episcopal bias, his notions stemmed from his belief that bishops who served simultaneously as civil and ecclesiastical officers were vulnerable to corruption, and all the other depravities of political power. In Thomas' view, Tudor churchmen had more than once proved to be "disloyall traytors, and most unjust and ungodly", particularly due to their jurisdiction in the civil realm. By way of example, Thomas cited Ridley and Cranmer, who had been persuaded by Charles V to allow private mass to the Catholic Queen Mary. Furthermore, the bishops had failed to protest against Queen Mary's succession in the House of Lords, had neglected to inform Parliament about the machinations of the court regarding the succession question, and, subsequently, had never repented of their errors.<sup>438</sup> The moderate episcopalian Thomas Hill similarly rejected the idea of bishops as agents of a godly monarch, instead praising Edward VI for having denied the private mass demanded by Emperor Charles V for the King's half-sister. Thus, according to Hill, Edward had been the true hero of the story, whereas the bishops who had been willing to countenance such demands were worthy of condemnation. In short, Edward's zeal for truth was much greater than that of his churchmen: the boy-king "had more divinity in his little finger then both they".<sup>439</sup> Such narratives effectively sidestepped the martyrdom of the Edwardian bishops, and simultaneously asserted that even the best bishops were doomed to failure in matters of magistracy. Implicit in these narratives was a strong Erastian tone. In particular, they emphasized the failures of the bishops, while extolling the earthly head of the church, in order to show that a bishop's legitimate authority ought not to extend to civil affairs. For those Smectymnians who systematically questioned the value of the Oxford martyrs for English ecclesiology, such bishops were "Traitors rather than Martyrs, and Deformers rather than Reformers of our religion".<sup>440</sup>

Anti-prelatical writers also held the history of episcopacy up to ridicule, offering a longer-term perspective on the political ambitions of the bishops. William Prynne, after his release from prison, wrote with renewed confidence about the evils of the clerical estate, citing historical examples of bishops' hostility to the liberties of

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<sup>438</sup> William Thomas, *A speech of VVilliam Thomas, esquire in Parliament in May 1641 being a short view and examination of the actions of bishops in Parliamen* (London, 1641), pp. 20-22.

<sup>439</sup> Thomas Hill, *The trade of truth advanced* (London, 1642), p. 57.

<sup>440</sup> Smectymnuans, *An Answer to a Booke entituled An Humble Remonstrance* (London, 1641), p. 11.

Englishmen. In doing so, he not only cast aspersions over the medieval martyrs Dunstan, Becket, Anselm, and Hugh, all of whom were canonized “onely because they were Prelates”, but also sought to complicate the history of the See of Canterbury.<sup>441</sup> Proceeding from the premise that conflation of temporal and spiritual power was dangerous to the liberties of subjects, Prynne argued that the power of bishops had often functioned as an apparatus of oppression. He also turned martyrologies against episcopal authority, presenting his own time as the fulfilment of the struggles of all those martyrs who had met their deaths at the hands of episcopacy. Drawing on Foxe, as well as the French martyrologist Jean Crespin, Prynne concluded that the “cruelty” of “most Kings and Princes” had originally arisen “from the Prelates instigation”.<sup>442</sup> Thus, Prynne’s historical survey sought to convince his readers about the harm done by clerical usurpation of secular authority. Prynne mustered many examples of magistrates persecuting subjects at the request of the clergy, asking rhetorically: “Who slew the Prophets? Who slew Christ? Who slew his Apostles? who the Martyrs, and all the righteous that ever were slaine?”. Notwithstanding the fact that capital punishments had been carried out by the secular arm of “The Kings and the Temporall sword”, they had originally been prompted by “the request of the false Prophets”. As well as providing vituperative accounts of persecutory authority, Prynne was also responsible for many unflattering portraits of the “Lordly Prelates”, described as “monsters of Trechery, Tyranny, inhumanity Traytors and enemies both to the Church and Common-wealth”, who had over the centuries been engaged in “destroying the Kings best Subjects”. In sum, while bishops had shed the blood of “many Martyrs in all ages”, they had “never” been martyrs themselves.<sup>443</sup>

In his eagerness to expose the iniquities of the unholy alliance between bishops and temporal rulers, Prynne also disavowed the martyred bishops whom he had previously praised during the 1620s and 1630s. Now, Prynne claimed that the only British Archbishop to really die a martyr was the Evangelical leader, Thomas Cranmer. Like the Presbyterian ideologist Thomas Brightman, Prynne was more interested in Cranmer the martyr than Cranmer the prelate, claiming that the Oxford martyrs had not been martyred

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<sup>441</sup> William Prynne, *The antipathie of the English lordly prelatie* (London, 1641), THE PROLOGUE.

<sup>442</sup> William Prynne, *A New Discovery of the Prelates Tyranny* (London, 1641), p. 174.

<sup>443</sup> William Prynne, *The antipathie of the English lordly prelatie* (London, 1641), pp. 78, 132, 366.

*qua* bishops. Instead of simply asserting that the martyrs had died in vain, Prynne argued that Cranmer had “suffered Martyrdome onely after his deprivation and degradation from his Bishopricke, not whilst hee was a Bishop”.<sup>444</sup> This was also the case with his fellow bishops, whose consciences had been revived only after they gave up their episcopal office. Only then, in the face of escalating Marian persecution, had the ex-bishops become witnesses of truth. From this perspective, the long-standing association of bishops with martyrdom was patently false. Indeed, during the 1640s many commentators pointedly referred to the Oxford martyrs as those “who *afterwards* proved Martyrs”.<sup>445</sup> Henry Burton, for example, wrote that the bishops of Edward VI were “Prelats (...) whom *afterwards* God reformed and purged in the flames of Martyrdome”.<sup>446</sup> While the leading Episcopalian apologists displayed sites where bishops had been martyred by barbarous forces and thought of them solely as victims of an exceptionally cruel regimes, the anti-prelatic writers were more willing to represent them as accomplices in the crimes of the civil regime.

Around the same time, a similar interpretation of Britain’s past was put forward in a chronicle appended to a Smectymnuan tract written against Hall’s *An hvmble remonstrance*. In this account, the British episcopate was represented as a thoroughly pernicious institution. Indeed, British history demonstrated an unbroken succession of persecuting bishops. From the period immediately following the island’s initial conversion, in which the “poore laborious Monks of Bangor” met their deaths at the hands of the Arian bishops, through the Anglo-Saxon era and Norman Conquest, right down to the reign of Queen Mary, the saints had been persecuted by the See of Canterbury.<sup>447</sup> According to some critical commentators, however, such attempts to expose the rottenness of Episcopal government through hagiographical and historical narratives were contradictory. Thomas Aston, for example, pointed out that the myth of an ancient church

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid. p. 134.

<sup>445</sup> Smectymnuus, *An answer to a booke entitvled An hvmble remonstrance* (London, 1641), p. 103. Emphasis added.

<sup>446</sup> Henry Burton, *A vindicaton of churches, commonly called Independent* (London, 1644), pp. 11-12. Emphasis added.

<sup>447</sup> Smectymnuus, *An answer to a booke entitvled An hvmble remonstrance* (London, 1641), p. 96. It is not clear who is responsible for this chronicle. It has been proposed that its composer was John Milton, whose scholarly interests focused at that time on the history of Britain.

free of government by bishops ultimately stemmed from the colourful accounts by John Foxe. However, while Foxe had insisted that the “Church of England was governed some hundred yeers without Bishops from the first plantation”, he had simultaneously claimed that “in the infant of the conversion of the Church, and supplantation of idolatry were planted by Bishops”.<sup>448</sup> Despite such contradictions, the proponents of such narratives succeeded in calling into doubt the authority of bishops, emphasizing the malign effects of episcopal priestcraft from the earliest ages of British history.

Many of the leading anti-prelatical writers also responded to foundational and institutional histories by placing a fresh emphasis on divine retribution for the shedding of innocent blood. It is not surprising, then, that the rhetoric of so-called blood guilt occupied a central place in their observations. On this view, the current disaster was a punishment for the innocent blood shed during the previous years, as well as a retribution for slowness in implementing ecclesiological reforms. While the Marian era of exile and persecution was increasingly regarded as a foundational story that marked the triumph of Protestantism, the anti-prelatical writers in question emphasized its unredeemed sins, which continued to haunt the nation, and were likely to bring providential sanctions upon the whole community. In accordance with this view, they stressed that the victories of the reformers and martyrs of the sixteenth century should not nullify the flaws of the era, nor justify its idolatrous customs.

The Smectymnuan ministers, for example, made a concerted effort to present the Marian experience in terms of national guilt, and to lay the blame for the current troubles on a wider failure to repent the shortcomings of the early reformers. Because “the Bishops in Queene Maries dayes, are so fresh in every mans memory”, these writers considered it “unnecessary” to mention the sympathetic bishops. Instead, they stressed a remarkable failure in the commemoration of the Marian period, namely the neglect of public repentance for the innocent blood shed during the 1550s, which cried to the heavens for vengeance. “[W]ee feare”, they warned, that “the guilt of the blood then

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<sup>448</sup> Thomas Aston, *A remonstrance, against presbitery* (London, 1641), To the reader.



shed, should yet remaine to be required at the hands of this Nation”. To avoid provoking God’s disfavour, they suggested “a generall and solemne humiliation for it.”<sup>449</sup>

Several other writers followed in the same vein. For example, Edmund Calamy, the curate of St Mary Aldermanbury, urged in one of his sermons later that year: “Do something to purge the land more and more of innocent blood of the martyrs shed in Queen Marys days has gone unregarded”.<sup>450</sup> Despite such urgent calls to institute a public feast for the ritual purification of the guilt of the Marian period, no such plan had been implemented by the end of 1642. Indeed, another clerical member of the Calamy house group, Matthew Newcomen, found it necessary to raise once again the theme of “blood guild”, and to suggest a day of national solemnity in order “to purge the land from that blood of Martyrs,” and thus avoid divine retribution.<sup>451</sup> This was also the view held by the Yorkshire nonconformist minister John Shawe, who listed the Edwardian reforms among the failures of the English reformation, recalling that the first Marian martyr, John Rogers, had considered the bloody events of the 1550s as a divine judgement for the idolatry that had occurred under Edward. In custody, Rogers warned his fellow inmate John Day, who was also the future publisher of Foxe’s martyrology, that if England would not make better use of the Gospel than it had done under Edward, then a “heavier storme of vengeance” would lie ahead. The Edwardians had fallen into idolatrous fallacies for six years, and, as a result, “God sent them five yeares fiery tribulation in Queene Maries dayes”.<sup>452</sup> Finally, a turning point was reached on February 5, 1643, when both Houses of Parliament voted to repent the personal and national errors that had brought destruction to hand. Among them, the most abominable was the “Idol of the Masse, in the dayes of Queene Mary, and some of her predecessors, when many hundreds of the deare Martyrs and Saints of God lost their precious Lives in Flames and Prisons”.<sup>453</sup> A few years later, however, a royalist London minister, Robert Chestlin, denounced those publicists who “so fiercely have cryed out against persecution, and against the cruelty of Papists”.

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<sup>449</sup>Smectymnuus, *An answer to a booke entitvled An hvnble remonstrance* (1641), p. 103.

<sup>450</sup> Edmund Calamy, *Gods free mercy to England presented as a pretious and powerfull motive to humiliation* (London, 1642), pp. 48-49.

<sup>451</sup> Matthew Newcomen, *The craft and cruelty of the churches adversaries* (London, 1643), p. 40.

<sup>452</sup> John Shawe, *A broken heart, or The grand sacrifice* (London, 1643), pp. 28-29.

<sup>453</sup> An ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament (London, 1643).

According to him, the ordinance of repentance of 1643 was a rhetorical smokescreen, designed to justify action and even violence. As Chestlin put it, its authors sought “to colour their pretence of fighting for the Protestant Religion”, which in turn enabled them to cast themselves as the heirs of the martyrs.<sup>454</sup>

The most powerful of all responses to Joseph Hall was provided by the poet John Milton, who drafted several tracts aiming to ensure that new bishops would not regain control.<sup>455</sup> Milton accused the leading bishops, Hall and Ussher, of gross manipulation, and found various ways to unravel their presentations of the ancient model of episcopacy. A crucial part of his strategy was to show that there had in fact been no such model of ecclesiastical polity in the early church. Milton made principled use of the *sola scriptura* doctrine, asserting that the truth of one’s religious beliefs depended upon rejecting anything not in accordance with scripture.

In his vitriolic replies to Hall’s tracts, Milton denounced the latter’s tendency to misrepresent the recorded utterances of the Latin fathers, and his failure to make a distinction between the Bible and other ancient sources. The world of late antiquity had nothing to say about Christian culture at its first appearance, but it had “laid open the faults and blemishes of Fathers, Martyrs, or Christian Emperors”. No one who had read the the works of St Cyprian could fail to recognize that the great martyr himself had acknowledged the authority of scriptural fidelity, such as when he wrote that if martyrs “decree on one thing, and the Gospel another, either the Martyrs must lose their Crowne for not observing the Gospel for which they are Martyrs; or the Majestie of the Gospel must be broken and lie flat, if it can be overtopt by the novelty of any other Decree.”<sup>456</sup> As Milton pointed out, although his adversaries’ arguments were steeped in patristic theology, their compilations of passages from early Christian authorities were full of syllogistic reasoning, anachronistic views, and ahistorical sources. For example, the Anglicans drew on Ignatius, and “cite him as authentick for Episcopacie, when they cannot know what is authentick in him”.<sup>457</sup> Such attempts to preserve historical traditions

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<sup>454</sup> Robert Chestlin, *Persecutio undecima* (London, 1648), p. 72.

<sup>455</sup> See Nigel Smith, ‘The Anti-Episcopal Tract: Republican Puritanism and the Truth in Poetry’, in Nicholas McDowell & Nigel Smith (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 155-173.

<sup>456</sup> John Milton, *Of reformation touching chvrch-discipline in England* (London, 1641), pp. 11-12.

<sup>457</sup> John Milton, *Of prelatial episcopacy* (London, 1641), p. 11.

by appealing to the authority of patristic orations were potentially untrustworthy. A decisive break with misguided traditions had hardly been a cause for concern for the third-century martyr Cyprian, as Milton recalled, since he had warned that “Custome without Truth is but agednesse of Error”.<sup>458</sup> According to Milton, the strategy that Hall employed would have been familiar to primitive sectarians such as Cataphryges and Marcionites, against whom the third-century martyrologist Eusebius had written in his fifth book. It was “an old heretical argument, to prove a position true, because some that held it were martyrs”.<sup>459</sup> An even greater problem was the lack of divine authorization: the biblical records did not grant divine right to the hierarchical constitution of episcopacy, and offered only minimal foundation for bishops.

A more controversial feature of Milton’s writings was the derogatory remarks he made regarding the Oxford martyrs. Instead of acknowledging any formal debt to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, he addressed them in confrontational terms, as “halting and time-serving Prelates”. There was no reason to suppose that the accomplishments of these “Prelat-Martyrs” were any more significant than the testimonies of other Christians, since “every true Christian will be a Martyr when he is called to it”. If the memory of the bishop-martyrs served to promote popish veneration, Milton argued, then it would be better to forget them altogether. As he put it, if “men’s fond opinion should thus idolize them”, it would be preferable that “these names were utterly abolished.” Thus, Milton did not hesitate to call the authority of the bishop-martyrs into question. However, it is important to note that he did not dismiss the idea of martyrdom altogether. The true martyrs, he argued, were those who “with the unresistable might of Weaknesse, [shook] the Powers of Darknesse, and [scorned] the fiercy rage of the old red Dragon”. In such cases, Milton assured his readers, it “was not Episcopacie that wrought in them the Heavenly Fortitude of Martyrdome”.<sup>460</sup>

In opposition to Hall, Milton questioned how far martyrs ought to count as authorities. For example, in a tract written in defense of the Smectymnuans in 1642, he

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<sup>458</sup> John Milton, *Of reformation touching chvrch-discipline in England* (London, 1641), p. 33.

<sup>459</sup> John Milton, *Animadversions upon the remonstrants defence against Smectymnuus* (London, 1641), p. 68

<sup>460</sup> John Milton, *Of reformation touching chvrch-discipline in England* (London, 1641), pp. 7, 10-12, 76.

sought to demonstrate why “we ought not to relye upon the Martyrs”. First, there was little reason to consider martyrs as authoritative teachers, since “there may be a Martyr in a wrong cause, and as couragious in suffering as the best”. Second, it was potentially misleading to admire their example unduly, since such persons might be “in a good cause with a forward ambition displeasing to God”. And third, those who had recorded the testimonies of the martyrs were unreliable witnesses, who may have been seeking to communicate a message of their own, “out of blind zeale, or malice”. After shocking Anglicans with such warnings regarding the dangers of following fallible witnesses, Milton admitted that he nonetheless greatly admired the martyrs, and revered the writings of the ancient fathers. As a source of Christian doctrine and ecclesiology, however, the authority of scripture took precedence over all else. In Milton’s words, “We also reverence the Martyrs but relye only upon the Scriptures”.<sup>461</sup>

When Milton’s interlocutor Joseph Hall found himself in prison, charged with High Treason, in 1642, he wrote a public letter in which he portrayed himself as a victim of the “miserably misguided zeale” of his times, and the policies of “cunningly-cruell men”.<sup>462</sup> To Hall, the Smectymnuans and their allies, in denying the significance of the Oxford martyrs, had departed from the whole Foxeian tradition. In assailing the memory of the martyrs, they were thus little better than the Jesuits. The “scorn that is by some thrown upon our Martyrs”, Hall wrote, was comparable to that of Catholic counter-Reformation polemicists, who barked at Foxe’s history “no lesse now than formerly”, and who wished “no better to the Protestant cause than they do”.<sup>463</sup>

Many participants in the controversy were uneasy about Milton’s root-and-branch rejection of the bishop martyrs. For example, John Bramhall, the former bishop of Derry, disapproved of the way in which a “young novice” with a “loose tongue” had written of “those blessed Men”.<sup>464</sup> Milton, by then a major polemical player, had indeed devoted much of his energy to belittling these martyrs, coining the derogatory term

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<sup>461</sup> John Milton, *An apology against a pamphlet call’d A modest confutation of the animadversions upon the remonstrant against Smectymnuus* (London, 1642), pp. 30-31.

<sup>462</sup> Joseph Hall, *A letter lately sent by a reverend bishop from the tovver* (London, 1642), p. 9.

<sup>463</sup> Joseph Hall, *A modest confutation of a slanderous and scurrilous libell, entitvled, Animadversions* (London, 1642), pp. 6-7.

<sup>464</sup> John Bramhall, *The serpent salve* (London, 1643), p. 212.

“prelate-martyr”, condemning the Edwardian bishops as “halting and time-serving Prelates”. For his part, Thomas Fuller condemned the pretensions of those reshaping the political and religious culture of Britain, comparing their zeal to “the pretended Reformation” under the Catholic Queen Mary. The sacrilegious violence of the puritans not only insulted the “memories of our first Reformers”, Fuller told an audience at Savoy, but was comparable to that of the ringleaders of the Marian regime, who had sought to extirpate Protestantism by digging up reformers’ dead bodies.<sup>465</sup> This drew forth a riposte from the radical puritan chaplain John Saltmarsh, who denounced Fuller for attempting to moderate the Reformation, and “the zeale of the Prophets and Martyrs”.<sup>466</sup> According to Fuller, however, one of the many things which had made Cranmer, Rigley, Latimer, Bradford, Philpot, and Hooper remarkable was their patience. “They were the Champions of passive obedience”, he wrote, and it was precisely “the noyse and fame of their patiency” which had “sounded aloud thorow the whole world to all Posterity”. During the turbulent historical moment of 1643, however, Fuller could only hope that “the very Doctrine of Martyrdom” would not itself be “martyred”.<sup>467</sup>

Thus, commenting upon martyrs during the *bellum episcopale* was an ideologically loaded affair. Not only conservative bishops, but also many minor clerics found themselves ejected from their livelihoods after having defended episcopacy. For example, Ephraim Udall, the rector of St Augustine’s in London, had suggested that any revisions to the prayer book ought to be limited, since the original had been drafted by “glorious Martyrs, who sealed the truth of the reformed Religion with their blood”. As a result, he was branded an enemy of Parliament, and expelled from his position. As the lawyer chairing the committee for scandalous ministers pointed out, Udall’s crime was to have asserted that “the great reformers of the church now were Hypocrites”. The Sussex minister Richard Goffe shared the same fate, being found guilty of keeping company with

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<sup>465</sup> Thomas Fuller, *A sermon of reformation* (London, 1643), pp. 17-18.

<sup>466</sup> John Saltmarsh, *Examinations, or, A discovery of some dangerous positions delivered in A sermon of reformation preached in the church of the Savoy last fast day July 26 by Tho. Fuller* (London, 1643), p. 4.

<sup>467</sup> Thomas Fuller, *Truth maintained, or Positions delivered in a sermon at the Savoy* (Oxford, 1643), p. 17.

papists, and expressing appreciation for the reign of Queen Mary.<sup>468</sup> When the chief publicist of Laudianism, John Pocklington, was removed from his position by the House of Lords on February 12, 1641, he was accused of having justified “sundry popish canonized saints for true saints and Martyrs of God”. The indictment also pointed out that during the years immediately prior to the civil wars, Pocklington had censured “our own English Martyrs”, and replaced them with “traitors, murderers, rebels and heretics”.<sup>469</sup>

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

As the themes outlined above imply, debates regarding church governance heavily influenced the discourse of martyrdom during the aftermath of the Bishops’ Wars. In the above chapter, I have explored calls for root-and-branch reform, as well as apologist endeavors to maintain the episcopal status quo.

The rehabilitation of martyred bishops had already come to play a central role in the defense of the episcopate and its liturgical forms. As we have seen, the memory of the persecuted bishops of the 1550s provided an important resource for those who sought to arrest the revolutionary reformism of the root-and-branch movement. To the institutional and liturgical reformers, on the other hand, the Oxford martyrs were an historical burden, since their lives had been widely popularized by John Foxe, and their example still had a strong hold over the social memory. Allusion to the Marian martyrs was a profoundly compelling argument, and, to the annoyance of the anti-prelatical writers, it was raised over and over again as evidence of the sanctity of the episcopal office. In addition, arguments against deeply rooted customs and rituals proved to be difficult to make. For these reasons, I want to suggest that custom and memory represented a powerful challenge to those in Parliament who called for sweeping changes.

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<sup>468</sup> Ephraim Udall, *Directions [p]ropounded and hymbly [p]resented to the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1641, p. 2; John White, *The first century of scandalous, malignant priests* (London, 1643), pp. 9, 44.

<sup>469</sup> His indictment was published later in a pamphlet titled *The Petition and Articles or Severall Charge Exhibited in Parliament Against John Pocklington* (London, 1641), pp. 21-23.

Given that “bishop-martyr” was a problematic category for institutional reformers, it is hardly surprising that they sought to loosen its association with the common gallery of martyrs, to challenge conventional assumptions regarding their significance, and to warn against putting too much emphasis on their authorship in the preparation of the liturgy. It is remarkable how some writers, most notably John Milton, challenged the overwhelming weight of tradition, and deployed a more extensive narrative of the Marian persecutions. In turn, this allowed Joseph Hall and his associates to protest against such scandalous assaults on the memory of the Protestant martyrs. Nonetheless, against the backdrop of previous chapters, the assertion that the Edwardian bishops had not in fact purified the English temple was indeed radical. Within Parliament itself, opinion was divided. In sum, as an anonymous observer noted in 1642, one notable consequence of the pamphlet wars had been the fragmentation of the memory of the Marian martyrs. While some denied that the Marian regime had been as bad as Foxe had made out, others preferred “instead of acknowledging *Foxes* History a Monument of Martyrs, [to] call it a Book fraught with Traitors and Heretiques”.<sup>470</sup>

The campaign to establish presbyterianism in the Church of England won considerable support in the Commons. However, the outcome was not exactly what the advocates of a presbyterian church had envisaged. The anti-prelatical movement enjoyed a relatively brief ascendancy when the House of Lords excluded all bishops on February 7, 1642. However, the majority of ruling opinion remained opposed to the wholesale termination of the civil power of bishops. Thus, the replacement of the *Book of Common Prayer* with the *Directory of Public Worship* did not occur until 1645, and the replacement of episcopal authority with Erastian presbyterianism until 1646.<sup>471</sup> In the meantime, there was little likelihood that the King would be willing to grant Parliament greater influence over ecclesiastical affairs. Charles refused to compromise his ecclesiastical prerogative, and, in due course, rejected the Grand Remonstrance, along

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<sup>470</sup> Anon., *Plots, conspiracies and attempts of domestick and forraigne enemies, of the Romish religion* (London, 1642), p. 5.

<sup>471</sup> Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002), p. 183.

with its proposal that “such a reformation be made of the Church-Government, and Liturgie, as both Houses of Parliament shall advise”.<sup>472</sup>

As the dispute between the English crown and Parliament could not be settled, events took a new turn late in 1642. Members issued a formal declaration of war in August 1642, and Parliament began to raise an army “for the necessary Defence of the true Protestant Religion, the King, Parliament, and Kingdom”.<sup>473</sup> King Charles positioned himself as a guardian of the Established church, telling his supporters that he was unwilling to sacrifice the “true Reformed Protestant Religion, sealed by the blood of so many Reverend Martyrs”, and would thus defend it against the assaults of “Brownisme, Anabaptisme, and Libertinisme”.<sup>474</sup> In the winter of 1642 to 1643, the country descended into violent confrontations and civil war.

This chapter began by posing the question of the ways in which Foxe’s martyrology was read in war-time England. While concerns related to church governance defined much of the discourse of martyrdom in the first two years of the Long Parliament, the outbreak of military conflict brought new considerations into the public arena. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the content of Foxe’s martyrology soon acquired fresh significance, particularly as the question of toleration of nonconformism began to preoccupy parliamentarians.

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<sup>472</sup> *Nineteen propositions made by both Houses of Parliament, to the Kings Majestie, for a reconciliation of the differences between his Majesty, and the said Houses* (London, 1642), p. 3.

<sup>473</sup> C. H. Firth & R. S. Raid (eds.) *Acts and ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London, 1911), pp. 15-16.

<sup>474</sup> King Charles, *His Maiesties declaration to all his loving subjects of August 12* (Cambridge, 1642), pp. 32, 37.



## CHAPTER 6

### The Culture of Martyrdom during the English Civil Wars: From persecution to toleration

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

During the 1640s, England experienced a decade of chronic warfare, which divided communities and families, and turned people against their neighbors. As terrible as the war was, and as much as it caused insecurity, confusion, and division, it paradoxically produced strong demands for civil and religious liberty, and generated greater debate around the issue of toleration than at any other time in the past. Hard-pressed minorities such as Anabaptists, for example, engaged in the war with the hope of achieving toleration for their sect. The members of this dissident group “have been so ready to engage in military service”, as one commentator suspiciously acknowledged, “with a designe no doubt to get that liberty by force”, since they had recognized that “by favour of authority” they could not achieve their aims.<sup>475</sup> Many civilians became soldiers in 1642, took up arms to fight for their cause, and, as a reward for their loyalty, hoped to receive governmental approval for their beliefs.

In this final chapter, I examine broad issues of culture and identity during the civil war, and specifically the conjunctions between toleration, persecution, and martyrs. As in the previous chapters, attention is drawn to discussions around martyrdom,

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<sup>475</sup> Citation from Henry Spelman, *An Answer to a question of a gentleman of quality* (London, 1646), p. 20.

and the ways in which Foxeian discourses featured in the latter. To this end, the chapter will begin by considering the contrasting interpretations of the issue of war and peace, and resistance and non-resistance, by pamphleteers, who were prone to combining martyrological paradigms with political commentary. The broader aim of this chapter is to examine pleas for toleration. Many writers who addressed the topic prior to the civil war associated toleration mainly with Roman Catholicism, but, by the mid-1640s, the language of tolerance was almost exclusively concerned with Protestant sectarians. It is particularly illuminating to analyze the language of tolerance and persecution in the context of the civil war, not only because strong tolerationist positions were advanced in the popular press, but also because the war transformed the character of the English polity, and convinced many people that the violent conflict had brought into being a new form of persecutory power. The idea of the pope as a malignant spiritual power persecuting Christians was widely shared at least from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the onset of the civil war convinced many people that the English prelacy had a similar influence on society. In short, as Mark Goldie has rightly pointed out, when the Civil Wars engulfed the British Isles, a “substantial segment of Protestantism came to believe that priestly usurpation took not one but three forms: prelatical and presbyterial as well as popish”.<sup>476</sup>

Toleration has long attracted the attention of scholars. As a field of study, it has been dominated by a quest for persons who expressed goodwill or sympathy towards those in a precarious minority position, or who strove for peace in an age of conflict. Our present understanding of the topic still rests largely on a few classic accounts, which concentrated either on individuals struggling in the “persecuting societies” of the early modern period, or on toleration as a matter of state policy.<sup>477</sup> Recently, however, scholars

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<sup>476</sup> Mark Goldie, ‘Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism’, in Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (eds.) *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 216.

<sup>477</sup> See, e.g. W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1866), A. A. Seaton, *The Theory of Toleration under the Later Stuarts* (1911), W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (1932-1940). These Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup>-century classics have been criticised for their teleological tendencies, for creating an early modern tolerationist utopia, and for seeing all the early modern alternatives to the ideology of subjectivism as necessarily coercive. Blair Worden, for example, suggests that the key to understanding toleration is to recognize that disputants were more concerned about the next world than this: “discussion of toleration is principally a debate about salvation not of society”. Blair Worden, *God’s Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 63-90. According to Alexandra Walsham, the shortcoming of this

have argued that the question of toleration is much deeper and multifaceted than these classic accounts allow. What has been questioned above all is the tendency of the latter to present history as a move towards greater tolerance. In order to understand early modern tolerationist sentiment, it is crucial to acknowledge that governmental violence was not the only issue involved, and also that the early modern toleration debate had its own specific characteristics. The leading historians of toleration have understood that its cultural roots lay far deeper than the Enlightenment or the Victorian era. Rainer Forst, for example, has provided a far-reaching genealogy of tolerance, ranging from antiquity to contemporary debates, and has suggested that “toleration is a general human concern and is not confined to any particular epoch or culture”.<sup>478</sup> It is likewise important to recognize the flexibility and relativity of the concept. To quote John Coffey, “every society has a theory of toleration; societies simply differ over what is tolerable”.<sup>479</sup> Acknowledging that the content and substance of toleration may alter has important implications for our understanding, and opens up new perspectives on the early modern debates.

This amorphous concept escapes easy definitions, and there is, of course, much critical disagreement on the matter. It is sometimes taken as an elusive civil or religious virtue; a creed of the losers; a matter of state policy; and a normative demand for civil society to protect dissenting individuals. Here, the word is understood broadly as a principle and practice of countenancing ideas, attitudes, and practices with which one strongly disapproved, or found morally disagreeable. In order to grasp the implications of the concept more fully, however, it may be helpful to bear in mind the difference between toleration and the closely related concept of liberty. The former could be

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earlier generation of scholars was not ignoring the tolerant minds of earlier periods, but rather the tendency of making progressive thought the only real champion in the history of toleration. See Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006); ‘Cultures of Coexistence in Early Modern England: History, Literature and Religious Toleration’, in *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol. 28 (2013), pp. 115–137. See also Jeffrey R. Collins, ‘Redeeming the Enlightenment: New Histories of Religious Toleration’, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 81 (2009), pp. 607–636.

<sup>478</sup> Rainer Forst, *Toleration in Conflict: Past and Present*, transl. by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>479</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000), p. 7. Coffey presents the post-Reformation toleration controversy as a textual affair “preoccupied by the challenge of biblical hermeneutics”. See John Coffey, ‘Scripture and Toleration between Reformation and Enlightenment’, in Eliane Glaser (ed.) *Religious Tolerance in the Atlantic World. Early Modern and Contemporary Perspectives* (Palgrave, 2014), p. 16.

described as no more than “a grudging concession granted by one body from a position of strength”, as Diarmaid MacCulloch has suggested, whereas “liberty provides a situation in which all religious groups are competing on an equal basis.”<sup>480</sup> One of the peculiarities of the early modern era, however, was that positions of strength were in constant flux, and religious orthodoxies were transformed by changes in political regimes. During the period under consideration in this study, allegiance was in a continual process of formation and fragmentation, and the guardians of orthodoxy of one era could become the hunted dissidents and martyrs of the next. In uncertain times like these, the line between liberty and toleration was tenuous. It was frequently unclear whether publicists were advocating their own liberties or the liberties of others.<sup>481</sup>

Toleration was not one of the high ideals of English Protestantism. It is true that the leading reformers were magisterial Protestants, who relied on the civil magistrate to maintain appropriate control over the church, and considered it a duty of the civil magistrate to keep doctrinal dissents on a tight leash. In this regard, it is not surprising that leading reformers are rarely taken as interlocutors in studies of toleration, at least not in the same way as figures such as John Locke, who sought to elucidate principles of toleration on *a priori* grounds, or his Huguenot contemporary Pierre Bayle, the proponent of a strategy of skeptical toleration. Indeed, the most comprehensive seventeenth-century work on religious toleration was written by Locke, whose arguments in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) have justifiably been given a privileged place. However, another early modern writer who also influenced contemporary discussion, but whose contributions have been less well documented, was John Foxe. Although he is customarily presented as a fierce anti-papist writer, Foxe was also a proponent of religious

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<sup>480</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's house divided, 1490-1700* (Allen Lane, 2003), p. 526.

<sup>481</sup> According to Blair Worden, for example, the exceptional tolerance of Independents during the 1640s was a short-term response to an immediate problem. In wartime England, leading Independents sought to widen the boundaries of religious toleration. Under the protectorate, however, after they had secured toleration for themselves, they were more than willing to implement persecutory policies, and to turn against toleration on similar grounds as the Presbyterians a few years earlier. In this regard, the political toleration that the Independents achieved with the support of Cromwell's army was a rather pyrrhic victory for sectarians. Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 63-90. See also Avihu Zakai, 'Religious Toleration and Its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War', in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 21 (1989), pp. 1-33; 'Orthodoxy in England and New England: Puritans and the Issue of Religious Toleration, 1640- 1650', in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 135 (1991), pp. 401-441.

toleration. He had both personal experience of persecution, and a career-long interest in persuading and instructing those in positions of power to practice a more lenient approach towards dissidents. For instance, he wrote letters to Elizabethan nobles, attempting to save the lives of five Dutch Anabaptists who had been sentenced to be burned for heresy in 1575. Moreover, he also defended puritans against the fury of Archbishop John Whitgift, and was actively involved in efforts to prevent the execution of the Jesuit Edmund Campion during the early 1580s.<sup>482</sup>

As a tolerationist writer, Foxe was not theoretically oriented towards the legal and institutional framework of the question. It is true that in the writings of Foxe, we do not find explicit principles regarding the solution of problems related to persecution. Nor was Foxe an analyst of constitutions or political institutions. Rather, he was a writer who sought to portray politics as a chaotic process. However, Foxe has an especial importance, because he put into circulation certain persuasive conceptions, which won growing support through the publication of his martyrologies. *Acts and Monuments* was important on several levels. It constructed an ethos of tolerance by transforming medieval heretics, radical evangelicals, and Henrician and Marian dissidents into martyrs, and rejecting the use of physical violence and persecution in spiritual matters. It is crucial to study the Foxeian imprint on the 1640s for two reasons. First, the majority of post-Reformation arguments in favor of toleration were in reality arguments against persecution. Foxe's martyrology proved a valuable source for such writers, since it provided by far the most popular defense of non-persecution. Second, many of the martyrs whose stories Foxe had narrated were put to death for reasons of conscience: that is, for holding individual convictions opposed to demands for conformity. According to Foxe, conscience was outside the magistrate's jurisdiction: No "Prelate [can] compelle him to kepe the same, except he will do contrary vnto Gods ordinance, but ought to committe him vnto the gouernaunce of the holy Ghoste, and of

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<sup>482</sup> V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (University of California Press, 1973), pp. 213-214. Sharon Achinstein, 'John Foxe and the Jews', *Renaissance Quarterly* Vol. 54 (2001), pp. 86-120. This inspired G. R. Elton to compare John Foxe to Thomas More. See G. R. Elton, 'Persecution and Toleration in the English Reformation', in W. J. Shells (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration*, Studies in Church History, Vol. 21 (Oxford, 1984), pp. 163-187.

his owne conscience”.<sup>483</sup> As the following chapter will demonstrate, the example of reformed martyrs could be used to highlight the potential defects of magisterial power in religious affairs, and was a particularly fruitful reference point for anyone advocating liberty of conscience. While it is debatable whether “toleration” is a sufficient hermeneutical key to Foxe’s virulently anti-papist text, many Stuart tolerationists were nonetheless heavily indebted to his massive martyrology.

## 6.2 MARTYRS’ PASSIVITY AND MILITARY AGGRESSION: CONFRONTING THE MARTYROLOGICAL RHETORIC OF NON-RESISTANCE

In the winter of 1642 to 1643, the country descended into violent confrontations and civil war, and attention shifted from questions of ecclesiastical reform to those of political allegiance. The war presented a wholly new challenge to both parliamentarian and royalist writers, and transformed the landscape of martyrological discourse. For the parliamentarian side, it was crucial to provide justifications for armed resistance, against a plethora of writers claiming that the people had risen in revolt against the lawful magistrate. In a situation in which each side accused the other of having fired the first shot, many of Charles I’s chaplains demanded to know why parliamentarian apologists thought that obedience to established authority was no longer binding. One of the more eloquent ways in which these casuists challenged the uprising was to underline the exemplary value of those primitive and reformed martyrs who had pursued their goals in a less confrontational, non-military fashion. There were, as the royalist preachers and pamphleteers eagerly pointed out, obvious difficulties in associating martyrs with armed resistance.

One of the first writers to defend Parliament’s actions was John Goodwin, the vicar of St Stephen’s, who encouraged the citizenry of London to rise against royalist forces, and declared in 1642 that a time was drawing near in which persecution would come to an end. In the process of casting Antichrist out of the world, many resistants

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<sup>483</sup> John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (1563 edition), HRI Online Publications (Sheffield, 2011), p. 193. <<http://www.johnfoxe.org>> [accessed March 6, 2016].

would suffer a martyr's death, but, in the future, martyrdom would become extinct, and eventually only the "glory and praise of Martyrdome will remain". When dealing with this topic, the vicar of Coleman Street interestingly eschewed all reliance upon Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. In his *Anti-Cavalirisme* (1642), he sought to justify collective resistance to the Crown through the language of natural law, which, in his opinion, provided a more effective means to defend a people's right of resistance against tyranny than historical accounts of martyrs. Indeed, Goodwin went as far as to suggest that the victims of the Marian period provided a model of how *not* to act. If you want to be "suffering whatever the malice and revengeful spirit of your enemies shal think good", Goodwin told his readers, "you must eate the bread of your foules in peril of your lives; as your forefathers did in Queen Maries daies".<sup>484</sup>

Indeed, it was a fundamental historical problem for those espousing the idea of armed resistance to explain why the members of the early church did not resist the persecuting heathen emperors. The dilemma was not necessarily insoluble, but it represented a serious threat to theorists who incited people to defend the country against royalist forces. The literary supporters of Parliament went to remarkable lengths in explaining away the casuistry that royalist churchmen had developed around the topic. Goodwin, for example, suggested that the primitive Christians had by nature the same liberty to resist persecutors as anyone else. The only reason why they courageously chose not to raise their swords was that God had "by way of special dispensation" hidden their liberty to resist actively, and hence ensured the spread of the Church.<sup>485</sup> Their example, however, was by no means binding for later times. The puritan minister Stephen Marshall responded to the royalist criticism simply by pointing out that there was no patristic proscription of defensive warfare: "Where did any of the Fathers ever oppose this opinion, and condemn this practice, that is, declaring it unlawfull, especially for a representative body to defend themselves against the unjust violence of their mis-led Princes?"<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> John Goodwin, *Anti-cavalierisme* (London, 1642), pp. 31, 34.

<sup>485</sup> John Goodwin, *Anti-cavalierisme* (London, 1642), p. 28.

<sup>486</sup> Stephen Marshall, *A plea for defensive arms, or, A copy of a letter written by Mr. Stephen Marshall to a friend of his in the city* (London, 1642), p. 20.

This was also the view held by William Prynne, who believed that the people owed their first allegiance to Parliament. He was anxious to impress upon his readers the idea that martyrs were not only passive by-standers of persecution, but also individuals who performed acts of resistance to arbitrary power. Against royalist allegations, Prynne insisted that none of the church fathers had said that it was unlawful for Christians “to resist their persecuting enemies”. Like Goodwin, he tried to convince his readers that Roman martyrs had not revolted against the heathen emperors only because they had not had sufficient strength. Instead, they used their freedom of will to choose another course, and “voluntarily refused to defend themselves with force of Armes against their Persecuters, though they were not bound in point of Conscience from such resistance, and had both liberty and power to resist”.<sup>487</sup> From the premise that resistance itself could not be deemed unlawful, as the example of the slain martyrs demonstrated, Prynne drew the conclusion that taking up arms was no different than any other form of resistance.

During the first civil war, such references to the passive obedience of martyrs abounded, to the extent that the Scottish divine Samuel Rutherford suspected the whole enterprise of aiming to “bring the fathers and ancient martyrs against us”, being a desperate royalist attempt to “burden our cause much with hatred”. Assailed by a host of royalist writers, Rutherford drew attention to their dubious moral demand that “the parliament, all the innocents of the city of London, and assembly of divines (...) lay down arms and (...) go to their own death to prince Rupert, and the bloody Irish rebels”. As justification for these actions, they invoked well-known stories in which “martyrs are of purpose to go to the place where they know they shall be apprehended and put to death, for this Christ did, and are willingly to offer themselves to the enemy’s army, for so did Christ”. Against the royalists who expected men to throw away their weapons when confronted with an enemy ready to slaughter them, Rutherford allowed Englishmen the right to defend themselves against “any violence against the invasion of superiors”.<sup>488</sup>

For many royalist theorists, however, such reliance on natural law was a poor justification for unauthorized use of force. As Thomas Hobbes wrote in *De Cive*,

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<sup>487</sup> William Prynne, *The soveraigne povver of parliaments* (London, 1643), pp. 140-142.

<sup>488</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex: the law and the prince* (London, 1644), pp. 315, 369.



“The distinction therefore between active and passive obedience is an empty one”, resting on an assumption that “a sin against natural law, which is the law of God, could be expiated by penalties laid down by human judgement”. While Hobbes suggested that securing the sovereign’s ecclesiastical authority was the only sure means to peace and order, he was rather conventional in permitting the magistrate to exercise sovereignty coercively, and to persecute his subjects for the greater good. The only option left for persons who did not submit to princely authority in ecclesiastical matters was, as he told his readers, to “Goe to Christ by Martyrdome”.<sup>489</sup> A supporter of Charles and a member of the Great Tew Circle, Sir Dudley Digges agreed that Parliament had waged an unjust war, and turned his pen against those theorists who appeared to be giving wider scope to natural law. While believing that “the law of nature will defend us, whomever we kill”, they were in fact committing an offence against natural law, not to mention throwing dirt in the faces of the martyrs, since active resistance was actually a “sinne against nature, as the example of martyrs clearly confute”.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen* [1641], ed. and transl. by Richard Tuck & Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 167, 245.

<sup>490</sup> Dudley Digges, *The vnlawfulnessse of subjects taking up armes against their soveraigne in what case soever together with an answer to all objections scattered in their severall bookes* (Oxford 1643), p. 5.



**Fig. 7** The most famous English account of the Ten Persecutions was provided in Book 1 of *Acts and Monuments*. The image of these persecutions had long informed English readers about the horrors that the primitive Christians faced during the first centuries. Was it a model to eschew or imitate? *A Most Exact and Accurat Table of the First ten Persecutions of the Primative Church under the Heathen Tirants of Rome* (1641). British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings.

According to the view widely held in the royalist camp, the parliamentary propagandists had failed to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why none of the known martyrs had taken up arms against their persecutors. One of Goodwin's critics, Henry Hammond, the canon of Christ church, was particularly keen to dissociate martyrs from any kind of physical violence, remarking that the two major epithets of martyrdom, namely faith and patience, were "most irreconcilable with forcible resistance". Unlike the martyrs of the first centuries, the saints of Goodwin's own time were known for "fighting, destroying, resisting, rebelling". In addition, Hammond wondered why Goodwin had so little to say about the English martyrs. It seemed as if their exemplary value had decayed: "our Martyr-reformers" were unable to "get out of the confines of Babylon", and were therefore "fit to be destroyed". The moral lessons that Goodwin suggested were dubious, since he implied that "martyrdome is no desirable thing", or at least not to contemporary reformers. Why had the Edwardian reformers not chosen armed resistance, Hammond

asked, before adding: “I had thought that our Q Mary Martyrs had had this strength from heaven too”.<sup>491</sup> Another promoter of unapologetic loyalism, Griffith Williams, bishop of Ossory, also suggested that the popular pamphleteers were rewriting the values of the Reformation. He demanded to know why the early English reformers had not countered persecution with violence, did not “despise her cruell Majesty”, nor “curse this Tyrant Queene”, nor “make any shew of resistance against their most bloody Persecuters”, but had rather “yielded their estates and goods to be spoyled, their liberties to be infringed, and their bodies to be imprisoned, abused, and burned”.<sup>492</sup> His anxiety was shared by the author of *True Christian Svbiect* (1642), who continued to cite the example of the early Christians as a precept of non-resistance. If the primitives owed loyalty and obedience to their heathen emperors, he asked, how “Is our Charter of Liberties more then God gave to his first Saintes?”<sup>493</sup>

The noncoercive example of the early church and Marian martyrs that Foxe had instilled in the minds of the English people provided poor theoretical justification for a war of resistance. As David Loades has remarked, nobody in the puritan camp wanted to acknowledge that “John Foxe, who had so carefully rejected any notion of rebellion against Mary, would not have countenanced similar resistance to Charles.”<sup>494</sup> Indeed, Foxe’s introduction, which had incited readers to “keep our hands from shedding of bloud”, and “our tongues also from hurting the fame of others”, was more suited to discouraging than to justifying violent resistance.<sup>495</sup> It is thus unsurprising that parliamentary writers tended to avoid references to the Foxeian tradition. However, they had no lack of other historical precedents and theorists to support their cause. In other words, in attempting to formulate convincing responses to royalist claims, they had alternative resources on which to draw. Samuel Rutheford, for example, urged his readers to devote attention to “human testimonies” offering support for the right of self-defence,

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<sup>491</sup> Henry Hammond, *The Scriptures plea for magistrates vvherein is shewed the unlawfulness of resisting the lawfull magistrate, under colour of religion* (Oxford, 1643), pp. 6, 17, 25.

<sup>492</sup> Griffith Williams, *Vindiciae regum; or, The grand rebellion* (Oxford, 1642), pp. 77-78.

<sup>493</sup> Anon., *A trve Christian svbiect vnder an heathen prince: Or Tertullians plea for allegiance* (Oxford, 1642), p. 12

<sup>494</sup> David Loades, ‘The Early reception’, in HRI Online Publications (Sheffield, 2011).

<<http://www.johnfoxe.org>> [accessed March 6, 2016].

<sup>495</sup> John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (London, 1563), A declaration concerning the vtilitie and profite of thys history.

and thus for the recent proceedings of the parliamentary army, citing the examples of the French and Dutch Revolts, as well as writers such as Johann Sleidan, Jean Calvin, Theodore Beza, David Pareus and George Buchanan, all of whom considered “resistance to be lawful”.<sup>496</sup>

Writers had been interested in the question of the limits of governmental authority long before parliamentarian propagandists had raised the topic. In order to legitimize taking up arms against persecutory powers, many turned their attention to sixteenth-century resistance literature. These arguments were originally made by radical Calvinists, who had identified the circumstances in which tyrants could be lawfully resisted. The historical discourse of resistance theory had sought to moderate the excesses of princes, and was closely bound up with the threat of persecution. For example, the drafters of the most famous resistance treatise, *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (1579), writing under the pseudonym “Stephanus Junius Brutus”, did not believe that suffering in silence was the only legitimate response to persecution, and went on to emphasize that subjects were not bound by governmental orders contrary to the law of God.<sup>497</sup> Responding to the persecutions in France during the reign of Charles IX, the opening line of the treatise stated that it was legitimate to wage active resistance, since such action was “confirmed in many places in Holy Scripture, various examples throughout history, and by the deaths of all the holy martyrs”.<sup>498</sup> The French reformer Theodore Beza was no less clear on this point. Writing after Catholic mobs had killed thousands of Huguenots in the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572, he emphasized the spiritual duty of self-defense against corrupt magistrates: “those who took up their swords against a tyrant and devoted their strength to the defense of the true religion should be honored as sacred martyrs, no less than those who conquered their enemies by patiently submitting their own execution”.<sup>499</sup> An English exploration of the theme was offered by a Marian exile, John

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<sup>496</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex: the law and the prince* (London, 1644), p. 372.

<sup>497</sup> Part of the French pamphlet appeared in William Prynne’s *The Sovereign Powers of Parliaments and Kingdomes* in 1643; the whole English translation appeared five years later, under the title *A defence of liberty against tyrants* (1648), by William Walker.

<sup>498</sup> Most likely Hubert Languet and Philippe Du Plessis Mornay. See *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (first published 1579), ed. and transl. by George Garnett (Cambridge, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>499</sup> See Theodore Beza, *Concerning the Rights of Rulers over Their Subjects and the Duty of Subjects Towards Their Rulers* [1574], ed. and transl. by Henry-Louis Gonin & Patrick S. Poole (Pretoria, South Africa: H.A.U.M., 1956).

Ponet, who served as bishop of Winchester during the Edwardian regime. The bishop reminded the readers of his *Short Treatise on Political Power* (1556) that martyrdom was above all an act of resistance. No less a figure than St Paul did “not saue his life, and folowe Kaiser Neroes commaundement”, nor did the “thousautes of martirs folowe the wicked tirannes commaundemetes and procedinges, but resisted them, and with their blood testified, that they allowed [them not]”. In other words, the orders of tyrants ought to be resisted. For instance, Christians in the army of emperor Julian the Apostate obeyed him when “he commaunded them to set forewarde to fight for the defense of the common wealthe”, but when the emperor ordered them to destroy people and to worship idols “they wolde not obeie Iulia”.<sup>500</sup> Moreover, taking part in a just war did not require a ruler’s approval, nor deny one the title of martyr. The puritan divine John Owen, for example, remarked that Englishmen had had no trouble resisting the “ambitious Potentates” of the Emperor during the Spanish invasions, and that it was only natural that “many chose rather die Souldiers then Martyrs” at the time of the late civil wars and the massacres in France.<sup>501</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that the literary supporters of Parliament began to frame the war with reference to these examples, to produce translations of these works, to make allusions to the latter, and to preserve the memory of past persecutions in which people had fought back against their persecutors. There was an inclination on the parliamentary side to see England as part of an embattled international Protestantism. Like people in France, the Netherlands, Piedmont, Bohemia, the Palatinate, La Rochelle, Germany, and other places in mainland Europe, and, most recently, in Ireland, they had been driven to defend themselves against tyrannical rule and atrocities. However, the tendency to align the English conflict with the Protestant cause in Northern Europe also provoked some ardent objections. The long-standing loyalist Peter Heylin was tremendously concerned about the influence of those thinkers who virtually incited the populace to overthrow their masters. In *Rebells Catechism* (1643), he worried about those controversialists who claimed to be acting “for the *Protestant Religions sake*”, and invoked “many examples

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<sup>500</sup> John Ponet, *A shorte treatise of politike pouuer and of the true obedience which subiectes owe to kynges and other ciuile gouernours* (Strasbourg, 1556), pp. [56-57, 70].

<sup>501</sup> John Owen, *Theomachia autexousiastike* (London, 1643), The Epistle Dedicatory.

of Rebellions since the Reformation”. What was especially repulsive in the examples drawn from the continent was that some of these rebellions had ended “in the death, and others in the deposition of their natural Princes”. These examples stood in stark contrast to the primitive martyrs, Heylin remarked, who “chose rather to expose their lives unto the merciless fury of the Persecutors, than take up Arms against their Princes, or disturb the peace of their Dominions, under pretence of standing in their defence”.<sup>502</sup>

There was a tactical advantage to be gained by appropriating historical martyrs to one’s own side. Above all, such appropriation served to reassure people that the war they fought was defensive. This, however, prompted the question of whether the victims of wars and massacres could be called martyrs. Were the fallen soldiers on English battlefields entitled to the crown of martyrdom? As soon as hostilities began and the war had claimed its first casualties, a royalist propagandist claimed “the memories of these Martyrs” would live forever, while the parliamentarian forces who had caused their deaths would be remembered as “Traytors and Conspirators”.<sup>503</sup> The sequestered Suffolk minister Paul Gosnold told his audience in Oxford, King Charles’s wartime capital, that whosoever “obliged by the lawes of God and men, shall loose his life in the service of the King, I dare not deny that man the honour of a Martyr”.<sup>504</sup> Divines on the other side of the battlelines were no less inclined to make such suggestions. In a sermon delivered at the invitation of the House of Lords, the London minister Edmund Calamy underlined the virtues of defensive warfare, calling the uprising the “most just defensive War”, and assuring his audience that anyone who “dies fighting the Lord’s battles dies a martyr”.<sup>505</sup> The same theme was also taken up in Cromwell’s military catechism, which incited soldiers to take up arms on the grounds that “There have been many famous Martyrs of this profession”, while also calling upon them “to avenge the blood of [the] Saints that hath been shed in the Land, and those many outrages which have been committed against [God’s] servants”.<sup>506</sup> However, the practice of identifying the casualties of war

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<sup>502</sup> Peter Heylyn, *The rebels catechism* (Oxford, 1643), pp. 8-9.

<sup>503</sup> Anon., *The Two state martyrs, or, The murther of Master Robert Yeomans, and Master George Bowcher, citizens of Bristol* (Oxford, 1643), p. 45.

<sup>504</sup> Paul Gosnold, *A sermon preached at the publique fast the ninth day of Aug. 1644 at St. Marie* (Oxford, 1644), p. 17.

<sup>505</sup> Edmund Calamy, *The noble-mans patterne of true and reall thankfulnesse* (London, 1643), pp. 57-58.

<sup>506</sup> Robert Ram, *The souldiers catechisme* (London, 1644), pp. 2, 14.

collectively as martyrs did not go uncontested. For example, the Anglican theologian Henry Hammond poignantly remarked that the war did not free one from the duty of obedience. In fact, shedding one's lifeblood for a political cause could potentially have the opposite effect: "what a sad condition it would be, if to one that dies a confident Martyr in this warre", Hammond wrote, only to realize on the day of judgement that the word *krima*, as used in Romans 13, the central text of Christian obedience, actually signified damnation.<sup>507</sup>

Although the public orators of the early 1640s were often reluctant to invoke Foxeian martyrs against the lawful magistrate, the controversy regarding his work did not die out altogether. As we shall see in the next section, the content of Foxe's martyrology soon acquired fresh significance, particularly as the question of toleration of nonconformism began to consume parliamentarians. Parliamentary success in the war undermined the fragile alliance between conservatives and reformers, and brought unresolved tensions, divisions of opinion, and new martyr-narratives into the public arena.

### 6.3 THE FOUNDING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY AND THE RECONSIDERATION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF TOLERATION

In seventeenth-century England, prior to the 1640s, it was mainly Jesuits who showed any theoretical interest in toleration, and, like all the Stuart Parliaments, the Long Parliament was strongly against such appeals. The term toleration itself obtained strong negative connotations. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the Irish rebellion, the army chaplain Hugh Peters suggested that misguided tolerance towards "Romish Idolaters" in Ulster and Munster had encouraged the Irish uprising, including the massacre of English and Scottish Protestant settlers in 1641.<sup>508</sup> Richard Vines, another pulpit orator favored by Parliament, similarly asked whether "there be any that can goe so low as to

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<sup>507</sup> Henry Hammond, *The Scriptures plea for magistrates vvherein is shewed the unlawfulness of resisting the lawfull magistrate, under colour of religion* (Oxford, 1643), pp. 13, 28.

<sup>508</sup> Hugh Peters, *A true relation of the passages of Gods providence in a voyage for Ireland* (London, 1642), pp. [22-23].

give toleration to Popery”, since in the light of all previous examples, toleration of idolatry and superstition endangered the well-being of the community, being now the main reason why the “warre is in our gates”.<sup>509</sup> A key member of Charles’ government, William Laud, who had been intolerant towards Calvinists, but had developed a much softer attitude towards Catholicism, was likewise blamed for allowing “so many Priests and Jesuites to live in England by toleration”.<sup>510</sup> The concessions made to the recusants were identified as a crucial failure of the Stuart government, but there were also more principled reasons to oppose such policies of toleration.

In sharp contrast to the belief that maintaining religious freedom was key to securing civil peace, many clerical opinion-shapers claimed that it had precisely the opposite effect. For the Presbyterian minister James Cranford, for example, “the toleration of errour is not a way to peace, as some men pretend, but to disorder and confusion”.<sup>511</sup> Rather than a means to peaceful settlement and political stability, toleration was conventionally understood as an evil doctrine, which gave each individual the right to be wrong, and had a detrimental effect on the social order, bringing in its wake insecurity, disintegration, and confusion. In 1642, the future Fifth Monarchist John Tillinghast claimed that the anarchic consequences of tolerationist policies could be seen in the history of ancient imperial Rome. After the Great Persecutions of the first centuries, and the reign of Constantine, who had brought church and empire together, the last pagan Emperor, Julian the Apostate, set the whole of Christendom in combustion, namely by procuring “a general toleration of Religion”. According to Tillinghast, proclaiming “libertie to all heretiques and schismatiques” had not been a strategy for quelling religious divisions, but rather a strategy to generate divisions among his Christian subjects.<sup>512</sup> Similarly, the biblical commentator John Trapp argued that such concessions by the magistrate could potentially have a dangerous impact on state policies. In this regard, a counter-example to emulate was “Our Edward the sixth”, who “would by no means yeeld to a toleration for his sister Mary”, despite the advice of all his counsellors.<sup>513</sup> For

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<sup>509</sup> Richard Vines, *Calebs integrity in following the Lord fully* (London, 1642), p. 23.

<sup>510</sup> Anon. *A prophecie of the life, reigne, and death of VWilliam Laud* (London, 1644), p. 2.

<sup>511</sup> James Cranford, *Haereseo-machia* (London, 1646), p. 14.

<sup>512</sup> John Tillinghast, *Demetrius his opposition to reformation* (London, 1642), pp. 29-30.

<sup>513</sup> John Trapp, *Solomonis panaretos: commentarie upon the books of Proverbs* (London, 1650), p. 319.



magistrate Protestants, who believed that the state had an obligation to govern the spiritual life of the multitude, toleration remained highly suspicious. Although this frame of reference was largely anti-Catholic, however, it is significant that the real test case of the 1640s was a wide range of dissenting Christian sects. Toleration was so strongly associated with these dissidents that a Scottish Presbyterian divine, George Gillespie, argued that “Toleration is the Sectaries holy of holies”.<sup>514</sup>

Of great importance for the debates of the 1640s was Parliament’s call for a national synod, in order to uphold the Church of England. From July 1643 onwards, some 150 ministers and lay representatives gathered in meetings of the Westminster Assembly, in order to carry out the necessary institutional reforms: namely, to construct a new ecclesiastical order, and to articulate the doctrinal positions of the church. The majority in the recently assigned assembly, and in the House of Commons, sought to rebuild an all-inclusive national church on the ruins of the old settlement. The overall aim was to create a new institutional and legal framework for the Church of England, by revising the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563, and directing the church towards a more coherent reformed doctrine. All the same, as soon as the representatives began their work, it became clear that the new formulas would not satisfy all. The main dividing line was between Presbyterian and Independent ministers.

One of the triggers for controversy was provided by five members of the Westminster Assembly, namely the authors of *Apologetical narration*, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughs, William Bridge, and Sidrach Simpson, who questioned the unifying compulsion of the Assembly. On a general level, their point of departure was less about whether the reforms in doctrine and liturgy were theologically sound or not. The real issue was whether the new national orthodoxy, which could be imposed with the support of the secular authorities, would tolerate dissidents, allow them to build institutions for themselves, and thus enable them to follow their own creed and style of worship. These five ministers, who had all been in exile in the Netherlands during the 1630s, appealed for a greater degree of toleration for different forms of worship, and put

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<sup>514</sup> George Gillespie, *A treatise of miscellany questions* (Edinburgh, 1649), p. 162.

pressure on policy makers to “allow us the peaceable practices of our Consciences, which the Reformed Churches abroad allowed us”.<sup>515</sup>

This moderate manifesto for independent congregations made the problem of toleration thinkable, but it divided the supporters of the puritan-parliamentarian movement. One of its authors, Jeremiah Burroughs, tried to balance opposed positions and save the unity of the parliamentarian alliance, by advocating a policy of coexistence and compromise, against those who thought “that all things should be tolerated”, as well as those who thought “that nothing should be tolerated”.<sup>516</sup> In the words of John Saltmarsh, the chaplain to Sir Thomas Fairfax’s parliamentary army: “I am not against the sitting of an Assembly or Synod at Westminster”, but rather against a government which “becomes an engine of persecution to all Christians differing from it”. The overriding concern for him was “to allow such liberty to others consciences, as we desire our selves”, and to avoid the kind of pressure which had been imposed on “thousands of weak Christians in Queen Elizabeths, and Queen Maries dayes of Martyrdom”.<sup>517</sup>

However, the valor and brutal treatment of proto-martyrs proved to be a highly controversial basis for argument. In the judgement of John Vicars, the authors of *Apologeticall Narration* expected the whole world to “believe what rare suffering-Saints and Martyrs they were, in suffering, so sorely, for their tender-conscience sake”. The spirited exchange of views during the mid-1640s reveal that the members of the different factions of the puritan coalition had very divergent ideas about the proto-martyrs of the English Revolution. The Scottish philosopher and controversialist Adam Steuart pointed out that the use of the precedent of martyrs to validate the Congregationalist stance was highly misleading, since there was not a single individual who had suffered martyrdom for the kind of church arrangement they advocated. The New England minister John Cotton claimed that this was equally true regarding the martyrs whom the Scottish Presbyterians sought to appropriate: in reality, their spiritual ancestors had in fact confronted only “civil deaths”. While hardliners such as Adam Steuart and John Vicars

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<sup>515</sup> Thomas Goodwin et al., *An apologeticall narration* (London, 1643), p. 25.

<sup>516</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Irenicum, to the lovers of truth and peace* (London, 1645), p. 18.

<sup>517</sup> John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of glory, or Some beams of the morning-star* (London, 1647), see The Epistle to the Reader.

were able to blame the independents for “flying reall Martyrdome”, and to portray their exile as an excursion to “the choicest and fattest parts of all beautifull Holland”, William Walwyn argued that such descriptions did not do justice to those individuals who believed the national church to be founded on false premises.<sup>518</sup> In previous decades, many Presbyterians had lived quietly, or left their homeland, or gone into exile, while stigmatized groups such as Brownists and Anabaptists had suffered the most, and had proved their commitment by enduring “the heat and brunt of persecution” in England.<sup>519</sup> Endurance under harsh persecution might have stood to the credit of Scottish Covenanters and English Calvinists, but, as Samuel Torshel noted, these were fallacious claims to authority. Escaping the threat of persecution by fleeing might be an act of cowardice, but did not constitute defiance against divine providence, since Christ himself had explicitly recommended fleeing persecution and hostile environments.<sup>520</sup> The independent Baptist John Tombes had no appetite whatsoever for martyrological arguments: “You know it is the way the Monks and Prelates use to inferre that their institution is of God, because their Orders have yeilded so many pious Confessors, Martyrs and Saints”.<sup>521</sup>

As soon as the prospect of victory in the first civil war came into view, the question of toleration turned into an increasingly divisive issue in national politics. The Presbyterian divine Thomas Edwards protested that recent years had indeed opened up the issue of toleration in an unprecedented manner. Within the last three years, there had “been more Book writ, Sermons preached, words spoken, besides plotting and acting for a Toleration”, he wrote, than “for all other things”.<sup>522</sup> Among the writers pronouncing on the topic, Edwards was undoubtedly the most active in launching attacks on sectarians. On the eve of the war, he had been among the first puritans to denounce the very idea of allowing freedom of worship to nonconformists, particularly in his *Reasons Against the Independant Government of Particular Congregations* (1641). Around the time that the royalists were losing the first civil war, Edwards published a lengthy and repetitive work

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<sup>518</sup> John Vicars, *The schismatick sifted* (London, 1646), pp. 11-12.

<sup>519</sup> William Walwyn, *The compassionate Samaritane* (London, 1644), pp. 73-74.

<sup>520</sup> Samuel Torshell, *A case of conscience concerning flying in times of trouble* (London, 1643), pp. 9-13.

<sup>521</sup> John Tombes, *An examen of the sermon of Mr. Stephen Marshal about infant-baptisme in a letter sent to him* (London, 1635), p. 30.

<sup>522</sup> Thomas Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), Part 3, p. 59.

entitled *Gangraena* (1645-1646), in which he underlined the threat of proliferating sectarianism, and listed all kinds of errors and heresies at great length. For Edwards, granting toleration to dangerous ideas meant sacrificing the aims for which the war had been fought. “Its a sad thing to think”, Edwards wrote after the downfall of the episcopacy and the military defeat of the royalists, “that so much blood hath been spilt, and vast sum of money spent, if in the end we should have a Toleration”.<sup>523</sup> Up to a point, many contemporaries agreed with Edwards’ alarmist rhetoric regarding sects, and his work was praised by likeminded reformers, who sought to restore religious unity to a ruined country. The Scottish commissioner Robert Baillie, for example, was hopeful that Edwards’ anti-toleration tract would convince contemporaries of the seriousness of the threat: if his work did not “waken the Parliament, and all others, to lay to heart the spreading of the evill errors”, Baillie wrote, “I know not what can doe it”.<sup>524</sup>

One problem with the independents’ argument was that it apparently allowed the right to defy the public authority. However, some controversialists went even further, suggesting that the boundaries of toleration ought to be extended even to those who were clearly in error. Not long after the appearance of *Apologetical narration*, the debate was re-ignited by the separatist Calvinist minister Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, who had worked in the American colonies and among the Indian tribes before returning to his former homeland. In his remarkably original work, *Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*, Williams argued that those who held obscure theological positions deserved something better than blind persecution. Since his reign was peaceful and charitable, “the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and Papists, spilt in the Wars of present and former Ages, for their respective Consciences, is not required nor accepted by Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace”. These views were highly exceptional for at least two reasons. First, Williams granted freedom of conscience to every man, and denounced the persecution of conscientious subjects.

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<sup>523</sup> Thomas Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), p. 42. Ann Hughes has recently provided a rich study of his thinking, writing, and networks, showing that there is far more to this book than intolerant speculation. See Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>524</sup> Robert Baillie, in David Laing (ed.) *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, Vol. 2 (Bannatyne Club, 1841–2), p. 352.

Second, he also suggested granting full-fledged “soul liberty” to “paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or antichristian”, as long as the peace of society was not endangered by their actions. However, the courageous suggestion that tolerance might be extended to an idea of general freedom of worship was not to the taste of most people. One of the leading Presbyterian members of the Westminster Assembly, John Arrowsmith, for example, did not share Williams’ hopes for peaceful coexistence, and considered his pamphlet “one of the greatest scandals I ever yet met with in print”.<sup>525</sup> He took a hard line against the radical proposal of allowing each soul free exercise of their religion, since a nation which granted “universall liberty to all kinds of worship” was likely to fall apart. John Cotton found it dubious that his former co-colonist, who had suffered at the hands of the colonial magistrate, presented himself as a martyr for the liberty of conscience, since “No Martyr of Christ did ever suffer for such a cause”.<sup>526</sup>

The anti-tolerationist arguments put forward during the 1640s relied largely on the notion of religious uniformity. Compelled to find new ways to defend their desire to convert England into a pristine Protestant communion, a number of English and Scottish Presbyterian spokesmen raised concerns regarding the proliferation of sectarian pluralism, and circulated negative portrayals of theologically unsound opinions, heterodox beliefs, and public tolerationists. Edward’s *Gangreana* was the most comprehensive and successful publication of this genre, identifying some 300 errors and 16 different sects (Independents, Brownists, Chiliasts, Millenaries, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Arminians, Libertines, Familists, Enthusiasts, Seekers, Perfectists, Socinians, Arians, Antitrinitarians, Sceptics). However, similar attempts to catalog doctrinal errors were made throughout the 1640s. John White, member of the Long Parliament for Southwark and chair of the committee on scandalous ministers, composed a tract called *The first century of scandalous, malignant priests* (1643), informing legislators about “the destructive Errours of Popery and Arminianisme”, and other “absurdities and barbarismes in Divinity”.<sup>527</sup> Subsequently, White’s list was used by the government to eject undesirable ministers. The rapid spread of sectarianism also

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<sup>525</sup> John Arrowsmith, *Englands Eben-ezer* (1645, London), pp. 13-14.

<sup>526</sup> John Cotton, *A Reply to Mr. Williams his Examination* (London, 1647), p. 30.

<sup>527</sup> John White, *The first centvry of scandalous, malignant priests* (London, 1643), The Epistle to the Reader.

concerned Ephraim Pagitt, the author of *Heresiography* (1645), Francis Cheynell, Daniel Featley, James Cranford, Samuel Rutherford, William Prynne, John Bastwick and many other less notorious characters, all of whom were concerned about the growing diversity of Protestant beliefs. In their efforts, they were aided by the mainstays of Scottish Presbyterianism, such as Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, George Gillispie, and Adam Steward, who wished to define precisely which ideas could be tolerated in accordance with Scottish standards. These Scottish commissioners desired to bring about a fully unified state, which would grant little room for those who sought to free their consciences from the discipline of the public authority. Thus, they constantly reminded Englishmen of the oath by which Parliament had bound itself to these goals. When the English Parliament and Scottish Covenanters joined forces to capture the monarch, they had indeed agreed to extirpate heresy. Thus, tolerating those who operated outside the bonds of orthodoxy was not a politically viable option, and in fact constituted a violation of the Solemn League and Covenant. The upholders of the Scottish tradition traduced various denominational groups in extremely harsh language, and attacked those innovative theological positions that were tearing the Covenanted nation apart.

One obvious impulse behind such anti-sectarian bias was awareness of the growing power of dissident religious groups. Orthodox Presbyterians had to expose and publicize the errors of the sectaries, precisely because the latter had taken advantage of the absence of church control over print.<sup>528</sup> In this regard, the literary campaign against heterodox religious opinion was an understandable response from the Presbyterians, who used fear of heresy as a means to advance their own political and ecclesiastical purposes. The alarm regarding popular heresies appears to have been much exaggerated, but there is no doubt that pleas for toleration presented a fundamental challenge to the Protestant Erastian tradition, and all those willing to enshrine ecclesiastical authority as a function of the state. It is also true that there were no guarantees that the Presbyterian program would enjoy toleration from the King's party in the peace negotiations following Charles I's surrender in 1646. The ascendancy of Cromwell and his associates had the potential

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<sup>528</sup> Ann Hughes, 'Print, persecution and polemic: Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena* (1646) and Civil War sectarianism', in Alexandra Walsham & Julia Crick (eds.) *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 258.

to frustrate the aims of the war, since they were willing to restore Charles to “the full execution of his regal authority”, and to establish a “moderated Episcopacy” in return for limited toleration.<sup>529</sup>

Writing vituperative pamphlets in favor of religious coercion might have been an effective way to win support for the ecclesiastical system, but many found their content more provocative than persuasive. Independent preacher John Saltmarsh, for example, denounced Edwards as a faction-monger, whose writings were nothing more than “Letters of blood”.<sup>530</sup> As the list of heretics grew longer, and descriptions of their beliefs and practices more detailed, many writers felt compelled to claim that the realm of beliefs was outside the jurisdiction of magistrates. Such extensive attention to popular heresies also prompted some writers to argue that true faith should not be defended or spread by violent means. This line of thought generally relied on arguments from conscience: asserting that sincere beliefs, regardless of their doctrinal veracity, must not be violated. Such appeals also sought to re-define the relationship between church and civil magistrate. Against the view of the civil power as a *sine qua non* of orthodoxy, the puritan politician Francis Rous, for example, asserted that “Man in naturall or politick consideration, is the servant of men, of his Prince, and the Republique, But man in a religious consideration, is onely the servant of God”. Thus, human fallibility in religious affairs was not a sufficient reason to impose severe legal penalties: “for faultinesse in Christianity, you must not destroy the man”.<sup>531</sup> In the next section, I want to discuss the notions developed by sectarians and their sympathizers around martyrological themes, demonstrating that these writers often invoked Foxeian martyrology in response to changing religio-political circumstances. Since the Presbyterians had a strong voice in the government, and had managed to increase their religious, cultural, and political influence during the war, most tolerationist pleas were directed against them.

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<sup>529</sup> David Scott, ‘Counsel and cabal in the king’s party, 1642–1646’, in Jason McElligott (ed.) *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 127.

<sup>530</sup> John Saltmarsh, *Some drops of the viall, powred out in a season when it is neither night nor day* (London, 1646), p. 95.

<sup>531</sup> Francis Rous, *The ancient bounds, or Liberty of conscience tenderly stated, modestly asserted, and mildly vindicated* (London, 1645), pp. 22, 32.

#### 6.4 EMPLOYING MARTYRS AGAINST HERESIOGRAPHERS

One of the ways in which Edwards had sought to disarm criticism of *Gangraena* was by associating his argument not only with a more authoritative polemic in defense of true religion, but also with Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which had been attacked by "Jesuits and Papists" as a "Book of lyes".<sup>532</sup> Although Edwards compared himself to Foxe, he took a much more negative view of nonconformists. For their part, his opponents also praised Foxe's work, hoping to thereby cloak themselves with his reputation. Frequently, Foxe's book of martyrs was seen as a poignant example of efforts to advance the Reformation through speech and persuasion, rather than power and coercion.

The alleged sectarian martyrs remained a problematic subject for Edwards and his associates. Edwards was fully aware that state coercion enabled those who operated outside the bonds of orthodoxy to fashion themselves as persecuted individuals, and to claim the crown of martyrdom. No less explicitly than William Laud a few years earlier, he went on to suggest that martyrdom could be of no value or profit for schismatics as a group. The crime of sectarianism was so "great an evil", Edwards wrote, being even more dangerous than the worship of idols, that even "the bloud of Martyrdome cannot blot it out". In this regard, it is not surprising that Edwards denounced all efforts to turn Antitrinitarians, Antiscripturists, Arrians, Socians, Perfectists, Independents, Brownists, and Anabaptists who "suffer by the Parliaments authority" into martyrs and saints.<sup>533</sup>

In response to Edwards' attacks, an anonymous supporter of the Congregationalist system urged his adversaries to admit that martyrdom should above all be seen as a confirmation of biblical teaching, "a broad seal to all the truths in the Scripture". However, such martyrs ought not to be treated as authoritative teachers, but rather as witnesses of different aspects of truth. History demonstrated that "in all ages some Saints have by suffering chiefly sealed to some present truth". It was thus unnecessary to put greater emphasis on one testimony over another: the apostles were persecuted by the Jews, the saints by the heathen, Athanasius of Alexandria by Arians, Luther by the Pope, and indeed the Scottish kirk by the prelacy. However, what his Presbyterian adversaries

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<sup>532</sup> Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>533</sup> Thomas Edward, *The first and second part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), pp. 29-30, 163.



failed to recognize was the validity of recent testimonies “against an Ecclesiaticall coactive power where Christ hath not settled it”.<sup>534</sup>

Since the idea of toleration itself was not an openly embraced idea in post-Reformation culture, those individuals and groups seeking justification for their views naturally turned to popular sources of authority in order to advance their cause. In this context, a massive literary campaign was launched to frame the Presbyterian ascendancy as a new form of tyranny. The most obvious example used to illustrate the consequences of such spiritual tyranny was the Laudian regime. Presbyterians, when they had influence, it was claimed, were no less hostile than the persecuting bishops of the Carolinian church. Thus, dissenters could simply take over the accusations that the anti-episcopalians had made against the Laudian disciplinary structures during the Bishops Wars, and redirect them against the new usurpers of church power. On this view, the shift from royal Erastianism to parliamentary erastianism was but a minor change. Henry Robinson, merchant and the author of *Liberty of Conscience* (1644), for example, claimed that liberating the Church of England from the constraints of episcopacy was a pyrrhic victory. For the victims, it did not matter if “an Episcopall tyranny” was transformed into “a Presbyteriall slavery”.<sup>535</sup> The Cromwellian Colonel Richard Lawrence, in turn, claimed that the threat of spiritual tyranny was no less real now than in the 1630s, when the puritan nonconformists were mutilated by Laud. Against those who focused on resisting the corruptions of Rome, and who thought that willingness to compel consciences was exclusive to papists, Lawrence asked whether “Antichrist cannot persecute as well in the shape of a Protestant as a Papist”.<sup>536</sup>

It is easy to see why Foxe’s martyrology provided an intellectual resource for these writers. People who knew that their own theological perspectives were increasingly distant from the national orthodoxy, then being agreed at the Westminster Assembly, could use Foxe to justify points which otherwise would have been subject to charges of heresy. The Baptist Francis Cornwell, for example, collected Foxe’s meditations on the

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<sup>534</sup> Anon., *A Coole conference between the cleared Reformation and the Apologeticall narration* (London, 1644), pp. 5-6.

<sup>535</sup> Henry Robinson, *An answer to Mr. William Prynne's twelve questions concerning church government* (London, 1644), pp. 18-19.

<sup>536</sup> Richard Lawrence, *The Antichristian Presbyter: or, Antichrist transformed* (London, 1647), p. 5.

differences between the realm of law and gospel in order to make his arguments more convincing, as well as to avoid charges of antinomian heresy from the “Orthodoxe Teachers”. Cornwell found it useful to remind his readers that Foxe’s martyrology had been printed seven times by the public authority, and that he used its text almost verbatim, adding “onely some explanations of his owne”. Against unifying Erastianism, Cornwell framed the church as an entirely spiritual entity, which was not to be mixed with the realm of law. Whereas the Papist merged “the Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Christ” together, and, in accordance with this view, “raigne[d] over the soule and conscience of man”, it was crucial that Protestants learn to separate the different laws, and to exclude the civil power from matters of conscience and belief.<sup>537</sup> Richard Young, a minister at Roxwell in Essex, also used Foxe’s martyrology to defend private conscience. Young invoked a story about Martin Luther that he had discovered in *Acts and Monuments*, in which the German reformer had accused the church of Rome of having seized the spiritual capacity of the church with the help of the temporal power: “they bring all the Estates of the world under their girdle; and creep not only into the purses of men, but into their consciences also”.<sup>538</sup>

To Henry Burton, a Laudian martyr who was compelled to defend his views after having become a determined advocate of an Independent parish structure, Foxe’s martyrology also served as a touchstone. After having explained in detail why his conscience could not be compelled to conform to the Presbyterian system, he asserted the liberty to follow his own conscience even in the absence of solid reasoning. This had been the case among some sixteenth-century martyrs too, Burton wrote, who had asserted the right to private judgement, and had “professed they could not dispute for that truth they held: but (say they) we can dye for it”. In this somewhat skeptical case for toleration of the individual conscience, Burton admitted that even martyred people could not always provide solid proof for their beliefs. However, as he pointed out, “truth should cease to be truth, because every one cannot shew a solid reason for it”.<sup>539</sup> Thus, Foxe’s work

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<sup>537</sup> Francis Cornwell, *King Jesvs is the beleevers prince, priest, and law-giver, in things appertaining to the conscience* (1645), To the curteous Reader, pp. 2-3.

<sup>538</sup> Richard Young, *The cure of misprision or Selected notes, upon sundry questions in controversie* (London, 1646), p. 161.

<sup>539</sup> Henry Burton, *A vindication of churches, commonly called Independent* (London, 1644), p. 37.

functioned as an appealing commonplace, through which various writers could make their point to a wider public.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Foxe's historical narrative on arguments against persecution. This was particularly effective, since its celebrated reformers had all pursued a religious program independent of the public authority, and had all claimed a spiritual authority at the expense of the civil magistrate. To the Baptist Samuel Richardson, for instance, Foxe's narrative provided ammunition for the defense of nonconformity. Richardson evoked the bloodletting of Queen Mary's reign as a warning against the authoritarian aspirations of the temporal authorities. If the magistrate had the power to punish an individual for "erroneous and hereticall" beliefs, or "because he differs in Religion from the Magistrate", then "Queen Mary and her Parliament did well, in byrying the Martyrs for differing from her established Religion".<sup>540</sup> The demand for conformity met defiant resistance in a tract written against the Scottish Covenanter Adam Stewart, which accused the Presbyterians of behaving like the Tudor inquisitors Bonner and Gardiner. Just like the latter, the Covenanters demanded their foes ignore their own consciences, and "thanke your selves for your troubles".<sup>541</sup> The convention of appropriating Foxe's words in order to defend freedom of conscience was thus a habitual dissident strategy. Another, perhaps more extensively used way of binding martyrological paradigms with political commentary, was to evoke the memories of past persecutions. If anything, the example of persecuted martyrs served to place the blame on coercive methods, and to set limits on the extent and means through which conformity might be achieved.

Many popular debaters took advantage of the strong distaste for heresy-hunting. In an essay published in 1645, the antiquary and baronet Sir Simonds D'Ewes drew a distinction between "matter of conscience" and "matter of offence & crime", arguing that making a "matter of Religion a capitall crime" was "against the rules of policy". The primary aim of his essay was to illustrate that persecution was counterproductive to the advancement of true religion. Any attempt to root out doctrinal

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<sup>540</sup> Samuel Richardson, *The necessity of toleration in matters of religion* (London, 1647), p. 11.

<sup>541</sup> Anon., *The Covenanter vindicated from perjurie* (London, 1644), p. 44.

errors by force, he claimed, was likely to increase and further propagate such heterodox beliefs, which otherwise would die off over time. On this view, the current diversity of creeds was in large part a consequence of Protestant failures to tolerate theological or ecclesiastical differences among themselves. The violence against the Spanish blasphemer Michael Servetus, for example, who was burned at the stake near Geneva in late 1553 for his seditious remarks regarding infant baptism and Trinitarian orthodoxy, caused nothing but damage to the Reformation. Instead of suppressing his errors and educating people into a solid doctrinal understanding, the execution of Servetus as an anti-Trinitarian heretic had made people who harbored similar beliefs even more convinced that he was a “Prophet of the Lord”. D’Ewes also saw the connection between the spread of Arminian theology and the executions of Anabaptists under Mary Tudor in a similar light. Mary’s attempts to ruthlessly eradicate errors by burnings had paved the way for the spread of Arminian doctrines in England, since the “Anarchicall Tenets” for which the Anabaptists were put to death were “almost verbatim with the workes since penned by James Arminius”.<sup>542</sup> To curtail heterodox and dissident doctrines by means of violence, it was alleged, was more likely to bolster the confidence of the heterodox, and to guarantee the continuing spread of their doctrines.

While persecution was seen as the wellspring of doctrinal error, the long-term effect of which was damaging to the commonwealth, D’Ewes also asserted that true religion was advanced most successfully with the aid of martyrs. Martyrdom and persecution had facilitated the growth of the Reformation, and had proved a powerful tool for drawing Catholics into the reformed faith. In fact, the persecutors of Jerome of Prague and Jan Hus had done a favor to the Protestants. As a poignant English example, D’Ewes cited the mid-sixteenth-century Oxford fellow Julian Palmer. As a young Roman Catholic, Palmer was a zealous opponent of the reformed doctrines implemented by the government of Edward VI. A few years later, Palmer welcomed the Marian restoration, and went to see the burnings of Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer on 16 October 1555. However, he was so convinced by their speeches and their cheerfulness in suffering, that he “relinquish[ed] the former ignorance and idolatry he had so long embraced”.

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<sup>542</sup> Simonds D’Ewes, *The primitive practise for preserving the truth* (London, 1645), pp. 14-16.

Eventually, Palmer ended his life as a reformed martyr, who, like Ridley and Latimer, “witnessed the truth with his own blood”. In sum, then, the use of coercion was likely to confirm people in their errors, while the death of each martyr served to stimulate the conversion of many more.

A similar faith in the importance of persuasion over punishment was expressed by Gerard Langbaine, an antiquarian historian and archivist, who was highly critical of the military alliance with the Scots, and suspicious of the ways in which the Solemn league and Covenant had exerted its influence over England. Instead of the forcible conversion favored by the divine-right Presbyterians, Langbaine preferred more subtle ways to advance true religion. In the first place, it was important to acknowledge that “Religion hath ever been better propagated by sufferings of the true Professors than by force”. Indeed, post-Reformation history tended to suggest that violence was not an effective means to safeguard true religion. To the contrary, the “flames of our *English* Martyrs did but give more light to the Truth of the Gospell”, and their “Funerals were the most effectuall Sermons for the Peoples Conversion”. Other vivid examples were the massacre in Paris, which had advanced the Reformation in France, and the Dutch revolt against Spanish rule. Initially, the conflict in the Low Countries had been ignited by “the rigorous pressing of the Inquisition”, but, instead of suppressing the resistance, had confirmed Dutchmen in their convictions, and “made way for casting Popery out of the *Low Countries*”.<sup>543</sup> Thus, in France as in the Netherlands, the imposers of religious unity were responsible for more damage than the heretics themselves.

The same belief was expressed by John Goodwin, who also wrote against attempts to impose compulsory unity. According to Goodwin, the authority of the sectarians had its origin in the harsh punishments they suffered for their resistance. “It was an observation of Tacitus long since”, Goodwin wrote, that “to punish men of parts and wit, is to cast a spirit of Authoritie upon them, and to make their reputation glowe”.<sup>544</sup> Thus, Goodwin was one of the few visionary radicals willing to tolerate theologically false ideas. In his view, a war of words was necessary for the furtherance of the

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<sup>543</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *A review of the Covenant, wherein the originall, grounds, means, matter, and ends of it are examined* (London, 1645), pp. 59-60.

<sup>544</sup> John Goodwin, *Theomachia* (London, 1644), p. 37.

Reformation. This permitted opinions which were unsatisfactory or clearly in error, such as the opinions of “Jesuited Papists and other subtle Hereticks”. Even if the presence of such works “may gaine some to Sathan”, both orthodox and heterodox ideas deserved access to the public sphere, since competing views served as a means to the discovery of truth.<sup>545</sup>

Arguments for toleration were rehearsed over and over again in puritan writing. However, it was not necessary to be a committed Independent or separatist in order to address the issue in an approving tone. Support for freedom of expression can also be found in *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), a work by the Laudian protégé and royalist chaplain Jeremy Taylor. Taylor had no personal inclination to separatism, nor did he advocate the radical cause of Parliament, nor that of the newly reformed church government. However, he deemed it reasonable to extend toleration to those who believed the creed and who were living good lives. In defiance of the anti-sectarian climate, Taylor thought it “most unnatural and unreasonable” to persecute dissidents, since “to punish where the punishment can do no good... may be an act of tyranny, but never of justice”. The rationale for this view would have been familiar to the readers of martyrologies: *Quoties morimur toties nascimur*. Suppressing heterodox belief by force was problematic for at least two reasons. On the one hand, it implied that “the hangman is the best disputant”. On the other, the persecution of sectarians increased their confidence and influence, and thus made their case stronger. It was precisely this reaction that had made it possible for the ancient sects, such as the Donatists and the Circumcellians, “to show and boast their catalogues of martyrs”. According to Taylor, there was no “greater folly and stupidity than to give to error the glory of martyrdom”.<sup>546</sup>

A broadly similar conclusion was reached by John Milton, who was unimpressed by Parliament’s attempts to clamp down on controversy. Displeased by the Licensing Act, Milton accused Parliament of having forsaken its heroic undertakings, and having turned enthusiastic and intolerant. Milton argued that imposing restrictions on publication was little more than “tyranny and superstition”, while cautioning his readers to be wary of the

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<sup>545</sup> John Goodwin, *A short ansvver to A. S.* (London, 1644), p. 33.

<sup>546</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *Theologia eklektike. A discourse of the liberty of prophesying* (London, 1647), pp. 124, 197-199.

“persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men”. In addition, he compared censorship to martyrdom, homicide, and massacre. In part, Milton’s aim was to convince his readers that demands for conformity by such means would impede discovery of truth. The Oxford academic John Wyclif, who was put to death as a “schismatic and innovator”, as well as two other proto-martyrs, Jan Huss and Jerome of Prague, exemplified discoveries of truth in a corrupt world, and their lives had been fundamental to the success of the Reformation. Moreover, there was also a possibility that the magistrate might suppress religious truth instead of religious error. Indeed, as Milton put it, “A man may be a heretick in the truth”. Thus, for Milton, truth was not a matter of consensus. Instead of submission to a set of beliefs prescribed by human authority, it was crucial for people to fashion some sense of the truth for themselves. To “believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy”. Broadly the same point was made by William Walwyn, who argued that ideas deserved toleration even if they were theologically suspect, since they could be overcome only through the force of good arguments: “the more horrid and blasphemous the opinion is, the easier suppress, by reason and argument”.<sup>547</sup>

Walwyn and the other Leveller leaders, John Lilburne and Richard Overton, were influential contributors to the discussions that took place during the latter half of the 1640s. Their fears appeared to have been realized in 1646, when Parliament issued the Blasphemy Ordinance, which significantly limited the freedom to profess and teach. Alarmed by assertions of clerical power, the Leveller leaders made strong statements against MPs, who had misunderstood their own powers when urging the Parliament to take violent action in response to errors. Overton proclaimed his hope that Parliament would show more tolerance towards English subjects than “the papal and episcopal clergy”. The “cruelties, tyrannies and martyrdoms” of the latter had provoked “this most unnatural war”, and, if Parliament would follow in their footsteps, he warned, “you will be branded to future generations for England’s Bloody Parliament”. Being charged with religious sedition, an obvious tactic was to align themselves with martyrs, and to claim

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<sup>547</sup> William Walwyn, *Tolleration iustified, and persecution condemn'd* (London, 1646), p. 8.

that the government's policies resembled those of the Marian regime. Overton alleged that the usurpers of civil power were capable of filling "the land with more martyrdoms, tyrannies, cruelties and oppressions than ever was in the bloody days of Queen Mary, yea or ever before, or since".<sup>548</sup> According to such outspoken defenders of popular sovereignty, England was slipping back into the religious and political oppression of the 1550s. No one ought to be subjected to legal penalties for religious differences, Walwyn declared, adding that people "are absolutely Free to follow the dictate of their own Understanding and Consciences, informed by the Word of God, by principles of right reason".<sup>549</sup>

Such emphasis upon free conscience was anathema to hardline covenanters and the Presbyterian mainstream. Given the crucial role that martyrdoms had played in the tolerationist literature, it is hardly surprising that many found it hard to accept the idea that even the heterodox could be persecuted for conscience. In turn, they challenged such notions of an entirely subjective conscience, and emphasized the role of church councils in determining matters of conscience. The Scottish divine Samuel Rutherford, for example, claimed that magisterial authority over religion did not violate conscience, and that his opponents case thus rested upon a mere "pretended liberty of conscience".<sup>550</sup> The dangers of such an inward understanding of conscience was recognized by John Vicars, who suggested that allowing "Libertie of conscience for all damnable Sects and Schismes whatsoever" would eventually lead to the "ruine of all sound Religion and sincere holinesse".<sup>551</sup> "All cry out, Persecution, persecution", James Cranford complained in 1646. However, such people did not understand that "suffering which is not for righteousnesse sake, is not persecution".<sup>552</sup> The polemic against persecution also forced Presbyterians to clarify the parameters of martyrdom. Unlike those contemporaries who identified martyrdom with moments of repression, or accepted an easy assimilation between suffering conscience and martyrdom, they emphasized that martyrdom ought to

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<sup>548</sup> Richard Overton, *An arrow against all tyrants and tyranny* (London, 1646), pp. 13-15.

<sup>549</sup> William Walwyn, *A word in season: to all sorts of well minded people in this miserably distracted and distempered nation* (London, 1646), p. 7.

<sup>550</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *A free disputation against pretended liberty of conscience* (London, 1649).

<sup>551</sup> John Vicars, *The schismatick sifted* (London, 1646), p. 22.

<sup>552</sup> James Cranford, *Haereseo-machia: or, The mischiefe which heresies doe, and the means to prevent it* (London, 1646), p. 52.



be defined by the content of one's beliefs. In 1646, Edward Leigh suggested that the sectarians who were "punished for their errors" were not only fewer in number than the martyrs of the true church, but that they also "suffered not with joy of conscience".<sup>553</sup> Two years later, Leigh emphasized once again that the essence of "the carriage and courage of the Martyrs" was to prove and confirm the "main principles of religion".<sup>554</sup>

#### 6.5 MARTYRDOM, PERSECUTION, AND THE MAKING OF ROYALIST HAGIOGRAPHY

The age of martyrs was not a bygone era for those royalists and Episcopalians who had fought for the King, the laws, and the established Protestant religion, only to have been vanquished on the battlefield. Those who sided with the Stuarts exhibited the same unease about sectarians as the Presbyterian writers. King Charles' court divine, John Bramhall, for example, was affected by the problem of theological diversity, and alleged in 1643 that without the discipline provided by the Royal Supremacy, heresy would flourish: "If the Independents should prevail, who are now so busy breaking down the Walls of the Church, to bring in the Trojan Horse of their Democracy, or rather Anarchy doe but imagine what a confused mixture of Religions we should have".<sup>555</sup> The next year, the royalist poet Francis Quarles exhibited a similar unease. There was no simple solution to the complicated situation, since semi-separatists, separatists, anabaptists, antinomians, and independents all had their own truths, and there would be no "Peace" until "all these Truths meet". In their desire to alter "some indifferent Ceremonies", Quarles complained, his contemporaries were willing to "cry downe Peace, and shed the blood of many thousand".<sup>556</sup>

As the conflict dragged on, the institutional structure of the English church was subjected to heavy revisions, and many loyal members of the "monarchical church" thus saw themselves as fighting for the very survival of the church itself. The ecclesiology that

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<sup>553</sup> Edward Leigh, *A treatise of divinity* (London, 1646), pp. 22-23.

<sup>554</sup> Edward Leigh, *The saints encouragement in evil times* (1648), p. 5.

<sup>555</sup> John Bramhall, *The serpent salve* (1643), p. 213.

<sup>556</sup> Francis Quarles, *The loyall convert* (London, 1644), pp. 4, 11.

had been developed by the Anglicans was eschewed, bishops were no longer part of the ecclesiastical order, and the former representatives of the church were either in exile, captivity, or, in the best-case scenario, delivering sermons to the troops on the battlefields. Royalist divines did not, however, disappear altogether from the scene. In 1645, thousands turned out on Tower Hill to watch William Laud's procession to the gallows, where he was executed for treason. To the mind of his supporters, the Archbishop, who had done so much to encourage attachment to new liturgical forms, had suffered the same fate as Cranmer one century earlier. In contrast to the accusations that Charles' Archbishop had promoted false religion, and was responsible for the persecutions that had destroyed the religious unity of the realm, his supporters alleged that Laud had been sacrificed to preserve the ideals of the Church of England. This chief representative of Caroline Protestantism was, as Thomas Wharton insisted, a "most excellent prelate and blessed martyr".<sup>557</sup> Writing after the Archbishop's execution in 1645, Laud's hagiographer and long-serving chaplain Peter Heylyn claimed that he had been steadfast under persecution, and that his public performance had "equalled, if not exceeded, the example of the ancient martyrs".<sup>558</sup> Thus, Royalist writers who wished to secure Charles' ecclesiastical authority continued to engage in the war of words even after the military cause had been lost.

As the royalists sought to make sense of all this, they found more and more compelling similarities between the fate of the first English reformers and their own. Commenting on the breakdown in order that had occurred in England, the London minister Robert Chestlin identified innovative puritan policies as the greatest source of instability. In his view, supporters of the episcopal church were now suffering at the hands of the victorious parliamentarians the same fate as reformers during the 1550s: "were those Martyrs now alive", Chestlin wrote, "they would bee the greatest Malignants, and Delinquents of our dayes, fit to be plundered, Sequestred, bannished, imprisoned, or slaine by bloody Votes, because they would not obey the Parliament in changing Religion". Ministers with royalist leanings had been driven from their livings, and those

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<sup>557</sup> Thomas Wharton, in *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1847), p. 127.

<sup>558</sup> Peter Heylyn, *A briefe relation of the death and sufferings of the Most Reverend and renowned prelate, the L. Archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford, 1644), pp. 23-24.

issues about which they felt passionately, namely the Prayer Book and Episcopacy, had been under attack by the more austere forms of Protestantism. When the “Common-Prayer-Book was torne before our faces”, the royalist churchman John Barwick wrote, it was as if the Edwardian reformers “are now this second time martyred”.<sup>559</sup> It is true that in these unstable times, the book of common prayer and liturgy were not tolerated at all, and that *iure divino* presbyterianism permitted little ground for compromise with Episcopalians.

Remarks made by theologically committed Anglicans between 1640 and 1651 indicate the perceived relevance of Foxe’s martyrology. The Anglican minister Edward Symmons, for example, exhorted “all men to read that Book often in these times, and they shall find a very great resemblance between the bloody Persecutors of those dayes, and these now”. Another public manifestation of royalist sentiment was issued in *Persecutio Undecima* (1648), whose author, most likely Symmons, stressed how forcefully Anglicans were silenced, going on to suggest that the past few years constituted the most intense period of religious persecution in English history: namely, the Eleventh Persecution. In the judgement of Symmons, recent ecclesiastical and doctrinal reforms had surpassed the changes and horrors of the Marian regime. “[C]onfident I am”, he wrote in 1647, that “if Master Fox were now alive, to search into all the places where these Parliament Tigres have come, and to write their doings; the volume would be three times as big as his former”.<sup>560</sup> Thus, Foxe’s martyrology mirrored the values and preoccupations of the royalists and Prayer Book Protestants of the 1640s. In the midst of looming defeat, the prestige of reformed martyrs provided both support for the Anglican cause, and a tool for organizing active resistance against the puritans. It is true that the royalists were in an unfavourable position, and frequently highlighted the persecution of orthodox religious views at the hands of the Presbyterians and the Roundhead armies. However, the other side also saw the war through the lens of martyrologies, and grappled with the same experience of persecution.

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<sup>559</sup> John Barwick, *Querela Cantabrigiensis* (1647), pp. 11-12.

<sup>560</sup> Edward Symmons, *A vindication of King Charles* (London, 1648), p. 81.

The threat to England's puritan Protestants had hardly ended with Laud's death. Persecutory themes continued to be rehearsed among the advocates of godly reform. Members of virtually every faction offered a religiously motivated reading of the civil war, and anticipated the likelihood of facing persecution. For the Presbyterian minister and future conspirator Christopher Love, it appeared as if the troubles that his faction had so far "undergone, were but the beginning of our sorrows".<sup>561</sup> The root cause of this woeful state of affairs, as Love remarked, was the relative ease with which provocative religious views and "luxuriant opinions" might be expressed. Moreover, Love then went on to remind his readers how John Foxe had reported "that the inlet to the eighth Persecution, was the Divisions among the Christians". One manifestation of these developments was the plan to draft a new book of martyrs, concerned with "the sufferings of the godly Ministers and people beginning where Mr. Fox left [off]". The puritans had already begun to circulate a draft plan for a martyrology focusing on those who had testified against bishops and ceremonies.<sup>562</sup> Convictions of this kind found a place in the highly abridged martyrology that Edward Leigh drafted in 1647, in order to reach those readers who did not have the money or time to read "the large book of Martyrs". In his mind, the political situation of the late 1640s offered more cause for fear than for hope. As Leigh observed in his preface, it was common among his fellowmen to think "that the bitterest persecutions of the Church of God are yet to come". According to the puritan minister Richard Baxter, contemporary struggles echoed those of the early church. However, the current intolerance went far beyond anything that the latter had experienced: "If one of the Primitive Martyrs were alive among us, and professed but what was in his ancient Creed, hee would scarce be taken by many for a Christian".<sup>563</sup>

It is striking, but not altogether surprising, to find the captured King Charles himself reading *Acts and Monuments* during his confinement at Carisbrook.<sup>564</sup> He showed no regrets regarding his war-time policies, apart from his part in the trial and execution

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<sup>561</sup> Christopher Love, *Short and plaine animadversions on some passages in Mr. Dels sermon* (London, 1647), p. 1.

<sup>562</sup> John Cotton, *A Reply to Mr. William his Examination* (London, 1647), pp. 115-116.

<sup>563</sup> Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification, With their Explication annexed* (London, 1649), To the reader.

<sup>564</sup> Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 9.

of the Earl of Strafford. Thus, his determination to assert his royal supremacy over his subjects was still alive in his writings. He had no choice, Charles explained, but to put the purity of the church before all other political considerations, including his own safety. Charles regarded opposed opinions as innovations against the true doctrine of the Church of England, and was no less willing than his adversaries to purge those doctrines that jeopardized the integrity of the nation. The root cause of the conflict had been those popular preachers who had called for further doctrinal and ecclesiastical reform: “nothing hath more marks of Schism and Sectarism then this Presbyterian waie of Government”. Unlike “the Primitive Planters both of Christianitie and Episcopacie, which was with patient shedding of their own blood, not violent drawing other mens”, the Presbyterian supremacy had been “planted and watered with so much Christian blood”.<sup>565</sup> In an attempt to legitimize their efforts, he complained, “Some parasitic preachers have dared to call those ‘martyrs’ who died fighting against me”. Thus, political objectives and religious beliefs went hand in hand for the sectarians. The phrases that Charles used to stigmatize his adversaries were similar to those that the famous heresiographers had employed against their opponents, and, like them, he also placed the blame on the tolerationist program. When the winners of the civil war began to reshape the commonwealth in accordance with their convictions and desires, Charles wrote, they had transformed episcopacy into presbytery, and had usurped the lands and revenues of the church in order that schisms and heresies “may enjoy the benefit of a Toleration”.

In 1643, the puritan leader Jeremiah Burroughs declared that he would “rather be a Martyr then a Monarch”. A few years later, this comment would have made far less sense. On a cold winter’s morning on 30 January 1649, Charles Stuart was beheaded in front of the Banqueting House in Whitehall. In response, his supporters claimed that while the country had lost a monarch, it had gained a martyr.<sup>566</sup> Like his grandmother Mary Stuart before him, Charles had been executed for treason. However, this time the regicide had been performed in the name of the people.

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<sup>565</sup> John Gauden, *Apophthegmata aurea, regia, Carolina* (London, 1649), p. 8.

<sup>566</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *The glorious name of God*, (London, 1643), pp. 101–102.

The deposing and then execution of a reigning monarch provoked a strong reaction against the Rump Parliament during the following years. The Irish Catholics and Scottish Presbyterians denounced the overthrow of Stuart royal authority. Like many others, the writer of a narrative entitled *The Scotch souldiers lamentation upon the death of the most glorious and illustrious martyr, King Charles* (1649), was profoundly saddened by the loss of a “most good and gracious King, our owne Sovereaigne, Countryman, A Protestant Prince, the wisest of men, the best of Princes, into the hands of most bloody, cruell, and deceitfull men”.<sup>567</sup> One of the ambassadors of the Dutch republic who was present at the execution in Whitehall reported afterwards that it “was the most remarkable and saddest spectacle that I ever saw”.<sup>568</sup> Queen Christina of Sweden declared that the King’s death at the hands of his own subjects was a loss not only to Britain, but to all of Europe, and hoped that all monarchs would unite to restore the exiled House of Stuarts to the throne. The news from England aroused strong feelings in Spain and the Netherlands, where vengeance-seeking royalists murdered Anthony Ascham and Isaac Dorislaus, the ambassadors of the new Republican regime.

Sympathy towards Charles Stuart dominated cultural sensibilities in the aftermath of the regicide. Grief and regret entered the minds of contemporaries and spread into all forms of discourse, turning mourning into a common theme in prose literature, private diaries, and letters. To commemorate the memory of Charles, aristocratic women had melancholic portraits made of themselves, in which they held a martyr’s palm-branch in their hands. The fate of Charles fired the imaginations of poets, including the contributors to Richard Brome’s nostalgic collection of elegies, *Lachrymae Musarum* (1650), who mourned for what they had lost in 1649.<sup>569</sup> Even the outspoken revolutionary William Prynne switched sides following the death of the King. In 1643, he had declared that our “bodies must become either Slaves or Martyres” in the event that Parliament failed to defend the laws, liberties, and religion of England. However, after 1649, Prynne

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<sup>567</sup> Anon., *The Scotch souldiers lamentation upon the death of the most glorious and illustrious martyr, King Charles* (London, 1649), pp. 1-2.

<sup>568</sup> Citation from, Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 1-2.

<sup>569</sup> John McWilliams, ‘A Storm of Lamentations Writ’: ‘Lachrymae Musarum’ and Royalist Culture after the Civil War, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 33 (2003), pp. 273–289.

claimed that he would “rather die a Martyr for our Ancient Kingdom, then live a Slave under any new Republick”.<sup>570</sup>

While Charles was praised by numerous contemporaries, the most moving contribution to the hagiographical genre came from his own pen. His personal testament *Eikon Basilike* (1649) was carefully prepared from the King’s own writings (very likely by chaplain John Gauden and Edward Symmons), and published within days of the execution by printer Richard Royston. The work was a mixture of celebration and yearning, written both to make sense of the defeat of the royalist cause, and to mobilize popular sentiment against the executioners. Although few of his subjects had ever seen Charles alive, the *Eikon Basilike* offered a rare opportunity to explain himself to the wider public, and to illuminate his private thoughts, prayers, and meditations. As well as being a biographic expression of his intimate thoughts, however, the work was also a recapitulation of earlier debates, and sought to set out an explanatory framework for the events that led to 1649. It was thus both a memoir and a justification of his behaviour, which brutally exposed the guilt of his opponents. The Kings Book shaped Charles’ reputation more than anything he had done alive, and left a permanent imprint on the popular imagination. In addition to allowing Charles to present himself in the most favorable light possible, his message was reinforced with a layer of martyrological iconography, leaving the audience to draw the conclusion that he had been martyred for the greater good.<sup>571</sup>

The depiction of Charles as suffering saint is perhaps the best-known image of the period. Its engraver, William Marshall, was already renowned for his compelling portraits of the royal family and nobility, as well as for having given a new visual expression to the famous Marian bishop-martyrs. Nonetheless, Marshall’s most enduring artistic monument was his representation of Charles contemplating the heavenly crown of glory, as published in the frontispiece engraving of *Eikon Basilike*. This highly symbolic visualization of the King’s sufferings drew inspiration from Charles’ last words

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<sup>570</sup> William Prynne, *The Sovereigne Power of Parliaments and Kingdomes* (London, 1643), p. 34; *A legall vindication of the liberties of England* (London, 1649), p. 43.

<sup>571</sup> For the emergence of the martyr cult see Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge, 2003).

at the scaffold, “I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible Crown, where no disturbance can be”, converting them into a royal *vanitas* still-life image. It depicts the King kneeling against an altar preparing to leave his worldly torments behind, whilst contemplating the prospect of eternal glory. Although Charles might have been defeated, the representation of him as a suffering martyr transformed his punishment at the scaffold into an act of heroic self-sacrifice, and the experience of political defeat into a transcendental triumph.

At the time, most contemporaries were taken in by this idealized, pious, and visually persuasive self-portrait. However, a number of commentators found the sacralized image fallacious. The most notorious among these critics was John Milton, who applauded the regicide, and volunteered to repudiate the rhetoric of royal martyrdom. He considered the emblematic frontispiece as a self-interested justification of tyranny and instance of theatrical manipulation, which invites “the eye if not the understanding of the silly beholder to a beleaf that he died an innocent Martyr”.<sup>572</sup> The quantity of material that Milton produced against the nascent martyr cult was vast: *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* within two weeks of the execution; *Eikonoklastes* later the same year; and three additional works intended for international circulation. Several features of Milton’s arguments against the hagiography of *Eikon Basilike* may be underlined here.

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<sup>572</sup> John Milton, *The life and reigne of King Charls, or, The pseudo-martyr discovered* (London, 1651), p. 149.





Fig. 8 William Marshall, frontispiece to *Eikon Basilike* (1649) Public domain / Wikipedia

In Milton's opposing view, while the King might well have stood like a martyr at the scaffold, the gap between the ideal and actual Charles was too large to make such a depiction convincing. This being so, Milton offered several arguments to support his claim. If the defining feature of martyrdom was a testimony given of something outside of oneself, in order to "bear witness to the truth", then Charles was a strange martyr indeed, since he placed himself at the center of his own writing, and thus made "himself martyr by his own inscription". Milton also raised an argument regarding individual conscience, which many Presbyterian divines had circulated against sectarians during the past few years. If Charles' martyrdom was authentic due to "the testimony of his own conscience", then every heretic dying for blasphemy was entitled to the same

title. Nor could the Hookerian assumption about an Established church as the basis of martyrdom be applied to Charles without validating every papist martyrdom in the past centuries along similar lines. An essential problem Milton saw in the argument Charles' hagiographers used to back-up their cause was its openness to Roman Catholic use: "if to die for an establishment of religion be martyrdom", why exactly was it then that, "Romish priests executed for that, which had so many hundred years been established, in this land, are no worse martyrs".<sup>573</sup>

In addition to these strictly martyrological arguments, Milton wanted to push beyond the hagiographical representation of *Eikon Basilike*, offering a highly vituperative account of Charles' reign, and claiming that the King was responsible for the persecutions before the civil war, for turning his sword against his subjects at the start of the troubles, and for the atrocities committed during the wars. These allegations were supported by various classical and biblical allusions, prompting the audience to ask themselves whether Charles was not in fact something less than a martyr. Drawing on classical histories and the ideas of republican writers, Milton ultimately concluded that Charles was a spectacular example of a tyrant. Invoking the Law of Moses, he labelled Charles a person who had brought war and destruction on the land, a man of blood, whose crimes could be cleansed only through the shedding of his own blood. In sum, Milton suggested that the cataclysmic events of 1649 ought to be seen as a legitimate comeuppance for a tyrannical regime, and as a heroic new beginning in European history.<sup>574</sup>

Insofar as winning the argument depended on success in mobilizing popular sentiments and stimulating book sales, the result was clear. Of the many books written in the 1640s, the most influential by far was *Eikon Basilike*. In the year following the regicide, no less than forty-six English editions of this martyrology were printed; the printing houses were so occupied with the work that William Marshall had to re-engage the plates for the frontispiece image eight times.<sup>575</sup> Although Milton's argument

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<sup>573</sup> John Milton, *Eikonoklastes in answer to a book intitl'd Eikon basilike the portrature His Sacred Majesty in his solitudes and sufferings* (London, 1649), pp. 205-206.

<sup>574</sup> John Milton, (1649), p. 216

<sup>575</sup> Antony Griffiths & Robert A. Gerard, *The Print in Stuart Britain, 1603-1689* (London, 1998), p. 163.

effectively limited royalists' attempts to refashion Charles as a martyr, his defence of the execution certainly failed to capture readers in the way the King's book did. In these radically unstable circumstances, it seems, the story of royal martyrdom was effective in capturing the popular imagination. All the evidence seems to allow of only one conclusion: Charles reputation as a martyr exceeded his fame as a tyrant.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

Alongside the war on the battlefields, the English Revolution was a struggle waged through presses and the pulpit. In this chapter, I have examined the evolution of martyrological discourse in the publications of the 1640s, with an eye to some major political concerns. The decade began with a debate about resistance, at the heart of which was the issue of toleration, and it ended with the martyrdom of King Charles Stuart. The preceding chapter has also traced the impact of the Foxeian martyrology, the foundational text of persecution, upon toleration tracts. Taken together, these themes provide a theoretical framework for understanding how martyrological arguments were advanced during the revolutionary period.

Over the course of the decade, people witnessed persecution, martyrdom, and pleas for toleration. However, as has often been noted, civil war theorists never offered any guiding principle that did not ultimately end up subordinated to the imperatives of the revolutionary struggle. Thus, the period has been aptly described by Nigel Smith as “a world in which there was no single religion but where a solution to the issue of toleration had not been found”.<sup>576</sup> It was an age in which religious divisions were deep and pervasive, and the overwhelming majority of writers did not consider religious toleration to be a positive principle.

As we have seen, the Foxeian grand narrative provided a background and context to much tolerationist writing. There are two specific factors which underline the importance of Foxeian history within popular debate. First, toleration was often promoted through arguments based on persecution, martyrdom, reason, conscience, scripture, and

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<sup>576</sup> Nigel Smith, ‘European Contexts of Toleration’, in Sharon Achinstein & Elizabeth Sauer (eds.) *Milton and Toleration* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 39.

reason of state – that is, the same concepts which formed the very content of Foxe’s martyrology. Arguably, Foxe had made this vocabulary palatable to mainstream opinion over the course of the post-Reformation period. Second, it was particularly convenient for writers during the English revolution to carry on a discourse that already existed. Like Foxe, who had seen the Reformation as a liberation from popish tyranny, the latter could turn the rhetoric of anti-popery against the advocates of Presbyterianism. Whatever their political goals, many participants agreed with the principle that a persecutory power could never be a true church.

In marked contrast to a later tolerationist like Locke, who in the very first pages of his essay identified tolerance as an inevitable part of life for Christians, and “the chief Characteristical Mark of the True Church”, for Foxe, tolerance revealed itself in the lineage of persecuted martyrs.<sup>577</sup> Fundamental to both writers, however, was the assumption that no one ought to be punished corporeally, since true belief could not be coerced. As Foxe put it in the final page of his martyrology, “The nature of the church is not to persecute with blood”.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> John Locke, *A letter concerning toleration* (London, 1689), p. 1.

<sup>578</sup> John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history* (London, 1570), p. 2302.

## Conclusion:

### The afterlife of the Foxeian worldview

In early Stuart England, the idea of martyrdom was closely affiliated with *Acts and Monuments* and its author John Foxe, whose name became inseparably intertwined with the protagonists of his work. As Patrick Collinson has emphasized: “There are few instances in English literary history of a more complete fusion of author and text.” Francis Cheynell, the Presbyterian controversialist and President of St John’s College, Oxford, expressed the same thought differently in 1643, when he warned his audience about “some black-mouthed Priests of late [who] have called them Foxes-Martyrs”. In the preceding chapters, I have sought to demonstrate not only that the meaning of martyrdom was strongly shaped by the content of *Acts and Monuments*, but also that the significance of the category exceeded the latter, stories about persecuted individuals being susceptible to re-narration in more than one way.

This study has been essentially an attempt to discover and present how martyrs figured in historical understanding, and in what ways their example and authority shaped patterns of reasoning. The importance of the memory of King Charles during the second half of the seventeenth century should not lead us to overlook the martyrological points made in the debates of 1603 to 1649. During these years, invoking the testimonies of martyred individuals in order to claim authority for one’s own viewpoint was just as popular as during the subsequent half century. Frequently, this meant invoking the

testimonies of the Oxford martyrs, who witnessed the shocking events of the 1550s, and of their contemporaries, who were executed at Smithfield and other areas around London. My broad aim in this work has been to register a set of meditations on the subject of martyrdom, and to elucidate some aspects of its public value, particularly by excavating the variety of settings in which martyred characters were brought up, and the meaning and significance they held. Situating martyrological issues in a longer-term historical perspective can help to explain mentality, political strategies, and religious concerns, and also to reveal the intentions that lay behind the fashioning of martyrdom in an ever-expanding print culture.

As we have seen, martyrological materials were utilized equally by persecuted Catholics, Episcopalians, Protestant nonconformists, and other dissidents and separatists. Notwithstanding the fact that the intentions of these groups varied, their common ambition was to vindicate their own causes before popular audiences. In some cases, the testimonies of martyrs served to provide support against the charges levelled against minorities. As pointed out in Chapter 6, dissidents whose views were estranged from national orthodoxy frequently benefited from this intellectual resource, particularly when opposing social and political authorities. In other cases, martyr-narratives could be used to persuade larger audiences of the truthfulness of one's cause. As we saw in Chapter 2, Jesuit proselytization was deeply reliant upon the rhetorical purchase of martyrdom, and members of the Catholic underground used latter-day martyrs as a means to make their agenda more accessible to a wider public.

Overall, the analysis presented in the preceding chapters confirms Foxe's influence on post-Reformation culture. Throughout this study, I have sought to recover the Foxeian heritage over a longer time period, particularly by situating his famous work at the center of the intellectual history of English Protestantism, and by exploring how various publicists used its appealing stories to convey messages to their audiences. While it seems clear that the martyrological tradition gained a firm footing among later generations, some questions deserve more specific attention. How should one measure the success or failure of martyrological arguments in public persuasion, or the capacity of *Acts and Monuments* to shape the wider culture? And how successful was Foxe's plan to make reformed martyrs part of day-to-day language? Although no single early modern work reached such a large readership as the "Book of Martyrs", it is no less true – as

Patrick Collinson once noted – that we do not know how the book was read, or how its numerous graphic images were viewed by contemporaries. For my part, I have attempted to illustrate the deep entrenchment of this tradition, by exploring the ways in which Foxe’s martyrs were employed to move audiences and readers during the reigns of James and Charles Stuart. Given the importance that seventeenth-century writers attached to Foxe’s martyrology, and the widespread use of its stories in their strategies of proof, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Foxe succeeded in implanting reformed terminology in the language of public discourse, and thus reshaping perceptions of the past. It is no exaggeration, then, to say that what was revisionist writing during the religious upheavals of the Tudor period had become mainstream history and traditional Protestant narrative by the time of the debates of early Stuart England.

In addition to the fact that *Acts and Monuments* stood at the the root of Stuart ideas of martyrdom, it is tempting to see John Foxe as an authority whose persuasive force surpassed that of many other Protestant luminaries. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapters 3 and 4, his work had grown into a source of legitimate belief and an authority in its own right. Foxe’s name could be used for constructing and reinforcing orthodoxy, in the same way that other people used canonical figures such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. It is telling that in the heated context of the 1630s, allegations that Archbishop Laud was turning against the Foxeian tradition became a potent weapon for the adversaries of his church policies. One of the factors which explain the longevity of Foxeian themes was their easy accommodation to new circumstances. *Acts and Monuments* was familiar historical terrain for popular audiences, and, for this reason, a fruitful reference point for anyone aiming to communicate an argument to a large public. The wider the audience that a writer of a pamphlet intended to reach, the more likely it was that the work would contain martyrological material.

Another aim of this study has been to show that ideas of martyrdom occupied a central position in political life. Early Stuart public debates were characterized by disagreement regarding religious authority. Indeed, an examination of the seventeenth-century sources reveals that the intense literary campaigns which wracked the Stuart polity centred on church government. Whereas sixteenth-century reformatory disputes focused primarily on right doctrine, the primary trigger for most seventeenth-century controversies was ecclesiological. Interestingly, all those who sought to exercise

influence in public debates, or to shape readers' perceptions, made use of the authority and testimonies of martyrs.

Why had the content of martyrologies become explicitly bound up with these struggles? Most often, as we have seen, publicists used martyrological sources merely to illustrate the arguments they had already reached by other means. If the same goals could have been achieved using other methods, it is worth considering why they used these materials in the first place. The short answer is that public actors exploited whatever arguments they believed to carry persuasive force, and turned to every available source to support their theses. Here, as elsewhere, many culturally specific assumptions determined what made an argument effective or ineffective. The deployment of authoritative witnesses and their testimonies was an established technique of advancing one's cause in the early modern world. However, when considering what was specific about martyrs, two features deserve our attention.

I have suggested above that the imagery of martyrdom became a crucial part of public discourse because it was popular as well as affective. Martyrs, who had amplified their testimonies with their own blood, carried affective persuasive force, and enabled writers and orators to move their audiences in a way that critical reasoning did not. Especially in the context of popular debate, the example of these characters provided a powerful tool for communicating messages to wider audiences. If a writer intended to illustrate an alleged illegitimacy of authority, for example, it was easier to appeal directly to the emotions of an audience from the point of view of suffering subjects, rather than to make the same argument in more abstract terms. Furthermore, the shapers of public opinion employed such arguments because referring to authoritative witnesses had the effect of making their own writings more authoritative. When thinking about what made martyrs particularly appealing to the controversialists of Stuart England, we also need to acknowledge that martyrological vocabularies provided a legitimate way to express resistance in a dynastic context. There is no escaping the fact that all early modern martyrs rejected the belief that religion is simply the will of the civil sovereign.

In the light of what has been said in the previous chapters, it is interesting that reasoning on the basis of this form of authority began to be called into question during the turbulent years of the mid-1640s. Martyrdoms offered an appealing resource for



attempts at ideological appropriation, but the facile use of the legacy of martyrs to legitimate and de-legitimate political action soon came under fire. Thomas Hobbes and John Milton, for example, participated in what is recognisably the same conversation, and arrived at the same nominalist conclusion from opposite standpoints. Seeking to restrict use of the term, Hobbes provided an intellectually rigorous definition, according to which the only true martyrs were the seventy original eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ. Seventeenth-century distrust towards martyrological arguments thus arose from the fact that early Stuart culture had witnessed many opportunistic appropriations of authoritative testimonies. The fact, as many writers noted, that testimonies illustrate more than they prove, was considered problematic. Within this kind of straightforward exploitation of martyrs, the character and the nuances of the term mattered less than the specific rhetorical ends to which they might be utilized. The notion that past martyrs might be moulded into any form that the present saw fit was expressed forcefully by William Sancroft, who implied that whenever “any persons of publick note [had] suffer’d under the Sword of Justice”, it was sufficient to deploy the arts and power of eloquence, in order to transform “old Traytors” into “New Martyrs”. While persecuted and martyred characters enjoyed wide success in the public sphere, it is worth bearing in mind that contemporary audiences were also preoccupied by the question of false martyrdoms.

Although the Oxford martyrs and the fires of Smithfield captured the imaginations of many Englishmen, the argument about the influence of Foxe’s confessional tone should not be carried too far. The limits of the Foxeian oeuvre and other martyrological materials within popular debate are equally interesting. The spectrum of attitudes towards the Foxeian heritage was to a large degree reflective of the religious and political divisions of the Long Reformation, and its disputes regarding ecclesiological issues. At a deeper level, Foxe was a consensual part of the heritage of the Reformation, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the authority and prestige of the Oxford martyrs occasionally outlived the religious views they expressed. One of the interesting aspects of the Smectymnian controversy (discussed in Chapter 5) was the reaction against the martyred bishops. This was a moment at which no one dared to suggest that the Oxford martyrs had gone to the stake for nothing, but, at the same time, the value of these most memorable martyrs was being called into question by anti-episcopalian writers.

Other criticisms against the reformed martyrs were made by those who pledged allegiance to Romanist doctrine. From the alternative perspective of the Jesuit commentator Robert Persons, the idea of martyrdom was very old, dating back at least to the first centuries. However, the idea of a Protestant martyr, as advanced by Foxe, was something new and incomprehensible. Thus, to Persons and his associates, the Foxeian martyrology seemed little more than a list of pseudo-martyrs. As John Carpenter observed, Catholic scholars invited readers in Stuart England to consider whether “all the doctrine and history which came out of [the] head” of John Foxe really proved anything. According to them, as Carpenter remarked, “Master Fox” was “weake a braine”, and his work never touched “a thing of hard substance”. Thus, the Jesuits approached thinking about martyrs from different premises, and sought to make Foxe’s mistakes public, in order to counter the advance of the Protestant reformation.

It is true that in the reformed tradition, martyrdom was often difficult to define on purely theological or ecclesiological grounds. What the chapters of this work collectively demonstrate is that English culture was characterised by a tendency to subject ideas of martyrdom to close scrutiny, reflective thinking, intensive debate, and relentless polemicizing, rather than simply canonizing martyrs on an institutional basis. In this regard, it is hardly surprising that the word ‘martyr’ remained conceptually unstable throughout the post-Reformation era. The very flexibility of the seventeenth-century use of the term is in itself revealing. During the period under consideration in this study, various attempts were made to identify new martyrs, to elucidate the significance of past martyrs, and to defend the meaning of the technical term *martyria* against popular misconceptions.

All this helps to explain why appropriation of martyrdom played an indispensable role in books written and opinions expressed during the course of the politico-religious controversies of the early seventeenth century. Although the scope of my analysis has been limited to the public utility of ideas of martyrdom, it should be noted that these also had a crucial role for private selves and religious identities. Writing martyrologies and evoking the triumphant example of martyrs within other kinds of texts should also be seen as a sort of commemorative endeavour. In 1655, almost a hundred years after the appearance of Foxe’s *editio princeps*, Thomas Fuller, another famous martyrologist, remarked that in most cases, the identity of the martyrs had been lost to

history. Even the best martyrologies failed to grasp the true scale of the tragedies involved, and it became inevitable that many of those worthy of remembrance would be forgotten. Thus, according to Fuller, “it would be Piety in us, here to erect a Monument in memorial of these Unknown Martyrs, whose Names are lost”. The significance of martyrs was deeper and more multifarious than the facile accounts that later generations gave of their glorious deeds. Just as it was “hard for men to suffer Martyrdom”, Fuller wrote, so it was “easie for their Posterity to brag of their Ancestours Sufferings”. For Fuller, however, it was hardly surprising that people were prone to relate to martyrs in this way. As he put it, “who would not intitle themselves to the Honour, when it is parted from the Pain?”.



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