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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

# 'FAVOURERS OF GOD'S WORD'? JOHN FOXE'S HENRICIAN MARTYRS

Thesis submitted
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of History
of the University of Southampton

by

S.J. SMART

October 1988

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy

'FAVOURERS OF GOD'S WORD'? JOHN FOXE'S HENRICIAN MARTYRS

by Stefan Smart

This thesis studies John Foxe's treatment of the Henrician Reformation in The Acts and Monuments, and the value of this text as a historical source. Although past analyses have shown that Foxe's transcriptions of his documentary evidence are quite reliable, it is suggested that this is very far from the case in his narrative sequences. A close reading of other source material surviving from the period, as well as the evidence in The Acts and Monuments itself, indicate that many of Foxe's stories do not stand up to rigorous examination. The question is raised as to who was responsible for these errors. It is contended that there were occasions when Foxe was 'honestly misled'. However, it is also made clear that Foxe was not averse to tampering with the evidence himself, if the nature of the expected disclosures appeared to warrant it.

Another facet of this thesis is Foxe's reaction to this evidence. It is shown that many of Foxe's claims about the Henrician Reformation are open to question - even on his own showing. Sometimes this resulted in a number of substantial alterations and 'corrections' in the martyrologist's transcriptions of his original material. Elsewhere Foxe reconsidered his claims about his heroes, even so far, as in some cases, to undermine their position as Protestant martyrs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to many people, not least to my supervisor, Dr. G.W. Bernard, without whose unselfish support and guidance none of what follows would have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the libraries of the Universities of Southampton and London, the British Library, the Lincoln Diocesan Record Office, the Institute of Historical Research and the Dr. William's Trust Library for the use of their facilities, and the Department of Education and Science, whose award of a Major State Studentship provided the finance necessary to support my studies. I am also in the debt of the following academic friends and associates, who kindly gave of their time in the course of my research, Dr. M.E. Aston, Dr. E.O. Blake, Dr. G. Walker, who kindly gave me permission to refer to his forthcoming article on Thomas Bilney in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Dr. A.G. Johnston, Dr. J.F. Fines, Dr. A.G. Dickens, Mr. A.C. Duke, Professor P. Collinson, who generously allowed me to read a draft of an article which has since appeared in A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse eds., Britain and the Netherlands (Zutphen, 1985), Dr. K.M. Sharpe, and Mr. P.J. Gwyn, who gave me permission to cite a chapter of his forthcoming biography of Cardinal Wolsey. For their help in the production of this thesis I would like to thank Mike and Paula Hinson. Also my thanks go to my parents and my mother-in-law, Janet Wynford-Jones, for their unflagging moral support and encouragement. However, my greatest debt is to my wife. Thank you Susie, for all your help.

# 'FAVOURERS OF GOD'S WORD'? JOHN FOXE'S HENRICIAN MARTYRS

by Stefan Smart

## Introduction

### Who was John Foxe?

Foxe was born in the town of Boston in Lincolnshire in 1517, the same year Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. His father having died when he was young, he was brought up by his step-father, Richard Melton, and it was largely through his efforts that, at the age of sixteen, the young Foxe went up to Brasenose College, Oxford. There Foxe distinguished himself by his industry and application, gaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1537 and a probationary fellowship at Magdalen a year later. In 1540 he was appointed lecturer of logic but it was to the study of divinity that he now devoted most of his time and energy. There were good reasons for this. Foxe's religious views were changing. Originally a staunch Romanist, the young Foxe came under the influence of a number of prominent evangelicals such as Faulkner, Hugh Latimer and Crowley. This, coupled with his study of the Greek fathers and Erasmus, resulted in much soul-searching, leading Foxe to adopt many of the new reforming ideas from abroad. Foxe's behaviour soon aroused the suspicion of his fellow students and in 1544 he was forced to defend himself against the charge of inattendance at mass and laughing in church. There is some question about whether he was guilty of these crimes - Foxe wrote a letter to the president of Magdalen defending himself against his accusers - but whatever the case, his unorthodox views were not in doubt. The next year Foxe resigned his fellowship on the grounds of his disapproval of clerical celibacy and the Act of Six Articles.

Fortunately for Foxe, he was then offered a position as tutor to the children of William Lucy and Charlecote. There, in February 1537, he married Agnes Randall, another member of the Lucy household. Fears for his prosecution under the Act of Six Articles led Foxe to seek alternative employment in London and, after a period of intense poverty, he accepted a position in the household of the Duchess of Richmond. Foxe's years as tutor to the Duchess' children were among the most profitable and productive periods of his life. He met the Protestant hagiographer, John Bale, there and the two of them soon became firm friends. He also found time to publis a translation of three works by Luther, Oecolampadius and Urban Regius as well as a Latin textbook, Tables of Grammar.

In 1553, however, Foxe's fortunes suffered a sudden decline. The accession of Mary Tudor and the consequent release from the Tower of the old Duke of Norfolk meant that Foxe's employment as the tutor of the Duchess of Richmond's children was at an end: the Duke was an arch-conservative and did not take kindly to the fact that his grandchildren were being educated by a man of Foxe's persuasion. Accessorily, Foxe got into trouble with Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester. Apparently Gardiner had met him by chance but on seeing him said he liked his face well and would make some use of him. Taking this to be a threat on his life, the Foxes fled abroad, as so many others were to do in Mary's reign. Passing through Antwerp, Rotterdam and Frankfort, Foxe eventually settled in Strasbourg, where in July 1554 he published a manuscript which he had brought with him from England. Called Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum (A commentary on the history of the Church), it dealt with the history of martyrs, chiefly English Lollards, between 1375 and 1500. After a period in Franfort, in which he became embroiled in the bitter controversy that was then raging among the English exiles over the Book of Common Prayer, Foxe next moved to Basle, where in September 1555 his daughter, Christiana, was baptized. Foxe found employment as a proofreader in the house of John Operibus but also found time to expand the martyrology he had published in Strasbourg. Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum, quae postremis et periculosis his temporibus evenerunt.... commentarii (A commentary of the events that happened in the Church in these last perilous times), published in

Basle in August 1559, contained much new information, particularly concerning news of the persecution that was taking place in England. A two-volumed affair, it incorporated most of the Commentarii of 1554 as well as histories of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary Tudor down to the burning of Archbishop Cranmer in March 1556.

Foxe's work on his martyrology was not complete, however. When he finally returned to England in 1559, a year after the accession of the new queen, Elizabeth I, he set to work on a new edition. Entitled The Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, this was mainly intended for English consumption, in contrast to the earlier books which were written exclusively for foreigners. This was followed, in 1570, by the publication of the so-called Ecclesiasticall History Contayning the Actes and Monumentes of Thynges passed in euery Kynges tyme in this Realme especially in the Church of England. This was a far more ambitious work than the previous edition of 1563 taking Foxe's history of the Church back to the time of Christ and containing much new information that had previously been unavailable to him.

Foxe's remaining years were in the main happy and successful ones. As well as bringing out The Acts and Monuments he also published a number of devotional works. The Sermon of Christ Crucified, which Foxe delivered himself at St. Paul's Cross in 1570, is an example of this. Also belonging to this period are A Sermon Preached at the Christening of a Certaine Jew (1578), The Pope Confuted (1580), and two more editions of his martyrology (in 1576 and 1583). But Foxe's life was also marred by tragedy. In the late 1560s he became embroiled in the infamous Ridolfi plot to dethrone Queen Elizabeth, in which Foxe's erstwhile pupil, the Duke of Norfolk, was heavily implicated. Foxe wrote to his former tutee in 1569 warning him of the dangerous course he ran, but to no avail, the Duke eventually going to the scaffold in June 1572. Equally upsetting from Foxe's point of view was the expulsion from Magdalen College, Oxford of his son, Samuel, in 1579. Evidently Samuel had aroused the emnity of the powerful puritan wing there. Foxe wrote to a number of influential friends, including the Queen's minister, Lord Burleigh, complaining that Samuel had been hard

done-by and that he should have his fellowship restored. Eventually, in 1585, Foxe bestowed upon his son his prebend at Shipton.

In April 1587 Foxe died 'not through any known Disease', recorded his son, Simeon, 'but through much Age'.[1] Never a particularly wealthy man - Foxe gained no royalties from the sales of The Acts and Monuments, for example - he was, however, immensely popular and a sizeable multitude flocked to his funeral at St. Giles, Cripplegate. There it was said by many that it felt as if they had lost a father and a brother.[2]

The Acts and Monuments : origins and development.

Although the author of a number of tracts, sermons, treatises and translations, Foxe is perhaps best remembered for The Acts and Monuments or 'The Book of Martyrs' as it later came to be known. Foxe appears to have first hit upon the idea of writing a martyrology while at Oxford, where is is recorded as having been engaged in a special study of ecclesiastical history. No less significant in view of future events was his friendship with John Bale, the ex-Carmelite monk and Protestant hagiographer, when they were both employed in the household of the Duchess of Richmond. Bale's brefe Chronycle concernynge the Examinacyon and death of the blessed martyr of Christ Syr Johan Oldecastell (1544) provided Foxe with a model for his later martyrology as did the publication in 1546 of The first Examination of Anne Askewe, a martyr of the 1530s whose story Foxe later incorporated in The Acts and Monuments from Bale's account. In 1552 Foxe began a work of his own. Originally intended to cover the history of the Church from the time of Wyclif to the end of Henry VIII's reign, the Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum, as it was called, dealt chiefly with the persecution of English Lollards between 1375 and 1500. Apparently Foxe had written another work but this he had left behind him in England when he had fled into exile. In 1559 another martyrology was published. Called Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum, this greatly benefitted from much new information gathered at the behest of Foxe's friend and future employer (as Bishop of London) Edmund Grindal. Seemingly, Grindal had been composing a

martyrology of his own at Strasbourg and when he learned that Foxe was involved in work of a similar kind supplied him with a number of key documents and eyewitness reports of the continuing persecution in England. Foxe was able to extend considerably his account by these means and may even have been approached by Grindal to bring out a number of these documents as separate volumes.

Upon Foxe's return to England in 1559 the amount of information at the martyrologist's disposal increased dramatically. Foxe now had access to a range of official documents that had been denied to him on the Continent, notably episcopal registers and State papers and letters. He could also carry out interviews with survivors and eyewitnesses of the persecution under Mary. A number of 'credible reports' were gathered by these means. Foxe's account of the persecution of Lollards in the Lincoln Diocese during the early 1500s particularly benefitted in this respect as did his narrative of Mary's burning of heretics in the South-East of England after 1556. Yet as soon as the 1563 edition was published, it was clear that another martyrology would have to be written. Foxe's work was simply not extensive enough to deal with the vast welter of corrections, addenda and additional information that existed and was now flooding into his office. Also Foxe had to contend with an increasingly vocal group of critics, mainly Roman Catholic exiles, who argued that Foxe was telling lies. Among the most vitriolic of these was Thomas Harding, who wrote to Bishop Jewel in 1565 and 1567 castigating Foxe's 'huge dongehill of your stinking martyrs'.[3] A more serious opponent was Nicholas Harpsfield, formerly Archdeacon of Canterbury under Mary. His Dialogi Sex Contra Summu Pontifactus, monasticae vitae, sanctorum, sanctum imaginum oppognatores, et Pseudomartyres, published in Antwerp in 1566, criticised Foxe's choice of martyrs, alleging that many of them had in fact been traitors.

It was with these things in mind, then, that in 1570 Foxe brought out The Ecclesiasticall History Contayning the Actes and Monumentes of Thynges passed in euery Kynges tyme in this Realme especially in the Church of England. A work of two volumes, this repeated much of the material cited in the 1563 edition but in a much more rigid fashion, Foxe dividing his history of the Church into five major periods or

epochs. Once the 1570 edition had been published the work underwent only minor amendments. An edition brought out in 1576 contained a few revisions while a fourth edition, published in 1583, incorporated a number of documents and eyewitness accounts that had previously been unavailable to the martyrologist. The story of the offer of escape made to John Frith, one of the Reformers discussed in this thesis, is here a case in point.[4]

The Acts and Monuments: aims and intentions.

Why did Foxe write The Acts and Monuments? Foxe's first concern appears to have been devotional. Writing in one of the prefaces to the 1570 edition of the work Foxe marvelled at the 'deformities' of his own age, particularly at its 'pompous apparel', 'carnal desires' and 'unchaste demeanors'.[5] The publiciation of stories of martyrs for the faith would, he hoped, establish in his reader 'a good conscience, to learn the contempt of the world, and to come to the fear of God'.[6] Foxe's criticism was not only directed at fellow Protestants. He argued that Roman Catholics could profit from reading his book as well. In another preface to the 1570 edition - 'To the Persecutors of God's Truth, Commonly Called Papists' - he exhorted his readers to 'read and peruse the history of these your own acts and doings.... to the intent that, when you shall now the better revise what your doings have been, the more you may blush and detest the same'.[7] He hoped that as a result of this they would 'forsake your cause, and your false hopes, and save yourselves'.[8]

But Foxe's book was never intended simply to encourage his readership to emulate the lives of the 'saints'. Also of concern was the necessity of providing the Protestant Church of Foxe's day with a respectable spiritual ancestry. In his account of the Lollards indicted by Bishop Longland in Buckinghamshire between 1520 and 1522, Foxe relates how many in the Roman Catholic Church had accused the Protestant religion of novelty asking 'where was this church and religion forty years ago, before Luther's time?' According to Foxe, such criticism of the Church of his own time was completely misdirected. In fact

throughout history his religion had not lacked 'great multitudes who tasted and followed the sweetness of God's holy word almost in as ample manner, for the number of well-disposed hearts, as now'.[9] Among the most important examples of these were the Lollards themselves and the Waldenses of the 14th century. Although these had been termed heretics by the Roman Catholic establishment, they had in fact 'served.... the living Lord within the ark of his true spiritual and visible church'.[10] Nor were they united with the Protestants merely in their opposition to the Church of Rome; they also believed the same doctrine. The Lollards, for example, are noted by Foxe as having been called 'known-men' or 'just-fast-men' or 'as now they are called by name of Protestants'.[11] Foxe includes among his Protestant antecedants 'godly teachers' such as Aidan, Finian and Bede as well as Joachim, Abbot of Calabria, Nilus, Archbishop of Thessalonica, Gower, Chaucer and John Hus. In fact, according to Foxe, the history of the 'true church' stretched right back to the time of Christ. It was the growth of the 'true church' and the concurrent history of the 'false sect of Rome' that Foxe made it his business to delineate.

There was a third reason why Foxe embarked upon writing The Acts and Monuments, although this was mainly confined to later editions of the work. Almost as soon as the first English edition had been published, Foxe's martyrology was met with a storm of public criticism, mainly at the hands of Roman Catholics living abroad, such as Thomas Harding and Nicholas Harpsfield. This criticism needed replying to and rather than issue separate tracts to the authors concerned Foxe chose instead to defend his earlier edition in the 1570 version of the work. There were in fact a number of pressing difficulties to be encountered. Chief among these was Nicholas Harpsfield's allegations that many of Foxe's martyrs had merely been traitors. Foxe's 'Defence of Sir John Oldcastle', which takes up the majority of his account of this 15th century martyr illustrates the lengths to which Foxe was sometimes prepared to go to preserve his good name in this matter. Another charge frequently cited against him was that he was a 'misreporter of truth, a depraver of stories'.[12] Again Foxe was at pains to prove that this was not so. 'If a lie be.... whatsoever thing is pronounced with the

intent to deceive another', Foxe wrote, 'then I protest to you, Master Cope [Nicholas Harpsfield]! and to all the world, there is never a lie in my book'.[13]

Foxe's place in English historiography.

Having assessed Foxe's aims and intentions in composing The Acts and Monuments, it is now pertinent to examine the historiographical context in which he was writing. How does Foxe compare to other historians that were writing at the same time? Does The Acts and Monuments represent a major development in English historiography? Up until the 15th century, English historical writing had mainly been confined to the clergy, and in particular monks. This, according to Professor D. Hay, limited historical scholarship.[14] The monastic annalist's chronology, his function as a moralist and recorder were all determined by his faith. The ultimate sanction of this type of history was the justification of God's ways to men. By the beginning of the 15th century, however, a new type of history was coming into being. The rise of a bourgeoisie and lay aristocracy in the late 14th century led to the demand for works in the vernacular and with a much broader world view than the monks, whose books were often confined to the study of the monastic order or even the monastery they belonged to, had been able to provide. Several new works were published, but none more influential than the Brut and Polychronicon. The romantic account found in these books of British origins and the pre-occupation with French affairs and city government were themes which were to characterize English historical writing for over a century.

Meanwhile in Italy historical writing was moving in a very different direction. Here a historical doctrine was being formulated, one which was to have profound implications for the study of history in Foxe's time. The key aspects of this doctrine are perhaps best expressed by a letter written in 1446 by the Italian humanist, Guarino, to a friend who had recently been appointed historiographer to the Court of Rimini. According to Guarino, history was meant to convey both good and bad examples and delight. Moreover, the historian must be

absolutely impartial. Persons and places must be faithfully described and detatchment is specially urged in dealing with battles. Guarino's views were not the only ones being expressed in Europe at that time. Another school of thought, represented by the historian Bruni, considered the accurate representation of events to be less important. Nevertheless they did have significant effects on historical writing generally, with most historians adopting something of a mid-way stage between both schools.

By far the most important humanist writer in England was an Italian and native of Urbino, Polydore Vergil, whose Anglica Historia was first printed in 1534. According to Vergil, history was 'the only unique, certain and faithful witness of times and things'. Like Guarino, be believed that it should provide positive exempla for good and bad living and, perhaps more significantly, that it should be told truthfully. In this respect he was quick to criticise the monastic annals, which he found to be in the main 'bald, uncouth, chaotic and deceitful' and undertook to write a true and accurate account of the past. He hoped, he wrote in one of his prefaces, that it would be an advantage that he was an Italian as he could then 'relate everything with truthfulness'.[15] To a large extent Vergil lived up to the promises he made in his introduction. He is noted for the assiduousness with which he collected his sources: one of them, the history of Gildas, he virtually discovered. Nor did he treat these sources uncritically but subjected them to some scrutiny, at times even scepticism. Where his sources conflicted, such as in his account of Britain's earliest settlers, Vergil printed the lot, leaving it up to the reader to decide which was the more accurate or true. At other times he tried to evaluate his sources as evidence, grasping the basic principle that sources written closest to the time recorded are usually more reliable than later ones. An example of this is his response to various facts supplied to him by a Scot, Gavin Douglas, about the earliest settlers in Scotland. Although Vergil believed his informant to be a 'sincere man' he was forced to dismiss the legendary account because it conflicted with the narratives given in Caesar, Tacitus, Ptolemy and Pliny.[16]

Vergil's pre-occupation with truthfulness was not pervasive however. At times, particularly in his account of the history of England after 1500, his work was determined by bias and personal prejudice. An example of this was Vergil's treatment of his patron, Henry VII, whom he saw as a model king, fair to both friend and foe alike. An indication of personal prejudice is found in Vergil's highly vitriolic portrait of Cardinal Wolsey, the latter having been responsible for Vergil's arrest and imprisonment in Italy in 1518. Nevertheless, The Anglica Historia marks a significant development in English historiography. Its author's concern to tell the truth and nothing but the truth was to influence historians for many years to come, even if they sometimes villified him as being inaccurate and partizan.

How, then, does Foxe relate to these new trends in historical writing? In so far as he was an assiduous compiler of records and documents the answer would seem to be, very favourably. Indeed, in many ways, Foxe's work represented a significant advance on previous histories. No other author up to this time takes the kind of trouble Foxe does to print extant documents and to make detailed references to them in his notes and glosses. Foxe was also quite critical of his sources. He was quick to point out where older accounts conflicted, such as Fabian's and Hall's versions of the death of Lord Cobham, and he pursued a healthy detatchment in dealing with episcopal registers, whose notes and records, he argued, may sometimes 'rightly be doubted of'.[17] Foxe's use of oral evidence is likewise very impressive: in contrast to earlier historians, like Vergil, he named most of his informants and gave precise details of their relationship to the events described.

Having said this, Foxe was writing with a very different aim in mind than Polydore Vergil. As has been noted, it was Vergil's intention to discover and relate the truth. This he intended to do by rigorous research and sceptical treatment of sources. Foxe's methods, on the other hand, were determined by his concern to promote his religion. As the martyrologist wrote in one of his prefaces to the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments, many of the earlier histories of England could not be relied upon because they were written by papists and were thus biased in their point of view. It was his intention in The Acts and

Monuments to set the record straight by bringing the Protestant view of history into full perspective.[18] Thus, although Foxe sometimes went to great lengths to check his sources, this was almost invariably on account of his enthusiasm for his cause. The early accounts of the death of Lord Cobham mentioned earlier are examples of this, as both Hall and Fabian had remarked that Foxe's hero, Lord Cobham, had been a traitor. And where Foxe doubts the authenticity of episcopal records this is almost without exception because they gave an unflattering impression of one of his martyrs. Foxe's criticisms of the so-called 'confession' of Richard Hunne on 2 December, 1514 is an example of this and will be examined below, as is his account of the sentencing and execution of two London Lollards, William Sweeting and James Brewster.[19] Thus, in many respects, Foxe was writing a very different kind of history to Polydore Vergil. While both men were committed to record what they saw as the 'truth' of the events they were describing, Foxe's idea of 'truth' was determined by spiritual concerns not scientific ones. In this much at least, The Acts and Monuments belongs to a much earlier age.

The importance of The Acts and Monuments as a source for the reign of Henry VIII.

Foxe's account of the reign of Henry VIII is undoubtedly of enormous value to the present-day historian. Many of the documents he printed would not have survived had it not been for his assiduousness in compiling them. An example of this is his transcription of Bishop Longland's register, dealing with the persecution of heretics in the Amersham area of Buckinghamshire between 1520 and 1522. No less significant is the vast amount of documents he did not publish but was later found among his papers and lodged in the Harleian Collection in the British Library as well as printed in the pages of Strype. Foxe's account of the heretics indicted in the Steeple-Bumstead-Colchester area of Essex is of vital importance to an understanding of popular heresy during this period as are the documents relating to the trial and imprisonment of the London merchant and possible importer of heretical books, Humphrey Monmouth, in 1528. Another aspect of Foxe's book that

has proved of enormous help to modern historians of the Reformation is the considerable range of oral information he provides, usually taken from survivors or eyewitnesses of episcopal investigations. Foxe's account of Bishop Smith's persecution in the diocese of Lincoln in 1506 is here a case in point, the martyrologist having gained his material from a number of former Lollards 'yet living and witness[es] hereof'.[20] Equally instructive are the stories of Simon Fish (taken from his widow) and William Cowbridge, whose burning in 1538 was probably witnessed by Foxe himself.

Yet Foxe's work should be read with a great deal of care if these sources are going to be interpreted correctly. The reliability of the martyrologist's transcriptions of original documents is not in doubt, although there are one or two important exceptions to this rule which will be examined below. However, The Acts and Monuments also contains a vast range of narrative evidence, the authenticity or otherwise of which has never been examined satisfactorily. In many cases, such as in the stories of John Frith and Thomas More mentioned in this thesis, Foxe fails to cite any authorities at all yet his account is readily accepted for all that. No less questionable are some of Foxe's arguments about the significance of the events he describes. His belief that the Lollards were part of the same spiritual tradition as the Church of his own day is here a case in point, but this too has often been accepted as a straightforward record of fact. It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to restore the balance to Foxe studies by assessing the martyrologist's evidence and arguments in context. Foxe's claims are examined alongside the material used in The Acts and Monuments itself as well as other evidence that has survived from the period. It is argued that although Foxe is noted for the thoroughness with which he collected his information, much of his material and the conclusions he draws from it cannot be taken as faithful renderings of historical fact. It is also intended to discuss whether Foxe was attempting to wilfully deceive his reader in this respect or whether he had been, as one historian has put it, 'honestly misled'.

Notes to the Introduction.

1 W.W. Wooden, John Foxe (Boston, 1983), 16. C.f. 'The Life of Mr. John Fox,' in Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable, Happening in the Church (London, 1684). I am indebted to Mr. Wooden for much of my information regarding Foxe's life.

2 J. Foxe, The Acts and Monuments ed., S.R. Cattley (London, 1837-1841), i, 226. The Reverend Cattley's edition is the basic text for this study of Foxe and is hereafter cited as A&M.

3 W.W. Wooden, John Foxe, 12.

4 See below pp. 111-113.

5 A&M i. 531.

6 A&M i. 521.

7 A&M i. 509.

8 A&M i. 512.

9 A&M iv. 217-218.

10 A&M i. 519.

11 A&M iv. 218.

12 A&M iii. 383.

13 A&M iii. 393.

14 The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil ed., D. Hay, Camden Series, Volume LXXIV, Royal Historical Society Publications (1950), xxiii. Professor Hay's excellent account of the development of English historiography up to and including the time of Vergil was one of my main sources for this section. Other works I found useful were A. Gransden, Historial Writing in England, ii, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century (New York, 1982) and D. Hay, Polydore Vergil (Oxford, 1952).

15 The Anglica Historia ed., D. Hay, xxviii.

16 A. Gransden, Historical Writing in England, ii, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century, 437.

17 A&M iv. 181.

18 A&M i. 512-520.

19 C.f. pp. 72, 53.

20 A&M iv. 123.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Were the Lollards Proto-Protestants?

If only in terms of the transcription and compilation of important primary documents, Foxe's treatment of the genesis and evolution of early Tudor Lollardy is undoubtedly of great significance. As is well known, Foxe's main purpose in collecting the material on the Lollards was didactic. In his introduction to the transcripts of the trials of the Diocese of Lincoln, he declares his intention to 'give to understand.... the continuance and consent of the true church of Christ [the Reformed Church] in that age, touching the chief points of our faith.'[1] Foxe's general accuracy in the compilation of these records is not seriously in doubt. As J.F. Mozley has shown, it would in fact be unreasonable to suspect Foxe of wholesale forgery as his material can often be corroborated by surviving episcopal records.[2] However, the problem of Foxe's treatment of his evidence has yet to be satisfactorily resolved. The question remains as to how far those convicted of heresy between 1480 and 1520 (the period of the main Lollard persecutions) were orthodox Protestants in embryo as Foxe's claim for continuity demands.

The word 'Protestant' presents problems in itself of course. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it will be defined as my reading of the evidence indicates Foxe would have defined it, its chief characteristics being the acceptance of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth, the doctrine of justification by faith only, and the universal priesthood of all believers. Certainly for many historians, Foxe's grand claim for continuity would appear to contain an element of truth. Mozley, for instance, in defending Foxe from charges of forgery and falsification of the Lollard articles also took it upon himself to delineate the Lollards as proto-Protestants. According to his argument, Foxe would have had no reason to falsify or alter his material precisely because the Lollards were what he said they were - there was no question of Foxe actually 'making' them into Lutherans.[3] Nevertheless, it is

uncertain whether such a view can go unqualified. A thorough examination of the records of early Tudor Lollardy in The Acts and Monuments, as well as other evidence that survives from the period, reveals a far more fragile relationship with the doctrines of the Church of Foxe's own day than has hitherto been accepted. Accessorily, it is clear that the Lollards' opinions were a source of some embarrassment for Foxe himself, resulting in a number of substantial alterations and corrections in the martyrologist's transcriptions of his original material.

## What is a 'Lollard'? Difficulties in the evidence.

What is a 'Lollard'? Clearly, the term itself poses problems in an analysis of the heretics' relations with the doctrines of the major Reformers. In the first place, not all the records of early Tudor Lollardy are equally valuable as statements of the heretics' beliefs: some at least of the less comprehensive episcopal registers are more apt to reflect the preconceived notions of the ecclesiastical authorities than an actual 'Lollard' or heretical pattern of belief. Stereotyping is a genuine problem here. As Anne Hudson has observed, many of those indicted during this period were examined on set forms of interrogatories often dating back to the early 1460s, a situation not helped by the fact that many persecutions, such as Blythe's investigations in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in 1511 and Archbishop Warham's persecution in the Weald of Kent, were carried out within a few months of each other.[4] Another problem with the records of early Tudor Lollardy is the possibility that some of the offenders may have been intimidated and tortured. We know from the transcripts of Bishop Blythe's persecution in Coventry and Lichfield that it was fairly common practice to make heretics confess 'by payne of prisonment' and it is possible that many suspects were convicted in this way of articles in which they did not sincerely believe.[5] Alternatively, one may doubt the integrity of the main witnesses called by the authorities to testify about their beliefs. Many of the former were themselves under suspicion of heresy and thus had good reason to shift the responsibility for their crimes onto innocent parties. The case of John Colins, a heretic from

the Lincoln Diocese, who talked of detecting his father in 1522 is an example of this.[6] In some instances one notes the employment of 'feed men' or paid informants, who were hardly in a position to be fair or dispassionate.[7]

Another difficulty in tackling the problem of the Lollards' relations to the Church of Foxe's own day is that, quite simply, not all the heretics believed the same thing. For instance, some at least of the less articulate offenders appear to have been inspired more by anti-clericalism than by any specific theology, as can be seen by the records of Bishop Longland's persecution in the Diocese of Lincoln. Among the charges mentioned in these records are that 'money spent on pilgrimage, served but to maintain thieves and harlots', that his vicar was 'a poll-shorn priest', that the church bell would hang better about any cow's neck in the town.[8] Nor, moreover, did everyone follow the doctrine of Wyclif; if anything, early Tudor Lollardy was composed of a set of more or less consistent attitudes rather than a group of carefully worked-out doctrines, although even here, as we shall see, the impression is never, or very rarely, one of a particularly pervasive trend. For example, among the more common heretical positions was that the blood and body of Christ was not corporeally or substantially present in the sacrament of the altar, but this serves to give the illusion of continuity, as some of the beliefs the Lollards expressed on this issue were more sophisticated than others. Elsewhere one notes a wide variety of eccentric beliefs - that baptism was 'nothing worth', that it was not necessary to solemnize marriage in the Church, or that marriage was not a sacrament - some, conceivably, the result of inebriation or mental breakdown, but on the whole, if fanciful, sincerely held and suggesting some degree of sophistication.[9] If, then, one is to define the word 'Lollard' for this chapter, one should perhaps make a start by examining those articles which are manifestly heretical, rather than simply denoting hostility to the priesthood or to authority generally. As will be seen shortly, the very diversity of belief we find expressed in these records has profound implications for our view of the Lollards' relationship with the doctrines of the early Reformers.

Foxe's case may be justified.

Let us first of all, then, turn to the records of the Lollards' beliefs preserved in The Acts and Monuments. These are (1) the Court-Book of Bishop Hales of Coventry and Lichfield, describing the trials of Lollards brought to examination in his diocese in the late 1480s;[10] (2) the 'register' of Bishop Longland, describing the persecution of heretics in the Lincoln diocese between 1520 and 1522 and perhaps one of the most valuable of all the extant sources of early Tudor Lollardy;[11] and (3) Foxe's summary of the Court proceedings of Bishops Tunstal and Fitzjames of London, the records of only three of which survive in the original Fitzjames material.[12] At first sight, Foxe's concept of some kind of continuing tradition of dissent appears justified. Clearly compatible with the doctrines of the first Protestants were the views of many of those indicted rejecting or criticising the Roman Church's teaching on transubstantiation. This can be demonstrated by the records of Longland's investigations in the diocese of Lincoln. Some of the heretics were simply sceptical of the priest's power to convert the material bread into the body of Christ: 'in proof whereof', said one Lollard, 'let a mouse be put in the pix with the Host, and the mouse would eat it up.'[13] Others expressed the belief that the sacrament was a commemorative service only or that the elements were but a signification or representation of Christ's body, thereby anticipating the doctrines of many of the 'Swiss' Reformers, such as Zwingli and Oecamplidius. Richard Colins was reported as having taught that 'the sacrament of the altar is not very God, but a certain figurative thing of Christ in bread'.[14] Another view was that the pure bread remained in the eucharist and that the body of Christ was ascended into heaven and 'would come there no more.'[15]

Equally pleasing from Foxe's point of view would have been the opinions of many of those indicted on the veneration of images and the practice of going on pilgrimages. One heretic, mentioned in the Longland register, believed, as did many of the early Protestants, that images ought not to be worshipped because they were carved by man's hand, an idea which seems to have stemmed directly from the prohibition

of images in the Decalogue.[16] Other Lollard positions which Foxe saw correctly as anticipating the doctrines of the Reformers were that Christ was alone sufficient for salvation as opposed to the mediatory influence of the saints, that one should not worship the Virgin Mary and that every layman was a priest. Also of interest in view of future developments is the emphasis of some Lollards on the authority of the Scriptures as the one sure basis of belief. According to Thomas Man, a leading Lollard teacher in the Amersham area of Buckinghamshire, 'the word of God and God [is] all one, and he that worthily receiveth the word of God, receiveth God'.[17]

The problems in Foxe's interpretation.

So far, then, we have seen how Foxe's idea of a continuing Protestant tradition contains an element of truth. But it cannot be applied universally, even on Foxe's own showing. Clearly absent from the records, for example, is the Protestant emphasis on justification by faith alone, with many of those convicted continuing to put a great deal of stress on the efficacy of 'good works' for salvation. One indication of this is found in the immense popularity of the Epistle of St. James among heretics indicted in the diocese of Lincoln, with some copies reaching as high a price as two nobles, a considerable sum considering the backgrounds of most of those accused.[18] With its emphasis on the value of good works ('even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone') the Epistle of St. James did not fit in very well with the Reformers' idea of justification by grace through faith.[19] Luther himself is said to have called it 'an Epistle of straw'.[20] Nor, indeed, were all the Lollards wholly anti-establishmentarian on such questions as the eucharist or the adoration of saints. One of the heretics indicted before Bishop Fitzjames in London, a certain Joan John, held in marked contradistinction to the views of many of her contemporaries that she should continue to worship the Virgin Mary, despite advising her neighbours against the 'pope, his pardons and pilgrimages.'[21] Other arguments of this type included that of Robert Rave of Burford who stated that men should worship none but 'God and our Lady',[22] while the absence of all references to the eucharist in the articles of some of

the Lollards in Foxe's account of the Coventry persecution, as well as in London, suggests that the accused were probably orthodox in their sacramental beliefs, if only because a charge on this issue would almost certainly have been brought had there been any reason to believe it could be sustained.[23]

Another distinguishing feature of the Lollards in the episcopal records included in The Acts and Monuments is the extent to which financial concerns or anti-clericalism played a part in heretical belief. For instance, many of the heretics indicted in the Lincoln diocese appear to have been aroused more by hatred of the clergy than by opposition to their doctrines. Among the charges mentioned in the 'Brief Summary of Opinions' at the end of Foxe's account are that the Church was too rich, that money spent on pilgrimages served to maintain thieves and harlots and that the chapel, being then in ruins, looked like an 'old fair milk-house'.[24] Two heretics indicted in London, Ellen Heyer and Robert Berkeway, appear to have held similar beliefs. Among the articles arraigned against Robert Berkeway was that he had spoken 'heinous words' against Thomas Becket, calling him 'micher and thief'.[25] This betrays little more than a virulent anti-clericalism. The other charges against him, being 'most wicked blasphemies against God', he categorically denied.[26] Ellen Heyer appears to have done little more than not come to Church. Her articles included the following: 'that she had neither confessed herself unto the priest, nor yet received the sacrament of the altar by the space of four years; and notwithstanding, had yearly eaten flesh at Easter'.[27] It is possible that Heyer's disobedience was the result of some kind of doctrinal opposition. Yet a much more mundane reason may be given. Foxe himself doubts her claim to be a 'witness of the truth'. There were, he says, certain others 'more simple and ignorant' who had 'but a very small smack or taste of the truth'.[28] And other incidents recorded in The Acts and Monuments show that people could be convicted of heresy when in reality they had done nothing of the sort. The story of one Mistress Frebarn, accused of heresy in 1538 because, being pregnant, she longed for a tasty 'morsel of a pig', is here a case in point.[29]

Further evidence of discontinuity is found in those records of early Tudor Lollardy that exist outside The Acts and Monuments. There were in fact some seventeen or eighteen episcopal records belonging to the period 1490-1530 which Foxe did not know about. In fact, as the discovery of a Court-Book devoted to the persecution of heretics in the Coventry and Lichfield diocese in 1511 shows, new evidence is coming to light all the time, with other sequences of information occurring in the London Chronicles, in the Significations of Excommunication in the Public Record Office, in the State Papers and many other secular sources.[30] Yet while there are significant similarities between the two groups, Foxe's comparison of the doctrines of the major Reformers with the beliefs of the later Lollards remains open to question. In this case this is chiefly illustrated by the existence of an indigenous 'radical' element. Admittedly, a few of these so-called 'heretics' would probably have been influenced more by the effects of drunkenness and mental instability than anything else. One of the troublemakers examined by Bishop King in Salisbury, a man from Temple parish in Bristol, held that there were three gods, and although this may reflect some kind of anti-Trinitarianism, a more likely explanation is that he had lost his reason.[31] Nevertheless, the majority were probably quite serious about their beliefs. Among the opinions recorded against Agnes Grebil, one of the heretics convicted by Archbishop Warham in the Weald of Kent in 1511, was that she had denied the spiritual profit of baptism, stating that a child put into the font was no better than if he had been put into other water.[32] Equally as shocking from an orthodox Protestant point of view would have been the beliefs of a heretic from Coventry who stated that Christ was the son of Joseph and that Mary was not a virgin, and that it was unnecessary for a child of Christian parents to be baptized.[33]

Yet Foxe's concept of a pervasive Protestant tradition is most open to question in view of the lack of any real 'theological' basis to the heretics' beliefs. Although one finds traces of a more constructive approach in, say, the tendency of some Lollards towards a scriptural fundamentalism, the abiding impression of the mass of Lollard articles

is not one of the radical alternative to Romanism posed by the Reformers, but one of a series of negatives, with many offenders making no attempt to fill the doctrinal gap left by their criticisms. Take, for example, some of the Lollards' views on the eucharist. Occasionally, as has been noted, it is possible to detect an extremely sophisticated pattern of belief in the charges of some of the more articulate offenders. The view of Richard Colins that the consecrated elements were a 'certain figurative thing of Christ in bread' is a case in point and represents a close correspondence with the teachings of the Reformation.[34] Yet by far the majority of those convicted evidently had little time or taste for such refinements: to them the host was, in Margaret Aston's words, 'only material bread', 'just a cake of material bread', if not less or worse.[35] Joan Clerk probably reflected the views of some at least of her neighbours in the Lincoln diocese when she stated that 'she never did believe in the sacrament of the altar, nor ever would believe in it'.[36] Other sayings of this type recorded in Foxe included the statements of Isabel Tracher, that the priest at communion time had given her a 'bitter gall',[37] and that of Elenor Higges of Burford, who threatened that she should burn the sacrament in an oven.[38] It is possible that owing to unimaginative and negative forms of questioning, many of the more positive areas of the heretics' beliefs were simply left unrecorded. As has been stated, heretics were often tried according to set formularies of interrogation which attempted to discover what they did not believe in rather than, necessarily, what they did. Nevertheless, much the same impression of negativism is gleaned from material in which offenders seem to have been allowed to speak their own minds, such as in a number of detailed depositions in the Lincoln evidence.[39] Whatever the case, the Lollards' negativism may explain why so many of those convicted in this period chose to remain within the established Church structure rather than separating to form their own Church. Of the sixty Lollards examined by Bishop Longland during his investigation in Buckinghamshire, it is possible to find only three cases of long-term absenteeism.[40] The significance of this fact for Foxe's view of the Lollards as a whole and how far this was a problem which affected Foxe himself are questions which will be examined in the following section.

Lollard priests and services.

Although he does not explicitly say so, one suspects that, for Foxe, one of the clearest expressions of Lollardy's close relationship to the Church of his own day was that it was largely separate from the established Roman Church. Of some significance in this respect was the Lollards' tendency to meet together in readings and conventicles. These are respectively labelled in Foxe as 'sweet assemblies',[41] this 'congregation of Buckinghamshire men'[42] or, as in the case of certain Lollards indicted in Newbury, 'a glorious and sweet society of faithful favourers'.[43] The Lollards not only met together in 'sweet assemblies'; according to Foxe, they also had their equivalent of a priesthood, the heretics in the diocese of Lincoln being led by 'four principal readers or instructors' or, as they were called then, 'doctors'.[44] That the Lollards often met together in the form of small assemblies or 'house groups' is a fact based on massive and incontrovertible evidence. In the Lincoln diocese alone there are records of at least twelve such meetings, some of which appear to have been quite well attended. Among the charges recorded against John Butler, a heretic from Chesham, was that he had once met with three other men in the house of one Ashford, there to read 'two hours together in a certain book of The Acts of the Apostles, in English'.[45] Another Lollard, a certain Durdant of Iver-Court, used to hold a conventicle afer family dinner, 'reciting unto them out of the Epistles of St. Paul, and of the Gospels'.[46] Finally, Richard Bartlet detected a group of at least nine heretics who had 'resorted many times together, reading and conferring among themselves, and talking against worshipping of images, and pilgrimage'.[47] It is likely that all these meetings were held in secret. According to Bartlet, 'if any came in amongst them that were not of their side, then they would say no more, but keep all silence'.[48]

However, it is doubtful whether these meetings ever developed into formal 'Church' services. Despite the martyrologist's remarks about Lollard 'congregations', there is little indication of their being given over to acts of public worship. In an apocryphal story in The Acts and Monuments Foxe relates how one Lollard was so upset by the 'wonted idolatry' of the Catholic mass that he was accustomed to flee into the

woods near his house, 'there solitarily to worship the true living God, in spirit and in truth'.[49] But such instances are significantly rare. The burden of the evidence suggests that when the Lollards did meet together they did little more than read or 'rehearse' passages of scripture or, as in the case of Bartlet above, 'confer' in matters of religion.[50]

Another problem with Foxe's claim is that no evidence is available of any large-scale boycott of Catholic services. Far from it - for many of those indicted are also recorded as having played a full part in the sacramental life of their parishes. Among the charges recorded against Alice Holting of Amersham was that 'she, being great with child, did dine before she went to church to take her rites'.[51] Another heretic, Joan Norman, was taught that she 'might as well drink on the Sunday before mass, as on any other day'.[52] Many other examples might be cited. It may be that some of these Lollards merely attended Church to avoid prosecution. Foxe's account of the seven heretics indicted in Coventry in 1519 is a case in point, the latter having been said to have 'pretended most show of worship and devotion' at the elevation of the host.[53] Yet for the majority of heretics the opposite was probably true. Although Lollards sometimes differed with their more orthodox neighbours as to how the sacraments should be interpreted, there is no indication that they ever intended to go without them or regarded them as any the less efficacious for salvation.

The case for an independent Lollard priesthood is even less convincing. On the one hand, it is clear that the heretics chose from among themselves certain teachers or 'instructors' whose responsibility it was to read out the Scriptures at public gatherings as well as to counsel individuals as to what to believe in key areas of doctrine. Alice Harding, a Lollard detected by Longland in 1522, told Richard Bartlet 'what he should do' on receiving the sacrament of the altar.[54] Another heretic, Thomas Man, declared to a hand-picked audience of Lollards in Chesham that 'pilgrimage was nought, and that images were not to be worshipped'.[55] It seems Man was well known in other parts.

According to the testimony of Thomas Risby, Man had been responsible for converting over seven hundred people in Buckinghamshire, London, Essex and East Anglia.[56]

Yet in so far as these 'instructors' did not take to administering the sacraments they cannot be equated with a formal priesthood. As has been noted, most Lollards continued to attend Church regularly, if only to celebrate mass and receive absolution. Among the questions posed to Agnes Wellis, for example, at the beginning of the Buckinghamshire investigations, was whether 'when she came to receive, and was confessed... she did utter and confess her heresies to the priest'.[57] It appears that the authorities considered Wellis' case as representative of the norm as Foxe quotes her articles as indicative of the sort of questions all the Lollards were confronted with. In the final analysis, therefore, the suggestion that the Lollards were in some sense separate from the established Church cannot be substantiated. Although it is clear that the Lollards regarded themselves as in many ways set apart from the normal run-of-the-mill communicant, it cannot be stated with any certainty that they established, or aimed to establish, an independent ecclesiastical structure along the lines of the Reformed Church.

Difficulties for Foxe.

Clearly, though, we cannot leave the issue of Foxe's account of the Lollards simply at that. If we are right and Foxe's claims are not supported by the evidence he uses to justify them, we may wonder what sort of effect this had on Foxe himself. Are there signs that he found his heroes' beliefs embarrassing? One way in which we can discover the answer to this question is by comparing Foxe's transcripts of the episcopal registers in his collection with any originals that might have survived. By assessing how far Foxe altered or omitted information from his transcripts we can get some idea of whether he was affected by it. The furious debate that has raged over this question in the past should make us very wary of taking up such a course. According to S.R. Maitland and his disciples, Foxe deliberately falsified documents

and fabricated essential information.[58] More recently, though, J.F. Mozley has argued that Foxe's account of the Lollards is noted for its precise transcriptions of episcopal registers and even where Foxe can be seen to have altered or suppressed certain information there is no reason to question his good faith in the matter. Often, Mozley alleged, the aforesaid articles had been left out because they had been considered too trivial; at the very worst Foxe simply believed that they had been fabricated by the ecclesiastical authorities and were hence insubmissible as genuine evidence of the Lollards' doctrine.[59] It is not the intention of this thesis to contribute to this argument for its own sake. As has been noted, checking Foxe's accuracy in transcription is only part of what it is intended to do; as will be seen, many of his narrative sequences, which have gone unquestioned in the past, deserve closer and more rigorous examination. Nevertheless an examination of the differences between the extant episcopal registers and Foxe's account of early Tudor Lollardy shows that Foxe was not only very embarrassed by some of the ideas the Lollards confessed to but would sometimes seek to alter or suppress information which failed to support his claim for the Lollards as proto-Protestants. Some of the problems raised below have been noted before in J.A.F. Thomson's 'John Foxe and Some Sources for Lollard History: Notes for a Critical Appraisal', although the implications I draw for our view of Foxe's integrity as a historian are slightly different.[60] However, others have never been discussed before, particularly Foxe's longhand notes on some of the heretics indicted in Kent in 1511, now preserved in his original papers in the Harleian Collection in the British Library.

Let us first of all, though, examine those extant episcopal records which might serve as a cross-check for Foxe's account of the Lollards' doctrine. Roughly speaking, these can be divided into two separate documents, or groups of documents: first, the extant register of Archbishop Warham, describing the persecution of Lollards in the Tenterden and Benenden areas of Kent in 1511; and secondly, the register of Richard Fitzjames, Bishop of London, including the articles of at least two heretics named in The Acts and Monuments, Joan Baker and Elizabeth Sampson. In Foxe's treatment of the London register, it is apparent that the case of Joan Baker caused Foxe little anxiety: most of

the document is transcribed quite accurately, and although Foxe leaves out a number of articles, such as 'no priest shall come but one', these are clearly fairly trivial and cannot seriously be considered as an attempt to misrepresent the facts of the case.[61] Be this as it may, Foxe does seem to have been quite embarrassed about some of the language used by the accused. One of the main articles indicted against her was that she had persuaded a friend of hers not to put any 'trust or confidence' in the Crucifix, adding that she 'would do more reverence to the crucifix in the Church than she would do to a dog'.[62] Yet in Foxe's version of the article in The Acts and Monuments, these additional remarks are replaced by the suggestion that her friend should have 'confidence' instead 'in God who is in heaven, who only worketh all the miracles that be done, and not the dead images, which be but stocks and stones'.[63] It is possible that Foxe was referring to a part of the register not now extant. On the other hand, it is equally as likely that Foxe was worried by the apparent crudity of Baker's comparison of the crucifix with a dog, and substituted a phrase or two of his own in order to give it a greater air of respectability. Although there is no reason to suppose Foxe disagreed with Baker on matters of doctrine, some of the language used by the Lollards could in itself be upsetting in the context of a Reformed Church tradition, especially given Foxe's emphasis on the 'true godliness' and 'godly living' of those convicted as, say, in his introduction to the Lincoln material.[64]

Whatever the case, Foxe appears to face far more serious problems in his treatment of the trial of Elizabeth Sampson. Here the martyrologist borrows extensively from the London register, but omits from his account two articles, both of which would have been considered heretical and hence spoiled his picture of the Lollards as proto-Protestants: first, that Sampson had said it was impossible that Christ should come bodily to heaven at the Ascension; and second, that there was no general resurrection as 'more souls than is in heaven already shall never come to heaven'.[65] It is conceivable that Foxe believed Sampson to have been wholly innocent of the indictment. This was certainly his view in the case of another Lollard convicted at the same time, William Pottier. According to the register, Pottier had affirmed that there were six Gods, the first three being the persons of the

Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the fourth a priest's concubine, the fifth the Devil, and the sixth 'that thing that a man setteth his mind most upon'.[66] Foxe is quick to point out that Pottier utterly denied this charge, 'confessing most firmly and truly, the blessed Trinity to be only one God in one unity of Deity', and that earlier remarks by Pottier had been scandalously misrepresented.[67] But in the case of Sampson it is much more likely that he omitted these charges because they embarrassed him. In the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments he refers to them as 'other fond articles' but does not elucidate further.[68] This not only suggests that he found them embarrassing but that he was quite clear in his mind that she was guilty as charged, the word 'fond' implying the articles had been dreamed up or imagined by Sampson herself. It is unlikely that he could have presented a reasonable case if he had thought otherwise. When she was asked how she responded to the articles indicted against her Sampson showed little hesitation in confessing to them.[69]

However, the clearest expression of Foxe's tendency to alter or omit beliefs he does not agree with is found in his account of the Kentish Lollards examined by Archbishop Warham in 1511. As with the Fitzjames evidence, much of the original document is transcribed quite accurately. Foxe states the names of the five accused, giving the main articles against them as well as the date of their sentencing and executions. Equally impressive is his account of the testimonies of some of the chief witnesses, among them heretics who had already abjured and who were now being required to detect others of their sect to the ordinary. Having said this, two irregularities should be noted in the articles of belief with which the offenders were charged. The first occurs in the main list of charges at the beginning of his narrative: Foxe fails to note down the fact that some of the accused denied the spiritual profit of baptism.[70] The second appears in the testimony of one of the main witnesses (Christopher Grebil) and deals with the issue of marriage. According to Foxe's account, Grebil had accused his mother, Agnes, of speaking against the sacramental efficacy of marriage; but in the equivalent passage in the register Agnes is recorded as having stated that it was not necessary to solemnize marriage in the church, a substantial variation.[71]

To what extent had Foxe altered the substance of the Lollard beliefs because he was embarrassed by the nature of the evidence at his disposal? Certainly this is suggested by the omission of the article on baptism. Although it was Mozley's view that Foxe had this article excluded on the grounds that he thought the Lollards were innocent of the charge, some of the major testimonies against the accused show the indictment to have been entirely justified.[72] And anyway this is not the only occasion in the account of the Kentish Lollards where Foxe appears to have wanted to give a false impression of his heroes' views on baptism. Another of the sayings attributed to Agnes Grebil was that she had stated that 'baptism was nothing worth, for a child put in the font was no more the better than if he had been put into other water';[73] but in Foxe's version of the same in The Acts and Monuments the charge is altered to read that 'baptism was no better in the font, than out of the font', thereby skillfully avoiding the challenge to the efficacy of baptism per se.[74]

The second inaccuracy in Foxe's account, concerning Agnes Grebil's opinion on marriage, is more difficult to explain. Although an attack on the solemnization of marriage in church was potentially as damaging to Foxe's case, one cannot rule out the possibility that he had made this error by mistake, particularly as something like Foxe's version of the same appeared in the main list of charges with which the martyrs were accused.[75] On the other hand, it is perhaps too much of a coincidence that Foxe seems to make exactly the same error in his treatment of other Lollard registers, notably in the records of Bishop Alnwick's persecution in the diocese of Norwich in the late 1420s. As with the Warham material, some of the heretics in Norfolk believed that all that sufficed for marriage to be made legal was the consent of both parties without any solemnization in the church; and again Foxe alters the article to give quite a different meaning, stating simply that the Lollards had claimed it was no sacrament.[76] Thus although the case for misrepresentation is less clear here than in his treatment of the heretics' views on baptism, the overall impression of some sort of tension as to the nature of the evidence is the same. Here

again, it is evident that Foxe's concern to promote the Lollards as proto-Protestants may have influenced him in his decision to 'edit away' a not insignificant proportion of the Warham material.

It is in fact Foxe's treatment of the Warham material in his notes in the Harleian Collection in the British Library that provides our final indication of the effect the Lollards' doctrines had on him. As has been noted Foxe not only copied documents but made extensive notes on them before committing them to his final drafts. These are chiefly important, I would argue, in so far as they allow one to assess how far he managed to suppress inconvenient information between research and writing. Foxe's papers on the Henrician period mostly deal with heretics who were convicted after 1528. A few notes on the persecution in Kent survive, however, and these shed some interesting light on Foxe's attitude to the Lollards. Take, for example, Agnes Carder's article against the necessity of solemnizing marriage in the Church. This again seems to have caused Foxe embarrassment, only in this case for the martyrologist to suppress the charge altogether, referring to the accused simply as having spoken 'against the sacrament of matrimony'.[77]

Conclusion.

In an analysis of Foxe's account of early Tudor Lollardy between 1480 and 1522 it is therefore clear that not all the information he had at his disposal was as helpful as he perhaps initially intended it to be. Some of the Lollards professed loyalty to suspiciously Catholic forms of workship; others expressed beliefs that would have led to a heresy charge in Foxe's day as well as at the time they were indicted. How Foxe reacted to this problem provides important clues about his aims and methods. Whereas much of his information is transcribed quite accurately many of the more outrageous statements, such as the Kentish Lollards' denial of the sacramental efficacy of baptism or the view of Elizabeth Sampson that it was impossible that Christ rose bodily at the Ascension, are flagrantly suppressed. It is possible only to speculate about Foxe's reasoning for this. It may have been his intention to

convince his reader that the Lollards were more 'Protestant' than they were in reality. However, one also has to bear in mind that Foxe sometimes admits (as in the case of Ellen Heyer cited above) that not all the Lollards were in 'like perfection of knowledge'.[78] Another explanation for this phenomenon is that Foxe saw the Lollard articles as fulfilling a vital spiritual function. The truth (eternal and unchanging) was the truth, Foxe believed, and whatever hindered its expression needed to be set right - especially when the spiritual welfare of his readers was at stake. Whatever the case, the fact that Foxe found his evidence embarrassing enough to attempt to suppress it is an important consideration to bear in mind when we come to examine Foxe's treatment of other 'favourers of God's word' in his history of the early years of the Reformation.

Notes to Chapter 1.

1 A&M iv. 174.

2 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book (London, 1940).

3 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book, 222.

4 A. Hudson, 'The Examination of Lollards', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research XLVI (1973), 145-159 and reprinted in A. Hudson, Lollards and Their Books (London, 1985).

5 J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XIV (1963), 169.

6 A&M iv. 236.

7 A&M iv. 242, 245.

8 A&M iv. 243.

9 For example, some of the heretics convicted by Archbishop Warham in the Weald of Kent in 1511 denied the spiritual efficacy of baptism as well as holding that it was not necessary to solemnize marriage in church (A&M v. 647-654).

10 A&M iv. 133-135.

11 A&M iv. 217-246.

12 A&M iv. 174-214; Reg. Fitzjames (London) fos. $25^{r}$-$26^{v}$; printed in E. Jeffries Davis, 'The authorities for the case of Richard Hunne', English Historical Review XXX (1915), 477-488 and A.F. Pollard ed., The Reign of Henry VIII From Contemporary Sources, (London, 3 vols., 1914), III, 242-246.

13 A&M iv. 229.

14 A&M iv. 235.

15 A&M iv. 232.

16 A&M iv. 234.

17 A&M iv. 209.

18 A&M iv. 222, 223, 224.

19 James 2: 17, Authorized King James Version of the Bible.

20 In his Prefaces to the New Testament, Luther remarks that he did not regard the Epistle of St. James as the writing of an apostle because it is 'flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works' (M. Luther, Prefaces to the New Testament in J. Pelikan and H.T. Lehmann eds., Luther's Works, (Philadelphia, 55 vols., 1960), XXXV, 396).

21 A&M iv. 176.

22 A&M iv. 233.

23 A&M iv. 133-135, 174-214.

24 A&M iv. 243.

25 A&M iv. 179.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 A&M v. 385-387.

30 A.G. Dickens, 'Heresy and the Origins of English Protestantism', Britain and the Netherlands, ii (Groningen, 1964), 51-53.

31 J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards 1414-1520 (London, 1965), 46.

32 Reg. Warham (Cantuar), fos. 169-173.

33 J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards 1414-1520, 106; Victoria County History, Derby, ii, 14.

34 A&M iv. 235.

35 M.E. Aston, 'William White's Lollard Followers', Catholic Historical Review LXVIII (1982), 469-497.

36 A&M iv. 229.

37 A&M iv. 228.

38 A&M iv. 237.

39 For example, the depositions of Robert and Richard Bartlet in A&M iv. 221.

40 These being Isabel Tracher (A&M iv. 227); Thomas Grove (A&M iv. 228) and Katharine Bartlet (A&M iv. 225-226).

41 A&M iv. 218.

42 A&M iv. 213.

43 Ibid.

44 A&M iv. 214.

45 A&M iv. 230.

46 A&M iv. 226.

47 A&M iv. 222.

48 Ibid.

49 A&M iv. 580.

50 A&M iv. 222.

51 A&M iv. 228.

52 A&M iv. 214.

53 A&M iv. 558.

54 A&M iv. 224.

55 A&M iv. 230.

56 A&M iv. 213.

57 A&M iv. 223.

58 S.R. Maitland, 'Remarks on the New Edition of Foxe's Work, and on the Work Itself', The British Magazine, XI (June 1837), 620-625; XII (July 1837), 6-13; XII (Aug. 1837), 137-144; XII (Sept. 1837), 253-259; XII (Oct. 1837), 376-381; XII (Nov. 1837), 496-502; XII (Dec. 1837), 620-627; XII (Jan. 1838), 12-20; XIII (Feb. 1838), 122-129; XIII (Mar. 1838), 254-263; XIII (April 1838), 385-389; XIII (June 1838), 613-619.

59 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book, 152-174.

60 J.A.F. Thomson, 'John Foxe and Some Sources for Lollard History: Notes for a Critical Appraisal', Studies in Church History, II (London, 1965), 251-257.

61 Reg. Fitzjames (London) fos. $25^{r}$-$26^{v}$; printed in E. Jeffries Davis, 'The authorities for the case of Richard Hunne'.

62 Ibid.

63 A&M iv. 175.

64 In A&M iv. 218, Foxe writes of the Lincoln Lollards that such were their 'travails, their earnest seekings, their burning zeal.... their love and concord, their godly living' that they 'may make us now, in these our days of free profession, to blush for shame.'

65 Reg. Fitzjames (London) fos. $25^{r}$-$26^{v}$; printed in A.F. Pollard ed., The Reign of Henry VIII From Contemporary Sources, III, 242-246; A&M iv. 126.

66 A&M iv. 175.

67 Ibid.

68 Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes (London, 1563), 373.

69 Reg. Fitzjames (London) fos. $25^{r}$-$26^{v}$; printed in A.F. Pollard ed., The Reign of Henry VIII From Contemporary Sources, III, 242-246; J.F. Mozley John Foxe and his Book, 216-218.

70 Reg. Warham (Cantuar) fos. $159^{r}$,$159^{v}$,$160^{r}$; A&M v. 648.

71 Reg. Warham (Cantuar) fol. 171; A&M v. 650.

72 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book, 218-222.

73 Reg. Warham (Cantuar) fol. 171.

74 A&M v. 650.

75 One of the articles objected against the Lollards was that 'the solemnization of martrimony is not necessary to salvation of soul'.

76 Westminster Cathedral MS B.2.8.; printed in N.P. Tanner ed., Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31, Camden Fourth Series, Volume 20, Royal Historical Society (1977), 57; A&M iii. 589-590; J.A.F. Thomson, 'John Foxe and Some Sources for Lollard History: Notes for a Critical Appraisal', 252-254.

77 British Library, MS Harleian 421, fol. 139.

78 A&M iv. 179, 174.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'Fearful falls and dangerous defections':[1] Foxe's Lollard 'Martyrs'

In The Acts and Monuments, Foxe is not simply concerned with the Lollards' doctrine. Of equal, if not greater importance was their conduct in adversity. Indeed, for Foxe, the two were intimately related. If the Lollards were really witnesses of the 'true Church', then it was logical to assume that this would be brought out in their way of life, particularly in times of persecution. As Foxe writes of the Lollards indicted in Buckinghamshire in the early 1520s,

> 'To see their travails, their earnest seekings, their burning zeal, their readings, their watchings, their sweet assemblies, their love and concord, their godly living, their faithful demeaning with the faithful, may make us now, in these our days of free profession, to blush for shame'.[2]

And yet for Foxe, clearly, the lives of the Lollards were also a source of great tension and anxiety. Although a few martyrs lived up to the godly ideal of suffering for the true faith, most of the records at his disposal were singularly unhelpful to his delineation of the Lollards as prototypes for a Protestant sainthood. Why, then, were the Lollards so disappointing and what was Foxe's reaction to his evidence? Did he take matters in his stride or did he experience difficulties in reconciling the problems his information afforded him? As will be seen, the Lollards' lack of constancy in the face of severe persecution was to present him with even greater difficulties than the tendency of some of his heroes to profess embarrassing doctrines. How Foxe attempted to resolve these difficulties and how successful he was in doing so, it is the intention of this chapter to discover.

Foxe's view of martyrdom.

Before going on to discover the answer to these questions, however, it will be necessary to examine The Acts and Monuments as a whole and look at the context Foxe was writing in. Why write about martyrs at all? And what qualities did he consider necessary for an individual to possess if his martyrdom was to be successful? A very important reason for Foxe's interest in martyrs was that they provided positive encouragement for the church-goers of Foxe's own day. Foxe was not likely to forget that even as he was compiling the first Latin edition of the 'Book of Martyrs' in Basle in 1554, people in his own native land were being persecuted for their religious beliefs. But even with the danger over, the godly lives and deaths of the saints continued to provide inspiration and encouragement for Christians and non-Christians alike. In this way, Foxe stresses, 'the mild deaths of the saints' helped to establish 'a good conscience, to learn the contempt of the world, and to come to the fear of God'.[3] A more pressing reason for discussing the problem, though, was that the martyrs' behaviour was in itself one of the marks of the elect. Their godly lives before they suffered persecution was alone testimony to this, hence Foxe's emphasis in his account of the Lincoln Lollards on his heroes' 'burning zeal' and 'earnest seekings'.[4] But the most powerful argument for their claim to be members of the 'true Church' was their conduct at death: the good death, as Foxe asserts in his account of some of the heretics convicted under Mary constituted a 'plain, visible argument' for the truth of the victim's sustaining faith.[5]

What, then, was meant by the 'good death'? On one level, this appears to have been as much a matter of the bearing of physical pain as anything else. The Acts and Monuments is studded with examples of this. One of these is the case of James Bainham, burnt for his beliefs by Bishop Stokesley in 1531. Apparently he shouted out at his executioners, that 'in this fire I feel no more pain, than if I were in a bed of down: but it is to me as a bed of roses'.[6] A similar courage was said to have been demonstrated by the Cambridge reformer, Thomas Bilney. In scotching rumours that Bilney had recanted his heresies before he died, Foxe relates the story of how on the night

before his execution he burnt off the entire finger of one hand in the flame of a candle in order to test his resolve.[7] Another virtue often emphasised in Foxe's account of the martyrs was the ability to bear one's death patiently, with the minimum of complaint. Thomas Bilney took his punishment in 'so good and quiet behaviour' and with such a 'quiet and mild countenance' that, argued Foxe, 'he seemed not much to consider the terror of his death'.[8] Other heretics to do this were John Frith and Richard Bayfield. According to Foxe, Frith's fortitude was particularly impressive, the wind having blown the flames of the fire onto the body of the heretic that was being burned with him, Andrew Hewet. This had the devastating result of leaving Frith's body half burned while his associate died extremely quickly. Yet Frith had 'established his mind with such patience, God giving him strength, that even as though he had felt no pain in that long torment, he seemed rather to rejoice for his fellow, than to be careful for himself'.[9]

Above all, however, it was necessary for the martyr to remain constant to his beliefs. Foxe's arguments about the 'truth' of the victim's sustaining faith would tend to lose their credibility if his heroes started to renounce their heresies before dying. Constancy, then, is a virtue Foxe makes a great deal of in his account of the martyrs. In the case of John Tewkesbury, a London heretic burned in the same year as Bilney, for example, he notes that he 'constantly abide[d] in the testimony of the truth', despite abjuring his doctrines in his first examination in 1529.[10] Apparently Tewkesbury was 'never quiet in mind and conscience until the time he had uttered his fall to all his acquaintance' asking their and God's forgiveness.[11] Thus it was with these things in mind that Foxe no doubt set about to write about the Lollards. How he fared in this task and to what extent he was obliged to reconsider this position it is now our intention to examine.

'Fearful falls and dangerous defections'.

Foxe's account of the Lollards in The Acts and Monuments is based on the martyrologist's use of two very different kinds of evidence. On the one hand he relied on a wide variety of oral information, mainly

eyewitness accounts by people who were still alive at the time Foxe started making enquiries. Foxe's story of William Tylseworth, a heretic burned in the diocese of Lincoln in 1506, is here a case in point, his chief informants for this being William Page, 'an aged father and yet alive, witness to the same' and a certain Agnes Wetherly, 'widow, being about the age of a hundred years, yet living and witness hereof'.[12] It is interesting that Foxe furnishes us with so much information about his sources, an aspect of his account which has been discussed at greater length in the Introduction to this thesis. Superimposed on this mainly oral tradition in Foxe's work, though, is a vast amount of documentary evidence, some of which would not have been preserved had it not been for Foxe's assiduousness. An example of this is Foxe's transcript of the 'register' of Bishop Longland, describing the persecution of some sixty heretics in the Amersham area of Buckinghamshire between 1520 and 1522 - by common consent, one of the most valuable of all the extant sources of early Tudor Lollardy.[13]

So how far does his evidence support Foxe's view of the Lollards as godly martyrs? His eyewitness material would certainly have afforded Foxe some encouragement. The requirement that the martyr take his death patiently was met by not a few of the heretics mentioned by his informants. Thomas Chase, one of the Lollards indicted before Bishop Smith in Amersham in 1506, was said to have shown just such courage and fortitude when despite the taunts and cruel handling of his captors - including a spell in 'Little Ease' (a notorious prison) - he reacted 'most quietly and patiently, remembering and having respect to Christ's promises [Matt. vii]: "Blessed are they which suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"'.[14] Another Lollard to show remarkable perseverence and constancy in adversity was Laurence Ghest, a heretic burned in Salisbury in 1508. According to the 'credible report' of one William Russell, 'an aged man dwelling of late in Coleman-street' in London, Ghest had been kept in prison for over two years before finally having been handed over to the secular arm.[15] This meant that his burning was imminent. Even at his execution, though, he was subjected to the most cruel torture, being

forced to listen to the exhortations of his wife and seven children that he recant and return to the faith. 'Yet in him', Foxe continues,

> 'religion overcoming nature, made his constancy to remain unmovable; in such sort, as when his wife began to exhort and desire him to favour himself, he again desired her to be content, and not to be a block in his way, for he was in a good course, running toward the mark of his salvation.'[16]

Many similar examples of great constancy are preserved in Foxe's eyewitness accounts, notably the stories of a 'faithful woman of Chipping-Sudbury' ('refusing no pains nor torments to keep her conscience clear and unreprovable in the day of the Lord')[17] and John Browne, a heretic horribly tortured in 1517, by Archbishop Warham and the Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher.[18]

Whether these were characteristics shared by the majority of Lollards convicted in this period is open to question, however. Foxe's documentary evidence, in particular, contains very few stories of heroism or constancy in times of hardship or persecution. Of major significance in this respect are the large number of abjurations that are said to have occurred, the process by which the convicted offender could avoid the death sentence by electing to recant his errors in open court. In Foxe's account of the Longland 'register', for example, there are reports of only five cases of burning: more than sixty of those prosecuted appear to have preferred to renounce their faith completely rather than suffer further for the sake of their religion. Indeed out of a total of two hundred and sixty-six heretics recorded in The Acts and Monuments as having been examined in this period, eighty-nine percent are dealt with in this way. How is one to explain this high proportion of abjurations? It is possible to blame the Lollards' behaviour on the unfair means of interrogation they were subjected to. Many offenders, if not tortured, were worn down by long terms of imprisonment, while a decision not to recant would almost invariably by accompanied by the threat of life imprisonment, if not that of the fire. We see this in Foxe's treatment of the Lollards examined before

Archbishop Warham in 1511 as well as in Bishop Blythe's persecution in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in which the Bishop's officers were ordered to discipline offenders who did not confess.[19] Nevertheless, it is very hard to imagine the high proportion of abjurations pleasing Foxe. The fact that most of his heroes refused to die for their faith was hardly good evidence for his claim for the Lollards as godly martyrs.

Foxe's problems would probably have seemed more bearable had some of the Lollards put up a stout resistance to authorities' demands that they recant. There are a few isolated examples of this. Emma Tilseworth, one of the heretics convicted in Amersham in 1520, categorically refused either to incriminate herself or to detect other heretics she knew.[20] But such cases were few and far between. Most Lollards convicted in this period gave in almost as soon as they began to be interrogated. Thomas Houre, one of the heretics indicted in the diocese of Lincoln, probably reflected the mood of many of his fellow believers in this respect when, on hearing of Bishop Longland's impending visitation, he told Alice Sanders that 'many were there condemned for heresy, and therefore he would lean to that way no more'.[21] Indeed, given the continuing participation of most Lollards in church services, opposition of any sort would hardly have been considered very popular or practicable. We have already seen that out of the sixty heretics examined in the diocese of Lincoln in the early 1520s, only three appear to have been convicted for non-attendance at mass.[22] What has not yet been mentioned is that many Lollards were themselves in positions of responsibility in the church. One heretic, a certain John Drury, was vicar of Windrish in Worcestershire. Apparently he was not afraid to flaunt his Lollard sympathies: when people brought candles to church he would take them away and 'say that they were fools that brought them that thither'.[23] Another, William Sweeting, was holy-water clerk for a period of ten years in three different parishes in Essex.[24] There are many more examples of Lollards taking up duties of this sort in this part of The Acts and Monuments, as indeed elsewhere.[25]

But the most important qualification that needs to be made to Foxe's view of the Lollards as godly martyrs concerns one of the by-products of the heretics' abjuration, the requirement of detection. As Foxe himself makes clear in his account of the Lincoln Lollards, the judgment of abjuration did not simply require the offender to forsake his opinions and suffer penance, but to 'detect to his ordinary whomsoever [he] should see or suspect hereafter to teach, hold, or maintain the same'.[26] And in apparent contrast to the martyrologist's claims about their 'love and concord' and 'faithful demeaning with the faithful' most Lollards appear to have had few qualms about doing this. As with the process of abjuration itself, the role of the ecclesiastical authorities in forcing the offender's hand cannot be too forcefully stressed. Not only were many of those convicted placed under pain of relapse if they refused to co-operate, but the use of some form of physical intimidation cannot be ruled out entirely. Many of the heretics interviewed by Bishop Longland, for example, had abjured before, during Bishop Smith's investigations in the Lincoln diocese in 1506. As a result their chances of avoiding the death sentence were very slim, yet not slim enough for many Lollards to detect their own wives and sisters in a last bid attempt to escape the fire.[27] Yet having said this there is hardly any evidence of the sort of loving community that one might have been led to expect had one relied solely on Foxe's version of events. In the Longland trials only three Lollards actually refused to betray their friends. Many more detected their neighbours because it gave them an opportunity to settle old scores or, as Foxe puts it in another context, to 'clear' themselves 'the better' against their articles.[28] John Colins, a Lollard from Burford, tried to win a reprieve by betraying his own father, claiming themselves that the latter's teaching on the eucharist had so 'discontented' him that he had once threatened to 'disclose his father's errors, and make him to be burned'.[29] Although the register does not say so, it is more than likely that Agnes Carder, an Amersham woman, betrayed her husband because she wanted to pursue an adulterous affair with the vicar of Iver. Apparently, the husband had stated that he was worried that she was becoming 'too familiar' with the priest.[30] Perhaps the most shocking example of collaboration between the Lollards and the ecclesiastical authorities is the case of Thomas Holmes, also from Amersham in

Buckinghamshire. According to Foxe he became a 'feed man of the bishop' or paid informant.[31] This resulted in the detection of over sixty of his fellow heretics in 1522.[32]

Foxe's explanation.

In an analysis of Foxe's account of early Tudor Lollardy, therefore, the idea that the Lollards were godly martyrs, providing a framework for later versions of Protestant sainthood, can by no means go unqualified. While on the one hand there may be reason anyway to doubt their willingness to suffer to the death, it soon becomes clear that in the case of many of those indicated during this period, rather less 'faithfulness' or 'concord' was shown than Foxe had led us to believe. This raises the question of how far Foxe was aware of the limitations of his 'godly martyrs'. Are there signs that he was forced to reconsider the claims he made about their 'burning zeal' and 'love and concord'? First impressions would appear to suggest not. Indeed his usual response to such problems in the evidence is to emphasise the Church's cruelty. Of some significance in this respect, argued Foxe, was the extent of the Lollards' suffering. If some of those convicted did not seek the honour of a martyr's death, he stated, then this did not rule out the possibility of other forms of maltreatment. Many Lollards suffered in ways that were no less admirable than their being handed over to the secular arm to be burned.[33] One of these was the practice of imprisoning Lollards for substantial periods before they faced examination. Father Rogers, one of the offenders arraigned before Bishop Smith in 1506, was kept in his cell 'fourteen weeks together', where Foxe alleges, 'he was so cruelly handled with cold, hunger, and irons, that after his coming out of the said prison, he was so lame in his back, that he could never go upright as long as he lived'.[34] No less horrifying, meanwhile, were some of the punishments the heretic was forced to undergo in the process of performing his penance. Many of those indicted during Archbishop Warham's visitation of the Weald of Kent in 1511, for example, were assigned to monasteries 'there to continue, and to fast all their life, "in pane doloris, et aqua angustiae;" that is, with bread of sorrow, and water of affliction'.[35]

Other heretics were viciously branded, a judgment that was allegedly imposed on some of the Amersham Lollards convicted by Bishop Smith in 1506.[36]

Another argument often used by Foxe in the defence of the Lollards concerned the means of interrogation they were subjected to. Clearly, contended the martyrologist, none of this would have happened had not the Lollards been compelled to abjure in the first place. Among the most effective methods of intimidation allegedly employed by the authorities was the use of oaths. Some of the Lollards in the diocese of Lincoln, for example, were forced to recant by being made to take an oath on the 'book of the peaceable evangelists', a feat of cruelty Foxe felt worth of particular censure as a 'violent abuse.... wresting men's consciences upon their oath'.[37] No less common as a means of compulsion was the use of torture or beating. John Browne, the heretic convicted by Archbishop Warham and Bishop Fisher in 1517, was here a case in point, his feet having been 'heated upon the hot coals and burned to the bones.... to make me.... to deny my Lord'.[38] There is some doubt whether this story is true. Although Foxe is said to have gained his information from Browne's daughter, the record of Warham's visitation to the district - also preserved in Foxe - assigns Browne's execution to 1511 and relates how he submitted himself of his own free will.[39] Nevertheless, the point of Foxe's story is plain: the reason why so many Lollards abjured between 1480 and 1522 was that they were forced to.

However, Foxe reserved his most convincing arguments for his treatment of the Lollards' persecutors. If some heretics had shown themselves weaker in resolve than might have been expected, this did not mean that the ecclesiastical authorities had been any less cruel. Indeed, in one sense, the clergy's cruelty was more important because it showed who had been on the right side during the Reformation. As Foxe explains in the case of some London Lollards, by far the most powerful argument in favour of the truth of his heroes' doctrines was that their opponents had been so obviously malevolent and cruel. In the light of this, the Lollards' tendency to renounce their beliefs paled into insignificance.

'Thus have I, as briefly as I could, summarily collected the principal articles objected against these weak, infirm, and earthy vessels; not minding hereby to excuse or condemn them in these their fearful falls and dangerous defections: but, leaving them unto the unmeasurable rich mercies of the Lord, I thought only to make manifest the unsatiable bloody cruelty of the pope's kingdom against the gospel and true church of Christ; nothing mitigating their envious rage, no, not against the very simple idiots; and that sometimes in most frivolous and irreligious cases.'[40]

A number of difficulties.

So far, then, we have seen how Foxe skilfully managed to avoid the problem of the Lollards' irresolution by concentrating instead on the bishops' 'bloody cruelty'. Not only did this offer him a convenient scapegoat for his heroes' weaknesses; it served to divert the reader's attention away onto other and - Foxe alleged - more significant issues. Yet there are times in his account of early Tudor Lollardy where he finds the heretics' behaviour enormously difficult to deal with. One such case is that of William Carder, one of the Lollards convicted by Archbishop Warham in 1511. From one angle, Carder's case provided Foxe with all the evidence he needed if he was successfully to mount an attack against the Church's cruelty. Not only, on denying his heresies, had he been accused by witnesses, whose previous abjurations had made refusing to testify against him impossible, but, having submitted himself and recanted his errors, the authorities had him burned anyway, a fact which Foxe thought 'contrary to good law, at least contrary to all christian charity'.[41]

Unfortunately for Foxe he could not very well expose the Church's cruelty without also drawing attention to the fact that Carder had recanted his errors in the first place. One indication of the sort of dilemma he faced in this respect is found in his treatment of Carder's witnesses. Although Foxe thought that the use of witnesses who had previously abjured was 'more than right law would give',[42] he nevertheless tries to explain away Carder's denial of his articles.

This, he says, had only happened because Carder thought he could 'clear himself the better' against the same - a somewhat unconvincing explanation when one considers that Foxe had already stated that Carder had been 'ready to conform himself in all points to their [the Catholics'] doctrine'.[43]

Another example of Foxe's unease occurs in his treatment of Carder's submission. Again it was Foxe's intention that this should illustrate the Church's cruelty: the fact that he had been condemned, 'his submission notwithstanding, and notwithstanding that the register maketh no mention of any relapse', was a travesty of justice and was not going to be passed over lightly.[44] But the fact that Carder recanted his heresies at all also needed to be explained. The explanation Foxe decided upon was even less convincing than the one he used to excuse Carder's denial. Although Carder recanted his beliefs, Foxe contended, neither yet did he hold 'any thing contrary to the mind of holy Scripture'.[45] In his account of one of the Lollards examined by Archbishop Warham, therefore, Foxe seems to have fallen into a trap of his own making. While it was his intention to focus on Carder's trial as an example of the Church's cruelty he could not very well admit - even to himself - his hero's frequent lack of resolve.

Another case mentioned in the Warham register that was to cause Foxe some disquiet was that of Agnes Grebil, one of Carder's disciples and a leading Lollard in the Tenterden area of Kent. Like Carder she had initially denied all her charges but the most worrying aspect of the trial from Foxe's point of view was the way in which she was finally condemned. Apparently the authorities had responded to her denial by bringing in other heretics to testify against her, among them her own husband and children. And it was on the testimony of the latter that she was sentenced to death and handed over to the secular arm to be burned. Clearly, Grebil's case was not going to be very encouraging from the point of view of Foxe's attempt to promote the Lollards as Protestant heroes. How was he to cope with this eventuality? His first move was a tried and trusted one: he would explain away the Lollards' weaknesses by emphasising the clergy's cruelty. Agnes' husband, John, only betrayed his wife, Foxe argued, because he had been persuaded 'by

virtue of his oath' to do so.[46] Similarly, Christopher and John Grebil, her sons, would never have acted in the way they did had they not previously abjured their heresies and sworn, on pain of death, to detect 'whomsoever they should see or suspect hereafter to teach, hold, or maintain the same'.[47] However, Foxe's horror at the Lollards' treatment of their mother is plain. In the following passage he seems to have completely forgotten his attack on the clergy: the main focus for his criticism is the Lollards themselves.

> 'Here hast thou, christian reader, before thine eyes a horrible spectacle of a singular, yea of a double impiety; first of an unnatural husband, witnessing against his own wife; and of as unnatural children, accusing and witnessing against their own natural mother: which although they had so done, the cause being of itself just and true (as it was not), yet had they done more than nature would have led them to do.... Now, besides all this, the husband to come in against his own wife, and the children to bring the knife wherewith to cut the throat of their own natural mother that bare them, that nourished them, that brought them up, what is this, but impiety upon impiety, prodigious and horrible for all christian ears to hear? And yet the greatest impiety of all resteth in these pretensed catholics and clergymen, who were the authors and causers of all this mischief.'[48]

As can be seen from the last comment, Foxe still thought that the clergy should bear the ultimate responsibility for Grebil's death. But the brunt of his criticism is directed at the Lollards - to the extent that they are said to have collaborated in her murder ('bring the knife wherewith to cut the throat of their own natural mother'). Significantly this is not the only occasion when Foxe found the Lollards' tendency to betray each other embarrassing. In his account of the heretics indicted by Bishop Longland in the diocese of Lincoln, for example, he notes, somewhat ruefully, that some of the Lollards showed themselves to be 'great detecters of their brethren'.[49]

But it was not the problem of detection that was to concern Foxe most. What embarrassed him more were those Lollards who, having abjured their beliefs and fallen into relapse, recanted their heresies again before being handed over to the secular arm to be executed. An example of this was the trial of William Sweeting and James Brewster, two of the heretics examined by Bishop Fitzjames in the diocese of London in 1511. Both men, Foxe discovered, had abjured before, in 1508 and 1506 respectively. But on being sentenced for relapse they immediately recanted their beliefs and asked absolution from their excommunications. This was not enough to save them from the punishment due to them by law - they were sent to Smithfield and on October 18th, 1511 they were burned - but from Foxe's point of view it was potentially disastrous. If Foxe was to prove that the Lollards died for the Protestant cause, the sight of two heretics renouncing their errors before they were killed was unlikely to be a particularly pleasing one. As with the case of Agnes Grebil, he seems to have remained unconcerned at first. He doubts whether the story was true as 'many of the registers' notes and records in such cases may rightly be doubted of, and so called into question'.[50] And even if it was true, Foxe argued, it only offered him the opportunity to charge 'that catholic clergy.... with a.... shameless tyranny; for', Foxe continues, 'if they nothing stay their bloody malice towards such as so willingly submit themselves into their mercies; what favour may the faithful and constant professors of Christ look for at their hands?'[51]

Yet Foxe could not quite hide his embarrassment at his heroes' irresolution. One indication of this is the fact that he provides not one narrative of the events of the trial but two. Whereas in one part of The Acts and Monuments the accused are said to have sought forgiveness for their errors, submitting themselves and craving absolution from their excommunications, in another part they are said to have had 'nothing else' to say but only they they committed themselves to Almighty God.[52] How is this discrepancy, all the more mystifying because it appears in the space of thirty-five pages in the modern edition of The Acts and Monuments, to be explained? It is possible that Foxe had left out the reference to the heretics' submission because of his haste to meet the demands of his printers. But it is much more

likely that he found it embarrassing. Suggestions at the beginning of the story that he was going to be dealing with offenders who 'became yet again as earnest professors of Christ as ever they were before' - strictly untrue in view of the evidence that follows - strongly reinforce this view.[53]

Foxe's encounter with the later Lollards, therefore, was not only plagued by worries about their doctrine. Equally disturbing from the martyrologist's point of view were the large numbers of heretics who abjured their beliefs and detected their brethren to the authorities. Some of the arguments he employed to explain his heroes' behaviour proved to be quite successful. He could concentrate on the degree to which they were compelled to recant or on the cruelty of the clergy as, in itself, one of the functions of the true Church. But he could not excuse them for ever. In a minority of cases Foxe's confidence about the Lollards' failings entirely gives way. As we shall see now, when we come to look at perhaps the most famous Lollard of them all, Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' is replete with crises of this kind.

## Notes to Chapter Two

1 A&M iv. 179.

2 A&M iv. 218.

3 A&M i. Preface p. 521.

4 A&M iv. 218.

5 A&M vii. 667.

6 A&M iv. 705.

7 A&M iv. 653.

8 A&M iv. 654. But see below pp. 92-97 for controversy.

9 A&M v. 15.

10 A&M iv. 692.

11 Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, (London, 1563), 486.

12 A&M iv. 123.

13 A&M iv. 217-246.

14 A&M iv. 124-125.

15 A&M iv. 127.

16 Ibid.

17 A&M iv. 128.

18 A&M iv. 181-182.

19 A&M v. 653; J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XIV (1963), 169.

20 A&M iv. 229.

21 A&M iv. 231.

22 See n. 40, Chapter 1 supra.

23 A&M iv. 237.

24 A&M iv. 214-5.

25 Other Lollard priests include, in the Longland persecution, the vicar of Little Missenden (A&M iv. 227), Thomas Tykill, morrow-mass-priest in Milk Street (London?) (A&M iv. 233), Robert Freeman, parish priest of Orton by Colebrook (A&M iv. 233).

26 A&M iv. 245.

27 For example, A&M iv. 222, 227.

28 A&M v. 649.

29 A&M iv. 236.

30 A&M iv. 231.

31 A&M iv. 245.

32 A&M iv. 226. See also the case of Thomas Houre (A&M iv. 232).

33 A&M iv. 587.

34 A&M iv. 124.

35 A&M v. 654.

36 A&M iv. 124.

37 A&M iv. 218.

38 A&M iv. 182. See also Foxe's comments in A&M v. 653: 'Or, if no such witnesses at all can be found, then are they strained upon the rack, or by other bitter torments forced to confess their knowledge, and to impeach others.'

39 A&M v. 651, 653.

40 A&M iv. 179-180.

41 A&M v. 649.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 A&M iv. 245.

48 A&M v. 650.

49 A&M iv. 242. Among them Thomas Holmes mentioned earlier.

50 A&M iv. 181.

51 Ibid.

52 A&M iv. 181, 215.

53 A&M iv. 180.

## CHAPTER THREE

'The Story of Richard Hun, Martyr'.

In a very real sense the case of Richard Hunne is as yet far from over.[1] Ever since Hunne was found dead in his cell on the morning of Monday 4 December 1514 - hanging from a staple by his own girdle - the issue of why he died and who was responsible for the deed has been the object of furious controversy among polemicists and historians alike. Many explanations have been put forward - some convincing, others merely ingenious - but all in one sense or another possible.[2] An equally interesting facet of the case meanwhile is precisely the controversy that surrounds it, and it is this often neglected aspect of the affair - in particular in relation to Foxe's account in The Acts and Monuments - to which this chapter is principally dedicated. From one angle 'The Story of Richard Hun' offers the student of Foxe remarkable room for exploration. Here we see Foxe not only in his role of archivist - various documents, such as the transcripts of Hunne's interrogation and trial for heresy, would almost certainly not have been preserved but for his zeal - but also in the capacity of historical commentator in his own right. Over a third of the martyrologist's account - an unprecedented amount, incidentally, at least in Foxe's treatment of the Henrician period - is devoted to developing his own line of thought as, at the same time, he attempts to work out for himself and his reader the peculiar inconsistencies that governed the course of Hunne's life and death. The question that arises, though, is how reliable is Foxe on Richard Hunne. Is he faithfully reporting the facts of the case or are there signs that he might have been biased? Clearly one's first consideration in answering this question must be the exact circumstances of Hunne's interrogation and trial and the events leading up to his death on 4 December 1514. Thus our problem: what happened to Richard Hunne in the Lollards' Tower and why?

The acknowledged facts of the Hunne case are too well known to warrant more than a passing mention here. Richard Hunne was one of the most respected of the Merchant Taylors' Company in London, a man supposedly of honest reputation who had been named as a defendant in a mortuary suit by one Thomas Dryffeld, rector of the parish of St. Mary Matfellon. In May 1512 the suit was decided in Dryffeld's favour, leaving Hunne to sue a writ of praemunire against the rector. Hunne was then charged with heresy and in late 1514 was imprisoned in the Lollards' Tower in the south-west corner of old St. Pauls. Opinions vary as to whether Hunne made a full confession, although from the transcripts of his interrogation he appears to have offered himself to the Bishop of London's 'charitable and favourable correction'.[3] Be this as it may, on the Monday morning following his interrogation he was found hanging from one of the beams in his cell. The ecclesiastical authorities immediately alleged suicide but the King's coroner, who was obliged in such cases to convene a jury to view the body,[4] was not convinced; and sometime in February 1515 William Horsey, the Bishop's Chancellor and two others - Charles Joseph, the summoner, and John Spalding, the gaoler - were charged with Hunne's murder.

So much for the established facts of the case. The question of their significance, however, has been open to dispute, a debate which rages over three fundamental problems: first, the real nature of the quarrel between Hunne and the ecclesiastical authorities; second, the real nature of Hunne's religious beliefs; and third, of course, the responsibility for his killing. One of the most important questions that needs to be asked as regards the first of these points is why Hunne should have taken out the writ of praemunire in the first place, some months after the mortuary suit had been decided in Dryffeld's favour. Perhaps we may suspect that Hunne wished to revenge himself in some way. As Richard Wunderli shows in one of the most recent reviews of the Hunne affair, the praemunire may have been the latest stage in a longstanding affaire d'honneur with the ecclesiastical authorities: in November 1511 Hunne appears to have been involved in another dispute, this time over a title to a tenement in 'West Cheap', and in January 1513 apparently he charged with slander one Henry Marshal, Dryffeld's chaplain.[5] Certainly

in the pleadings to the praemunire - unearthed some years ago by S.F.C. Milsom - there is a record of the background facts of the original case, how Hunne refused the bearing-sheet of his dead child as a mortuary payment, eventually provoking Dryffeld to bring a suit against Hunne in the archbishop's court at Lambeth.[6] There is at least a suggestion here, however, that Hunne may have had another motive. It may be that as early as 1512 he feared that he was about to face charges of heresy and sued the praemunire as a means of protecting himself. The main evidence that Hunne was at least under suspicion for heresy comes from Sir Thomas More who, in his Supplication of Soules, suggests that Hunne's religious beliefs had been the object of the Church's attention for some months before the praemunire.[7] There seems no reason to believe that More is not faithfully reporting the facts. In the definitive sentence against Hunne after his death, which Foxe records in full in The Acts and Monuments, Bishop Fitzjames suggests that Hunne had appeared before convocation at least once before he was imprisoned (but 'apprehendi non potuit').[8] And from the evidence of Hunne's first formal interrogation - also preserved in Foxe - in which Fitzjames alludes to Hunne's defence of the heretic Joan Baker (abjured 1510) it appears that Hunne had been in trouble with the authorities before even 1512.[9] But it is the evidence of Hunne's charge of slander against Henry Marshal in January 1513 which seems to clinch the matter. Apparently Hunne had claimed that when he attended vespers at Whitechapel on 27 December 1512 Marshal, with a 'loud and opprobrious voice', said 'Hunne, thou art accursed.... and therefore go out of the church, for as long as thou art in this church I will say no evensong or service'. Understandably Hunne immediately left the church, but in the king's court claimed that his reputation and credit were so damaged by Marshal's slander that he had had to suffer a substantial loss of trade.[10] Now it may be that the charge of excommunication here referred to Hunne's non-payment of the original mortuary. On the other hand, as Hunne was explicitly to deny this before the King's Bench, it is more probable that the incident signalises the beginning of proceedings against him for heresy or at least that such proceedings were about to take place.

Whether in fact Hunne was guilty of the charges levelled against him is, of course, another matter. According to Simon Fish, opinion in

the city at the time took Hunne to be 'none eretik, but an honest man',[11] and this is the view that has generally prevailed. Certainly, no way of proving Hunne's heresy conclusively now exists. From one of the depositions made to the coroner's inquest, we learn that Hunne had been in the habit of saying his beads before retiring, while Foxe records the fact that Hunne resorted 'daily to mass'.[12] On the other hand, enough evidence is available to suggest that Hunne was far from orthodox - and this again, ironically enough, is preserved in the pages of Foxe. In effect the evidence takes two main forms: the articles indicted against Hunne during his first interrogation before Fitzjames on 2 December; and what Foxe calls the 'New Articles' commenced against Hunne after his death.

Let us first of all then turn to the articles of 2 December, remembering that in the declaration which accompanies this document as it is transcribed by Foxe, Hunne appears to have more or less conceded the charges. Now it must be said that from one point of view the articles do not appear to give strong support to the view that Hunne was a Lollard. Of the six charges recorded two refer only to his abuse of the clergy, one to his antipathy towards tithes. On the other hand he was brought up for possessing heretical books and, perhaps more to the point, of defending the person and the opinion of one Joan Baker, a heretic who had already abjured and done open penance in 1510.[13] The second set of articles, those objected against Hunne after his death, offer much the same kind of picture. As with the articles of 2 December, the indictment deals with Hunne's possession of proscribed books: among the books mentioned was the Prologue of Hunne's Bible which was reputed to contain a veritable manifesto of Wycliffite beliefs.[14] And as with the first set of articles, it is likely that Hunne was in fact guilty as charged, despite the suspicion of some historians that the Bible had been forged and planted by the clergy some time after Hunne was found dead.[15] The discovery by John Fines of a document relating explicitly to this trial - probably notes from a court-book exclusively devoted to cases of this nature - has brought to light the fact that no fewer than four witnesses gave evidence of their knowledge of Hunne's ownership of a Bible, a fifth alleged that he had heard it said and a sixth told how Hunne claimed that the Scriptures should be

translated into English. Of these six, three were clerics whose testimony might possibly have been prejudicial, but it would be unreasonable to suspect all six of having perjured themselves whether out of malice or for fear of retribution in the church courts.[16] In the final analysis, therefore, the question of Hunne's heresy is perhaps less 'open' than has hitherto been acknowledged. Although at least in part Hunne may have conformed to the established doctrine, it would almost certainly be a mistake to assume him to have been entirely innocent of the charges brought against him.

Hunne himself, of course, did not live long enough to face judgment. On the morning of 4 December 1514 he was found dead hanging from the staple in his cell. Was Hunne murdered? Certainly this was the view of the coroner's inquest appointed to deal with the case at the time, and to a large extent this judgment has been adhered to ever since. Grounds may exist, however, for doubting the reliability of such evidence. One major difficulty is that what are alleged to be the proceedings of the inquest appear anonymously, in a tractate apparently published some twenty years after the event called 'The enquire and verdite of the quest panneld of the death of Richard Hunne wich was founde hanged in Lolars tower'. Moreover, the strongly worded preamble to the document - the clergy are throughout seen as fornicators and adulterers - suggests the work of a highly biased author with a manifestly anti-clerical purpose in view.[17] The fact, too, that one is dealing not with a single, unified document but rather a loose compilation of several documents reinforces one's suspicions about its authenticity. Many of the depositions referred to were taken several days after the inquest had reached its verdict and submitted its judgment (on 6 December).[18] This suggests that they came from another document incorporated by the author to make the verdict sound more convincing and that they may well have been chosen selectively.[19] Again there seems no reason why the 'enquire and verdite' should include a letter by the Bishop of London to Cardinal Wolsey and the words the Bishop spoke before the House of Lords in Horsey's defence, both of which are incorporated at the end of the inquest proceedings but before

the final judgment. They do not belong to the original inquest findings and were probably grafted on because they reinforced the author's own preconceptions and attitudes.

Equally questionable is the integrity of the participants themselves, the members of the jury and the dozen or so witnesses brought before them. As Miss E. Jeffries Davis long ago suggested, statements made by witnesses at a time when the city was overwhelmed by a wave of excitement and party clamour must be received with some reserve,[20] while the apparent existence of a variety of 'pressure groups', among them the King himself, raises the possibility of some form of intimidation or bribery, an impression strengthened by the existence of certain unfounded allegations within the report, to which we shall return later, as well as by the suspicious character of some of the authors - Foxe himself suggests that Thomas Barnwell, the king's coroner, was bribed at least once during the affair.[21]

Let us suppose, however, that the statements made in the report have a foundation in fact, and that the coroner's jury were, as even Sir Thomas More intimated, 'right honest men'. Are we entitled to trust the report's main findings? Certainly it was the view of Bishop Fitzjames, and incidentally of More himself, that Hunne had in fact committed suicide and that the chancellor, Dr. Horsey, was entirely guiltless of the charges brought against him. Insofar as there is no evident motive for the murder, the bishop appears to have had a point. There seems little reason why the authorities should have been so anxious for Hunne's death as to murder him indiscriminately, particularly as the heresy trial - which would almost certainly have found against him - had barely begun. Indeed the lack of a sufficient motive is the one vital omission in the coroner's report itself. Why the jury were so reluctant to state the cause of Hunne's assassination may perhaps be answered only by the members themselves; it must suffice to say at present that they did not. On the other hand, more than sufficient evidence of a motive for suicide seems to exist. After all, in those last desperate hours, when Hunne was in the Bishop of London's prison, the game was going entirely in the authorities' favour. If one is to believe More - and at the time of Hunne's death no one was perhaps

in as good a position as the then under-sheriff of London to come to some balanced appraisal of the inquest proceedings - Hunne's praemunire was on the point of failing. And anyway Hunne had already - albeit in part - confessed to a charge of heresy. More claims that Hunne began 'to fall in fear of worldly shame' because he felt the failure of the praemunire would result in the loss of his reputation among his numerous supporters;[22] but the situation would surely only have been exacerbated should Hunne have been convicted of heresy. The possibility of public abjuration or at least the threat of open penance was bound to be a humiliating experience, and certainly it was by no means unusual for convicted heretics to attempt suicide rather than to go through with a ceremony of this nature.[23]

However, within the transcripts of the coroner's report another strategy may be observed very much in conflict with this. Despite the lack of a coherent motive, the proceedings of the inquest provide a vast range of what might be termed 'forensic' evidence - i.e. the physical state of Hunne's dead body immediately following the killing - evidence which to a large extent tends to support the view that Hunne was in fact murdered and that he did not kill himself. Clearly the report is not without its discrepancies. How Hunne is supposed to have been 'smothered', or where the great quantities of blood found in the room actually came from is left curiously unexplained. Nevertheless, the intricacy of the detail in the report would make it unreasonable to suspect wholesale forgery, and anyway the evidence is convincing insofar as it argues for the physical impossibility of Hunne's hanging himself. There appears to have been signs of a struggle and the 'suicide' certainly seems to have been rigged: note the stool in Hunne's cell, too fragile even to sit on, or the silk girdle, scarcely strong enough to mark the skin of the neck let alone kill a man outright.[24] How, then, are we to explain Hunne's murder - for this is what it appears to have been - in this context? If no ostensible motive for the killing seems to exist, how and why did it happen? One possible explanation might be that Hunne's killers did not enter his cell with the intention of destroying him at all. Rather some form of physical intimidation may have been brought to bear to make him confess to more than he had already admitted - some of the testimonies before the coroner's inquest

suggest a whole history of systematic maltreatment to precisely this end - and that it was only in the course of this that Hunne was killed. Certainly the 'forensic' evidence within the report does not give the impression of prior planning: if Hunne's murder was premeditated it was an extraordinarily bungled attempt; and from the deposition of one of the key witnesses at the inquest proceedings - a certain Julien Littell - it seems that Charles Joseph admitted to having brought about Hunne's death by putting 'a wire in his nose', an activity not inconsistent with torture.[25]

Whatever the case, there seems little reason to make William Horsey a party to the scheme. As already stated, Bishop Fitzjames and Thomas More believed Hunne had committed suicide and that Horsey was wholly innocent. It seems clear that in one of these allegations at least More and Fitzjames were justified. As Richard Wunderli suggests, a high Church official such as Horsey would have been acting out of offical character by ordering such a foolish action;[26] and anyway, apart from Charles Joseph's confession, the evidence against the chancellor is for the most part circumstantial. At various points in the coroner's report Horsey is accused of having the care of the prisoner, of physically intimidating Hunne in some way, but nowhere is sufficient proof found of the jury's main allegations - that is that Horsey intended to murder Hunne from the start, hired Joseph and John Spalding to help him commit the deed, and finally sought to make it appear as if the prisoner had killed himself in desperation. The inadequacy of the case against the chancellor is, perhaps, best revealed by Charles Joseph's confession itself. Taken at face value, Joseph's testimony may be seen as crucial evidence of Horsey's involvement. All the details required for a conviction are here: how Horsey, with Joseph and Spalding, bore up the stairs into the Lollards' Tower, how they found Hunne lying on his bed, how Horsey shouted, 'Lay hands on the thief', as they all murdered him. And so the tale goes on, made all the more convincing, it seems, insofar as it is the testimony of a known accomplice to the crime.[27] And yet given the circumstances of Joseph's examination, such evidence cannot be accepted without reserve. It has been argued, for instance, that Joseph may well have been tortured. And certainly given the apparent format of the confession - the way in which

it alone out of all the depositions in the tract is transcribed into reported speech, not to mention the suspiciously concise description of the murder - there may be some justification in such a view.[28] In any case there is no reason to assume that Joseph is telling the truth. The evidence of a man who has already perjured himself by denying his part in a murder twice before - in one instance, in January 1515, Joseph goes so far as to present his mistress in open court in order to support one of his alibis - is at best open to question; and quite clearly, much of what Joseph appears to have testified to at this point - especially as regards his remarks on the chancellor's behaviour - leaves a great deal to be desired.[29] But whatever the case, it would be unreasonable to present Charles Joseph's confession as in itself sufficient evidence of Horsey's complicity. As J.D.M. Derret astutely observes, 'No modern criminal court in Britain or North America would convict Horsey on these grounds', and given Joseph's position as the only witness to implicate the chancellor explicitly, this would seem a not unjustifiable indictment of the coroner's verdict.[30]

So much then for the facts of the case. We now have to consider what Foxe tells us of the episode and why he tells it in this way. Clearly Foxe was not only in a position to know most of the facts, but to form a balanced judgment upon them. Almost from the moment Hunne was found dead the affair became a cause célèbre among churchmen and historians alike. Simon Fish refers to it extensively in his Supplication for the Beggars as do, among others, William Roy, Jerome Barlow, Thomas More, Nicholas Harpsfield, John Bale. By the time Foxe set out to compose The Acts and Monuments in the 1550s and 1560s the controversy that had surrounded the case in its early days had by no means diminished. How reliable a 'witness' is Foxe to the events? Are there any signs of bias in his presentation? We have already seen that up until the mid-1940s Foxe's work was generally regarded with some distrust. With the advent of J.F. Mozley's John Foxe and his Book, however, Foxe has enjoyed an altogether better press, based primarily on the accuracy of his documentary material when compared against extant episcopal registers. How far, then, does 'The Story of Richard Hun' support this view? On the one hand , of course, Foxe's standard of honesty in quoting his authorities in this case is a high one. He

appears to have had access to a wide variety of primary documents and, considering that his book was intended for the general reader he devotes a surprising amount of space to archivism of this kind. Often documents are quoted in full. Indeed, as has been stated above, many of the records would not have survived had it not been for his assiduity in compiling them.

The authenticity of these documents and the claims Foxe makes about them, however, is open to doubt. Foxe's accuracy in transcription is not always as it should be as an examination of 'The enquire and verdite of the quest' shows. Not only does he leave out the date of Julien Littell's deposition (14 January, 1515), but he changes the day on which Charles Joseph is said to have fled for fear of arrest from the 3rd to 4th of December.[31] There seems no reason to question Foxe's good faith in the matter: the first mistake may have had its origin in a similar slip in Hall's Chronicle, one of his major sources for 'The Story of Hun',[32] with the second no more than an attempt by Foxe to sort out an apparent confusion in the original document (the tractate said the 3rd was a Sunday, which by the logic of other evidence was palpably incorrect).[33] Nevertheless the traditional view of Foxe as a largely accurate compiler of evidence must be brought into question in this light. Equally questionable are Foxe's own comments on this material. In parts of his narrative he appears to rely merely on hearsay evidence, clearly a debatable source of information in a case as controversial as Richard Hunne's. Nor in the same way can we be sure of Foxe's objectivity. It may be that he did not at first intend to mislead his reader but one cannot rule out the possibility of this having happened, particularly in view of the martyrologist's undoubted enthusiasm for his cause.

The dangers inherent in Foxe's version of events are illustrated precisely in his treatment of Richard Hunne's praemunire.[34] The facts of the case, as Foxe gives them, are these: that there was in the year 1514 a London citizen named Richard Hunne of good substance and of good repute; that he was defendant in an action to recover a mortuary 'unjustly' brought by one Thomas Dryfield, parson of the parish of St. Mary Matsilon; that to scotch that suit, he was forced to pursue a

writ of praemunire against the plaintiff and various of his counsellors; that as a result of the praemunire, he was arrested on a charge of heresy and confined in the Bishop of London's prison, in the charge of William Horsey, the bishop's chancellor. To an extent Foxe's account appears to have a foundation in truth. Indeed, until as recently as the 1960s, without Foxe's initiative nothing would have been known of the role of Thomas Dryffeld in the mortuary suit, of the name and age of Hunne's dead child, nor of the exact nature of Hunne's legal action. However, evidence relating to the case for the praemunire discovered in 1961 by S.F.C. Milsom reveals that Foxe may well have been mistaken on several crucial points. It is, in the first place, extremely unlikely that the entire affair took place over a few months in 1514, as Foxe implies. Not only is there clear evidence to suggest that Hunne refused to pay the bearing sheet at least a year before Dryffeld endeavoured to take the suit before the archbishop's court at Lambeth, but it seems that Hunne sued the praemunire not less than five months after the mortuary case was decided against him in May 1512.[35] Doubtful too are Foxe's claims as to the reasons behind Hunne's imprisonment. According to the martyrologist, Hunne was charged with heresy merely as a result of his having sued the praemunire. As noted earlier, however, the primary sources available to us suggest that Hunne was under suspicion for heresy for some months, even years, before the praemunire. Probably the most debatable of Foxe's contentions is his accusation as to the illegality of the original mortuary action. Hunne, he says, refused to hand over the bearing sheet on a definite ground: it was clearly unreasonable that a minor should be forced to pay a mortuary when as a minor he could hold no property. This is not tenable. At the time of the praemunire Dryffeld was perfectly in his rights: the law in respect of charge of property was not altered until the Act of Parliament of 1529.

How are these errors in Foxe's narrative to be explained? It may be that Foxe did not have all the evidence at his disposal. It seems significant that for once Foxe does not acknowledge his authorities and it is possible that he relied mainly on hearsay evidence. The constricted time sequence meanwhile can probably be explained by Foxe's use of The Chronicle of Edward Hall, which like The Acts and Monuments

places the entire affair in the sixth year of the reign.[36] In the final analysis, however, it seems that Foxe's version of events was determined not by any significant lack of evidence but rather by the prejudices inherent in his own position. Of immediate significance in this respect is Foxe's view of Hunne's enemies. In Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs, Helen C. White has demonstrated the way in which in The Acts and Monuments the character and behaviour of the Catholic clergy become almost of necessity the exact opposite of that of God's holy martyrs, that is to say that the clergy are throughout considered as being in some sense morally culpable;[37] and so it proves in Foxe's account of Richard Hunne's praemunire. Thomas Dryffeld, for example, is shown to act regarding Hunne's dead child with a 'covetous desire', while Hunne is said to have been arrested for heresy merely to 'satisfy the revenging and bloody affection' of the Bishop of London's chaplains. However honourable his intentions, we may doubt Foxe's ability to come to some balanced appraisal of events in this light.

A similar attitude in fact is evident in Foxe's treatment of the vexed question of Hunne's heresy. As already noted, it was the traditional view that the clergy's charges were unjustified, and that Hunne was imprisoned merely in revenge for the suit of praemunire.[38] In The Acts and Monuments, Foxe clearly shares this view. To say that Hunne was a heretic or that he killed himself was as 'false in the one as it was untrue in the other'.[39] The clergy had only charged him in the first place in order to stop the praemunire, while the judgment on Hunne's dead body was in itself so 'ridiculous a decree' that it could not be taken as clear proof of his guilt.[40] Foxe rests his argument on three basic claims: that Hunne was not only a daily attender at mass, but that he had his beads with him in prison after the Catholic manner;[41] that if Hunne had been a heretic the clergy would have proceeded against him while he was alive, i.e. charged him formally; and, perhaps most importantly, that the witnesses who came forward after Hunne's death - among them, crucually, Hunne's own manservant and maid - were not able to demonstrate his heresy conclusively. How well based, then, are Foxe's claims? There is, of course, little reason to suppose the first to be false. Although we only have Foxe's witness for Hunne's daily attendance at mass, there is a clear reference to Hunne's

ownership of rosary beads in the transactions of the coroner's inquest as printed in The Acts and Monuments itself. Nor are we entitled to doubt the veracity of Foxe's second claim, although it is fair to say that the clergy may well have been on the point of charging Hunne at the time of his death. The third of these points, however, must surely be challenged. According to Ussher's transcripts of the records of Hunne's posthumous trial in mid-December 1514, at least five of the deponents called, including one of Hunne's servants, testified as to his ownership of a Wycliffite Bible, complete with prologue, as well as a number of other heretical works. Now we may of course doubt the validity of this statement as such, but there can be no question that as far as the authorities were concerned it constituted more than sufficient evidence to convict Hunne of heresy.[42] Foxe on the other hand maintains precisely the opposite. Two lay witnesses came forward, he says, but they were not able to charge Hunne with 'any great thing worthy of reprehension' or in 'such points as the bishops chiefly objected against him'.[43] This is very strange. Indeed, as with the question of Hunne's praemunire, it raises the question of Foxe's integrity. Admittedly it could be that Foxe is not entirely to blame for this misrepresentation. If he had access to the document in question one might have expected him to quote it in full, and it may be that he was relying almost entirely on hearsay. Certainly this is the view of historians like John Fines. According to these Foxe only had access to documents included in the official episcopal register. As the proceedings of Hunne's posthumous trial were in fact part of a separate volume, probably a court-book devoted particularly to cases of this nature, Foxe's knowledge of the affair, it is argued, would at the very least have been extremely limited.[44] On the other hand, it is not unlike Foxe to summarise documents that come into his hands, and it is very arguable that the credentials of the several witnesses Foxe mentions would only have been known to someone familiar with the original transaction. Is Foxe guilty then of some kind of fabrication? Clearly the question of misrepresentation must be left open; but it is certainly possible that in his haste to spread the word of God's holy martyrs, Foxe stumbled across such material as could not - in all honesty - be set to fit his needs.

It may be, however, that on this issue Foxe was particularly unsure of his ground. Indeed the question of Hunne's heresy seems to have been a source of some embarrassment for the martyrologist. Clearly not all the evidence that came to hand could be tailored to meet his requirements. On the crucial question of Hunne's books, for example, Foxe - apart from the one instance mentioned above - does not appear to deny his hero's probable guilt. Indeed it may be significant, if only in this connection, that Hunne is referred to as 'half a papist' or, rather curiously, as 'no full protestant'.[45] The evidence of Hunne's 'answer' before the Bishop of London at Fulham also appears to have caused Foxe some discomfort. Plainly the fact that in the declaration that accompanied the indictment Hunne may in part have admitted his guilt was going to be difficult to explain away convincingly. At first Foxe argues for forgery: there were no credible witnesses to Hunne's having written the declaration, he suggests, and the clerk's note in the margin tended to indicate that the entry was made some time after Hunne's death. Elsewhere, however, Hunne's confession is considered as very much 'his own act'. In answer to the bishop's sentence as to Hunne's supposed 'obstinacy', Foxe states unashamedly that Hunne had submitted himself 'by his own handwriting'. Indeed he finds it strange that the ecclesiastical authorities would have sought to murder Hunne as they did when he had 'already so willingly confessed his fault'.[46] However, perhaps the greatest source of embarrassment for the martyrologist lies not so much in the ambiguity of the evidence at his disposal but, paradoxically, in his own conviction as to Hunne's innocence. The Acts and Monuments, it will be remembered, was conceived primarily with the intention of providing the Church of Foxe's own day with historical evidence of a respectable spiritual ancestry: for Foxe there was nothing very novel about the Protestant Reformation; Luther's arrival on the scene served only as a vital link in an already great tradition. And yet how was this great tradition to be accommodated to the case of Richard Hunne? A man entirely innocent of heresy had little to offer the Church of the Reformation in terms of a respectable spiritual ancestry, however virtuous he may have appeared or however beset by persecution he had been. Perhaps the clearest indication we have of Foxe's embarrassment over this issue comes from the martyrologist's examination of the articles indicted against Hunne after

his death. At first Foxe seems to remain true to his original position. Insofar as Hunne was manifestly guiltless of the charge of heresy, so the bishop's sentence was 'a mere show of their [the clergy's] pretended justice and innocency'. And yet what Foxe does not do, or even look like doing, is to deny the authenticity of the source of these articles, Hunne's Bible. Not only is Hunne acknowledged as having owned the book (it is as far as can be told 'his Bible') but the reading of the text even seems to suggest that the Bible was one of the works mentioned in the original charges against Hunne at Fulham - the book being said to 'remain' in the bishop's hands.[47] Now it may be that in allowing for the possibility of Hunne's heresy Foxe has once again had to admit to the ambiguity that surrounds much of the evidence at his disposal. But it is much more likely that is inconsistency reflects a real concern for the role of the Hunne affair in his overall strategy, for quite clearly it is not so much the question of Hunne's innocence that concerns him at this point as the content of the articles indicted. Dr. Hed, the bishop's examiner, is, for example, said to have perused the Bible 'not to learn any good thing therein, but to get thereout such matter as he thought might best serve their cursed purpose'; while in a footnote to the text, Foxe denies that 'a holy mother church', as the bishop puts it, cannot sanction the translation of the Scriptures in the vernacular.[48] Is this not the action of a man aware of the limitations of his material? Plainly, if Hunne could be made to be associated in some way with the dissemination of Protestant doctrine, the problem of the latter's inclusion in The Acts and Monuments would disappear. Whether in so doing Foxe ran the risk of undermining the basis of his initial position does not seem to have concerned him unduly.

In dealing with the subject of Hunne's murder, however, Foxe leaves any embarrassment he may have felt over the issue of the heresy trial far behind him. The demonstrable facts of the case as Foxe gives them are these: that on the night of 3 December 1514, Hunne had been brutally murdered in his cell; that Horsey, the bishop's chancellor, was to blame; that the inquest proceedings, begun immediately Hunne had been found dead, tended to confirm both these things. From one point of view, Foxe's version of events appears to have a basis in truth. The evidence of the coroner's report, for instance, tends to indicate that

Hunne could not have committed suicide. And so we are repeatedly assured by Foxe: by the girdle that hung around his neck, by the stool that was so 'tickle' that with the least touch it would fall, it was clear that some person or persons had entered Hunne's cell at an appointed time and had 'there feloniously slew him and murdered him'. Foxe's argument as to who this person or persons might be, however, is rather less convincing. On the one hand he believes the coroner's report to provide 'good proof' and 'sufficient evidence' of Horsey's guilt. And yet as we have seen this cannot be said to be the case. Indeed Foxe's argument often turns out to be merely speculative in content and lacks real conviction. Here, for instance, Foxe attempts to prove that the murder was in some way premeditated:

> 'But belike they perceived that he could not be proved a heretic while he lived, and therefore thought it best to make him away privily, and to stop the praemunire, and afterwards to stop the pursuit of his death by making him a heretic.'[49]

The curious thing here is that Foxe supplies not one motive for Hunne's murder but two. On the one hand, Hunne was secretly murdered so that the clergy - i.e. Horsey - could prove him a heretic, something that apparently could not be done while he was alive. On the other hand, he was killed to 'stop the praemunire' and convicted of heresy merely to 'stop the pursuit of his death'. Clearly Foxe is trying rather hard to have his cake and eat it at the same time: in the first place Hunne is murdered so that he could be convicted of heresy; and yet he is also convicted of heresy because he is murdered. In the final analysis, the martyrologist's inconsistency can only serve to weaken further his case against the chancellor.

How, then are we to understand Foxe's apparent conviction as to Horsey's guilt? Of course it is possible that the martyrologist genuinely believed that the latter was in some way implicated in Hunne's murder and that the evidence of the coroner's report was in fact 'sufficient' to this end. It is also possible, although perhaps less likely, that Foxe had access to evidence that for some reason he failed to include in The Acts and Monuments. There is at least a suggestion,

however, that the case against the chancellor rests as much on Foxe's own preconceptions about the affair as it does on hard evidence of Horsey's complicity. Indeed, the question of the responsibility for the killing provides us with what is perhaps our best evidence for the view that Foxe is far less trustworthy as a historian than has hitherto been credited. The articles indicted against Horsey in Foxe's discussion of the murder includes a reference to a particular murrey gown found in Hunne's cell the morning after the murder. According to the martyrologist, the coroner's jury came to the conclusion that this was none other than the chancellor's, and understandably he cites this as clear evidence of Horsey's involvement.[50] A close examination of the tract, however, tells a rather different story. Not only is it clear that the existence of the gown was in some doubt in the first place - apparently it had disappeared by the time Barnwell and his colleagues arrived on the scene - but, more significantly, the jury seem to have made no attempt to identify its owner; 'whose gown it was we could never prove'.[51] Clearly, then, Foxe has seriously misrepresented the strength of the evidence against the chancellor. Indeed it is so obvious a misrepresentation of the facts that the reader is entitled to wonder why. It is always possible that in his haste to meet the demands of his printers, Foxe simply read into the record more than is actually stated and consequently misinterpreted the grounds of the jury's enquiry. But it would seem far more likely that Foxe's mistake here reflects what the martyrologist would have preferred to believe, or read, given what was after all a vested interest in the accuracy of the jury's verdict. In the final analysis, there is reason to believe that Foxe's enthusiasm for his cause - significantly, Horsey is almost always associated with the evils of the clergy in general - may also have affected his judgment on the critical question of the identity of Hunne's killers.

The Hunne affair can, therefore, be said to illustrate precisely the dangers inherent in Foxe's treatment of popular heresy in The Acts and Monuments. In several crucial areas, notably the praemunire and the question of Horsey's guilt, the martyrologist is patently mistaken. At one level Foxe may not have been in a position to know all the evidence but he is also guilty of misleading the reader as, for example, in the issue of the murrey gown and possibly Hunne's posthumous trial

for heresy. Whether he did this deliberately is another matter. But there is a very thin line between a historian wittingly and unwittingly misrepresenting a case. On the other hand Foxe could also show a marked degree of sincerity in dealing with some of the more ambiguous elements of his evidence. This is shown in his treatment of Hunne's religious beliefs, where he first denies but then asserts the authenticity of Hunne's confession on 2 December. That Foxe should be capable of both deceiving the reader and allowing for ambiguities of this kind need not surprise us. In many ways Foxe was unusual for his age in his avowed intention to discover the truth of the matter: 'it is not enough', he writes of one of his major critics, Nicholas Harpsfield, 'to bring a railing spirit, or a mind disposed to carp and cavil where any matter may be picked: diligence is required, and great searching out of books and authors, not only of our time, but of all ages'.[52] On the other hand he could also be extremely biased and seek to suppress information if the importance of the expected disclosures appeared to warrant it. This is shown in an examination of the records of early Tudor Lollardy referred to in Chapter One of this thesis. It is, however, the question of the ambiguities in Foxe's own position that is the most prevailing point of interest in our study of 'The story of Richard Hun, Martyr'. Clearly, Foxe was sometimes completely unsure about what to argue. We catch a glimpse of this in Foxe's discussion of the motive behind the murder, but perhaps most significant is the martyrologist's apparent confusion over the issue of Hunne's heresy. Here we see Foxe struggling with the traditional Protestant view of the episode and not always finding it to his liking, a sort of critical malaise which is by no means uncommon in The Acts and Monuments.

Notes to Chapter 3.

1 An earlier draft of this chapter appears in 'John Foxe and "The Story of Richard Hun, Martyr"', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XXXVII (1986), 1-14. As with the above, I would like to thank Dr. G. Bernard and Dr. G. Walker for their advice in the early stages of the preparation of this chapter.

2 The most recent of these being A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower (Oxford, 1949); J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards (Oxford, 1965), 162-171; J.D.M. Derret, 'The affair of Richard Hunne and Friar Standish' in J.B. Trapp ed., The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1979), IX, 215-246; R. Wunderli, 'Pre-Reformation London Summoners and the Murder of Richard Hunne', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XXXIII (1982), 209-224; S.M.Jack, 'The conflict of common law and canon law in early sixteenth-century England: Richard Hunne revisited', Parergon, New Series III (1985), 131-145.

3 A&M iv. 184.

4 I am obliged to Professor G.R. Elton for the above information. Everything else apart, the royal almoner laid claim to the movables left by a suicide.

5 R. Wunderli, 'Pre-Reformation London Summoners', 217-219.

6 S.F.C. Milsom, 'Richard Hunne's "Praemunire"', English Historical Review LXXVI (1961), 80-82.

7 Supplication of Soules in Works of Sir Thomas More, Knight (London, 1557), 297-298.

8 A&M iv. 188-190.

9 A&M iv. 183-184.

10 Milsom, 'Richard Hunne's "Praemunire"', 82.

11 Simon Fish, Supplication for the Beggars in F.J. Furnivall ed., Four Supplications, The Early English Text Society (London, 1871), 12.

12 A&M iv. 194 (the deposition of John Spalding, or Bellringer); A&M iv. 201.

13 A&M iv. 183-184.

14 A&M iv. 186.

15 Notably A. Ogle, The Lollard's Tower, 113-131.

16 J. Fines, 'The post-mortem condemnation for heresy of Richard Hunne', English Historical Review LXXVIII (1963), 528-531.

17 'The enquire and verdite of the quest panneld of the death of Richard Hunne wich was founde hanged in Lolars tower', 1539(?), S.T.C. 13970; also transcribed by Edward Hall, The Chronicle (London, 1809), 573-580, and J. Foxe in A&M iv. 190-198. References given are to Foxe.

18 For example, the deposition of Julien Littell, 14 January, 1515. Other depositions were almost certainly taken later as they refer to later events. I am indebted to Dr. G. Bernard for this information.

19 Alternatively the fault may well have been that of the inquest panel themselves, who may have chosen to record only those depositions which agreed with their original judgment.

20 E. Jeffries Davis, 'The authorities for the case of Richard Hunne, 1514-1515', English Historical Review XXX (1915), 477-488.

21 A&M iv. 204 (i).

22 T. More, The Dialogue concerning Heresies in The Works of Sir Thomas More, Knight (London, 1557), 239.

23 More tells the story of a certain 'Holy John' of Paternoster Row in London who was so loath to face the scorn of his fellow citizens that he resolved to cut off his life by, of all things, throwing himself down a well; while in the records of the Lincoln Commissary Court Books, Margaret Bowker has recently remarked upon the case of one Thomas Piggot of Dinton who said openly in court that he would rather kill himself than undergo the shame of open penance; his judges appear to have taken him seriously as there is no record of Piggot having actually complied with this request; J.B. Trapp ed., The Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knight in The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1979), IX, 126; M. Bowker, 'Some Archdeacons' Court Books and the Commons' Supplication against the Ordinaries of 1532' in The Study of Medieval Records, Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major (Oxford, 1971), 308.

24 A&M iv. 190-192.

25 A&M iv. 192-193. The possibility of some unfortunate accident having taken place is also suggested in G.R. Elton, Reform and Reformation (Cambridge, 1977), 53. See also S.M. Jack, 'The conflict of common law and canon law in early sixteenth-century England: Richard Hunne revisited', Parergon New Series III (1985), 135. Mrs Jack argues against the 'torture' theory, although her proof - that 'there is no evidence that Joseph or Spalding had any skills or experience as torturers' - is not conclusive.

26 Wunderli, 'Pre-Reformation London Summoners', 223.

27 A&M iv. 192.

28 The matter is treated in P.J. Gwyn's forthcoming biography of Cardinal Wolsey. I am grateful to Mr. Gwyn for permission to refer to his biography.

29 Take, for example, Charles Joseph's complaint that the chancellor had him 'put out of his office' because he would not agree to harm the prisoner. Wunderli's assertion that Joseph's story was probably justified will not do. Joseph's 'work-record' in the Commissary Court Books, to which the historian refers, states that Joseph had indeed been relieved of his duties, but some months before the murder rather than, as the reading of the tract suggests, a matter of days. A&M iv. 191; 'Pre-Reformation London Summoners', 222.

30 J.D.M. Derret, 'The affair of Richard Hunne and Friar Standish', 246.

31 A&M iv. 192, 194. See note 17 for reference to 'The enquire and verdite'. Again my thanks go to Dr. Bernard for his helpful comments on this issue. It should be noted that Charles Joseph's flight had nothing to do with the death of Hunne. According to the tractate, he had been informed the 'Sunday next before that' that he should be arrested 'by divers sergeants as soon as he could be taken'. Is this why he looked so unsettled and ill-at-ease on the morning after Hunne's murder? Dr. Bernard, who likes to argue for Hunne's suicide, believes so.

32 Hall, Chronicle, 575.

33 For example, the deposition of John Spalding: 'Saturday the 2d day of December' (A&M iv. 194).

34 A&M iv. 183.

35 Milsom, 'Richard Hunne's "Praemunire"'.

36 Hall, Chronicle, 573.

37 H.C. White, Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs (Madison, 1963), especially 145-156. A similar move is evident in Foxe's attitude to the clergy's cruelty. See previous chapter.

38 In this way Simon Fish could write, 'had not Richard Hunne commenced accoyn of praemunire ageinst a prast, he had bin alyve, and none eretik, a tall but honest man', Fish, The Supplication for the Beggars; see note 11 above.

39 A&M iv. 193.

40 A&M iv. 188.

41 See note 12 above.

42 Fines, 'The post-mortem condemnation for heresy of Richard Hunne', 531.

43 A&M iv. 187.

44 Fines, 'The post-mortem condemnation', 529.

45 A&M iv. 201.

46 A&M iv. 184, 190 (a).

47 A&M iv. 186.

48 Ibid.

49 A&M iv. 202.

50 A&M iv. 203.

51 A&M iv. 191.

52 A&M iii. 376-377.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Bilney Affair.

Like 'The Story of Richard Hun', Foxe's account of the life and death of the Cambridge Reformer, Thomas Bilney, concentrated on the nature of his religious beliefs. For Foxe, clearly, Bilney's importance lay in the fact that he was the first truly 'Protestant' martyr in England. As the martyrologist writes of his abjuration in 1527, quoting Bishop Latimer,

> 'I knew a man myself, Bilney, little Bilney, that blessed martyr of God, who, what time he had borne his faggot, and was come again to Cambridge, had such conflicts within himself (beholding this image of his death), that his friends were afraid to let him be alone.... Yet for all this he was revived, and took his death patiently, and died well against the tyrannical see of Rome.'[1]

And yet the story of Thomas Bilney was also a source of great anxiety for the martyrologist. While at one moment apparently confident of Bilney's claim to be a 'witness of the truth' there seems yet to have been a reluctant acceptance of the ambiguity of much of the material at his disposal. Rather as in the case of Richard Hunne, not all of his information was as straightforward as had at first seemed. The purpose of this chaper is twofold. First, an attempt will be made to assess the veracity of Foxe's claim in the light of the evidence presented in The Acts and Monuments as well as other sources surviving from the period. To what extent can Bilney be said to have been a Protestant, or as Foxe puts it, a lover of 'true religion'?[2] How far was Foxe's assertion determined by bias? And secondly, and connected to this, we shall consider some of Foxe's responses to the problem of Bilney's beliefs and the extent to which they were reconciled or resolved in his own version of the affair.

Early career and examination in London.

The main facts of the Bilney affair are well known. Born in the county of Norfolk in the mid 1490s, Bilney went up to Cambridge at an early age, 'even from a child'.[3] Bilney read Civil and Canon Law in Trinity Hall, gaining his degree in 1519. While at Cambridge, though, he became increasingly interested in theology and sometime in the early 1520s he joined the notorious White Horse Inn group which met for discussions on religious matters in one of Cambridge's inns. The precise nature of these meetings is unclear although a recent suggestion that they were aimed at propagating Lutheran ideas and alliances with the native English Lollards must surely be doubted.[4] There was a wide diversity of opinions represented at these meetings. Some of the attenders, like John Frith, were to nail themselves firmly to the mast of the Protestant cause and were to die for it in due course. But others were more moderate, such as Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner, soon to be one of Henry VIII's most conservative bishops. Whatever the case Bilney was very active; according to Foxe, he encouraged other theologians in the reading of the gospel and preached in the leper houses and prisons in Cambridge.[5]

While Bilney was occupied in these activities, however, religious controversy became more widespread. In 1521 a bonfire of heretical books was ordered to be made in the heart of Cambridge, while in the same year a certain Peter Valence, a Norman student, imitated Luther by posting a declaration against indulgences to the gate of Schools.[6] Significantly, prosecutions were extremely rare, not least because there appears to have been some confusion as to what exactly was heretical about the new ideas from abroad: many of Luther's ideas were entirely orthodox; others were only belatedly condemned by the Pope.[7] But by the mid-1520s the attitude of the authorities had hardened enough for charges to have been brought against a number of young theologians, among them some of Bilney's associates, Stafford, Barnes and Latimer. Bilney himself appears to have been treated fairly leniently. In early 1527 both he and Latimer were summoned before Wolsey and dismissed on condition of their taking an oath not to preach any of Luther's doctrines. Sir Thomas More says that Wolsey 'for the tender favour he

bore to the University, did not proceed far in the matter against him [Bilney]'.[8] In November 1527, however, after a short preaching tour of London and East Anglia, Bilney, together with his countryman Thomas Arthur, were arrested and taken to Wolsey in London to face formal charges. The proceedings of this trial, preserved in the extant register of Bishop Tunstal in the Guildhall Library in London and transcribed by Foxe himself into The Acts and Monuments, provide the best evidence of the nature of Bilney's religious beliefs. If Foxe's claim that Bilney was one of the 'witnesses of the truth' is to be satisfactorily examined, it will be necessary to establish the broad features of this trial.

Bilney first examination, 1527.

According to the register, Bilney was first brought before Wolsey and other assembled bishops on 27 November. Asked immediately whether he held any of Luther's opinions, or whether he had sworn to Wolsey not to preach Luther's doctrine, Bilney answered guardedly. To the latter he replied that he had so sworn but not 'judicially', i.e. lawfully, adding that if he had taught Luther's opinions he had done so unwittingly. Bilney was then examined on a list of thirty-four interrogatories covering a wide range of opinions, whether he thought that Luther was justly condemned, whether it was heresy to pray to saints, and that pardons were to be rejected. Unfortunately, Bilney's answers to these interrogatories were noted in 'libro papri' which survive only in Foxe's transcript. On the first article, inquiring whether he considered Luther justly condemned, Bilney answered affirmatively, calling the Reformer, with his adherents, a wicked and detestable heretic. Similarly orthodox were his replies concerning the worshipping of images and obedience to the great Councils of the Church, although in view of his conduct later in the trial he may well have had cause to reconsider his answer to the first of his interrogatories. On the question of saints and the efficacy of pardons, however, Bilney appears to have been far more heterodox. At one point he allowed that a man may believe without hurt to his faith that the souls of Peter and Paul were not in heaven, and that our Lady 'remained not always a

virgin'. As far as papal pardons were concerned, he argued that it was better that they be restrained rather than kept 'as they be used' as they had been an 'injury of Christ's passion'. Similar ideas are expressed in the Reformer's letters to his examiner, Tunstal, written while he was in prison awaiting judgment, and represent perhaps the most positively 'Lutheran' aspects of his teaching. Be this as it may, Bilney's answers do not seem to have been enough to satisfy his judges of his guilt, and this they reflected by calling for the testimonies of witnesses allegedly gathered from sermons he had made in East Anglia and London.[9]

Bilney's second examination.

In many ways the articles in Bilney's second examination follow the pattern of the first, despite the noticeably more simplistic terminology. Among the major charges levelled against him were that he had said it was folly to go on pilgrimages, that Christ and not the saints was sufficient as man's mediator, that miracles done at Walsingham served only to blind the poor people. Also imputed to him was that he had said that the pope hath not the keys that Peter had unless he followed Peter in his living, and that he had spoken in favour of a solefidean doctrine, 'that man is so imperfect of himself, that he can in no wise merit by his own deeds'. To the first of these interrogatories, concerning the attack on saints, Bilney denied the charges outright, although as will be noted there may be some reason to doubt whether he was showing all his mind. On the question of images Bilney denied the charge only insofar as to ask time to consider his replies ('negat ut ponitur'). There then followed what appears to have been a complete breakdown of the interrogation procedure. Asked whether he had once preached that Jews would have become Christians long ago were it not for the idolatry associated with image worship, Bilney declined to answer, since he could no longer remember what he had said in his sermons. Bilney was then brought before Tunstal and exhorted to forsake his errors, but once again denied the charges, saying that he had not said these things and that he could produce witnesses to testify that he had not said them. On 4 December, Bilney's obstinacy led

Tunstal to begin the reading of the definitive sentence, only for Bilney to reply exactly as before: he would stand to his conscience, trusting that he was not separate from the Church; moreover, for every one witness against him he could call thirty witnesses to his honesty. Finally the Reformer was allowed three days to deliberate. On 7 December Tunstal's perseverence was rewarded, Bilney abjuring and submitting himself to open penance. According to Thomas More, however, his was by no means an ordinary judgment as it appears that the Reformer was allowed to abjure without having to admit the charges imputed to him.[10]

Problems for Foxe.

Two questions immediately present themselves in the light of Foxe's claim for Bilney as a Protestant martyr. First, how authentic or reliable is this as evidence of Bilney's doctrine? Was Bilney telling the truth when he denied the charges in such a dramatic fashion? And secondly, even if we regard these articles as authentic, to what extent can they be said to be demonstrably 'Protestant'? The question of the reliability of the trial evidence has always been a matter of dispute among historians. According to More, public opinion at the time held that Bilney was entirely innocent of the charges indicted and this is the view that has prevailed in the works of modern historians such as Rupp or Elton.[11] From one angle such an argument would seem to be quite justified. Some of the testimonies are of surprising triviality, such as that Bilney had once called Mary Magdalene 'a stewyd hoore' and the integrity of any panel of witnesses which includes the names of three leading friars, among them John Huggen 'chief principal of the friars-preachers throughout all England', must at least be open to question.[12] Further clues as to Bilney's 'innocence' - or at least a suggestion of the same - comes from the latter's letters to Tunstal written while he was in prison awaiting trial. Here again the defendant strenuously denies speaking against voluntary works 'not condemning them (as I take God to my witness), but reproving their abuse', and despite the fact that Bilney fails to mention the articles against saint-worship or images, statements like this in the letters to Tunstal appear to bear

the mark of sincerity.[13] It is extremely doubtful, however, whether this in itself is enough to clear Bilney completely. In his Dialogue against Heresies, Thomas More, for example, claimed that Bilney had lied about his beliefs, and this is confirmed to some extent by specific underlinings in Bilney's Vulgate where certain lies are justified.[14] Further evidence for Bilney's complicity is found in the testimonies of other heretics abjured at the same time, as pointed out recently by J.F. Davis. According to John Pykas of Colchester, Bilney had preached at Ipswich that 'it was but folly to go on pilgrimages, for saints are but stocks and stones.... and that it is no good to pray to saints for they are but servants and can hear no man's prayer'. Another witness to Bilney's sermons had appeared before Wolsey and confessed that he would not stop to go twenty miles to hear Bilney preach against images, relics and pilgrimages.[15] In the final analysis, therefore, it would appear as if Bilney was not telling his examiners the whole truth about what he had said in his sermons and that most of the articles against him were genuine. This is not to say, however, that the ambiguities of Bilney's trial evidence were not potentially a source of some embarrassment for Foxe in his own treatment of the affair in The Acts and Monuments. As will be seen shortly, the fact that Bilney denied his charges was eventually to force Foxe to reconsider his claim for the Reformer as a 'witness of the truth'.

For the moment, though, let us concentrate on Foxe's main claim in The Acts and Monuments, that is that Bilney's articles were in some way representative of a Lutheran or 'Protestant' brand of doctrine. How far is this claim justified in the light of the evidence at our disposal? Do we note any signs of bias on Foxe's part in his treatment of his material? As far as Foxe was concerned, there were in fact several features of Bilney's life that supported his assertions as to the Reformer's Protestantism. Chief among these were his religious beliefs as expressed in his articles - and, as we have seen, Foxe quotes much of the original Tunstal register in his account of Bilney's trial in The Acts and Monuments. But clearly important too in the making of the Protestant martyr was Bilney's standard of behaviour, particularly in the face of the persecution of his enemies. In one story Bilney is described as visiting the prison houses of Cambridge in order to exhort

'such as were infamed or imprisoned for evil life'.[16] No less dramatic was his heroism before his execution: in this respect Foxe was particularly keen to defend Bilney from the charge that at his death, he had recanted his former beliefs and told the story of how on the eve of his burning Bilney thrust his finger into the flame of a candle in order to test his resolve.[17] The Reformer's 'godliness' aside, however, the records of Bilney's trial in 1527 must leave Foxe's claim seriously open to question. Although some of Bilney's beliefs were undoubtedly close to Luther's on, say, the question of justification, there is very little evidence to suggest a pervasive Protestant influence in terms of doctrine. Some of Bilney's replies to his judges were essentially orthodox in tone, as for instance on the problem of the authority of the Church's Councils. We note a similar move with regard to the power of the Papacy: asked whether the Pope's laws ought to be obeyed and reverenced by all men, Bilney answered affirmatively, saying that he believed that the Pope's laws were 'profitable and necessary' and 'neither in any point.... repugnant unto the Scriptures'; 'But touching all those laws, I cannot determine: for as for such as I have not read, I trust notwithstanding they are good also'.[18] But it is the evidence of Bilney's doctrine on the mass which seems to clinch the matter. As is well known, it was Luther's view that the traditional observance of the doctrine of transubstantiation was entirely erroneous. While on the one hand refusing to discount completely the possibility of Christ's presence in the elements, Luther stressed that in essentials the bread and wine remained what they appeared to be, illustrating this by the famous concept of the fire and the iron. For Bilney, though, the mass was not an issue. His orthodoxy on this point is illustrated in the first place by his conduct before his death; according to Thomas More, the Reformer requested that he might be allowed to receive absolution and the eucharist at his execution.[19] But clearly significant too is the total absence of any articles or questions on this subject in the records of his trial in 1527. As has been indicated elsewhere with respect to the Lollard heresy, there could be little doubt that the ecclesiastical authorities would have pressed charges on this point had there been any reasonable chance that they could be sustained.[20]

Thus far, then, we have seen how Foxe's case for Bilney as a Protestant martyr cannot go unqualified, even in the light of the records at his disposal. While on the one hand there may be reason anyway to doubt the authenticity of such evidence, the burden of proof tends to suggest that Bilney was rather more 'Catholic' or orthodox in his views than Foxe would perhaps have liked to believe. The question is posed, however, as to how far Foxe might have been aware of the limitations of his material in this respect. Are there, for example, any appreciable signs that he was forced to reconsider his claim for Bilney as a 'witness of the truth'? From one point of view, certainly, Foxe appears to have remained unmoved. Referring to the Reformer's criticism of the immorality of the Pope and his clergy, Foxe applauds is conviction to 'pluck at the authority of the bishop of Rome'.[21] Later on in his account he is even more explicit, remarking how Bilney spoke principally 'against idolatry, invocation of saints, vain worship of images, false trust to men's merits, and such other gross points of religion, as seemed prejudicial and derogatory to the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ'.[22] Accessorily, however, Foxe appears to have had to admit to the limited suitability of much of the evidence at his disposal. By far the most important examples of Foxe's 'honesty' here are to be found in the martyrologist's own comments on the affair in his notes and glosses. Take, for example, Bilney's first interrogation before Tunstal on 27 November. Now, as has been noted, some of Bilney's replies to these charges were undoubtedly heretical, such as that the Virgin Mary did not always remain a virgin and that the souls of Peter and Paul were not in heaven. But in the main the answers of the Reformer were essentially orthodox, particularly concerning the authority of the Church and his attitude to Luther. Bilney's strictures on the power of the Papacy have already been noted, but clearly significant too are his claims that Luther was a 'detestable heretic' and that the constitutions of the Church ought to be observed by all men 'even for conscience' sake, and not only for fear'. Plainly, then, the records as Foxe found them were potentially a source of some embarrassment to the martyrologist. And yet far from attempting to suggest that Bilney disagreed with the interrogatories cited against him, he nevertheless admits that 'for the most part' of the articles the

Reformer 'seemed to consent and agree (although not fully and directly, but by way and manner of qualifying)'.[23]

Much the same feeling of unease in the handling of his material, meanwhile, is gleaned from Foxe's transcription of Bilney's second examination. On the one hand, it was in Foxe's interests to use these articles as evidence of Bilney's Protestantism. Among the charges indicted against him were that 'man is so imperfect of himself, that he can in no wise merit by his own deeds' - a view which was not entirely dissimilar to Luther's view of justification by faith only - and that Christ and not the saints was sufficient as man's mediator.[24] Indeed in a comment on these articles in his examination of Bilney's alleged recantation in 1531, Foxe refers to them explicitly as 'the whole sum of his.... doctrine', supporting his claim moreover by explanatory glosses, as if in some way these were edifying to the reader as to the nature of 'true doctrine'.[25] Having said this, Foxe could not very well ignore the fact that in his answers to these interrogatories Bilney had steadfastly maintained his innocence. At one stage Bilney refused to confirm or deny the articles indicted against him, saying that he needed time to consider his replies. Later on in his trial he declared he could clear his name and that the witnesses brought in against him had committed perjury. It seems that Foxe was tempted to believe these replies. Remarking on the articles deposed against Bilney after his sermon in Christ's Church, Ipswich, Foxe doubts the justification of his having been examined on such evidence at all, calling the offending articles 'cavilling matters'.[26] Similarly in the 1563 edition of the work, the subject of the articles is scrupulously avoided - apart, that is, from a vague reference to a certain speech Bilney had made at St. Magnus' 'against the new idolatrous roode newly erected, before it was gilded'.[27] In his treatment of Bilney's second examination, then, Foxe was caught very much between two stools. On the one hand he wanted to establish the evidence cited against him as 'the whole sum of his.... doctrine': this served to confirm his assertion - already in some danger after his treatment of Bilney's first examination - that Bilney was a Protestant martyr. On the other hand Bilney had made repeated denials of these articles. If he was really a 'witness of the truth' then it was unlikely that he would have been lying. In some respects - even to

the extent of calling these articles 'cavilling matters' - Foxe was obliged to give him the benefit of the doubt.

This tension in Foxe's account of Bilney's second examination is no more clear than in the martyrologist's transcription of the proceedings of the Reformer's trial in the Court Book of Bishop Tunstal. As G. Walker has pointed out in 'Saint or Schemer? The 1527 Heresy Trial of Thomas Bilney Reconsidered', many of Bilney's replies - such as that he wanted time to consider his answers or that he could not remember what he had said in his sermons - were left out of Foxe's own account of the affair in The Acts and Monuments. It is possible, as Dr. Walker has argued, that Foxe omitted this evidence because it suggested that Bilney was a liar and therefore not a very good ambassador for the Protestant cause. Some of Bilney's answers - such as he could not remember what he had said in his sermons (a probable attempt by Bilney to prevent further discussion of these matters and thus avoid having to try his wits against any traps which his inquisitors might set) - were quite clearly of this order. On the other hand it is more likely that Foxe did not want to spoil his picture of Bilney as a Protestant martyr. While on the one hand sympathetic enough toward Bilney's plight to call some of his articles 'cavilling matters', it was also his intention to use his articles as evidence of Bilney's Protestantism. Thus any denials or objections Bilney made along the way were best left out altogether, even though, as we have seen, Foxe probably half-believed them anyway.[28]

In an analysis of Foxe's treatment of the records of Bilney's trial in 1527, therefore, it soon becomes clear that the experience of the Reformer's articles led Foxe to qualify considerably his initial claims for his hero as a 'witness of the truth'. While at one moment apparently oblivious to the most orthodox or ambiguous elements of Bilney's doctrine, there seems yet to have been a reluctant acceptance of the very real limitations of much of the material at his disposal. As we will now see with regard to the Reformer's alleged recantation in 1531, contradictions like this in Foxe's discussion of the case of Thomas Bilney were by no means a singular or isolated phenomenon.

Trial and execution, 1531.

Before we go on to examine Foxe's response to this problem, however, it will be necessary to consider the facts of the case in some depth. What exactly was it that made Bilney's trial in 1531 so controversial? Were More and the ecclesiastical authorities right when they said that Bilney had recanted? The acknowledged facts of the affair are, of course, well known. Tortured by remorse at having betrayed his faith in his abjuration in 1527, Bilney had resolved to go out preaching again, taking with him two heretical books, Tyndale's New Testament and The Obedience of the Christian Man, to deliver to the Anchoress of the Black Friars in Norwich. In April 1531 he was overtaken outside Norwich and arrested on charges of relapse. Inevitably Bilney was convicted and sentenced to death, his place of execution being the notorious 'Lollards' Pit' outside Norwich. What exactly happened at this point, however, is still unclear. After the Reformer's death, the ecclesiastical authorities immediately alleged that Bilney had recanted although eyewitnesses at the scene later disputed this, thereby prompting an official enquiry into the affair by Sir Thomas More. The proceedings of this enquiry survive in the Public Record Office. Apparently Bilney had received absolution and the eucharist and at the stake a bill of revocation was handed to him by the Bishop's Chancellor, Dr. Pellis. Opinions vary as to whether Bilney actually read this bill. According to Edward Reed, the Mayor of Norwich, Bilney had only read it 'softly' to himself before going on to make a separate declaration to the people, although others present in the crowd later contested this. After Bilney was dead, Pellis brought the paper to Reed to be exemplified under the town seal but Reed and the other aldermen, who had meanwhile assembled in the Council Hall, all agreed at once (according to Reed) that it did not tally with their remembrance of what Bilney had said at his execution. Fortunately, Reed had made his own draft of Bilney's speech (allegedly written at the time of execution) and this was then filed as a true record. Against this, Alderman Curat later testified before More that Bilney had read his revocation out-loud rather than 'softly' as the others said.[29]

As with some aspects of Bilney's trial in 1527, much of the evidence surrounding the Reformer's death is inconclusive, although from one point of view it would seem reasonable to give Reed and his party the benefit of the doubt. Certain letters written by Bilney on the eve of his execution seem to suggest that he was on the whole reconciled to his fate 'redye by ye grace of god.... to suffre much more if ytt be his plesur', while Curat's report of the recantation would appear to be dubious, if only because Curat tells us very little of what exactly Bilney said.[30] On the other hand, it is a factor of some significance that Thomas More in his own findings on the affair in The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer concluded that Reed and his men were lying, a point of view not unsubstantiated in the evidence as it now stands. It was no secret, for example, that the Mayor and his colleagues were very sympathetic to Bilney's plight. One of the aldermen, Thomas Necton, brother of the Lutheran bookseller, Robert Necton, was reputedly a personal friend, while Reed himself had already betrayed his interest when he confessed before More that he did not know 'wither the same Bilney did ever hold eny such opinions'. Similarly much of Reed's story about what happened at the time of the execution leaves a great deal to be desired. Frequently in his evidence, for instance, Reed goes out of his way to stress that the Council meeting which met after Bilney's death had been entirely impromptu; but given the fact that the Mayor was already suspicious enough to write down a version of Bilney's speech at his execution, such an eventuality is extremely unlikely. Again, the exact status of Reed's notes is open to question: while at one moment apparently a copy of a speech Bilney had made after he had looked over the bill of revocation, they later took the form of the equivalent to the bill of revocation itself, to be compared to one another, as Reed puts it, 'word for word'.[31] In an examination of the archives relating to Bilney's trial in 1531, therefore, it soon becomes clear that the evidence for the latter's recantation was rather stronger than has in the past been suggested. Although there exists a certain amount of information to indicate that Bilney had resolved to die patiently, many of the so-called 'eyewitness' reports of his execution are highly unreliable, and may even have been fabricated in order to cover up the Reformer's humiliation.

Foxe's view of the evidence.

So much for the established facts of the case. We now have to consider what Foxe knew of the episode and how these facts were reconciled in his own version of the affair in The Acts and Monuments. There were in fact a number of sources available to Foxe. Of some significance to him in this respect were Thomas More's comments on his own investigation into the episode in The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, although, as we shall see, there was some doubt in Foxe's mind as to More's reliability. Much more useful were the various eyewitness reports Foxe had managed to acquire, among them the testimony of Archbishop Parker, a 'present beholder of the things there done'.[32] According to Foxe, all of these witnesses agreed that Bilney had not recanted at his death, an impression which was considerably strengthened by serious flaws in the main evidence for the 'prosecution', Thomas More's Confutation. More had written that Bilney had recanted his beliefs many days before his execution as well as on the day of execution itself. This had allegedly been proved by the fact that many of the people who said Bilney did not recant afterwards confessed that he had read a bill of revocation, albeit 'softly'. According to Foxe, though, there were serious problems with such an argument. In the first place, More had not specified how many days he was dealing with. By what authority did More prove his case? Foxe asked. More only had to state that such and such was so and it was taken as literal truth.[33] Another problem with More's account was that Bilney was not in Norwich long enough to have recanted 'many days' before, having been kept there as long as it took for a writ to be sent for from London to burn him.[34] But perhaps the most dubious point of More's evidence was his treatment of the eyewitnesses who said that Bilney had not recanted. Foxe himself, of course, had no hesitation in taking their depositions at face value, but even if More was right and Bilney read a bill 'softly' as they 'confessed', was this necessarily proof that he had recanted? The fact that he had read it 'softly' - i.e. to himself - suggested that he read it without 'good will' to read and 'against his own mind and conscience' thereby making it invalid.[35] 'Ah Master More!' Foxe concluded, addressing his adversary, 'for all your powder of experience,

do ye think to cast such a mist before men's eyes, that we cannot see how you juggle with truth, and take you tardy in your own narration?'[36]

Unfortunately for the martyrologist, though, there were several statements made by More that were to cause him some discomfort. One was that Bilney had not only recanted but had knelt before the Bishop's Chancellor - Dr. Pellis - and sought absolution from his excommunication before his execution. From one point of view, Foxe could afford to admit to the truth of this without necessarily jeopardising his account of the Reformer's great 'constancy' at death. Even if he accepted, argued Foxe, that Bilney was assoiled from his excommunication, 'yet doth it not the thereupon follow that he recanted'.[37] Other evidence Foxe had managed to discover showed that Bilney was quite orthodox on this issue. Indeed at one point he had visited William Latimer in his study to be 'confessed and assoiled from his sins', such was the prevailing 'blindness of that time'.[38]

Accessorily, however, Foxe appears to have reconsidered adopting this position. After all, if he accepted Bilney had been assoiled 'as the blindness of that time then led him',[36] then the latter's position as a 'witness of the truth' and favourer of 'true religion' was going to be in some danger. Foxe showed his unease by denying what he had previously affirmed to be the case: 'But whether he kneeled down, and was assoiled or no, neither was I there to see him, nor yet Master More himself; and therefore, with the like authority as he affirmeth, I may deny the same'.[39] But he also appears to have used more subtle means to avoid undermining his claim. Bilney only asked to be absolved from his excommunication, he explained, because he was 'not fully resolved touching that matter of the church', in other words Bilney would probably have declined to be absolved if he had been given a little more time to think the matter through.[40] Moreover, he was a man of a 'timorous conscience' and 'humble spirit', who - quite admirably in the circumstances - knew no pride when it came to asking forgiveness for past sins.[41] Foxe's response to More's suggestion that Bilney sought to be absolved from his excommunication is, therefore, far from convincing.

While, on the one hand, offering no danger to him on the question of Bilney's recantation, it did seem to open Bilney's Protestantism to question.

Equally problematic, meanwhile, was More's account of what happened after Bilney's submission. Apparently the Reformer had made 'great labour' that he might receive mass, a request which Pellis granted after much debate.[42] Here again Foxe could afford to accept More's story as true. Just because Bilney had heard mass did not mean that he recanted his other heresies. In fact, Foxe's researches into the subject assured him that the Reformer had always been orthodox on this point, as he did not 'find in all the articles objected against Bilney, that ever he was charged with any such opinion, concerning either the mass or the sacrament'.[43] To say, as More did, that Bilney's action was evidence for the fact that he recanted was simply not valid. However, the repercussions of this stance for Foxe's view of Bilney as a 'witness of the truth' were far from happy. In the same way as in Foxe's account of the Reformer's absolution, Foxe appears to have reconsidered his initial position, even so far as to completely undermine it as an argument against the recantation. In the first place, it is noticeable that he couches his 'admission' of More's case in the most ambiguous terms. It was, Foxe wrote, 'not impossible' that Bilney should hear mass.[44] Moreover, he had only done so because of the circumstances in which he had been brought up, not because he implicitly believed in the doctrine of transubstantiation: 'it may be', Foxe wrote, 'that he was not resolved otherwise than common custom then led both him and many others'.[45] Thus in accounting for More's second claim, that Bilney requested the sacrament of the altar before he died, Foxe seems to have experienced similar problems to the ones he encountered tackling Bilney's absolution from his excommunication. In both cases it made sense to take More at his word. The argument against the recantation would, Foxe believed, be strengthened not weakened by these means. Yet this could not be sustained without directly challenging Bilney's status as a 'favourer of God's word'. Whatever the advantages of, as Foxe puts it, taking More 'tardy in [his] own narration',[46] the fact that Bilney knelt down to ask absolution from his excommunication and then went on to celebrate mass was not going to be explained away very easily.

Conclusion.

The Bilney affair, therefore, illustrates the dangers Foxe's evidence sometimes afforded him very well. There was a sense in which Bilney was the model martyr: his articles as well as his godly life were, according to Foxe, convincing proof of his support for the Protestant cause. On the other hand some evidences were clearly much more useful to Foxe than others. The orthodox tone of some of Bilney's replies in 1527, his behaviour at his execution, not to mention the largely ambiguous nature of the evidence in the original trial - was Bilney really guilty? - led to much unease on Foxe's part. In the final analysis, Foxe could not avoid the problem that any historian examining the case of Thomas Bilney has to consider: was Bilney a heretic or did he die, as More said he did, a loyal servant of the Roman Church?

Notes to Chapter 4.

1 A&M iv. 641.

2 A&M iv. 620.

3 Ibid.

4 Recent analyses of the White Horse Circle have tended to exaggerate the 'connections' between Cambridge Protestants or evangelicals and the native English Lollards. Although meetings between the two groups clearly took place - some Lollards even went to Bilney's sermons in East Anglia - there is as yet no conclusive evidence of influence here. As R. Knecht has pointed out, the emergence of an intellectually sophisticated heresy from abroad would more likely either pass unnoticed or ferment hostility among native English heretics, not least because of the implication of separation from the established Church. (C.f. R. Knecht, 'The Early Reformation in England and France', History, LVII (1972), 7.)

5 A&M iv. 621.

6 E. Gow, 'Thomas Bilney and his relations with Sir Thomas More', Norfolk Archaeological Society XXXII (1958-61), 297.

7 For example, the doctrine of justification by faith only, condemned in 1543. An example of the authorities' unease is found in Bilney's first interrogation in 1527, in which the accused is actually asked to define what he thinks heresy is, a form of questioning which, to the present writer's knowledge, is unprecedented (A&M iv. 624-625).

8 T. More, Dialogue Concerning Tyndale W. Campbell ed. (London, 1927) III, iv, 193.

9 A&M iv. 621-626; Reg. Tunstal (London), 9531/10 fos. $132^{v}$-$133^{v}$; printed in J. Foxe, The Acts and Monuments G. Townsend ed. (New York, 1965) iv. Appendix.

10 A&M iv. 627-632; Reg. Tunstal (London) 9531/10, fos. $133^{v}$-$135^{v}$.

11 E.G. Rupp, Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition in the Reign of Henry VIII (Cambridge, 1947), 23-28; G.R. Elton, Reform and Reformation (London, 1977), 96.

12 A&M iv. 622.

13 A&M iv. 633-641.

14 T. More, Dialogue Concerning Tyndale, III, ii-vii. See especially ii, 184; E. Gow, 'Thomas Bilney and his relations with Sir Thomas More', 298-301.

15 J.S. Brewer ed., Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (hereafter cited as L.P.), IV (ii), 4029; Norfolk and Norwich Record Office, Act/4/4b, fos. $34^{v}$-$36^{r}$ cited in J. Davies, 'The Trials of Thomas Bylney and the English Reformation', The Historical Journal XXIV (1981), 784-786.

16 A&M iv. 621.

17 A&M iv. 653.

18 A&M iv. 625-626.

19 T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer in L.A. Schuster et al. eds., The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1973), VIII, 23-24.

20 See Chapter 1 of this thesis:'Were the Lollards proto-Protestants?'

21 A&M iv. 620. In the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments this epithet (significantly?) is missing (J. Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes (London, 1563), 461-478).

22 A&M iv. 649.

23 A&M iv. 624-625.

24 A&M iv. 627-628.

25 A&M iv. 649.

26 A&M iv. 627.

27 Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes (London, 1563), 477. N.B. Foxe's pagination is confusing. I have given the reference as printed in the original.

28 G. Walker, 'Saint or Schemer? The 1527 Heresy Trial of Thomas Bilney Reconsidered', forthcoming in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, January 1989. I am indebted to Dr. Walker for letting me see an early draft of his article.

29 L.P., V 522, 560, 569; Foxe, The Acts and Monuments G. Townsend ed. (New York, 1965) iv. Appendix IV; J. Guy, The Public Career of Sir Thomas More (Brighton, 1980), 167-169.

30 L.P., V 522; Acts and Monuments G. Townsend ed. iv. Appendix IV.

31 As note 26 above.

32 A&M iv. 652.

33 A&M iv. 646.

34 A&M iv. 643.

35 A&M iv. 644.

36 Ibid.

37 A&M iv. 645.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 A&M iv. 646.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 A&M iv. 644.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 'The Story, Examination, Death and Martyrdom of John Frith'.

So far in this thesis we have seen how Foxe's narratives can be seriously qualified in the light of other evidence. His account of the Hunne incident, for example, is open to question, not least because of the various 'additions' he makes to the evidence about Hunne's murder. Another case that repays close examination is the story of John Frith, an associate of Thomas Bilney and the second academic to suffer death for heresy in the early years of the Reformation of England. To some extent, Foxe's story is justified. Indeed, it forms the basis of many modern accounts of the Reformer's life.[1] But it is not entirely so. This chapter is intended to examine some of the ways in which it can be challenged and to reflect upon what these tell us of Foxe's reliability as a historian.

### Early life and 'escape' from Oxford.

According to Foxe, John Frith was born in the town of Westerham in Kent. A keen scholar, he entered Cambridge at an early age, where he met William Tyndale. It was through his 'instructions' that he 'first received into his heart the seed of the gospel'.[2] Foxe is at pains to emphasise his intelligence. He had, he argues, 'so profited in all kind of learning and knowledge, that there was scarcely his equal amongst all his companions'.[3] After some years at Cambridge, Frith moved to Oxford, to Frideswide or Cardinal College. This had been built by Cardinal Wolsey, according to Foxe, more for selfish ambition than for any particular love of learning. Be this as it may, Frith found himself among the cream of the Cambridge intelligentsia Wolsey had recently transferred to Oxford, John Clerk, a well-known Biblical scholar now thirty-four years of age, Frier, Sumner, Harman, Bettes, Cox, Goodman, Thomas Lawney and one Taverner, a musician. In most cases these men

seem to have been influenced by heretical ideas from abroad as 'conferring together upon the abuses of religion, being at that time crept into the church' they were immediately accused by the Cardinal of heresy and, according to Foxe, cast into prison in a fish cellar under the college.[4] So uncomfortable was it there that three of them - Clerk, Bayly and Sumner - died, having eaten 'nothing but salt fish from February to the midst of August'.[5] After this Wolsey sent word that he would not have the rest so 'straitly handled'.[6] Frith and the others were released on condition that they did not stray within ten miles of Oxford, although Frith himself appears to have escaped to the Continent. News of the abjuration of two other heretics, Anthony Dalaber and Thomas Garrad, may have spurred him on in making this decision.

So much for Foxe's version of the facts. Is it credible? First impressions appear to suggest so. Certain basic facts are corroborated by other evidence. The Register of the University of Oxford mentions a John Frith taking his degree at Cambridge in 1525 before transferring to Cardinal College as a junior canon in December that same year.[7] Moreover, Thomas More refers to him as one of Stephen Gardiner's 'scolers'. The future Bishop of Winchester was at this time a prominent Cambridge tutor and may even have contributed to discussions about the new reforming notions from abroad.[8] Nor is there any doubt that Frith conferred together with others on 'matters of religion'. According to one of Gardiner's kinsmen, Germayne Gardiner, writing in 1533, Frith had been 'among others at Oxenford found busy in setting abroad these heresies which lately sprung in Alamayne',[9] while in one of a series of letters John Longland, the Bishop of Lincoln, wrote to the College's founder, Cardinal Wolsey, he isolates Frith as one of several academics at the centre of an Oxford book run, largely organised by the ubiquitous Thomas Garrad. 'There are', he wrote on 3 March 1528, a 'mervilouse sorte of bookes founde whiche were hydde undre the erth, and otherwise secretly conveyde from place to place. The chefe that were famylarly acquaynted in the matter with Master Garrot was Master Clarke, Master Freer, Sir Fryth, Sir Dyott, Anthony Dalaber.' All of the books were found to have been written by well-known heretics, Luther, Melancthon, Hus, Oecolampadius, Wyclif, Zwingli and Bucer.[10]

Having said this, certain aspects of Foxe's story must be treated with scepticism. For example, Foxe implies that Wolsey would not have Frith so 'straitly handled' and had him released from prison on condition that he did not stray within ten miles of Oxford.[11] Now it is true that Wolsey has been accused of leniency towards heretics. Some of his opponents in Parliament in 1529 named him as an 'impeacher and disturber of due and direct correction of heresies'.[12] This is echoed by Sir Thomas More, who in his account of the trial of the Cambridge heretic, Thomas Bilney, marvels that for 'the tender favour borne to the University [Wolsey] did not proceed far in the matter against him'.[13] But to say that he allowed heretics to go free without so much as acknowledging their fault - as this story implies - leaves a little too much to the imagination. In the first place this does not concur with Wolsey's usual practice. The records of the Cardinal's Legatine court contain evidence of over forty convictions for heresy, yet not one of its victims was allowed to go free without at least revoking his errors in open court.[14] (This was even true of Bilney; whatever the exact status of his abjuration - and there is some doubt whether he formally acknowledged his own guilt in the matter - it is nevertheless clear that he was made to speak against the very heresies he had been accused of preaching.[15]) Indeed, there would have been serious questions asked of the Cardinal if they had been. As John Fines remarks in 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', even those who were suspected of heresy were made to forswear erroneous doctrines.[16] Another difficulty with Foxe's account is that it clashes with another account he gives of the heresy convictions in Oxford. In looking at the life of another Oxford Reformer, Thomas Garrad, Foxe recalls that even those who were 'suspected' of heresy were commanded in 'token of repentence and renouncing of their errors' to march in procession up, to a huge furnace on top of Carfax and 'to cast a book into the fire as they passed by'.[17] Although Frith himself is not mentioned by name it is hard to believe that he would have been excused this ordeal, particularly as the list of those Foxe does remember as being involved includes some of his colleagues from Frideswide - Bettes, Taverner 'with others of Frideswide college'.[18] Thus although most of Foxe's story seems justified, the story of Frith's release and eventual 'escape' from Oxford must give the historian cause for concern.

If Foxe has got his facts wrong, as it appears, how is this mistake to be explained? From one angle, it seems unfair to blame Foxe for the omission. Various additions to the story in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments suggest that he may have been relying on other people's memories of the events described.[19] Nevertheless it is possible that Foxe feared that to mention his abjuration would be to spoil Frith's reputation as a Protestant martyr, i.e. someone who 'constantly suffered in the testimony of the truth'. One indication of this is found in the way he describes some of the other heretics imprisoned by Wolsey. Thomas Bettes, for example, is said to have won his release by 'entreaty and surety' but one is left none the wiser as to what exactly this 'entreaty and surety' involved.[20] Perhaps Foxe did not consider the matter important. Yet the fact that Bettes, as Foxe is at pains to mention, turned out to be one of the most influential Protestants in the Court of Queen Anne may have tempted him to gloss over anything which smacked of inconstancy or a recantation. In the end, perhaps, the question of misrepresentation must be left open. But the likelihood is that Foxe deliberately omitted this information, fearing the damage it would do to Frith's reputation. My argument, then, is this: not only is it probable that Frith abjured but Foxe makes no mention of it in order to preserve his hero's integrity.

Return to England and captivity near Reading.

The story of Frith's early career is not the only occasion in Foxe's narrative where the martyrologist's reliability is open to debate. Equally questionable is his treatment of the events immediately following his escape. According to Foxe, Frith spent some time 'over the sea' but returned two years later 'for exhibition of the Prior of Reading'.[21] It was while he was on the way to visit the Prior that he was clapped in the stocks by the town magistrates as part of a general drive against vagabonds and vagrants. Being almost 'pined with hunger', Frith asked to see the town schoolmaster, Leonard Cox, but on catching sight of him merely began to bewail his fate in Latin.[22] Apparently, Cox was so amazed by this that he at once began to 'love and embrace such an excellent wit and disposition unlooked for'.[23] They went on to

talk of the latest gossip from the University (Oxford) while Frith entertained Cox to a perfect rendition of the first book of Homer's Iliad. Finally Cox sought an audience with the town magistrates complaining of their harsh punishment of so excellent and learned a young man. Within a short time Frith was released and allowed to go on his way.

There is much in this story which rings true. We know from a passage in Frith's Works, where he links himself as a translator of Tyndale's Pentateuch and Jonah, that Frith must have spent some time on the Continent, possibly at Marburg and almost certainly with Tyndale at Antwerp.[24] Nor can there be any doubt that Frith returned to England in 1531 or, as Foxe says, two years after his flight. According to the records of Frith's trial in 1533, conducted by John Stokesley, the Bishop of London, one of Frith's visits had occurred during the Lent of that year: 'Deinde interrogatus fatebatur quod natus fuit in Cantia et partibus ultramarinis circiter festum sancti Jacobi ultimo praetent et quod fuit in Anglia quadragesima - ad duos annos elapsos' (my emphasis).[25] The reason given for Frith's return - he came over 'for exhibition of the Prior of Reading' - is a little more dubious.[26] The papers relating to the trial of Thomas Garrad in Oxford in 1528 indicate that Garrad had 'dyverse tymes sent to the Prior [of Reading] ther suche corrupte bookes.... to the nombre of three score or above', so it is possible that Frith had come to England to rally support for the new reforming ideas or to distribute heretical literature.[27] On the other hand a letter from Stephen Vaughan, the king's ambassador in the Netherlands, to Henry VIII in May 1531 appears to give credence to Foxe's story, that he returned to England because he was poor. 'As to Frith', wrote Vaughan, whose brief it had been to win Frith's support for the king's attack on Rome, 'I will do my utmost as soon as I meet him to persuade him to return. "Howbeit I am informed that he is very likely married in Holland, and there dwelleth, but in what place I cannot tell. This marriage may by chance hinder my persuasions. I suppose him to have been thereunto driven by poverty, which is to be pitied, his qualities considered"'.[28]

Be this as it may, two aspects of the story recommend themselves as repaying closer inspection. Remember, it was Foxe's view that Frith returned once in 1531. Yet the records of Frith's trial, which have already been referred to, indicate that Frith returned twice - in Lent 1531 and again on St. James' day (25 July ) 1532.[29] It is unlikely that the register was incorrect on this point as Frith agreed to sign the document as an accurate statement of his views.[30] The story of Frith's captivity outside Reading is just as questionable. While it is possible that Frith was taken as a vagabond - it would not have been in his interests to reveal who he really was - it cannot be entertained with any degree of seriousness that he won his release in the way Foxe describes. Is it likely, for example, that the schoolmaster would have taken so long to complain to the authorities having 'at once', in Foxe's words, begun to 'love and embrace such an excellent wit unlooked for'?[31] And how Frith managed to bewail his fate in Latin, talk of the schools and recite the first book of the Iliad while on the point of starvation (being 'almost pined with hunger') is a matter only for conjecture.[32] Clearly, the story of Frith's captivity at Reading does not stand up to rigorous examination. It is both inaccurate in detail and implausible.

Given these flaws in Foxe's narrative one may wonder how they came about. Were they made deliberately or is it wrong to question Foxe's good faith in the matter? The confusion over the dates of Frith's return suggests that it is not. Not only did Foxe have access to the Stokesley register but he made extensive use of it elsewhere in 'The Story of John Frith'.[33] It is highly curious, to say the least, that Foxe should have failed to spot that Frith returned twice. No less curious is the story of the Reformer's captivity at Reading. The fact that it appears to emphasise Frith's love of learning - even Leonard Cox is said to have been 'a man very well learned' - suggests that it was at least in part the work of the martyrologist himself.[34] Similar remarks about Frith's abilities in this direction were made in the story of the Reformer's education at Oxford. Indeed, if anything, the second story appears to have been written with the intention of illustrating the first.[35] Foxe's account of Frith's return to England is, therefore, flawed in several important respects. How and why Foxe attempted to

misrepresent the case in this way will be discussed at greater length below.

John Frith and Thomas More.

If Foxe's integrity is open to question in the story of Frith's return, the account of his dealings with Thomas More is of even greater concern to the historian. According to Foxe, Frith had no sooner won his release from the stocks outside Reading than he was captured again, this time at the hands of Sir Thomas More, who being at that time Lord Chancellor had persecuted him 'by land and sea' and promised great rewards for information about his whereabouts.[36] Foxe leaves us in no doubt about More's feelings for Frith: it was, he says, through the latter's 'great hatred and deadly pursuit' that Frith was betrayed and thrown in the Tower.[37] Yet Frith continued to be a thorn in the authorities' side. While in the Tower he had many 'conflicts' with the bishops but especially in writing with Sir Thomas More, and many of his treatises were later to be printed and widely circulated.[38] The first occasion of his writing was this. Apparently a friend of Frith's had asked him his views on the sacrament of the altar. Frith produced a little manuscript containing the following points: that transubstantiation was not be seen as an article of faith under pain of damnation; that, contrary to what the authorities said, Christ's body could not be in two places at once; that Christ's words at the Last Supper were to be taken metaphorically; that the Sacrament should be received as Christ taught, not as it was now practised.[39] Unfortunately for Frith, this treatise found its way into the hands of Thomas More. More immediately set about refuting him in a book of his own. However, because he feared a Frithian counter attack, he at first had his book suppressed. It was only later that Frith managed to acquire a copy and reply to it in 'An Answer to More's Letter'.

There is a great deal of truth in Foxe's account. In the 'Answer to More's Letter' Frith tells a similar tale, how he had been approached by a 'Christian brother' to tell him his views of the sacrament of the altar, how he had finally been persuaded to write a tract and how this

had fallen into the hands of Sir Thomas More and how More had his reply suppressed because, Frith had heard it suggested, he was ashamed of it.[40] Yet in so far as it lays much of the responsibility for Frith's predicament onto the lap of Thomas More, Foxe's story is somewhat doubtful. It is unlikely that More was in a position to order Frith's arrest, let alone persecute him 'by land and sea'.[41] By the time Frith returned to England in July 1532 More had already resigned as Lord Chancellor and was living in quiet retirement in his country home in Chelsea.[42]

No less questionable is the suggestion that More bore Firth 'a great hatred'.[43] While it is true that More had managed to acquire a reputation of being extremely unpleasant to heretics, this was very far from his attitude in the case of John Frith. This is illustrated in a 'letter' More wrote to him attacking his views on the eucharist as well as in The Apology, an account of More's views on heretics written after his resignation as Chancellor. Far from insulting him, as is the case with most of the other heretics he mentions, More seems to have been genuinely concerned about his welfare. 'In good faith', he wrote, 'it greveth me sore to see this young man so cyrcumvented and beguiled by certayn olde lymmes of the devell'.[44] He was 'of trouth very heuy to heare' that he had written against the sacrament, 'for so help me god and none otherwyse, but as I wolde be gladde to take more laboure, losse, and bodyly payne also, thenne peraduenture many a man wolde wene, to wynne that yonge man to Cryste and his trewe fayth agayne'.[45] It seems reasonable to suggest More is telling the truth. Indeed, Frith appears to have been held in fairly high regard by those in authority, notably Stephen Gardiner, who More describes as bearing a 'very fatherly fauour' towards the 'yonge mannys amendement'.[46] Clearly the idea that Frith had excited 'great hatred' is open at least to debate.

Most alarming, though, is Foxe's account of More's Reply. As has been noted, it was Foxe's view that More had the book stopped because he did not want it to 'come into Frith's hands'.[47] In stating this he is no doubt inferring that More was afraid Frith would reply to it and reveal its shortcomings. This view is supported, to some extent, by what Frith has to say on the subject in his 'Answer to More's Letter'. According

to Frith, he could not 'well judge what the cause should be that his book is kept so secret.... but some men think that he [More] is ashamed of his part, and for that cause doth so diligently suppress the work which he printed.'[48]

Thus far Foxe's story seems justified. Yet in The Apology, written soon after, More explains the suppression in arguably more convincing terms. He admits that he had at first had the tract suppressed but this was only because he did not want to give unnecessary publicity to Frith's views. Frith's treatise, he explains, was not yet 'abrode in prent', so to fully discuss his arguments himself would be to do his job of converting the populace for him.[49]

Foxe's view of More in 'The Story of John Frith' is, therefore, open to question in several ways. Not only is it unlikely that Frith was held in the sort of 'hatred' Foxe says he was; there may even be doubt as to his ability to arrest him and imprison him in the Tower. These flaws in Foxe's narrative require explanation and it is to this that I shall now direct my attention. It may be that Foxe was misled by sources who were hostile to More. The Apology mentions scurrilous stories being told about him as early as 1533 and it is possible that Foxe had access to a similar source.[50] On the other hand, Foxe's references to More are so emotive and vitriolic that one is tempted to suggest he had some say in the matter. At one stage More is said to have been the cause of 'great trouble, and also of death, unto the said Frith', although his only 'crime' appears to have been to acquire a copy of Frith's tract from an informant.[51] Elsewhere he is depicted, quite sarcastically, as whetting 'his wits' and calling 'his spirits together, as much as he might' to answer Frith's treatise.[52] And twice Foxe goes out of his way to relate that More was 'then chancellor' as if he wanted his readers to be under no illusions about who was really responsible for Frith's demise.[53] Thus while it is possible Foxe was misled by sources who were hostile to More, one cannot rule out the possibility that he made these 'mistakes' himself, perhaps in a bid to blacken the name of one of the Reformation's most ardent opponents. Similar problems occur, significantly enough, in Foxe's treatment of More's

'victimisation' of other heretics, notably James Bainham and John Tewkesbury, who were said to have been held captive in More's household and tortured into giving their abjurations.[54]

Frith's journey to Croydon: an offer of escape.

Whatever Frith's dealings may have been with More, he spent four months in the Tower before finally being ordered to face trial at the Bishop of London's palace at Croydon. Apparently, while on his way to Croydon he fell into conversation with his escort, one of Archbishop Cranmer's men, who not only exhorted him to reconsider his determination not to recant but promised that there were those in high office - namely Cromwell, the Vicar General, and Cranmer himself - who were anxious that he should survive his ordeal. There was no question, Frith is supposed to have said, that he would do this as this would be to run the danger of damning himself. For his part he promised the gentleman that 'if you live but twenty years more.... you shall see this whole realm of mine opinion concerning this sacrament of the altar'.[55] Not to be put off, the gentleman offered him another chance to save himself, organizing a mock escape for this very purpose. Apparently he had already had words with the porter, Perleabeane, and they had decided upon a plan which would allow Frith to flee into the woods near Brixton. Here again, Frith was reluctant to go along with his captors. If they were to leave him there, he answered them, 'I would surely follow after as fast as I might'. 'Do you think', he asked, 'that I am afraid to declare my opinion unto the bishops of England, in a manifest truth?'[56] In the end Frith was escorted to Croydon in safety, 'spending [the rest of the journey] in pleasant and godly communication', determined to die for his faith boldly and openly.[57]

Some of the details of this story appear justified. No doubt Frith had friends in high office who were anxious to see him recant. A letter from Archbishop Cranmer to Archdeacon Hawkins, in June 1533, just before Frith's execution, confirms this. Apparently, Cranmer, had sent for Frith three or four times to make him change his mind.[58] Frith was also helped by Thomas Cromwell. According to Edward Walsingham, Frith's



keeper in the Tower, Cromwell had once told him that it was a great pity to lose Frith 'if he may be reconciled'. Apparently Frith was allowed to remain free of irons, although the other prisoners all wore them.[59]

Also credible is the idea that Frith may have been offered the chance to escape. The gentleman's plan to allow Frith to escape into the woods near Brixton while his captors raised a hue and cry in the opposite direction is too intimately precise not to be taken at face value.[60] The extent to which this involved Cranmer and Cromwell, both trusted ministers of the Crown, is, of course, another matter.

Yet in other respects the story is extremely dubious. The idea that Frith prophesied that his beliefs on the sacrament would be held by the whole country probably benefits from hindsight as this actually occurred with the publication in 1552 of the Second English Prayer Book.[61] Also debatable are some of the events leading to the gentleman's offer of escape. Quite plainly, many of the things that are described could not have happened. How the gentleman and porter managed to plot his escape 'without the hearing of Frith' is a matter only for conjecture.[62] Not only does it appear as if they left their prisoner totally unguarded, there is not even a suggestion that he was kept in chains. Elsewhere Frith is described as having taken 'the gentleman by the hand' before prophesying about the spread of his beliefs.[63]

How are these problems in Foxe's narrative to be explained? Again it is possible that he was misinformed. As the story appeared very late - in the 1583 edition of The Acts and Monuments - it is unlikely that Foxe was writing from first hand knowledge. It is difficult to say who his informants might have been although the curiously anonymous 'gentleman' is a possible candidate. On the other hand Foxe could easily have added various embellishments. Frith's suggestion that his news would be widely believed in twenty years is a case in point, not least because prophecies like this are quite a common occurrence in The Acts and Monuments as a whole. Another Reformer, Jan Hus, is said to have predicted that the authorities would have to give account for their treatment of him a hundred years after his death. Foxe notes that it was a hundred years later when Martin Luther first began is ministry,

dealing the death-blow to the reign of Anti-Christ.[64] But Foxe's handiwork is most evident in his emphasis on Frith's learning. One of the reasons the porter gave for agreeing to help Frith escape was that he was of 'personage both comely and amiable, and of natural disposition, gentle, meek and humble'.[65] However, the gentleman was persuaded by his intelligence. Not only was he a man of 'singular knowledge both in the Latin and Greek, and both ready and ripe in all kind of learning', but 'I take him to be such a one of his age, in all kind of learning and knowledge of tongues, as this realm never yet in mine opinion brought forth'.[66] Does not this language bear a remarkable resemblance to Foxe's description of Frith's early career and captivity outside Reading? Like the gentleman, Foxe notes that he was 'an exquisite learned man, in which exercise.... he had diligently laboured certain years, not without profit in both Latin and Greek'.[67] Moreover, 'he had so profited' - and here he follows the gentleman almost word for word - 'in all kind of learning and knowledge, that there was scarcely his equal amongst all his companions.'[68] However one looks at it, there is little question that the gentleman's words were originally inspired by Foxe himself.

Trial and execution, 1532-1533.

Foxe's account of Frith's trial at Croydon and execution in 1533 is likewise open to question. In the 1583 edition of The Acts and Monuments, Foxe reminds us that it was only because of the cruelty of Gardiner and the other bishops that Frith found himself in this position in the first place. Apparently Gardiner had persuaded the king's chaplain to preach a sermon reminding Henry that there was 'one now, in the Tower of London, so bold as to write in the defence of that heresy [against the eucharist], and yet no man goeth about his reformation'.[69] The king being at that time 'in no point resolved' about the truth of Frith's beliefs but 'a perverse stout adversary to the contrary' consequently decreed that Frith should be put on trial.[70] Foxe is adamant that these proceedings had been organized to 'seek the destruction' of Frith, in other words his death at the stake.[71]

Once safely established at Croydon, Frith was summoned before a conclave of bishops led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. According to Foxe, he had a profound effect on his hearers, showing 'himself passing ready and ripe in answering to all objections'.[72] When they had finished examining him Cranmer told Dr Heath that Frith had '"wonderfully travailed in this matter"' despite taking '"the doctors amiss"', whereupon Heath defended Frith 'so straitly' that 'my lord was driven to this sheet-anchor.... "that you, with a little more study, will be easily brought to Frith's opinion"'.[73] According to Foxe, Cranmer was not then 'fully resolved of the sincere truth of that article'.[74]

After detention in 'the bishop's stall', or the Bishop of London's consistory, where he was instructed to 'hear the maimed and half-cut-away sacrament of antichrist.... or else to perish in the fire',[75] Frith was brought before the bishops of London, Winchester and Lincoln (the early editions say Chichester) and formally accused. As far as Foxe was concerned Frith had little chance to defend himself. 'No reason', he says, 'would prevail against the force and cruelty of these furious foes' and on 4 July, 1533 he was sentenced to be burnt at the stake.[76] However, his death was marked by great courage. Because the wind blew the majority of the flames onto the body of his colleague, Andrew Hewet, Frith took far longer to die than would normally be expected. Yet so resolved was he to die patiently that he did not seem to experience any pain but 'seemed rather to rejoice for his fellow, than to be careful for himself'.[77] Thus ends the story of the death, examination and martyrdom of John Frith, in itself according to Foxe, 'a perfect and firm testimony [of].... true doctrine'.[78]

Yet how well based is Foxe's account? The details of the trial are not in question as they appear to have been based on the extant register of Bishop Stokesley. Nor is it beyond the bounds of possibility that Frith took his punishment very courageously. A letter written to some friends just before his execution urges them so 'receive the cross when it shall please God to lay it upon them'. Indeed he had always suspected that to 'walk after God's word would cost me my life at one time or another.'[79] However, Foxe's account is less convincing in other respects. The idea that Gardiner organized his trial in order to seek

'the destruction of Frith' is an example of this as most of the evidence suggests that he did all he could to save him.[80] According to his kinsman, Germayne Gardiner, he even invited Frith home and offered to change his view on the sacrament if Frith could persuade him otherwise: '"if your cause be better, why should ye not think to win me?"'[81] At another time he persuaded his chaplain to visit him in prison in a last bid attempt to win him round.[82] A similar episode occurs in More's Apology. Apparently, Gardiner had invited him to his house once before, in December 1532, and being of 'very fatherly fauour towarde the yonge mannys amendement' attempted to persuade him to give up his heretical views.[83]

More dubious still is the idea that Frith's examiners were 'forceful' and 'cruel'.[84] While it was always the Church's intention to punish heretics who proved to be obstinate, they did not go out of their way to burn their victims as Foxe appears to suggest in 'The Story of John Frith'. In fact the records of Frith's trial quote the bishops as using 'all the lawful means that we could, and most wholesome admonitions that we did know' to make him change his mind.[85] It was only after lengthy debate and questioning that they were - with 'great sorrow' - forced to read the definitive sentence.[86]

Yet Foxe's account is most contentious in its description of Frith's interview with Archbishop Cranmer. Remember it was Foxe's view that the Archbishop was deeply affected by Frith's arguments. It is possible that relations between the two men were quite good, even so far, as Foxe suggests, for Cranmer to organize Frith's escape. But they had little in common in terms of sacramental doctrine. Writing to Archdeacon Hawkyns in June 1533, Cranmer notes that Frith's views were 'so erroneous' that he could not 'despatch him'.[87] He had even sent for him himself in order to persuade him to leave 'his imagination'.[88]

Foxe's version of Frith's trial and execution is, therefore, under suspicion in several important respects. It now remains for us to explain these errors in terms of Foxe's trustworthiness as a historian. The story of Frith's interview with Cranmer appears to put Foxe in the clear as this was allegedly reported to him by those who were 'nigh

about'.[89] Foxe relates how various gentlemen acquainted with the case had overheard the crucial conversation between Cranmer and Dr Heath. Yet even here the possibility of some sort of fabrication by Foxe cannot be ruled out entirely. It is noticeable, for example, that Cranmer is said to have been 'then.... not fully resolved of the sincere truth of that article' i.e. Frith's view on the sacrament of the altar.[90] This tends to suggest that Foxe was embarrassed by Cranmer's orthodoxy, making it by no means impossible that Foxe invented the whole story to protect Cranmer's reputation. The treatment meted out to Gardiner and the other bishops is equally suspect if only because it singles out Bishop Gardiner. Gardiner, as is well known, was the bête-noire of Foxe's history. As such Foxe's assertion that he engineered Frith's murder must be treated with great caution. One indication that Foxe was sometimes tempted to tamper with the evidence in order to give a false impression of Gardiner's cruelty is found in Foxe's treatment of Gardiner's role in the trials of two other heretics, John Lambert and Richard Bayfield. In the case of the former Foxe's claim that Gardiner was in 'high authority' at the time and therefore the real author of proceedings against him is entirely without foundation. Indeed he admits as much later on in his account when he lays the blame for Lambert's execution at the door of two Protestants, Robert Barnes and Dr. John Taylor.[91] In the case of the latter Foxe accuses Gardiner, as Bishop of Winchester, of being responsible for his burning when the records of Bayfield's trial, which Foxe used and quoted from extensively in The Acts and Monuments, suggest nothing of the sort. Gardiner was in fact consecrated Bishop of Winchester two weeks after Bayfield's execution.[92] Foxe's description of Gardiner's role in the trial and execution of Frith is consequently open to question. While it is possible that Foxe was writing what be believed to be the truth of the situation, a more likely explanation is that he was simply being biased.

Summary.

When the historian examines Foxe's version of 'The Story, Examination, Death and Martyrdom of John Frith' he should, therefore, take into account two things. First, that Foxe's story is not

necessarily accurate. Frith's alleged 'escape' from Oxford, his captivity at Reading on his return to England in 1531, his so-called 'bad relations' with Thomas More, his journey to Croydon and the offer of escape that this entailed, and, lastly, the behaviour of his judges all leave a great deal to be desired as straightforward records of sworn fact. One hesitates to say that Foxe was wholly responsible for this. But in a number of cases, whether it be because of embarrassment at his hero's lack of resolution or a desire to emphasise his great learning, Foxe's integrity is at the very least open to debate. It is not certain whether he intended to deceive his reader: his account of the journey to Croydon, for example, may have been introduced merely to illustrate a point about Frith's learning rather than, say, give a false impression of the reformer's heroism. But this cannot be said to have been the case with Foxe's account of Frith's relations with Thomas More and Bishop Gardiner. Here Foxe appears to have deliberately fabricated the evidence in an attempt to blacken the names of two of the Reformation's most ardent opponents. As will be seen in the next chapter, Foxe's treatment of the Catholic opponents of 'God's word' is of fundamental importance as it leads the historian to qualify considerably previous assessments of his reliability.

Notes to Chapter Five.

1 These include M. Loane, Pioneers of the Reformation in England (London, 1964), 2-46; W.A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535 (New Haven and London, 1964); A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation (London, 1964), 115-117; J.F. Mozley, William Tyndale (London, 1937).

2 A&M v. 4.

3 A&M v. 3.

4 A&M v. 4-5.

5 A&M v. 5.

6 Ibid.

7 C.W. Boase, Register of the University of Oxford, Vol. 1 (1449-63; 1505-71) (Oxford, 1885), 140: '1525: Frythe, John, B.A. of Cambridge. sup. for incorporation 27 Oct. 1525, incorporated 7 Dec. - martyred 4 July, Athenae 74.'

8 T. More, The Apology, J.B. Trapp ed. in The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1979), IX, 124.

9 L.P., VII, 1606; J. Gairdiner, Lollardy and the Reformation in England (London, 1908), I, 405-419.

10 Foxe, The Acts and Monuments G. Townsend ed. (New York, 1965), v. Appendix VI: 'Papers Relative to Thomas Garrard'.

11 A&M v. 5.

12 A.F. Pollard, Wolsey (London, 1929), 215.

13 T. More, Dialogue Concerning Tyndale, W.E. Campbell ed. in The English Works of Sir Thomas More (London and New York, 2 vols., 1931), I, iii, IV, 193.

14 A.F. Pollard Wolsey, 214: 'The records of his [Wolsey's] legatine court teem with cases of penance, confession, abjuration and imprisonment.' The following may be cited: L.P., III (i), 1922; L.P., IV (i), 1962; L.P., IV (ii), 4029, 4175, 4218, 4242, 4260, 4444, 4545, 4850.

15 G. Walker, 'Saint or Schemer? The 1527 Heresy Trial of Thomas Bilney Reconsidered', forthcoming in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 1989.

16 J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XIV (1963), 169.

17 A&M v. 428.

18 Ibid.

19 For example, the story of Frith's captivity in the Fish Cellar under Cardinal College. In the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments Frith is simply stated as having been imprisoned in a cave (J. Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes (London, 1563), 497).

20 A&M v. 5.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 W.A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535, 80-81.

25 J. Foxe, Acts and Monuments, G. Townsend ed. (New York, 1965), v. Appendix XXII, Acta et Processus contra Johannem Fryth Hereticum Obstinatum et Impenitentem (ex Reg. Stokesley (London) second series of folios, fol. 71).

26 A&M v. 5.

27 'Papers Relative to Thomas Garrard'; Longland to Wolsey, Holborn, 3 March, 1528.

28 Vaughan to Henry VIII, 20 May, 1531; printed in J.F. Mozley, William Tyndale, 197-198.

29 See note 23 above.

30 A&M v. 14: 'I, Frith, thus do think; and as I think, so have I said, written, taught, and affirmed, and in my books have published.'

31 A&M v. 5.

32 Ibid.

33 This is shown by his account of the Reformer's trial in 1533 (A&M v. 14-16).

34 A&M v. 5-6.

35 A&M v. 3-4.

36 A&M v. 6.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 J. Frith, The Works of the Excellent Martyr of Christ, John Frith in W. Russel ed., The Works of the English Reformers; William Tyndale and John Frith (London, 3 vols., 1831), III, 321-323.

41 A&M v. 6.

42 More had resigned the previous May. See L.P., V, 1075 (5 June, 1532).

43 A&M v. 6.

44 T. More, A Letter of Sir Tho. More knyght impugnyne the erronyouse wryting of John Fryth agaynst the blessed sacrament of the aultare (London, 1533).

45 T. More, The Apology, 122.

46 T. More, The Apology, 124.

47 A&M v. 9.

48 J. Frith, Works, 322-323.

49 T. More, The Apology, 123-124.

50 T. More, The Apology, 119,126.

51 A&M v. 6.

52 A&M v.7. Also A&M v. 9: 'he sharpened his pen all that he might'.

53 A&M v. 6: (1) 'Thomas More, who, at that time being chancellor of England, persecuted him both by land and sea'; and (2) 'that same writing of Frith's.... [was carried] unto More, being then chancellor: which thing, afterwards was occasion of great trouble, and also of death, unto the said Frith.'

54 These will be studied in greater detail in Chapter Six.

55 A&M viii. 697.

56 A&M viii. 698.

57 A&M viii. 699.

58 Miscellaneous Writings of Thomas Cranmer, J.E. Cox ed. The Parker Society Publications (1844-1846), 246.

59 L.P., V, 1458.

60 A&M viii. 698.

61 W.A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535, 104.

62 A&M viii. 697.

63 Ibid.

64 A&M iv. 253.

65 A&M viii. 698.

66 A&M viii. 696, 697-698.

67 A&M v. 4.

68 A&M v. 3.

69 A&M viii. 695.

70 A&M viii. 696.

71 A&M viii. 695.

72 A&M viii. 699.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 A&M v. 14.

77 A&M v. 15.

78 Ibid.

79 M. Loane, Pioneers of the Reformation in England, 19.

80 A&M viii. 695.

81 L.P., VII, 1606; J. Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation in England (London, 1908), i 405-419; J.A. Muller, Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction (London, 1926), 52-53.

82 Ibid.

83 T. More, The Apology, 124.

84 A&M v. 14.

85 A&M v. 15.

86 Foxe, Acts and Monuments G. Townsend ed. (New York, 1965), v. Appendix XXII.

87 Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer, 246.

88 Ibid.

89 A&M viii. 699.

90 Ibid.

91 J.A. Muller, Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction (London, 1926), 353.

92 J.A. Muller, Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction, 349.

## CHAPTER SIX

Thomas More and the Heretics.

In The Acts and Monuments Foxe is not simply concerned with the stories of the martyrs. Of equal, if not greater importance is the character of their adversaries. Indeed the two are very much tied in with one another. If the martyrs were to be denoted by their character as well as their beliefs then this was equally true of the Catholics; the more violent and malevolent they were, the more obvious the error of their doctrine. As Foxe writes in the case of Cardinal Wolsey,

> 'For like as the Lacedemonians, in times past, were accustomed to show and demonstrate drunken men unto their children, to behold and look upon, that through the foulness of that vice, they might inflame them the more to the study and desire of sobriety; even so it shall not be hurtful sometimes to set forth the examples which are not honest, that others might thereby gather the instructions of better and more upright dealing.
>
> Wherefore thou shalt note here, good reader! in this history, with all judgment, the great difference of life and christian conversation between this church and the other true humble martyrs and servants of God, whom they have and do yet persecute.'[1]

The clearest expression of this is Foxe's account of Sir Thomas More, in particular his dealings with heretics. Indeed Foxe's accusations have won considerable support, notably in Arthur Ogle's Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower.[2] There may be some doubt, however, about the validity of these accusations as well as of Foxe's reliability in making them. As in the other accounts examined in this thesis, the possibility of bias is a strong one and deserves serious consideration.

What, then, are Foxe's charges? First and most important, More is supposed to have exceeded his authority. According to Foxe, the affairs of the Church were exclusively the preserve of the ecclesiastical establishment. And yet More, 'not contented with his own vocation' as a layman had 'reached out his unmeet hand to meddle with God's ark-matters, wherein he had little cunning, and while he thinketh to help religion, destroyeth religion, and is an utter enemy to Christ'.[3] In saying this Foxe may have been thinking of More's so-called Controversial Works, which dealt with the rise of Lutheranism and attempted to confute the ideas of Tyndale, Frith and others. But he also seems to have meant the practical measures More took to undermine the spread of heresy. In The Acts and Monuments More is recorded as having arrested and detained at least five heretics. These are Thomas Phillips,[4] John Frith,[5] John Tewkesbury,[6] George Constantine,[7] and, most controversially, James Bainham.[8] According to Foxe, Bainham was not only imprisoned by More but - in the offender's words - accused and 'judged' by him too.[9] If this was so this was highly irregular as the judgment and conviction of heretics was plainly the prerogative of the episcopal authorities alone.

The second of Foxe's charges concerns More's treatment of the heretics detained in his custody. According to Foxe, at least four of the prisoners arrested and detained by More underwent some form of physical intimidation, either, as perhaps happened in the case of Richard Hunne, to make them confess to more than they had already admitted, or in at least one case - the imprisonment of the boy of Colchester - out of pure vindictiveness on the part of the prison authorities.[10] The nature of physical intimidation varies from case to case: in some stories, like those of James Bainham and John Tewkesbury, More's victims were supposed to have been systematically beaten and tortured,[11] although George Constantine was merely placed in the stocks in More's gatehouse.[12] But in every case the Chancellor is seen to have shown an unwarranted cruelty in the interrogation and/or punishment of heretics in his charge.

Let us examine the first allegation against More, that is that the Chancellor was himself a leading figure in the arrest of heretics, and,

in at least one case - that of James Bainham - party to their examination and conviction. There can be no doubt that as far as the arrest of heretics is concerned Foxe is substantially correct about More. One may question his involvement in the cases of Tewkesbury and Frith on chronological grounds - More became Chancellor in October 1529 (Foxe himself says 1530) and had surrendered the seals by May 1532[13] - but there is no reason to suppose Foxe exaggerated More's part in the capture of Bainham, Constantine and the others. In the first place, More admits as much in his own Apology, written some months after his resignation in 1532. Here he mentions the names of some five of six heretics who had been arrested, imprisoned and interrogated by him, either in the Tower or in his own house in Chelsea.[14] Indeed two of them appear in Foxe. George Constantine, a supporter of Tyndale and bookseller, appears to have been placed in the stocks at More's home.[15] Another Thomas Phillips, was imprisoned in the Tower, apparently on compassionate grounds.[16]

Other evidence for Foxe's case exists in some of the records of the heresy trials carried out during this period. A letter printed on behalf of the London Hanse merchants in March 1526 refers to a raid carried out by More on behalf of Cardinal Wolsey on their premises in the January of that year. Apparently the merchants were accused of eating flesh during Lent as well as circulating Lutheran literature. Although no books were found on the raid, a few of the merchants were taken in for questioning.[17] A similar picture emerges from the records of two petitions filed in the 1530s (now in the Public Record Office) accusing More of wrongful imprisonment. The details of illegal imprisonment and misuse may be treated with reserve - a point to which we shall return later - but the impression of More's initial participation in their arrest is probably correct. Coincidentally, one of them, Thomas Phillips, is the same Thomas Phillips mentioned by Foxe and More as having been arrested by the Chancellor and detained in the Tower.[18]

However, it is doubtful that More's share in the seeking out of heresy would have been so great as to allow him to take part in the examination and 'judgment' of these heretics, as is the case apparently

in Foxe's account of James Bainham. Obviously, given More's zeal in the stamping out of heresy, there is no reason to suspect him of having merely participated in their arrest. Conceivably he may also have taken the opportunity to witness their examinations himself, a point confirmed to some extent by his detailed references to certain cases in his Controversial Works.[19] Yet the argument in favout of a formal presence at these trials is a dubious one to say the least. In the first place, it clashes with the evidence of The Apology, which shows him to have been fundamentally opposed to interference of this kind: on ethical grounds, because More is always quick to make the distinction between the Church Courts and his own experience - he is a layman first and foremost, despite taking it upon himself to defend the Church from the calumny of St. Germain and her critics; and on legal grounds, because although he considers it his duty to do all he can 'to represse heretykes and assyst the ordinaries' in their arrest and the carrying out of sentences, it was primarily the Church's function to examine and convict.[20]

More is entitled to be believed. Even the records of the trials of the heretics mentioned in Foxe show the Church to have taken the initiative in these matters. It appears that More was often 'in attendance'. Indeed a few of the trials seem to have taken place at More's house at Chelsea.[21] But the overall responsibility for their interrogation and conviction lay with the Bishops of London, Cuthbert Tunstal to 1530 and John Stokesley from 1530. It is Bishop Tunstal and his chancellor who condemn John Tewkesbury for instance,[22] while Thomas Phillips was tried by Bishop Stokesley.[23] In Richard Bayfield's case sentence was passed by the bishop.[24] And even in the case of James Bainham there is every reason to doubt the validity of the offender's charges. As far as our documentary evidence is concerned, there is not the slightest shred of evidence to suggest that any of these heretics were 'accused and judged' by More.[25]

What, then, of Foxe's second allegation, that is that More mercilessly tortured some of the offenders in his custody? This has been accepted almost without question in the past. It has been argued that More would have had 'no compunction' about having Bainham or any

other heretic tortured, even so far as to have been present at the ordeal himself, 'if the importance of the expected disclosures appeared to warrant it'. Nor, apparently, should we judge More by the encomiums of later generations. Torture was not nearly as morally repugnant in Tudor times as it is now, something which argues for the authenticity of the martyrologist's account in terms of 'times, places, and main events'.[26] However, such a view cannot go unqualified. Of course no one in authority could deny that heresy was an extremely serious offence that required radical measures in its suppression. But there is no evidence of anyone sanctioning acts of cruelty for their own sake. The abiding impression of most of the records of heresy trials still extant is a desire on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to save the souls of those unfortunate enough to have wandered from the fold. Crucially, this was not to be done by compulsion or intimidation but by the voluntary participation of the offender, even if the offender appeared to have relapsed and been condemned to death as a result. We see this in the records of the 'Lollard' trials of the 1510s and 20s, where well over 97% of those accused were persuaded to recant and return to the articles of Mother Holy Church.[27] Indeed, the torture of victims of any kind was strictly forbidden, a point of which the scrupulously law-abiding More would not have been ignorant. It is in this light that the evidence against More should be viewed. What in fact is required is a clear indication that the Chancellor intervened in the interrogation of heretics so as to overturn the traditional procedure in cases of this kind. Foxe's reliability on this point depends upon the existence of what is, in essence, an extremely radical innovation.

What, then, are the facts of the case? There are in fact three groups of evidence to consider. Firstly there is the evidence of More's Apology, which, not unsurprisingly in the circumstances, amounts to a complete denial of any charges of compulsion and torture. Secondly there are the two petitions in the Public Record Office accusing More of wrongful imprisonment. These have been examined in detail by G.R. Elton in 'Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII'.[28] And thirdly, there is the evidence of Foxe himself, some of which comprises detailed transcriptions of the bishops' registers.

Let us turn to More's Apology first of all. Although he had never sought to deny his animosity towards heretics, More assures us that he could only recall two instances of his having beaten heretics in his custody. One was a child, a servant of his already 'nowseled vp' in heresy and a follower of George Joye;[29] the other a madman, who among other things was found guilty of indecently assaulting young women during mass.[30] But for these two exceptions, More could not remember one case of a heretic having been flogged for his belief. The rest, he says, had not so much as a 'fylyppe on the forhed'.[31] How trustworthy is More's account? Of course in politics, and More was an extremely clever politician, a denial is often as good as confirmation. Clearly the fact that More was worried by such criticism - he writes of a number of heretics on the Continent who were spreading lies about him[32] - suggests he had something to hide. Certainly the idea that More's word is often not to be trusted has some basis of truth. More's denial of some kind of personal antipathy to heretics at the end of The Apology grates sharply in view of his thoroughly abusive language towards certain individuals in an earlier work, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer.[33] Some of More's responses to a number of the other criticisms he faced are also very questionable, notably the allegation that large numbers of heretics had been punished in the dioceses of London and Lincoln. Although More denies his critics' claims, the weight of the evidence - particularly in fact in view of the material we find in Foxe - suggests he was probably lying.[34]

Nevertheless, More's denial of cruelty to heretics does have about it the ring of truth. In the first place, More's comments do not appear to have been crucial to his overall argument but only lie in parenthesis to it. Here he is not responding to a specific charge laid by his critics; the discussion of More's treatment of heretics comes in incidentally to the major discussion on the unfairness of ecclesiastical tribunals. There is, in short, - at least within the limits of the text - no need to lie. Secondly, More does not deny his harsh treatment of criminals in general, only of heretics. Significantly, he admits to being capable of extreme acts of cruelty as many a time he had commanded his officers to deal out a 'well deserued payne' to those who had been

brought to bar for murder or sacrilege in the church.[35] If he should draw the line in cases of heresy, he is in all fairness entitled to be believed. Most crucially, though, More never once seeks to deny his animosity either towards the heretics or heresy in general. Indeed so far from denying this, he affirms it repeatedly in The Apology and emphasises it in his epitaph.[36] Clearly, this is not the action of a man who told lies about his treatment of offenders and is in itself a notable recommendation for the substantial accuracy of More's account.

Further confirmation can be attained in the form of two petitions filed in the 1530s accusing More of wrongful imprisonment. These were written on beahlf of two men, Thomas Phillips and John Field. According to Field, he had been detained in More's house in Chelsea for eighteen days in January 1530 and then for more than two years in Fleet, in conditions of particular hardship without trial or knowledge of why he had been held. From here, 'upon the commandment of Thomas More',[37] he had been transferred to the Marshalsea, though not before suffering the indignity of being robbed by the officers of the Fleet. Even after he had fallen 'sick of the house sickness' Field's troubles continued with a further spell of imprisonment.[38] This was again apparently at the request of More through the Bishops of London and Winchester and the Duke of Norfolk.

At first sight, Field's evidence appears to give Foxe's case some degree of credence. It is not, however, conclusive proof. More's part in Field's maltreatment was neglible: the one instance of apparent cruelty on the part of the Chancellor - Field's incarceration after a serious illness - is, significantly enough, reported at second hand ('as your bedeman heard say'),[39] while the only other evidence of some kind of intimidation is that of the gaolers to Field's prison, who rob him to 'obtain their fees'.[40] Whatever the case, More himself answered all such charges when he spoke in The Apology of accusers who had been investigated by the Council and found to be liars. Although he does not mention Field by name, he does refer to the case of Thomas Phillips, who claimed to have suffered similar indignities.[41]

Could More have been mistaken? This has been claimed by a number of historians, notably by G.R. Elton in 'Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII'. According to Elton, some of the allegations against the Chancellor were upheld after More's resignation. For example, Thomas Phillips was said by Hall to have been a gaoler in the Tower of London at the time of the execution of Nicholas Carew in 1538.[42] The only explanation for this, it has been submitted, is that Phillips had been 'liberated after More's departure from the scene'.[43] There may be some truth in this argument but it is just as likely that even in 1538 - and here it is important to note that Hall's chronology is by no means reliable - Phillips had remained a prisoner in the Tower. Those who are imprisoned for any length of time sometimes manage to acquire positions of some authority. Indeed a document in Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials mentions a 'Philips' as gaoler in the Tower as early as 1531, at about the time that More had probably been accused.[44]

But the most damaging evidence against Foxe can be found in The Acts and Monuments itself. There is no way in which we can test the veracity of Foxe's claims purely as they stand: the stores of More's cruelty to Bainham, Tewkesbury and the rest are simply that, mere narratives of events which may or may not bear some relation to the truth. Nevertheless it is surely significant that such records as have survived and been transcribed by Foxe into The Acts and Monuments give a very different picture of events and show the ecclesiastical authorities to have been remarkably lenient in their treatment of individual heretics. One such case is that of John Tewkesbury. According to the register, Tewkesbury, a leather seller of London, was examined before Bishop Tunstal three times before he finally abjured in May 1529, on 12, 13 and 21 April respectively.[45] At no time, however, does he appear to have been threatened or intimidated. Far from it, for the bishop and his associates went out of their way to exhort Tewkesbury to renounce his errors - in the words of the bishop's register - 'often, and very gently'.[46] This is supported by the evidence of the proceedings themselves. Significantly, most of the articles are repeated, not only from session to session but sometimes on the same day, a clear indication of the authorities' desire to give the offender every possible opportunity to change his mind. At the end of every session,

Tewkesbury was appointed to 'deliberate with himself' how he would respond in his next examination,[47] which not only suggests a reluctance to convict him on the part of the bishop but a considerable equanimity of temperament in the face of some fairly stubborn resistance on the part of the offender. Finally, Tunstal offered Tewkesbury the chance to be legally represented: 'These things thus done, the bishop oftentimes offered him, that he should choose what spiritual or temporal man he would, to be his counsellor'.[48]

Another case which suggests that the authorities were quite lenient to the heretics in their charge is that of James Bainham. As has been noted, Bainham claimed at his execution that he had not only been arrested by More but 'accused and judged' by him too.[49] According to Foxe, this was not the only indignity Bainham had been forced to undergo. He had also been racked and tied to a tree in More's garden and cruelly whipped.[50] Yet the records of Bainham's trial do not support these claims. As with Tewkesbury, the main task of the authorities seems to have been to return him - as Foxford, the Vicar General, has it - 'purely and unfeignedly' to the Catholic faith.[51] Far from seeking to intimidate him or harm him in any way, they merely attempted to reason with him, as, for example, on 16 December, 1531 where we read, 'they asked him whether he would persist in that which he had said, or else would return to the catholic church.... adding, moreover, many fair, enticing, and alluring words, that he would reconcile himself, saying, the time was yet that he might be received'.[52] This is not say that Bainham was not pressurised into making a decision: at various times during his examination, less politic arguments were used, even so far as in one case for Foxford to begin to read the definitive sentence. But this does not suggest the authorities were cruel. An action of this kind was entirely regular where the offender proved to be obstinate. And anyway, the authorities seem to have done all they could to avoid taking this step. In the cases of at least two of Foxe's heretics, therefore, the martyrologist's allegations against More are not supported by the evidence of the bishops' registers. In each instance the chief emphasis appears to have been not so much on the punishment or intimidation of the offender as on a reconciliation, it being the bishops' main aim to bring the heretic back into the fold of the Church

and to prevent him from back-sliding in the future. Of course, it could be argued that More was acting entirely independently of the bishops. Yet it is doubtful that More would go against the grain in such an obvious way. The fight against heresy in the early 1530s was essentially a combined effort involving, as More says in The Apology, a strictly uniform approach to the problem. If More was even half the loyal son of the Church he said he was, one must question the likelihood on his part of any significant deviation from the norm.

Both of Foxe's allegations against Sir Thomas More are, therefore, open to question. Not only is it unfair to suppose More to have 'judged' his victims; it is even less likely that he tortured them. Yet if Foxe has made a mistake, how is his mistake to be explained? Is the martyrologist guilty of wilfully deceiving his reader or had he been, as one historian has put it, 'honestly misled'?[53] As has been noted elsewhere, the usual picture painted of Foxe on questions such as these is one of his substantial integrity. Where mistakes do occur - and his apologists are the first to admit that there are many 'fables' or 'vivid touches' in Foxe's work[54] - then it was primarily his source material that has been seen as being to blame. Many of the stories were passed down to Foxe by word of mouth, often many years after the events they purported to describe. Indeed such inaccuracies as did occur and were discovered by Foxe to have been false were invariably corrected in later editions. Alternatively, apparent inaccuracies or inconsistencies have been put down to Foxe's 'casual and unsystematic' methods.[55] This may partly have sprung out of the haste in which he worked, partly out of weakness of temperament, but it would be unreasonable, it has been argued, to suspect Foxe of wholesale forgery. Whether this can be said to have been the case in Foxe's treatment of Thomas More, however, is far from certain. Like many of the other stories covering the Henrician period, one must express grave doubts as to whether Foxe was as reliable and honest as has hitherto been suggested.

Let us firstly turn to Foxe's sources. How justified is the assertion that Foxe may have been misled by unreliable witnesses? At first sight it seems quite plausible. Foxe does not quote his authorities for once so it could be that he was forced to rely mainly on

hearsay evidence, clearly a questionable source of information in a case as controversial as this. Alternatively Foxe may well have acquired his information by word of mouth from people who had purported to be witnesses of the alleged 'crimes'. This again must be - or should have been - treated with some reserve as much of his evidence probably came from men who had suffered themselves under Catholic rule and so had the best of reasons for hating the system of which More was representative. More himself writes in The Apology of certain Protestants, then in hiding, who had accused him of maltreatment of offenders and had been found by him to have been liars - among them Tyndale and one Segar Nicholson, himself at one time More's prisoner - and there is no reason to believe that some of these were not alive in Foxe's own day.[56] Maybe they were the so-called 'friends' who visited John Tewkesbury while he was being held captive by More.[57] They might have included Joan Bainham, James Bainham's widow, who according to Foxe had been interviewed once before, in connection with the story of her first husband, Simon Fish. 'Excerta relatione, vivoque testimonio propriae ipsius conjugis.'[58]

Yet this is not to say that Foxe's role was an entirely innocent one. Evidence discovered by J.B. Trapp suggests that one of the sources for his account of More's dealings with heretics may have been none other than More's own discussion of the problem in The Apology.[59] Foxe's version of the case of George Constantine - in which he plagiarizes extensively from More's Confutation of Tyndale's Answer - sets a clear precedent for this[60], and although he does not mention the later work by name, internal evidence suggests that he knew of it and found it useful. We find an indication of this in Foxe's account of the examination of John Tewkesbury. According to the martyrologist, Tewkesbury, a leather seller from London, was first examined by Cuthbert Tunstal, the Bishop of London, in April 1529. As soon as his examination was over he was sent to Chelsea, to the house of Sir Thomas More, 'to see whether he [More] could turn him, and that he might accuse others'.[61] There he lay in the porter's lodge for about six days 'without release' until he was tied to a tree in More's garden and whipped and 'also twisted in his brows with small ropes, so that the blood started out of his eyes'.[62] Finally he was let loose in the house for a day so that his friends

thought he would soon be at liberty, only for their hopes to be dashed by a further spell of imprisonment in the Tower. It was only after he was racked till he was 'almost lame' that Tewkesbury agreed to recant at St. Paul's Cross.[63]

Now what is interesting about Foxe's account is that it bears a striking resemblance to More's own description of what is alleged to have happened in the case of Segar Nicholson. Like Tewkesbury, Nicholson, a follower of Tyndale who had since fled to the Continent, was supposed to have been tied to a tree in More's garden and cruelly beaten before being handed over to the authorities for interrogation.[64] The manner of their punishment was identical too. According to More, Nicholson was alleged to have been 'bounden about the hed wyth a corde & wrongen, that he fell downe dede in a swone',[65] whereas Tewkesbury was supposed to have been 'twisted in his brows with small ropes, so that the blood started out of his eyes'.[66] How is this to be explained? It could be that Foxe had been misinformed by the same person who was accusing More in the 1530s. But it is equally possible that Foxe used More's account as the basis of his own account of John Tewkesbury. If this was so there are strong grounds for questioning the traditional image of Foxe as a substantially 'honest' compiler of facts.

What other aspects of these cases could be said to shed light on Foxe's reliability? Foxe's chronology has already been alluded to and is dubious to say the least. But this cannot be said to represent a genuine attempt to mislead the reader. A much more serious problem, though, is the curious similarity of many of these stories. Indeed, as can be shown in the following extracts, again from the stories of Bainham and Tewkesbury, they often appear to mirror one another in a most uncanny way.

'...Then [More] cast him into prison in his own house, and whipping him at the tree in his garden, called the tree of Troth, and after sent him to the Tower to be racked; and so he was, sir Thomas More, being present himself, till in a manner he had lamed him, because he

would not accuse the gentlemen of the Temple of his acquaintance, nor would show where his books lay.'

Bainham (A&M iv. 698)

'...and then he was sent from the Lollards' tower to my lord chancellor's, called sir Thomas More, to Chelsea, with all his articles; to see whether he could turn him, and that he might accuse others. There he lay in the porter's lodge, hand, foot, and head in the stocks, six days without release: then was he carried to Jesu's tree, in his privy garden, where he was whipped, and also twisted in his brows with small ropes, so that the blood started out of his eyes; and yet he would accuse no man... After this, he was sent to be racked in the Tower, till he was almost lame, and there he promised to recant at Paul's Cross.'

Tewkesbury (A&M iv. 689)

The similarities are startling: the fact that Bainham and Tewkesbury were both sent to More's house at Chelsea and tied to a tree and whipped, the nature of their treatment in the Tower (both were racked until lamed) suggest that they are one and the same story. The one substantial difference is that Tewkesbury was 'twisted in the brows with small ropes', an idea which, as has already been noted, probably derived from More's account of another heretic in The Apology. Can we detect a note of foul play? Did Foxe simply duplicate these stories in order to give as bad an impression of More as possible?

A body of opinion would appear to deny this. In The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower, A. Ogle argued for Foxe's considerable honesty in the stories of Bainham and Tewkesbury and although it must be stressed that his conception of Foxe's integrity rests on the veracity of his claims against More, he does succeed in producing some very cogent textual evidence in favour of this hypothesis.[67] What explanations can be offered? The possibility of misinformation cannot be discounted. As

J.B. Trapp points out, atrocity stories of this kind have a way of being so transferred and repeated in the popular mentality, and it may have been that Foxe's account was simply a response to the confusion that accompanied these cases in the minds of his sources.[68] Seemingly more probable is Ogle's suggestion that the repetition was the result of 'defective sub-editing', and that this part of the case of John Tewkesbury is in fact properly attached to the story of Bainham.[69] This is supported by the fact that in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments Foxe transfers to Bainham's case the story of Tewkesbury's alleged recantation at Bow Lane and St. Austins.[70] But what is more important is that the martyrologist's account of More's part in Tewkesbury's interrogation in the 1563 edition disappears altogether from subsequent editions of the work.[71] From this and certain other indications it would appear that the inclusion of this passage in the original version of The Acts and Monuments had been the result of some clerical error on the part of Foxe's printers or editors, most probably necessitating correction at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yet this is not conclusive evidence in favour of Foxe's case. A number of problems exist with this kind of interpretation, not least to do with the stories' content. Although it has been argued that the stories are similar, they are in no way entirely the same: if the inclusion of the passage describing Tewkesbury's imprisonment had been a mistake and was in fact properly attached to the story of Bainham, one might expect them to mirror one another more closely. More significantly, one need not explain the suppression of Tewkesbury's story from later editions in terms of 'defective sub-editing'. Other explanations are just as credible. It is noticeable, for instance, that Tewkesbury is said to have been imprisoned by More as 'chancellor' in April 1529.[72] Yet, as has been noted, More did not take up his office until the following October, with Foxe himself elsewhere giving the date as 1530.[73] Could this explain why the story was cut out of the 1570 and 1576 editions of The Acts and Monuments? This would not have been the first time that Foxe omitted material from his work for such apparently trivial reasons, a good example of the latter being the disappearance from later editions of the account of James Bainham's burning.[74] And anyway, even in these later editions of The Acts and Monuments, the

story of Tewkesbury's torture survives albeit in a slightly condensed form. According to Foxe, Tewkesbury only abjured his heresies because he was 'inforced thorow infirmitye as is before expressed' (my emphasis), the very phrase whch he used to describe the effect of More's interrogation in 1563.[75] For the moment, then, the reason why these stories were repeated is open to question. The possibility remains that Foxe duplicated them deliberately for the purposes of propaganda.

Clear evidence for this is found in the context in which these claims appear. According to Foxe, both Bainham and Tewkesbury were noted for their great heroism. There is a sense in which this was true. At one time Bainham is said to have shouted at his execution that he felt as much pain as he would have done on a bed of roses[76], while Tewkesbury's refusal to recant (in 1529) was persistent if not genuinely heroic.[77] Yet they were at times extremely weak characters. For example, Bainham agreed that he had been 'deceived by ignorance' and hoped that his interrogators would be 'good unto him'.[78] According to Thomas More, Tewkesbury even attempted to deny that 'ever he hadde holden any such opynyons as he was abiured for',[79] an impression considerably strengthened by a reference in the bishop's register in The Acts and Monuments which describes him as claiming that his previous abjuration in 1529 had been gained 'by compulsion'.[80] Yet the interesting thing to note is that whereas Foxe makes the most of his heroes' more glorious moments, he rarely acknowledges their cowardice. Indeed - and this is the point - he does this to such an extent that we may wonder whether the martyrologist's embarrassment about this may not have had something to do with his allegations against More.

The record of Bainham's examination on 16 December, 1532 is a case in point. Almost at once he is said to have been 'contented' to submit himself to the authorities, admitting that he had probably been 'deceived by ignorance'.[81] Yet Foxe tends to play down the fact that he did this. Whereas the bishop's register is copied verbatim in cases where Bainham puts up an adequate defence, here it is conveniently abridged - as if Foxe had not wanted to dwell on the matter longer than was strictly necessary. Foxe's aside to this section of the register is telling: 'to conclude long matter in few words'.[82]

Also of concern was Bainham's third examination the following February. Again Bainham agreed to submit, although he seems to have objected to the wording of the abjuration, pronouncing that because he found some of the words 'obscure and difficile', he intended 'not to go from such defence, which he might have had before his oath'.[83] The meaning of Bainham's objection is a little hard to understand. Perhaps he simply wished to make sure that he was not being tricked into swearing to something in which he could not believe. But whatever the case, Bainham's willingness to submit is clear. Upon being reminded to 'take your oath, and kiss the book' - a sign that one had repented of one's errors - Bainham 'immediately' does just that, subscribing the same with his signature.[84] Foxe's gloss to this particular section of the register, however, gives the impression that Bainham was altogether reluctant to submit ('Bainham again brought to the consistory, is loth to abjure')[85] which is so obvious a misrepresentation of the facts of the case that the reader is entitled to wonder why. Once again it is clear that Foxe deliberately glossed over one of Bainham's more cowardly moments in order to preserve his reputation as a Protestant saint and martyr.

The case of John Tewkesbury is the clearest example of Foxe's anxiety about his martyrs. As has been noted, Tewkesbury attempted to deny that he had committed the crimes he did on the grounds that he had been compelled to abjure during his first examination. He added fuel to this argument by refusing to bear the two faggots that had been embroidered on his arm, 'for that he deserved not to wear them'.[86] Yet Foxe's version of the trial fails to take this into account. Although he agrees that Tewkesbury was at first 'enforced through infirmity' to recant his doctrines, yet in the end he 'constantly abide[d] in the testimony of the truth, and suffered for the same'.[87] One cannot think that Foxe intended to mislead his reader. On the other hand, the possibility of some kind of self-deception existing here is a strong one. If Foxe was to retain his image of Tewkesbury as a man 'very expert and prompt in his answers.... with such power of the Scriptures and heavenly wisdom'[88] he could not very well admit - even to himself - his frequent lack of resolve.

Now what is significant about this is that the stories of More's cruelty do exactly the same thing: they tend to explain away his victims' cowardice while leaving their reputation as Protestant heroes relatively untarnished. It was only after Tewkesbury had been laid in the stocks for a week, whipped at a tree in More's garden and racked in the Tower that, eventually, he promised to recant in 1529. Bainham's submission was preceded by even greater tortures. Could Foxe, then, have invented the stories of More's cruelty to atone for his heroes' cowardice? The possibility cannot be discounted easily and must serve as strong evidence against the traditional view of Foxe as, on the whole, an honest compiler of facts.

Notes for Chapter Six.

1 A&M iv. 587-588.

2 A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower (Oxford, 1949) 279-280.

3 A&M iv. 652.

4 A&M v. 29ff.

5 A&M v. 3ff.

6 A&M iv. 688-694.

7 A&M iv. 671.

8 A&M iv. 697-706.

9 A&M iv. 705.

10 A&M v. 38.

11 A&M iv. 688-694, 697-706.

12 A&M iv. 671.

13 Foxe says Tewkesbury was detained by More 'as chancellor' in April 1529 (A&M iv. 689). Frith, on the other hand, is said to have been arrested by More in (A&M v. 6). More resigned as Chancellor in May 1532 (L.P., V 1075 [5 June, 1532]).

14 T. More, The Apology, J.B. Trapp ed. in The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1979), IX, 119/20 (Segar Nicholson); 117/34-35 (John Byrt); 118/35 (George Constantine); 126/12 (Thomas Phillips); 88/4 (Richard Bayfield).

15 & 16 See note 14 above. For More to detain Thomas Phillips in the Tower in this way was highly irregular. Indeed there is some reason to doubt his qualification to detain heretics per se. On the other hand, there is at least a suggestion in Foxe's account of the case that More had gained this privilege from the episcopal authorities 'by indenture', in other words by a sealed or written agreement (A&M v. 29).

17 T. More, The Apology, IX, Preface p. xxv; L.P. IV 1962.

18 See notes 14, 15 & 16 above. Also, P.R.O., SP 1/78/ 246-247.

19 T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, Schuster et al. ed., in The Complete Works of St. Thomas More (New Haven/London, 1973), VIII, i, 21-22.

20 T More, The Apology, 162.

21 Bainham was tried before the bishop of London, 'in the aforesaid place of sir Thomas More at Chelsea' (A&M iv. 700).

22 A&M iv. 688-694.

23 A&M v. 38.

24 A&M iv. 680-688.

25 A&M iv. 705.

26 A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower, 280; W.A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535 (New Haven and London, 1964), 282.

27 See Chapter 2 of this thesis, 'Fearful falls and Dangerous defections': John Foxe's Lollard "Martyrs".

28 G.R. Elton, 'Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII' in Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government (Cambridge, 1974), Vol. 1, 155-172.

29 T. More, The Apology, 117.

30 T. More, The Apology, 118.

31 Ibid.

32 T. More, The Apology, 119, 126.127.

33 T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, VIII, 17, 21.

34 In Lincoln: Foxe's 'Table, describing the grievous afflictions of good men and women in the diocese of Lincoln under John Longland, the Bishop.... A.D. 1521' (A&M iv. 221-244) gives the names of persons detected of heresy and of the 50 who abjured.

In London: Foxe mentions forty heretics convicted by Bishop Fitzjames and Bishop Tunstal between 1500 and 1518 (A&M iv. 175-180).

35 T. More, The Apology, 117.

36 T. More, The Apology, 49/21-24; 117/15; 118/32.
More's epitaph, in which he speaks of himself as 'molestus' towards heretics, is still to be seen in Chelsea Old Church.

37 J.A. Froude, History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada (London, 2 Vols., 1872), I, 556-559.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 T. More, The Apology, 126-127.

42 E. Hall, The Chronicle (London, 1809), 827: 'Carew.... giving God most harty thank that ever he came in the prison of the tower, where he first savored the life and sweetness of God's most holy word meaning the Bible in English, which there he read by the mean of one Thomas Phelips then keper of that prison, but before he was a citezen and poyntmaker of London, which Phillips two yeres before had ben there prisoner him selfe, & sore troubled as well by Sir Thomas More as also by Doctor Stokslei bishop of London, who often tymes examined the said Phelips & laied many articles to his charge, but he so wisely and coldly used himselfe, that he maugre their evel willes, eskaped clearly their handes.' Hall's chronology is dubious to say the least. Carew was executed in 1538 which puts Phillips' examination in 1536 or 1537 'two yeres before'.

43 Elton G.R., 'Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII, 160-161.

44 J. Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials Relating Chiefly to Religion and the Reformation of it (Oxford, 3 Vols., 1822), I, 314: 'But Mr. Frith shewed him, that it was God that wrought him that liberty in the heart of his keeper, Philips: who, upon the condition of his own word and promise, let him go at liberty in the night to consult with godly men. And this was the same good keeper that granted Petit and Bilney the liberty beforesaid.'

45 A&M iv. 689-692.

46 A&M iv. 690.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 A&M iv. 705.

50 A&M iv. 698.

51 A&M iv. 701.

52 A&M iv. 700.

53 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book (London, 1940), 159.

54 J.F. Mozley, John Foxe and his Book, 159.

55 J.F. Mosley, John Foxe and his Book, 154.

56 T. More, The Apology, 119, 126.

57 A&M iv. 689.

58 A&M iv. 657 (i).

59 T. More, The Apology, 94/2n. & 119/20n.

60 Ibid.

61 A&M iv. 689.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 T. More, The Apology, 119.

65 Ibid.

66 A&M iv. 689.

67 A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower, 279-280.

68 T. More, The Apology, 94/2n. & 119/20n.

69 A. Ogle, The Tragedy of the Lollard's Tower, 279-280.

70 J. Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter perillous dayes (London, 1963), 486; Actes & Monumentes (London, 1576), 996:
In the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments, this is seen to accomppany the story of Tewkesbury's imprisonment. Problems of designation remain nonetheless. The obvious contradiction in the 1563 edition, which sees Tewkesbury as having been arrested 'immediately' and/or two years after this episode (see A&M iv.692), may not be enought to explain the transferral of the story of Bainham. According to the martyrologist, Bainham was in prison for some five weeks before he was examined on the '19th day of April 1532', which makes his arrest in the middle of March. Yet Bainham's alleged recantation takes place at least five weeks from the date of his release (17 February), which leaves him very much at liberty by the time he was supposed to have been in jail (see especially, A&M iv. 702, 704). As with the transferral of the story of Tewkesbury's imprisonment, therefore, it cannot be stated with any certainty that the above had been a case of 'defective sub-editing'.

71 J. Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter perillous dayes, 486.

72 A&M iv. 689.

73 A&M iv. 610.

74 As with Tewkesbury there may have been a problem of dating here. It is noticeable, for instance, that Bainham is described (A&M iv. 705) as having been burnt on the 'May day'. Elsewhere in Foxe's account, however, the date is given as the 'last day in April' (A&M iv. 704). It is conceivable that Foxe omitted this whole passage from later editions because of this inconsistency.

Alternatively we may look to the story of William Paver, who is said by Foxe to have committed suicide after the execution. Chronological problems exist here too.

75 J. Foxe, Acts and Monuments, newly revised, (London, 2 vols., 1583) 1026.

76. A&M iv. 705.

77 A&M iv. 688-692.

78 A&M iv. 700, 701.

79 T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, VIII, i, 21.

80 A&M iv. 692-3.

81 A&M iv. 700.

82 Ibid.

83 A&M iv. 701.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 A&M iv. 693.

87 A&M iv. 692.

88 A&M iv. 689.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Popular heresy in England 'after the first beginning of Luther'.[1]

Having examined some of Foxe's leading protagonists, it is now pertinent to return to the question of popular heresy. To what extent were the popular heretics of the 1520s and 1530s considered to be 'favourers of God's word'? Are there any signs that Foxe's account was determined by bias? For Foxe, clearly, the heretics of the 1520s and 1530s were to be compared to the Lollards in their closeness to the doctrines of the Church of Foxe's own day. Foxe writes in his account of some of the heretics indicted in the diocese of Lincoln that it was his intention to 'specify.... what doctrine it is, and long hath been in the church, for which the prelates and clergy of Rome have judged men heretics, and so wrongfully have molested poor simple Christians.'[2] It is a view that has gained a great deal of credence recently, notably in A.G. Dickens' The English Reformation and other, related works. Accoriing to Dickens, Foxe's heretics provided a 'springboard of critical dissent' for the dissemination of the new reforming ideas from abroad.[3] Another historian saw the evidence of heresy in the County of Essex as 'proof of the existence of Protestantism before Henry had thought of the breach with Rome.'[4] However, it is the contention of this chapter that Foxe's claim is open to question - even on his own showing. It will be shown that the heretics one finds in The Acts and Monuments espoused very different beliefs to those which were considered acceptable in the 1560s. Moreover, it is clear that Foxe himself was not unaware of this.

### How many heretics were there?

Our first problem however, concerns the precise number of heretics we are going to be dealing with. According to Foxe, the popular heretics of the 1520s and 1530s were not only 'favourers of the

gospel',[5] they were also very numerous. 'For why stand I here numbering the sand?', he writes of those accused during a persecution conducted by Bishop Longland in the diocese of Lincoln.[6] Indeed, it was

> 'an infinite thing to recite all them that through all the other dioceses of the realm in these days, before and since, were troubled and pursued for these and such like matters.'[7]

Foxe pursues a similar theme elsewhere, as, for example, in this extract from his account of some heretics convicted in the diocese of London:

> 'There was a great multitude, as well as men as women; whose names, if they were sought.... would make too long a discourse.'[8]

Whether Foxe's confidence is justified in the light of the evidence at his disposal is open to question however. This comprises three main records or groups of records. The first deals with the persecution of heretics in the Lincoln diocese in the early 1530s and includes the names of about ten heretics, some of whom had been in trouble before, during Longland's visitation of the Amersham area of Buckinghamshire between 1520 and 1522.[9] Then there are the records of an investigation carried out by Geoffrey Wharton, Bishop Tunstal's Vicar-General, in Steeple-Bumstead and Colchester between March and October 1528. These comprise the records of about one hundred and thirty separate investigations.[10] Finally, there is Foxe's transcription of the register of the Bishop of London in which the names of fifty-eight heretics appear.[11] Despite Foxe's claim, this is hardly representative of a 'great multitude'. Altogether the records comprise no more than 230 examinations for heresy.

Of course it is possible that in making this claim Foxe had other heretics in mind, who did not appear in the official registers. As is commonly allowed, episcopal records of this kind cannot in themselves be taken as evidence of the extent of popular heresy, only of its persecution. Feasibly many more heretics were alive in the 1520s and 1530s than were actually recorded in the official documents. Yet this is not to take into account two things. Firstly, the evidence we do

have shows us that heresy was far from acceptable socially. If a conviction for heresy resulted in the offender's victimisation and persecution by the population at large then it is reasonable to assume that very few people were heretics. This is illustrated by the case of a London heretic, Humphrey Monmouth, who found himself in jail in 1528. According to Monmouth, he had 'utterly lost his name and credit by this imprisonment'.[12] He usually sold 400 or 500 cloths a year, selling most between Christmas and Whitsuntide but he had only sold twenty-two since Christmas 'and no one asks for them.'[13] If he remained in prison much longer he would, he said, be 'utterly undone'.[14] Similar remarks were made by John Hig when he was arrested by Geoffrey Wharton, again in 1528. If he were compelled to wear the faggot (a badge designed to indicate a previous conviction for heresy) 'no one would employ him and he would be compelled to beg'.[15] It is difficult to reconcile this marked antipathy to heretics with the existence of a substantial religious dissent.

Equally damaging to the notion that Foxe knew about other heretics whom the registers did not mention, is that the investigations he does describe were very thorough. Very few heretics were not caught and convicted by the ecclesiastical authorities. Wharton's investigations in Essex are a case in point. Before being allowed to abjure a heretic had to name any other heretics in his acquaintance. The results could be devastating, as can be seen in the case of John Hakkar, who was responsible for the conviction of thirty-nine of his associates in 1528.[16] Not surprisingly, the rate at which heretics were prosecuted was extremely high. Once one had been recorded as under suspicion one's chances of escaping persecution were minimal. Out of the sixty-one people named as suspects in Foxe's account of the Essex troubles, for example, at least thirty-eight were formally charged and sentenced, a conviction rate of 66%.[17] The number may even have been higher, as Foxe's list of those convicted during these trials in The Acts and Monuments does not coincide exactly with extracts from the official version of events stored away in his original papers. Ironically, Foxe

himself testifies to the bishops' thoroughness. As he writes of the persecution of heretics in London in the 1520s and early 1530s,

> 'such decrees and injunctions then were set forth by the bishops, such laws and proclamations were provided, such watch and narrow search was used, such ways were taken by force of oath to make one detect another so subtilly, that scarcely any good man could or did escape their hands, but either his name was known, or else his person was taken.'[18]

If the curious discrepancy between Foxe's evidence and the claims he makes about it cannot be explained by these means, what other explanations are there? Again, it is possible that Foxe had access to other material which he left out of the published edition of The Acts and Monuments for some reason. This is supported, to some extent, by what he says of the heretics prosecuted in the diocese of Lincoln. 'If all the register books were sought', he writes, it would take him far too long to record all those who had suffered for the Gospel in those days.[19] A similar inference is made in his account of the London troubles. If he included the name of every heretic in the register books up and down the land he would have ended up with 'too long a discourse'.[20]

But how well-based is Foxe's contention? If he did have access to other registers one might have expected him to quote from them. But no details are supplied. Similarly, Foxe's notes and jottings preserved in the Harleian Collection in the British Library, in which one might have expected to find such information refer only to the records of Geoffrey Wharton's investigations in Essex between March and October 1528. If Foxe was aware of the existence of other registers it is curious that he does not mention them here.[21] Perhaps in the end Foxe wrote what he would have preferred to have been the case about the number of heretics whatever the facts may have been. Much of the language he uses to describe the heretics is self-consciously biblical - they were as numerous as 'the stars of the sky', for example, a phrase which is used by Old Testament prophets to describe the children of Israel[22] - and it seems probable that Foxe was tempted to make similar

claims for the 'chosen people' of his own time, the popular heretics of the 1520s and 1530s, even when little evidence existed to substantiate them.

Nevertheless, two hundred and thirty heretics remain. Are not these enough to suggest that Foxe's notion has an element of truth? Here again we should beware of taking Foxe's evidence too literally. Some of the so-called 'heretics' in Foxe's records were, quite clearly, nothing of the sort. In many cases they were convicted unfairly. Sometimes they were slandered although in most instances one suspects that the authorities over-reacted. The trial of Robert Goodridge is a case in point. According to Foxe, Goodridge, a priest of St. Mary Spital in London, had been accused of heresy as a result of reading a bill in commendation of Richard Hunne in March 1528. Yet, when questioned about his involvement in the affair, Goodridge strenuously denied this charge. Although he accepted he had prayed for the soul of Hunne, this, he says, he had done 'unadvisedly'.[23] Moreover, he declared that before God 'I have not favoured him or any other heretic, nor hereafter intend to do, but at all times shall defend the Catholic faith of holy church, according to my profession, to the best of my, power'.[24] Goodridge is entitled to be believed. No Protestant convert would pray for the souls of the dead, whatever his feelings about Richard Hunne. This, coupled with the apparently innocent nature of the original speech - a bill of sale of Hunne's goods - leads one to conclude that he was convicted unfairly, perhaps in response to the renewed controversy that was surrounding the Hunne case in the late 1520s.

Equally debatable is the conviction of one of the parishioners of St. Sepulchre's in London, Robert Hudson. According to the register, Hudson had marched into St. Paul's at Childermas time (28 December) and pretended 'devotion' to the child bishop (St. Nicholas) by offering up a dog instead of his offering money. It is possible that this represents some kind of doctrinal opposition. But is is more likely that Hudson was complaining about some of the Church's financial exactions. Upon being asked to explain his actions, Hudson accepted he had done wrong but said he 'meant no hurt' thereby; for 'he thought the dog to be

better than a halfpenny, and the dog should raise some profit to the child; and said moreover, that it was the tenth dog'.[25]

Finally, there is the case of Robert Cooper, a priest indicted in London in 1531. His only article was that he had said that the bishop's blessing was as good as a blessing with a shoe-sole. Again it is possible that Cooper was a heretic although, given the fact that this was his only charge, a more feasible explanation is that he was simply being rude. Once more it seems that Foxe's claim that his heretics were all 'favourers of God's word' is open to serious question.[26]

Difficulties for Foxe.

In an analysis of the nature and significance of popular heresy in the early 16th century it, therefore, appears that the popular dissenters in religion were not as numerous as Foxe claimed them to be. While on the one hand the number of convictions is surprisingly low, some of those who were convicted may not have been heretics at all. How many people came into the latter category is impossible to say but the nature of our evidence must be taken into account before we dismiss this phenomenon as merely affecting one or two cases. It is clear that considerable pressure was put on offenders to make them confess to doctrines in which they did not sincerely believe. We have already encountered this in the case of the Coventry Lollards who were told to recant their heresies 'by payne of prisonment'[27], while Foxe records the case of Richard Mekins, who 'for safeguard of his life' would gladly have told the authorities that he had learned his doctrines from the twelve Apostles. 'such was his childish innocency and fear'.[28]

Be this as it may, one can wonder what sort of effect this evidence had on Foxe. Did he find the relatively small number of heretics mentioned in the registers embarrassing and how did he react to those 'heretics' who had been convicted unfairly? That Foxe was aware of these problems is illustrated in his account of the case of Humphrey Monmouth, a well-to-do merchant convicted by Bishop Stokesley in May 1528. In the past, this trial has been considered to be of the

utmost importance to an understanding of the nature of popular heresy in Henrician England. According to one historian, the alderman played a vital role in the spread of Lutheran literature in the early 1520s.[29] For another, his importance lay in the fact that he belonged to the 'international world of Lutheranism' yet was linked to men of 'Lollard background' through the importation and printing of forbidden books.[30] It was clearly an opinion that owed something to Foxe. There could be no doubt, Foxe argued, that Monmouth was a Protestant. Indeed he names him explicitly as that 'right godly and sincere alderman of London.... troubled and put into the Tower for the gospel of Christ, and for maintaining them that favoured the same'.[31] The problem with Monmouth's case, though, as with several other of the heretics Foxe mentions was that there was some doubt that he had been lawfully accused. How Foxe attempted to resolve this problem it is now our intention to examine.

The acknowledged facts of the affair are quite straightforward. According to the transcript of the trial preserved in Foxe's Papers in the Harleian Collection in the British Library and, more latterly, printed by Strype, Monmouth was charged with a number of articles relating to the publication in 1526 of William Tyndale's New Testament. These included that he had kept Lutheran books in his house, that he had aided Tyndale in the importing, printing and distribution of the New Testament and that he had sponsored two trips, by Roye and Tyndale, to visit Luther in Wittenburg, transferring money to the Continent for this purpose. Also imputed to him was that he held several 'Lutheran' opinions, namely that men should pray to God only and no saints, that faith alone was sufficient for salvation, that it was wrong to go on pilgrimages or worship images, that pardons granted by the Pope and his bishops were not profitable.[32]

How justified were these charges? They apprear credible in view of Monmouth's will, in which the testator trusts for his salvation solely in the merits of Christ's passion, as well as leaving money for sermons to be said in favour of the King's Supremacy.[33] Yet this was written in 1537, several years after his imprisonment by Wolsey, years in which a great deal could have happened to change Monmouth's mind about such things. In 1528 Monmouth strenuously denied his guilt, as shown by a

petition written to Wolsey four days after his imprisonment. This, too, was transcribed by Foxe and preserved in Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials. According to Monmouth, Tyndale had only been hired as his chaplain in order that he might pray for the souls of his dead mother and father, while his ignorance of the former's involvement with heresy could be proved by his offering a similar service to entirely reputable theologians, like Royston, the bishop of London's chaplain, and Dr. Wooderal, provincial of the Augustin Friars. As to his possession of heretical literature, Monmouth admitted to owning a number of questionable books, a Pater Noster in English, De Libertate Christiana, The Enchiridion as well as a copy of Tyndale's New Testament. However, he denied that he had known they were prohibited by ecclesiastical law or that he had connived in their printing and importation. Apparently, they had been lying openly in his house for two years 'yet he had never heard priest, friar or layman find any great fault in them'. Finally Monmouth's petition brings into doubt the charge that he had denied the efficacy of pardons and pilgrimages. As he remarks towards the end of the petition, he had already hd a pardon, a poena and a culpa, granted to him by the Pope while he was 'on his way to Jerusalem', not to mention the one granted to him by Wolsey the previous Easter.[34]

It could be that Monmouth was lying. One of the books found in the alderman's possession - the Pater Noster in English - he actually denied owning, not to mention the fact that, albeit 'not for any yll that I knew by them',[35] he tried to burn his books once he discovered he was in trouble. Yet the majority of the petition is convincing. The most significant evidence in Monmouth's favour is his employment of Tyndale to pray for the souls of his dead mother and father and 'al Christen souls'.[36] This is not the action of a convinced Protestant. Nor should Monmouth's plea that he did not know that his books were heretical be treated lightly as he names four eminent theologians, among them the King's chaplain, Dr Watson, and the Father Confessor of Sion, as having studied this material without censuring him for it.[37] But it is the alderman's remarks on the efficacy of pardons and pilgrimages which seem to clinch the matter. Clearly, Monmouth would have been unlikely to accept a pardon from the Pope, let alone make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, if he did not sincerely believe in these things. Foxe's version of the

affair, in which he sees Monmouth as a 'favourer of God's word' 'troubled.... for the gospel of Christ',[38] fails to take into account some important discrepancies in the evidence.

However, it may be that Foxe had second thoughts about Monmouth. Remember, the portion of the register dealing with the trial was initially transcribed by Foxe in manuscript form, now in his letters and papers in the Harleian Collection in the British Library. But he also discusses Monmouth's trial in print, in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments. Here, at first sight, Foxe does not seem to have been unduly perturbed by these difficulties. He not only introduces him as a 'right godly and sincere alderman of London.... troubled.... for the gospel of Christ, and for maintaining them that favoured the same', but credits him as an 'advancer of all Martin Luther's opinions' in his account of the alderman's articles.[39] On the crucial question of the petition, furthermore, Foxe seems loath to take the alderman at his word. Monmouth's claim that he hired Tyndale to pray for his mother's and father's souls is nonchalantly swept aside with the words 'as he then said';[40] his claim that he did not know that his books were heretical is similarly glossed. Nevertheless there were certain aspects of Monmouth's case which the martyrologist found extremely embarrassing. An example of this were Monmouth's remarks about pardons and pilgrimages. As has been noted, Monmouth effectively ruled out the validity of these charges in his petition to Wolsey. He stated that he had not only been granted a pardon by the Pope while 'on his way to Jerusalem' but he had also been granted one by Wolsey himself the previous Easter.[41] However, in Foxe's version of the petition in The Acts and Monuments no such reference to pardons occurs. Instead the martyrologist rounds off his account of the document with a list of the various books found in the alderman's possession.[42] It could be that in his haste to meet the demands of his printers Foxe simply forgot to include these facts. Yet it is much more likely that he omitted them deliberately because he did not want to spoil his picture of Monmouth as a 'favourer of the gospel'.

Another case which demonstrates Foxe's embarrassment about some of the offenders included in his 'faithful band of Christ's followers' is

that of one Collins, a gentleman indicted in the diocese of Winchester and burned at Southwark in 1538. As J. Fines has pointed out recently, the exact circumstances of this case are still very much in question: Richard Hilles, the English Reformer, wrote to Bullinger in 1541 of 'a crazed man of the name of Collins' who had recently been burnt for shooting an arrow at a crucifix and calling upon it to defend himself; another reference to the case in 1531 describes a man named 'mad Colyns' who 'lasheth out of Scripture in Bedlam'.[43] According to Foxe's version in The Acts and Monuments, though, Collins was a lawyer and a gentleman whose wife, a woman of 'exceeding beauty and comeliness', had left him for another paramour. As a result of this Collins lost hold of his senses, having taken it 'very grievously and heavily, more than reason would', and in this state of madness came into a church where the priest was about to say mass. Collins, seeing that the priest was holding the host over his head, picked up a little dog by the legs, and, parodying the elevation of the elements, showed it to the people. For this he was condemned and burned, the dog with him, in 1538.[44] Clearly, even on Foxe's own showing, it is open to question how far Collins was a heretic. Although it is true that many of those accused at this time would 'sit mum' during the raising of the host, Collins, being mad, could in no way be held responsible for his actions. How, then, did Foxe react to the extraordinary nature of Collins' dissent? Initially, certainly, Foxe seems willing to accept that Collins's case might not have been all that he hoped it would be. 'I do not', he writes in his introduction to the piece in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments, 'here recite [this man] as in the number of God's professed martyrs': indeed, Foxe appears at first merely to reprove the clergy for their 'cruelty and madness' in burning 'without all discretion, this man, being mad, and distract of his perfect wits'. Whether Foxe really had the courage of his convictions here, however, is uncertain as in the same breath he appears to wholly redefine his concept of martyrdom to include even those who were just accused of heresy. 'Yet neither', Foxe writes, 'do I think him to be clean sequestered from the company of the Lord's saved flock and family, notwithstanding that the bishop of Rome's church did condemn and burn him for a heretic; but rather do recount him therefore as one belonging to the holy company of saints'.[45]

Foxe's claim, then, that there was a 'great multitude' of heretics professing Protestant opinions in the early 16th century cannot be substantiated by the facts of the case. On the one hand, Foxe's information is very limited. More importantly, not all of those convicted for heresy were necessarily guilty. In at least two of the cases recorded in The Acts and Monuments we see Foxe's reaction to this problem. Although Foxe attempted to ignore anything which contradicted his picture of his heroes as 'favourers of God's word', certain facts were bound to be unhelpful and could not be explained away very easily. As will be demonstrated, this sort of tension in Foxe's treatment of the 1520s and 1530s was by no means uncommon.

The heretics' doctrines.

Foxe's argument about the nature of popular heresy in 'King Henry's days', however, rarely rests on the strength of its support alone. Of vital importance too was the fact that it was part of a long term tradition of dissent, stretching forward in time through the lives of the major Reformers to the Church of Foxe's own day. As we have seen, some modern historians find themselves very much in agreement with Foxe's view, and yet how justified is Foxe's claim in the light of the evidence at his disposal? Do the records of popular heresy in this period show up the offenders indicted as orthodox Protestants or can Foxe instead be said to have exaggerated the connections between the former and the major Reformers? Accessorily, are there any signs of embarrassment or anxiety in Foxe's own comments on the evidence? As I hope to show, many of the problems we have noted with regard to Foxe's idea of a substantial relgious dissent are in fact only amplified and developed within the context of heretical belief.

From one angle, Foxe's contention appears to have been well founded. The evidence is not always clear. Indeed, numerous difficulties exist which need to be taken into acocunt. The speed with which heretics were sometimes interrogated is here a case in point as this suggests that some offenders were convicted of articles in which they did not actually believe. (How Geoffrey Wharton, Bishop Tunstal's

representative in the heresy trials in Essex in 1528, could examine and convict seven heretics in one moring and feel sure that he had passed judgment with equanimity is a matter only for conjecture.)[46] Even if the articles against them are taken at face value, our understanding of the heretics' doctrine is very limited. Partly this is the fault of the episcopal registers which seem to have been designed to discover what a heretic did not believe in rather than, necessarily, what he did. But one can also blame Foxe whose so-called 'tables' of those indicted provide no more than the barest minimum of information.[47] Nevertheless, the claims he makes about them do seem to have been based on fact. Many of the ideas circulating at this time, which Foxe prints in The Acts and Monuments, bear a strong resemblance to the doctrines of orthodox Protestantism.

One of these is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Among the articles indicted against John Eaton and his wife, Cecily, both convicted by the Bishop of Lincoln in 1530, were that they had claimed that the blood of 'our Lord Jesus Christ hath made satisfaction for all ill deeds that were done, or should be done; and therefore it was no need to go on pilgrimage'.[48] This is clearly similar to Luther's position that good works in themselves were useless and that salvation, such as many people sought through pilgrimages and other religious observances, could only be gained by faith in what Jesus had done for them on the Cross. A comparable view was expressed by John Medwel, a servant from London, convicted in 1532. He believed that only the merits of Christ helped him and he doubted 'whether pilgrimages and setting up of candles to images, were meritorious or not'.[49] He also seems to have doubted the validity of Papal pardons as he would not trust these but rather the promises of Christ.[50] Again this bears a clear resemblance to Luther's comments in The Ninety-Five Theses and would undoubtedly have been applauded by Foxe.

Another popular belief that would probably have given Foxe cause for satisfaction concerned the Roman doctrine of purgatory. According to the Church's teaching, this was the place or state of temporal punishment, where those who had died in the grace of God expiated their unforgiven venial sins and underwent such punishment as was still due to

their forgiven sins, before their admission to the Beatific Vision.[51] Some of the heretics indicted in the 1520s and 1530s rejected this notion however. According to James Algar, a heretic convicted by the Bishop of Lincoln's commissionary in 1531, the soul 'as soon as it departeth out of the body, goeth straight either to heaven or hell'.[52] A similar view was held by William Wingrave, who proved that purgatory did not exist by force of reason. According to him, if 'every mass that is said should deliver a soul out of purgatory, there should be never a soul there; for there be more masses said in a day, than there be bodies buried in a month'.[53] In both cases, these heretics anticipated the views of the major Reformers, most of whom openly rejected the existence of Purgatory. For them, this had to do with Christ's death on the Cross. They argued that the soul was freed from sin by faith in Christ alone without any works, and therefore, if saved, went straight to heaven.[54]

No less significant as precursors of Protestant belief were the articles of some of those indicted against images and pilgrimages. Jasper Wetzell, a German convicted in London in 1528, probably reflected the views of many of his contemporaries on this subject when he stated that the image of a saint in the local church was of no use 'for he is made but of wood'.[55] A more common position was that images were but 'stocks and stones and cannot speak to a man nor do him any good'.[56] Equally compatible, meanwhile, were some of the heretics' views on the veneration of saints and the Virgin Mary. According to John Pykas, one of the offenders indicted in Colchester in 1528, it was useless to pray to saints 'for they are but servants and can hear no man's prayer'.[57] Jasper Wetzell perhaps represented a slightly less informed body of opinion when he stated that he would not pray to the Virgin Mary 'for she could do us no good'.[58] Finally many of the heretics shared common ground with the Protestants on the question of transubstantiation and the sacrament of the altar. One of the more sophisticated views was that of Lawrence Maxwell, a tailor from Shoreditch. He believed that 'the sacrament of the altar was not the very body of Christ in flesh and blood; but that he received him by the word of God, and in remembrance of Christ's passion'.[59] Mostly, though, charges on this subject amounted to little more than a rejection of the fact of the Real Presence. The

opinion of William Wallam that 'the sacrament of the altar is not the body of Christ in flesh and blood; and that there is a God, but not that God in flesh and blood, in the form of bread' is here a case in point.[60]

Thus far, then, we have seen how Foxe's comparison of the popular heretics in the reign of Henry VIII with the major Protestant Reformers may have some foundation in truth. The question might be posed, however, as to how far this represented a pervasive trend among the offenders indicted or whether it was just the tip of the iceberg. And quite clearly, there are many heretics mentioned in Foxe's account whose allegiance to cardinal Protestant doctrines is at the very least open to question. One indication of this is found in the heretics's ideas on salvation and justification. We have already seen, for example, how some of the heretics described by Foxe appear to have come close to the Protestant teaching of justification by faith; but how far is this representative of the majority? Despite speaking against images and pilgrimages, many of the heretics convicted in Essex seem to have held to the necessity of good works for salvation. We can tell this, in the first place, from the immense popularity of the Epistle of St. James. At least two heretics - a certain Best[61] and an unnamed offender indicted in October 1528[62] - learned the epistle off by heart and the central position of the book in the curriculum of the discipleship courses many heretics seem to have undergone is attested to by the testimony of one of their most influential teachers, John Pykas, a baker from Colchester. According to Pykas, he had once 'had communication' about the epistle with Best as well as a man called Grylyng, saying that God is Father of light and overshadowed all sin, wherefore we should pray only to God.[63] Indeed, out of a total of two hundred and thirty heretics named in The Acts and Monuments as a whole only eight show signs of having held to distinctively 'Protestant' beliefs.[64]

A similar level of discontinuity is noted in many of the heretics' opinions on purgatory and prayers for the dead - only nine convictions this time out of the total number indicted - while the prevalence of traditional ideas on the veneration of saints leaves any easy identifications between the popular heretics of 'King Henry's days' and the major Reformers at best open to dispute. One of the offenders

arraigned by Bishop Longland in Buckinghamshire, a certain Alice Dolly, held that she should 'remember to pray unto saints' despite rejecting the adoration of images.[65] A similar case was that of William and Henry Raylond, two of the heretics indicted by Geoffrey Wharton in Essex in 1528. According to them, going on pilgrimages and worshipping images was wrong as only 'saints in heaven' should be worshipped.[66]

A further qualification to be made to Foxe's idea of a pervasive Protestant tradition concerns the wide variety of 'radical' belief among some heretical groups. Admittedly, a few of these so-called 'heretics' were probably mentally unstable or feeling the worse for wear for drink. One of the offenders brought before Longland in 1538, a certain William Cowbridge, held to a number of strange ideas, that Christ came not to save the world but to deceive it, that priests betrayed God by breaking the host, and that the name of 'Christ', as distinct from 'Jesus', was not to be tolerated.[67] As shall be seen below, it is unlikely that Cowbridge was in his right mind when he said these things. Having said this, the majority of these 'radical' believers were sufficiently compos mentis to say some significantly sane things about the eucharist and image worship, in these respects holding to doctrines remarkably similar to their more 'orthodox' brethren. Among the articles levelled against John Pykas and William Raylond, for example, two heretics convicted in Essex in 1528, was that they denied the validity of baptism in water, saying that 'there is no baptism but of the Holy Ghost' or that 'baptism in water is but a token of repentance, and that when a man comes to years of discretion, and keeps himself clean of the promise made by his godfathers, then he shall receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit'.[68] Equally as shocking from an orthodox point of view would have been the opinion of John Tybal, one of the heretics indicted at Steeple-Bumstead. According to the register, Tybal believed the priesthood to be unnecessary, and that a layman might minister the sacraments, a view which he said he had gleaned through an independent reading of Paul's epistles.[69]

In the end, then, we may conclude that Foxe's idea of a continuous Protestant tradition cannot go unqualified in the light of some very marked differences between the doctrines of some of the popular heretics

of 'King Henry's days' and the Protestants of his own time. But what of Foxe himself? Was the martyrologist wholly oblivious to these differences or does one note a degree of tension in his handling of this material? One indication that he was really quite worried about some of his evidence is found in his treatment of the heretics convicted in Steeple-Bumstead and Colchester in March to October 1528. Although, as we have seen, the original records of this persecution are preserved among Foxe's papers in the Harleian Collection in the British Library, it is interesting to note that Foxe refers to them only fleetingly in the published edition of The Acts and Monuments, and only here in a long list of names of partakers of the 'same cross of affliction'.[70] How, then, is this omission to be explained? From one point of view, clearly, it would seem reasonable to suppose Foxe omitted these details because he felt that such an account would make his narrative too tedious. Introducing the period as a whole, Foxe complains that 'so great was the trouble of those times, that it would overcharge any story to recite the names of all them that during those bitter days.... were.... brought to open shame by abjuration'.[71] Again, this time in a pointed reference to the Essex heretics, Foxe suggests that his 'story almost suffereth not to recite the particular names of all and singular such as then groaned under the same cross of affliction and persecution of those days'.[72] There is at least a suggestion here, however, that Foxe omitted the heretics' articles because he feared they might jeopardise his concept of the popular heretics of 'King Henry's days' as orthodox Protestants. As has been noted, many of the offenders mentioned in Foxe's material would have been in as much trouble in the Protestant Church as they were in the Catholic one, a fact that is particularly note-worthy in terms of the Essex evidence: among the beliefs attributed to John Pykas, for example, one of the heretics from Colchester, was that 'there was no baptism but of the Holy Ghost' and that baptism in water should cease'; elsewhere one notes the opinion that there was no Church but man's conscience or that the priesthood was unnecessary.[73] And it seems not impossible that Foxe should have deliberately omitted the Essex evidence because he did not want some of these more unorthodox sayings coming to light. Apparent confirmation of this fact is gleaned from the nature of the original records in the Harleian Collectiion in the British Library. Most unusually, these seem

to have been ripped out of the episcopal registers wholesale as if Foxe wanted to prevent anyone gazing at the original evidence. Significantly, a similar violence is done to the records of some of the offenders indicted in Kent in the 1550s and here too one wonders whether Foxe might have done this because he was concerned about the unorthodoxy of many of his heroes' beliefs.[74]

Another trial that seems to have caused Foxe some embarrassment was the case of William Cowbridge, a heretic burned in Smithfield in 1538. From one angle, Cowbridge's case offered Foxe all he needed if he was to prove that the heretics of the 1520s and 1530s were orthodox Protestants. Not only had he come from 'good stock and family, whose ancestors, even from Wycliff's time hitherto, had always been favourers of the gospel, and addicted to the setting forth thereof in the English tongue';[75] but, after leaving home, he had become an itinerant preacher, thereby 'converting many unto the truth'.[76] Unfortunately for Foxe, however, not all of the evidence of Cowbridge's case squared up with this image of him as a 'favourer of God's word'. In the first place, he appears to have exercised the office of priest, though 'no priest indeed', when he was residing in Wantage in Berkshire.[77] As has been noted in the case of some of the Essex heretics, this was unlikely to have been very encouraging from Foxe's point of view, not least because it tended to undermine the idea of a formal priesthood. But much more serious were the articles Cowbridge was alleged to have confessed to while in jail. The first acknowledged that he could not abide to hear the name of Christ, only Jesus. Apparently, on reading the second article of the Creed, he would say 'et in Jesum Jesum' and not, as was commonly allowed, 'et in Jesum Christum'.[78] Secondly, he was said to have stated that 'every poor priest, be he ever so poor or needy, being of a good conversation, hath as great power and authority in the church of God and ministration of the sacraments, as the pope or any other bishops'.[79] Neither of these views would have been treated with much sympathy by Foxe's contemporaries.

How did Foxe deal with these difficulties? His first thought seems to have been to deny that Cowbridge ever said these things, or if he said them that he meant them. According to Foxe, Cowbridge was taken to

Oxford after his arrest, where he was treated with such severity by his captors that 'through the long consumption and lack of sleep, his natural strength being consumed, he lost his wits and reason [and].... as it is the manner of madmen.... uttered many unseemly and indiscreet words'.[80] Nevertheless Foxe was certain that Cowbridge was orthodox. This could be shown by his conduct at his execution, where recovering 'some part of his senses and strength' and 'contrary to their expectation' he called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (which he could not utter before) and 'with great meekness and quietness.... yielded his spirit into the hands of the Lord'.[81]

However, it is doubtful that Foxe was wholly convinced by this explanation. Other passages in 'The Story of Cowbridge' suggest that he had second thoughts about his hero's orthodoxy, even so far as to undermine his concept of him as a 'favourer of God's word'. It is noticeable, for instance, that Cowbridge's spell as an itinerant preacher was spent 'instructing the ignorant', but only, significantly enough, 'according to his ability'.[82] And from Foxe's treatment of his hero's treatment at Oxford, we can guess that there was some doubt in Foxe's mind whether Cowbridge was orthodox or not. We have already seen how Foxe criticises the clergy for treating Cowbridge so harshly that he uttered a number of 'unseemly' words. But it is also clear from Foxe's account that Cowbridge was 'weak' in faith and 'in error' even before his harsh treatment in jail. 'For admit', writes Foxe of the initial investigation,

> 'that he did not understand or see so much in the doctrine and controversies of divinity as the learned divines [his examiners] did, yet Paul, writing unto the Romans, and in other places also, saith, that the weak are to be received into the faith, and not to the determination of disputations; but the imbecility of the weak is to be borne by them that are stronger'.[83]

As with the Essex heretics, therefore, Foxe was forced to reconsider his claim for Cowbridge as an orthodox Protestant in the light of some very unhelpful evidence.

Further indications of Foxe's embarrassment over the Cowbridge case can be found in the 1570 and 1583 editions of The Acts and Monuments. These differ from the original version of the story, in the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments, in so far as they were written in direct response to one of Foxe's major critics, Nicholas Harpsfield, in Dialogi Sex, Contra Summi Pontificatus.... et Pseudomartyres, published in Antwerp in 1566.[84] As has been noted, it was Foxe's view that Cowbridge had been indicted unfairly, largely at the behest of his examiners at Oxford, who through his 'long consumption and lack of sleep' in prison finally managed to get him to utter many 'unseemly and indiscreet words'.[85] According to Harpsfield, though, to say that Cowbridge had been falsely accused by a collusion of Oxford theologians and 'soon after - by the same pretext - consumed by fire' was little short of telling lies.[86] Not only did the story simply not make sense - the idea of theologians acting in such an unscholarly, let alone un-Christian way was 'an incredible charge' - but it lacked sufficient proof. Moreover, Foxe's narrative was open to question within the confines of The Acts and Monuments itself. There was no reason for the authorities to make Cowbridge say the things he did if, as Foxe himself stated, he had already 'converted many to the truth' (i.e. heresy) and illegally taken up the office of a priest.

But the most persuasive evidence against Foxe was the testimonies of several men of 'mature age and judgment' present at Cowbridge's trial.[87] Apparently, Cowbridge had not been sentenced at Oxford but at Wycombe, in Bishop Longland's palace. Asked whether he had said it was right not to confess the name of Christ, Cowbridge unhesitantly responded in the affirmative, adhering, says Harpsfield, to this 'horrendous heresy inflexibly and obstinately' but giving 'no sign of madness.... or delerium'.[88] Furthermore, Cowbridge was well-treated, 'neither lacking in nourishment for the care of his body nor the counsel necessary for saving his soul'.[89] Time and again he was interviewed by the bishop's doctors to make him revoke his error, culminating finally in a full-scale tribunal in 1538 in which he was urged 'with pious and soft words' to return to the faith. But nothing would serve leaving Longland with little choice but to convict him for obstinacy and consign him to Oxford to face execution.

Now Harpsfield admits that even at the time of Cowbridge's burning the case was not entirely lacking in controversy. Soon after Cowbridge's examination, a number of gentlemen present at the trial had written to Cromwell, accusing Longland of condemning him 'precipitously, in a sudden rush of blood to the head', and without a satisfactory investigation.[90] But this was effectively quashed by Longland himself in a missive which even Cromwell, a man not known for his harshness towards heretics, was eager to ratify. Crucially, the articles on which Cowbridge was indicted, had survived and had since come into Harpsfield's hands. These, he argues, show clearly that Cowbridge had been arraigned by his own confession as well as by the affidavits of several well-known witnesses. Indeed he finds it curious, not to say suspicious, that Foxe should have found them so hard to come by, only printing two in his own version of the affair in The Acts and Monuments:

1. I William Cowbridge have publically asserted that priests are guilty of treason against the Divine Majesty, because they distribute the host in three particles and not receive the whole according to our custom.

2. That no one ought to waste away by fasting and chastising the body.

3. Do not wish me to make a confession before a priest, unless he may absolve me by my own decision and prescribe for me to say, 'God be propitious to me a sinner and may God the Father bless me'.

4. That neither the Apostles, nor the Evangelists, nor the four doctors of the Church have yet brought to light by what reason sinners may be saved.

5. That my confession in this septennium has been of no use to me.

6. I have asserted that neither a life piously led nor fasting can profit a man's salvation.

7. In my judgement the word (Christ) is a foul name and I have expunged it for the most part wherever it occurred in my books.

8. I have asserted that Christ was not the redeemer of the world.... but is about to be the deceiver of the world.

9. I have altered the name of Christ to Jesus and where it reads 'in Jesum Christum' in the Apostolic Creed I used to say 'Et in Jesum Jesum'. I did the same in prayers at Easter time.

10. I have asserted and written that all who have believed in the name of Christ are doomed in hell.

11. I have openly denied that I have ever confessed the name of Christ.

12. Besides, these words of Christ, (Take and eat, this is my body which will be given to you', I have interpreted in this way: this is my body in which the people will be cheated and deceived.[91]

In Dialogi Sex, therefore, Foxe's account of 'The Burning of Cowbridge' is brought into question in several crucial respects. Not only is it argued that Foxe was mistaken in assuming the authorities to have driven Cowbridge mad by harsh treatment in jail, and through this into confessing ideas in which he did not really believe, but the very scenario of a trial and examination in Oxford is put in doubt as not being supported by the facts of the case. Whether Harpsfield's account is justified must be left open although there is certainly an element of truth in it. This is illustrated by a letter written by Bishop Longland to Cromwell on 22 July, 1538, just after Cowbridge had been condemned. Here Longland's main priority seems to have been to answer various 'men of Windsor', who, having been present at Cowbridge's trial at Wycombe, later wrote to Cromwell complaining that he had been convicted unfairly and was in fact entirely innocent of the charges brought against him. Not only, argued the bishop, had Cowbridge been proved guilty 'by his

own confession' - indeed, his articles were 'so strange and heinous' that Longland had 'never read of worse' - but his conduct towards him had been marked with none of 'the extremity and hastiness' of which his critics complained, but by all 'patience and soberness'. While at Wycombe, the bishop had used 'all the means and gentle ways he could imagine, by good counsel and advertisements, by scripture, by the word of God, by prayer, by ensamples showing and otherwise'.[92] Further confirmation of Harpsfield's story can be discerned from Cowbridge's articles in the extant register of Bishop Longland in the Lincoln Diocesan Record Office. Many of the charges mentioned by Harpsfield are repeated here, that priests betrayed God by breaking the host, that 'Christ', as distinct from 'Jesus', betrayed the world, and that Christ's words at the last supper were best translated as 'Take and eate, this is the body wherein the people shalbe deceyved'.[93]

But whatever the case, one may wonder what sort of effect Harpsfield's account had on Foxe. Is there any sign that Foxe found the latter's claims embarrassing? At first sight, the evidence would appear to suggest not. Significantly, Foxe comments on Harpsfield's attack on him in his account of one of his 15th century martyrs, Sir John Oldcastle. But Harpsfield's suggestion that Cowbridge was not a martyr is merely laughed out of court, scratching 'where it itcheth not', argues Foxe.[94] A similar impression is gleaned from Foxe's account of the trial in the edition of The Acts and Monuments which immediately followed Dialogi Sex, the 1570 edition. Much of the original story is retained, albeit in slightly more succint form. For instance, Cowbridge is only said to have confessed the articles he did because he was 'then.... destitute of sense and reason'.[95] His 'right confession' at the last, on the other hand, was proved by the fact that at his execution he 'soberly and discreetly called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ'.[96]

However, it is doubtful that Foxe was wholly at ease about Dialogi Sex. Other passages in the 1570 edition of The Acts and Monuments show that he was gravely concerned by Harpsfield's account even so far as to open to question his own claim for Cowbridge as a 'favourer of God's word'. An example of this is Foxe's suggestion that Cowbridge was

burned in 1538 'or the next year following'.[97] This had been suggested by Harpsfield in response to Foxe's first estimate of 1536. But far more significant is the omission of the story of Cowbridge's examination at Oxford. As has been noted, it was Foxe's view that it was while Cowbridge was being interrogated and harshly treated in Oxford that he uttered many 'unseemly' words. As a result of this he was charged with heresy and sentenced to be burned at Smithfield. This was not a view endorsed by Harpsfield, however, who reflected on the fact that Cowbridge had been examined at Wycombe and with none of the harshness of which the ecclesiastical authorities had later been accused. There is suggestion that Foxe reluctantly complied with this view. Significantly, the story of Cowbridge's interrogation by the Oxford divines, Dr. Smith and Dr. Cotes, now drops out, no longer apparently a source of concern. Again, on the question of Cowbridge's beliefs, Foxe admits that he may at one stage have been in error. 'Whatsover his madness was before, or howsoever erroneous his articles [thereby implying that Cowbridge was responsible for them].... yet as touching his end, this is certain, that.... he lifting up his head to heaven, soberly and discreetly called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so departed.'[98]

Foxe's account of the burning of Cowbridge, therefore, illustrates some of the difficulties the popular heretics of the 1520s and 1530s sometimes afforded him. While there was a sense in which many of his claims about him were justified, not all of the evidence at his disposal served to confirm his view of him as a godly Protestant. It was a problem that was soon to occur again but this time to arguably even more damaging effect.

Notes for Chapter Seven.

1 A&M iv. 585.

2 A&M iv. 587.

3 A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation (London, 1964), 60. See also A.G. Dickens, 'The Early Expansion of Protestantism in England 1520-1558', Archiv für Reformationsgeschicte, LXXVIII (1987), 187-222.

4 J.E. Oxley, The Reformation in Essex Until the Reign of Mary (Manchester University Press, 1965), 3.

5 A&M v. 251.

6 A&M iv. 587.

7 Ibid.

8 A&M v. 26.

9 A&M iv. 580-585.

10 British Library, MS Harleian, 421, fos. 9-36; A&M v. 41-42; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials (Oxford, 3 vols., 1822), I, 113-124, many documents being printed in extensio ibid., pt. 2, 50-65.

11 A&M iv. 680-694, 697-707; A&M v. 26-43.

12 B.L., MS Harleian, 425, fos. 8,10; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, i, 488; also i, pt. ii, Appendix No. 89; L.P., IV (ii), 4260, 4282.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15

16 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, Fol. II; L.P., IV (ii), 4029.

17 This calculation is based on Foxe's account of the trials in The Acts and Monuments as well as on B.L., MS Harleian, 421. See note 10 above.

18 A&M v. 41.

19 A&M iv. 587.

20 A&M v. 26.

21 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fos. 9-36.

22 Compare 'For why stand I here numbering the sand?' (A&M iv. 587) with 'That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed.... as the sand which is upon the sea shore' (Genesis 22:17). See Also Hosea 1:10: 'Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered'. (Both references are from The Authorized King James Version of the Bible.)

23 A&M v. 28.

24 Ibid.

25 A&M v. 38.

26 A&M v. 33.

27 J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XIV (1963), 169.

28 A&M v. 440-442.

29 C. Cross, Church and People 1450-1660 (Glasgow, 1976), 59.

30 A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation (London, 1964), 106.

31 A&M iv. 617.

32 B.L., MS Harleian, 425, fol. 8; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, i, 488; L.P., IV (ii), 4260.

33 Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, ii, Appendix No. 90 (from Foxe's original papers, since lost).

34 B.L., MS Harleian, 425, fol. 10; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, ii, Appendix No. 89; L.P., IV (ii), 4282.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 A&M iv. 617.

39 Ibid.

40 A&M iv. 618.

41 See note 34 above.

42 A&M iv. 618.

43 J. Fines, Biographical Register of Early English Protestants (Part 1) (Sutton Courtenay Press, 1981); H. Robinson, Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, Parker Society Publications, 2 vols. (1846-1847), I, 200f.; T. More, Dialogue Concerning Tyndale in W.E. Campbell ed., The English Works of Sir Thomas More (London, 1931), II, 322.

44 A&M v. 251.

45 Ibid.

46 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 19; L.P., IV (ii), 4175.

47 A&M v. 26.

48 A&M iv. 583-584.

49 A&M v. 39.

50 Ibid.

51 F.L. Cross ed., The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London, 1974), 1144-1145.

52 A&M iv. 585.

53 A&M iv. 584.

54 F.L. Cross ed., The Oxford Dictionary of the Christan Church, 1144-1145.

55 A&M v. 32.

56 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 17; L.P., IV (ii), 4029.

57 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 21; L.P., IV (ii), 4175.

58 A&M v. 32.

59 A&M v. 29.

60 A&M v. 33.

61 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 21; L.P., IV (ii), 4175.

62 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 34; L.P., IV (ii), 4850.

63 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 21; L.P., IV (ii), 4175.

64 These are Jeffrey Lome (A&M v. 26); Richard Kitchen (A&M v. 28); Thomas Philip (A&M v. 29-31); Thomas Patmore (A&M v. 35-37); John Medwell (A&M v. 39); Lawrence Maxwel (A&M iv. 585); John Eaton (A&M iv. 583-584); Roger Hackman (A&M iv. 582).

65 A&M iv. 582.

66 Confession of John Pykas, B.L. MS Harleian, 421, fol. 21; L.P., IV (ii), 4175.

67 A&M v. 251; Nicholas Harpsfield, Dialogi Sex (Antwerp, 1566) Book Six, 'Contra Pseudomartyres', XVII, 852-859.

68 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fos. 17, 21; L.P., IV (ii), 4029, 4175.

69 Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, ii, 50.

70 A&M v. 41-42.

71 A&M v. 41.

72 Ibid.

73 B.L., MS Harleian, 421, fol. 17; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, ii, 56, 50.

74 P. Collinson, 'Truth and Legend: the Veracity of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse eds., Britain and the Netherlands (Zutphen, 1985), 42. I am indebted to Professor Collinson for an opportunity to view this article prior to its publication.

75 A&M v. 251.

76 A&M v. 252.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 A&M v. 253.

82 A&M v. 252.

83 Ibid.

84 Full title: N. Harpsfield, Dialogi Sex Contra Summi Pontificatus, monasticae vitae, sanctorum, sanctum imaginum oppugnatores, et Pseudomartyres... Nunc Primum ad Dei Optimi Maximi gloriam, & Catholice relgionis confirmationem ab Alano Cope Anglo editi etc (Antwerp, 1566), IV, xvii, 852-859 (hereafter cited as Dialogi Sex). I would like to thank Dr. E.O. Blake of the University of Southampton, without whose expert assistance none of the following would have been possible.

85 A&M v. 252.

86 Dialogi Sex, 852.

87 Dialogi Sex, 856.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Dialogi Sex, 858.

91 Dialogi Sex, 859.

92 L.P., XIII (i), 1434.

93 J. Fines, A Biographical Register of Early English Protestants (Part 1) (Sutton Courtney Press, 1981); Lincoln Diocesan Record Office, Reg. 26 fos. 284v-285.

94 A&M iii. 380.

95 J. Foxe, The First (- Second) Volume of The Ecclesiastical History, Contayning the Actes and Monuments of Thinges Passed in Every Kinges Time in This Realm, Especially in the Church of England.... Newly Inlarged by the Author (London, 1570), 1292; (A&M v. 251-253 contain slight modifications to the original. Where the two do not clash I have quoted from the more modern version.)

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 'Favourers of God's Word'? Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII.

Foxe's accounts of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell, as with many other of the 'martyrs' in The Acts and Monuments, begins with the premise that they were both godly Protestants. 'What a zealous defender she was of Christ's gospel all the world doth know', writes Foxe of Anne at the end of his account.[1] Again in commenting on Cromwell's execution in 1540 Foxe names him that 'valiant soldier and captain of Christ'.[2] There is some doubt whether Foxe's claims are justified however. Although there is evidence to suggest that they were both involved in the patronage and protection of some of the more innovative clergy of the period, many of their own beliefs were surprisingly orthodox and traditional. What these beliefs were and how far they had a bearing on Foxe's accounts in The Acts and Monuments it is the purpose of this chapter to determine. It is also intended to examine Foxe's treatment of the king, Henry VIII, as, in itself, an example of the martyrologist's embarrassment at some of the material at his disposal.

### Anne Boleyn.

Recent work on the life of Anne Boleyn by Maria Dowling[3] and Eric Ives[4] has shown that many of Foxe's comments about her are justified. Indeed at first sight a great deal of evidence exists to suggest that Anne's beliefs were not only quite radical but that she was an active supporter of the Protestant cause. Of some significance in this respect is the part she had to play in the elevation and appointment of a number of evangelical bishops, 'my bysshoppys' as she called them at her execution in 1536.[5] Chief among these were Nicholas Shaxton, William Cranmer and Hugh Latimer, whom she seems to have had appointed to the Bishopric of Salisbury, the Archbishopric of Canterbury and the Bishopric of Worcester respectively. But she also appears to

have had a hand in the rise of William Barlow, John Salcote and Edward Fox. According to Charles V's ambassador, Chapuys, Salcote had recently been created Bishop of Bangor 'that he may serve the Lady's [Anne's] interests', a probable reference to Anne's alleged ambition to usurp Catherine as Queen of England.[6] Barlow, too, was a staunch Boleyn supporter while Ives suggests that Fox was appointed because of his hard work on the divorce.[7] Needless to say, Anne did not 'appoint' these bishops herself; William Latimer's suggestion that she made 'continual mediations' for them with the king is probably more accurate.[8] But her influence and personal interest is clear. When Latimer and Shaxton could not afford to pay their first fruits to the king in 1535, it was Anne who lent them the considerable amounts of money they needed to get out of trouble.[9]

Equally indicative of an apparently sympathetic response to the new ideas from abroad is the part Anne played in the elevation of clergy to lower positions in the Church. Some of these men had already been in trouble for their beliefs. Among the more famous was Dr. Edward Crome, who had been examined before Bishop Stokesley and the king in 1530, on account of his preaching, and had been obliged to recant. A letter written by Anne in 1534 reveals that she obtained the parsonage of St. Mary Aldermanbury for him, precisely for the purpose of preaching 'godly doctrine'.[10] Another example of Anne's interest in promoting evangelicals to the lower orders in the Church is her intervention on behalf of Nicholas Shaxton, Edward Baynton and one David Hutton in the appointment of a priest to the college or hospital of St. John the Baptist in Ratcliff pit, Bristol. Here she wrote to the Corporation of Bristol requesting that 'they may present thereunto at the next vacancy, a friend of hers of right good learning, and of no less virtue and good demeanor'.[11] Other letters which illustrate Anne's interest in promoting some of the more radical elements among the clergy include a letter by Cranmer to Cromwell in 1535 in which he complained of the need to 'extirpate all hypocrisy, false faith, and blindness of God' from the twon of Calais and revealed that he had already written to Anne for the gift of the next two benefices there.[12] A document is extant, furthermore, relating to Anne's appointment of Matthew Parker to the collegiate church of Stoke by Clare in Suffolk. Among the items listed

in Parker's job description were that he should enforce regular preaching and set up a new grammar school, with eight or ten scholarships leading to a six-year bursary at Cambridge.[13]

Yet, for some historians, the clearest expressions of Anne's Protestant sympathies were the men she appointed as her personal chaplains. Here the work of Maria Dowling should be acknowledged as contributing greatly to our understanding of the evangelical influence at Court in the 1520s and early 1530s as well as Anne's own religious beliefs. According to Dowling, it was Anne's personal attitude to religion that lay behind the appointment of a large number of radical clergy to positions of influence at Court. Many, if not all of them had been in trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities or were associated with notorious heretics, like Thomas Bilney, but this seemed only to make Anne more determined to appoint them. Among the most radical was Hugh Latimer, a noted evangelical preacher, whose widely publicised views had even aroused the concern of Cranmer. He was made Anne's chaplain in 1533. Another prominent evangelical to gain high office was Nicholas Shaxton. He had abjured in 1531, at the same time as the burning of Thomas Bilney, prompting Bishop Nix to complain that he had burnt Abel while letting Cain go, but in 1533 he was made Anne's almoner. It appears that Shaxton was probably of less radical stock than Hugh Latimer as he eventually recanted his heresies in 1546 and died a loyal supporter of the supremacy of Rome, but the effect of his appointment, according to Dowling and others, is the same: it illustrates that Anne had profound synmpathies for those more radical spirits in the English Church. Other chaplains appointed by Anne included Matthew Parker, an associate of Bilney, William Betts, one of the heretics involved in the controversy at Wolsey's Cardinal College in 1528, and John Skip, a member of Gonville College, Cambridge, and noted for his evangelical views.[14]

But Anne did not only grant leading Protestants her patronage and positions of influence at Court; she also made efforts to protect heretics in trouble. The most famour example of this is the letter she wrote to Wolsey about the imprisonment of one of those involved with Garrad in the Oxford book-running scandal of 1528: 'I beseech your grace

with all my heart to remember the parson of Honey Lane for my sake shortly'.[15] This could have been Garrad himself or his rector Thomas Forman, whom he had implicated in his book-dealing.[16] Another example of Anne's intervention in cases of this kind is the affair of Thomas Patmore, a priest who had been arraigned for seditious opinions in 1530. According to Foxe, a number of Patmore's 'brethren' had written to Anne as well as the king claiming that Patmore had been accused of heresy for personal reasons and not because he was guilty: allegedly Bishop Stokesley had wanted to prefer someone else to his benefice. The outcome of this petition is uncertain, but several years later Anne was petitioned again, this time being implored to see if she could win Patmore's release from jail. Anne seems to have complied with this request as Patmore was not only released but a special commission was set up to look into Bishop Stokesley's participation in the affair and how far he had convicted Patmore by 'injurious and unjust' means.[17] Anne was also responsible for helping offenders abroad. Her role in the restoration of the Antwerp merchant, Richard Herman, to membership of the English society of merchants there is here a case in point. She felt that he had been unjustly expelled 'only for that he [still like a good Christian man] did both with his goods and policy, to his great hurt and hindrance in this world, help the setting forth of the New Testament in English'.[18] A similar compassion, according to William Latimer, was shown to two Continental evangelicals, Mistress Marye and John Sturm, both victims of persecution in France,[19] while the petition of Thomas Alwaye, an otherwise obscure offender prosecuted by Wolsey for buying English New Testaments and other prohibited books, reveals that Anne's intervention in cases of this kind was probably quite commonplace. The petition, recently unearthed by Maria Dowling, is worth quotation at length.

> 'When extreme need began to compel me, right honourable lady, to make me friends by whose means I might be released out of my miserable thraldom, I could not find in all this realm in whom I had any hope or looked for any comfort until your gracious ladyship come unto my remembrance. But anon I remembered how many deeds of pity your goodness had done within these few years, and that without respect of any persons, as well to strangers and aliens as to many

of this land, as well to poor as to rich: whereof some looking for no redemption were by your gracious means not only freely delivered out of costly and very long imprisoning but also by your charity largely rewarded and all thing restored to the uttermost, so that every man may perceive that your gracious and Christian mind is everywhere ready to help, succour and comfort them that be afflicted, troubled and vexed, and that not only in word and tongue, but even after the saying of St. John.'[20]

Another evidence often used to support the view that Anne was a Protestant is her ownership of a number of dubious books. The survival among her effects of a copy of Tyndale's 1534 edition of the New Testament is a case in point. Equally curious is her possession of French books like the 1534 Antwerp edition of the Bible translated by Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples, the 'Ecclesiaste' and 'The Pistellis and Gospelles for the Lll Sondayes in the Yere', all of which had clear Protestant overtones and, if known about, would undoubtedly have been frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authorities.[21] One may attach rather less significance to Anne's alleged involvement in the promption of Simon Fish's Supplication for the Beggars and Tyndale's Obedience of the Christian Man. Both of these stories leave a great deal to the imagination as they tend to minimize the role of the intended recipient of the books, Henry VIII. Nevertheless they have some value in so far as they tend to illustrate a guiding principle: that Anne was interested in some of the more radical theological ideas circulating at this time.[22]

Of all the aspects of Anne's alleged Protestantism her concern for the poor and education is often the most stressed. Almost half of Foxe's account of her in The Acts and Monuments is devoted to her reforms in this area, while it is William Latimer who furnishes us with most of the information available about them. According to Latimer, she was responsible for giving standing orders for the relief of needy and impotent householders as well as substantially increasing the Royal Maundy. Other measures included the prompt handling of petitioners, the distribution of clothes and money while she was on progress with the king, and her intervention in individual cases of misfortune, such as

the parishioner brought to Anne's attention by Hugh Latimer after the death of most of his cattle. This picture of Anne's munificence is confirmed to some extent by her relationship with William Marshall, one of Cromwell's commissioners appointed for looking into poor relief. In 1535 Marshall dedicated to Anne a practical work on the treatment of poverty in Flanders, The Form and manner of subvention or helping for poor people, devised and practised in the city of Ypres. The dedication deliberately invited Anne to persuade the king to set up relief of a similar sort in England.[23] As with poor relief, so with education. Anne's influence in the schools and universities has been seen as indicative of her own highly innovative religious beliefs. One example of this has already been mentioned, her appointment of Matthew Parker to the collegiate church of Stoke by Clare. But she also was responsible for making substantial grants to the universities for the maintenance of poor scholars as well as contributing to the academic careers there of not a few future Protestants. Foxe names Lord Paget 'at that present.... an earnest protestant' as one of the foremost beneficiaries of this scheme.[24] Also relevant is the testimony of William Barker, who in the dedication of his Nobility of Women to Elizabeth I in 1559 recalled that Anne had 'employed her bountiful benevolence upon sundry students, that were placed at Cambridge, among the which it pleased her highness to appoint me'.[25]

So far, then, we have seen that much of the evidence regarding Anne's religious beliefs indicates that Foxe was probably right. Not only was she actively involved in the patronage and protection of individuals, whom some of the more conservative clergy in England would undoubtedly have considered heretical, but she is also known to have had a number of Protestant or quasi-Protestant books in her possession. It is doubtful, however, whether this evidence is conclusive. Involvement in the promotion of Protestant bishops and chaplains, even ownership of prohibited books, are not necessarily indicators of personal belief. Indeed in many areas Anne's beliefs were perfectly orthodox. The question of the sacrament of the altar is here a case in point. As has been seen, it was the view of a number of Foxe's martyrs, notably John Frith, that the doctrine of transubstantiation was erroneous. In this way Frith shared the beliefs of many of the theologians of Foxe's

day and served as vital evidence on the 'continuance of the true church of Christ' in the 1520s and 1530s. However, Anne's beliefs on this subject were markedly different. This is illustrated, in the first place, by her conduct in the days leading up to her execution. According to her gaoler, William Kyngston, she twice demanded that she should receive the sacrament of the altar in her closet so that he could hear her speaking touching her innocency of the charges indicted against her. It is clear that she regarded the sacrament as the physical representation of Christ's body and blood as she is said to have sent for Kyngston to be present at such time as she 'reysayved the gud Lord'.[26] Equally indicative of Anne's orthodoxy on this matter is her conduct in the case of one Tristram Revell, who in 1536 tried to dedicate her a translation of a work by François Lambert of Avignon which denied the sacraficial nature of the mass. In contrast to her treatment of other evangelical suitors, like Patmore, Anne refused the request; even Latimer found one or two of the sections in the tract objectionable.[27]

While Anne's opinions on the mass leave Foxe's idea that she was a 'zealous defender of Christ's gospel' open to question, it is her view on the nature of salvation that jeopardises it most. As has been noted, it was central to Lutheran doctrine that good works could not in themselves result in eternal life. Rather salvation lay in a God-given faith in Christ's death and resurrection and the consequences of those events for the individual sinner. At least one historian has suggested that this was Anne's position too. The strong emphasis on the necessity of faith in the notes to the concluding chapter of one of her books, the 'Ecclesiaste - 'faith in God, and in our Lord Jesuchrist is it which chiefly doth relieve us from the transgressions that be passed of the sentence of the law' - has been seen as significant in this context.[28] Yet Anne's personal beliefs were probably quite traditional on this issue. Again her conduct before her execution in 1536 is the main evidence for this. Rather than expressing confidence in Christ's death as, in itself, the propitiation for her sins, Anne appears to have put enormous stress on her 'gud dedys'. In a letter to Cromwell on 3 May, Kyngston wrote that Anne had requested that she celebrate the sacrament of the altar in her closet so that she might pray for mercy, 'for I am

as clere from the company of man as s[in as I] am clear from you, and am the Kynges trew wedded wyf'. The effect of Anne's statement was that she felt confident that she would be forgiven by God because she was totally innocent of her charges of adultery.[29] A similar confidence in good works is demonstrated in the next letter Kynston wrote to Cromwell. Here Anne's true position was even more apparent as she remarked that she would be in Heaven after her death, 'for ] I have done mony gud dedys in my days'.[30] It is not enough to suggest that these are the last-minute ramblings of a demented or desperate woman. Her belief in the necessity of good works for salvation is also demonstrated by her repeated requests that she he 'shriven' and by her speech on the scaffold when she asked the crowd of onlookers to 'pray for me'.[31] It is unlikely that these statements - testifying as they do to Anne's belief in aurricular confession and prayers for the dead, as well as in the efficacy of voluntary works - would have been very encouraging to Foxe in his own treatment of the affair in The Acts and Monuments.

If Anne was rather less Protestant or heretical than has in the past been suggested, how is one to explain her involvement with radical clergy and her possession of proscribed literature? One explanation might be that she was using these things for political ends. It is noticeable, for instance, just how many of Anne's protégés rose to prominence in the first place because of their support of the king's divorce from Catherine and the consequent split from Rome. It was not until Cranmer wrote that Henry should seek the opinion of Europe's major universities on this matter that he, an otherwise obscure fellow of Jesus, Cambridge, gained recognition at Court - and, significantly enough, a position in the household of Anne's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn. Latimer's rise to fame ran along similar lines. A notorious evangelical preacher it was not until Dr. Butts approached him to speak for the king's divorce that he was given positions of some influence firstly, as one of the delegates appointed by senate to debate the divorce, and, more latterly, the holder of a royal benefice in Wiltshire and, in 1533, one of Anne Boleyn's chaplains. If Maria Dowling is correct in ascribing to Dr. Butts the role of 'intermediary' between Anne and some of the more radical clergy in the universities, it seems significant that Butts chose Latimer for political not religious reasons.[32]

Latimer and Cranmer, however, are not the only examples of this phenomenon. Edward Fox's appointment as Bishop of Hereford was undoubtedly the result of the sterling support he gave Anne during the divorce,[33] while Nicholas Shaxton and John Skip were among the large number of academics whose support for the king's cause proved favourable to their careers in 1530 or 1531.[34]

A similar move, meanwhile, is demonstrated in Anne's promotion of proscribed books. Clearly, much of the literature she had dealings with had political overtones and may have been adopted by her not for their religious content but because they gave support to the arguments used by the king in his quarrel with Rome. An example of this is Simon Fish's Supplication for the Beggars. As Maria Dowling has demonstrated, this was less a radical departure in theology than an extended criticism of clerical fees and jurisdiction. As such it tended to bring into question the issue of Wolsey's legatine authority - Fish actually claimed that the king's laws against the Church's financial depredations could not be implemented because the Chancellor was invariably a priest himself - and must have interested Anne as an alternative means of freeing Henry from Catherine. Similar motives have governed her support for Tyndale's Obedience of a Christian Man, which appealed to the king's erastianism not his doctrine. Apparently Henry was so pleased by the book - Anne had allegedly marked the most significant places for him with her fingernail - that he declared that it was 'for me and all kings to read'.[35]

Thus far, then, we have seen that Anne's interest in radical religion had as much to do with political as specifically doctrinal concerns. This is not to say, however, that the queen was devoid of religious feeling or, indeed, that she did not care passionately about some of the issues raised by her protégés. The translation of the Bible into English is here a case in point. It is significant, for example, that her intervention on behalf of Richard Herman, the merchant thrown out of the English society of merchants at Antwerp, was determined not by sympathy with his doctrinal position - Anne seems to have discounted the possibility that he was a heretic - but by her concern that the Bible should be freely circulated in the vernacular. The only reason he

had been expelled, she pointed out, was that 'he [still like a good Christian man] did both with his goods and policy, to his great hurt and hindrance in this world, help the setting forth of the New Testament in English'.[36] It is possible to detect a similar commitment to the Scriptures in the vernacular in her ownership of Tyndale's 1534 translation of the New Testament and a number of Scripture books of French origin. Of course this was a dangerous enterprise and, if found out, Anne would have been in serious trouble. But it does not demonstrate that she was a Protestant. As a child brought up in the French Court she would have witnessed the reprinting of a vernacular French Bible seven times between 1487 and 1521. That she may have wished for similar developments in England is not, in itself, surprising.

Another indication of Anne's concern for new ideas, as opposed to specifically heretical ones, is her involvement in poor relief. One of the books in her possession, the 'Ecclesiaste', talked most vociferously of the government's duty to alleviate financial deprivation and injustice and there is evidence to suggest that Anne complied with this view.[37] Latimer's references to Anne's activities in this area are among the more believable aspects of his narrative and may be taken as an accurate indication of Anne's attitude in such matters. Incidentally, Anne's concern for the poor and deprived may explain the 'protection' she is alleged to have given to Protestants in trouble. Significantly enough, Alwaye's petition, quoted above, made no reference to Anne's doctrine only 'her many deeds of pity.... done within these few years, and that without respect of any persons, as well to strangers and aliens as to many of this land, as well to poor as to rich', and it may be that similar sentiments lay behind her intervention on behalf of Mistess Marye and John Sturm (aliens) and Thomas Patmore (unjustly accused).[38]

Anne Boleyn and The Acts and Monuments.

Thus far, then, we have seen that Foxe's claim for Anne as a godly Protestant must be seriously challenged in the light of the evidence

available. Not only were Anne's beliefs more orthodox than has in the past been accepted, but her involvement with radical clergy and her ownership of prohibited books were probably determined by political motives as much as by religious ones. Importantly, these weaknesses in his case were not lost on Foxe himself. As will now be demonstrated, some of the facts about Anne proved to be very embarrassing to him.

To some extent, Foxe's account of Anne was built on a solid foundation. 'What a zealous defender she was of Christ's gospel' was something 'all the world doth know', he wrote in his account of her execution in 1536.[39] Indeed he went so far as to say that her acts would declare this to be the case to 'the world's end'.[40] Of some significance in this respect, he contended, was her role in Henry's divorce of Catherine of Aragon. Foxe wrote in the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments that up until the coming of Queen Anne the Pope lost a great deal of 'his authority and jurisdiction in this realm of England'.[41] But Anne's intervention was the occasion by which 'his whole power and authority began utterly to be abolished'.[42] Although she was not yet named as Henry's queen, it was by her 'godly means and most virtuous counsel' that 'the king's mind was daily inclined better and better'.[43]

Another indication of Anne's support for the Gospel was the fact that during her ascendancy very few heretics were burned. Foxe reports that from the 'time of the said queen Anne, we read of no great persecution, nor any abjuration to have been in the church of England, save only that the registers of London make mention of certain Dutchmen counted for Anabaptists, of whom ten were put to death in sundry places of the realm, A.D. 1535'.[44] Again in his account of Anne's execution in 1536, Foxe suggests that her one commendation was that 'during her life, the religion of Churst most happily flourished, and had a right prosperous course'.[45] The inference here is an obvious one: because Anne was in the ascendancy and therefore in a position to exercise some influence on government affairs, protection was given to people who might otherwise have found themselves convicted for heresy and burned at the stake.

But Foxe's claim depended for the most part on Anne's role as a patron of Protestants. According to Foxe's account of her coronation in 1533, she was not only 'a special comforter and aider of all the professors of Christ's gospel, as well of the learned as the unlearned' but 'her life [was] also directed according to the same, as her weekly alms did manifestly declare'.[46] There is some evidence for both these assertions. An example of Anne's support for heretics was her role in the Patmore affair, a priest who had been arraigned for heresy in 1530, while her intervention on behalf of Simon Fish resulted in a pardon for him from the king.[47]

Anne's protection of Protestants was matched by her concern for the poor. According to Foxe, not only was she used to giving away three or four pounds to local householders but she often sent her subalmoner to record the needs of the local community. According to 'divers credible persons who were about the queen' she always carried a little purse, out of which she 'was wont daily to scatter abroad some alms to the needy, thinking no day well spent wherein some man had not fared the better by some benefit at her hands'.[48] In fact, Foxe argued, by the last year of her life Anne was giving away fourteen or fifteen thousand pounds per annum.[49] There is reason to doubt this figure as this was twelve times larger than the annual surplus of Anne's expenditure. Perhaps Foxe misread his evidence in his enthusiasm for his cause.[50] But whatever the case, it does demonstrate the martyrologist's concern to establish Anne as a protector of the poor.

Unhappily, though, not all the evidence about Anne was this helpful. The story of her arrest and execution in 1536 was an example of this. According to Foxe, the king suddenly cut short his jousting at Greenwich and departed for Westminster in some disarray. The reasons for this were unclear at first but the next day Anne, her brother, Lord Rochford, and several other men of the queen's acquaintance were sent to the Tower. Nineteen days later they were dead, the queen going to her death with 'quiet modesty', a fact Foxe felt worthy of particular comment as a reflection of her love of 'true religion'.[51] For Foxe, there was no doubt that Anne was innocent. He keeps quiet about the charges against her initially but in tackling the central allegation

that she slept with her brother and several other men, Foxe is adament: how a Parliament could charge her with 'such carnal desires of her body as to misuse herself with her own natural brother' was only a matter of conjecture.[52] Indeed, it was 'so contrary to all nature, that no natural man will believe it'.[53]

Nevertheless, some of the facts surrounding Anne's death were less easy to explain. One was Anne's speech which she delivered just before she was beheaded. According to Foxe, this speech, as much as her protection of heretics and her concern for the poor, 'declared no less her sincere faith and trust in Christ'.[54] Yet if one examines the text of the speech as it is printed in The Acts and Monuments, it is very difficult to see how he could have come to such a conclusion.

'The Words of Queen Anne at her Death

> Good christian people! I am come hither to die, for according to the law, and by the law, I am judged to death; and therefore will I speak nothing against it. I come hither to accuse no man, nor to speak any thing of that whereof I am accused and condemned to die; but I pray God save the king, and send him long to reign over you, for a gentler, or a more merciful prince was there never; and to me he was ever a good, a gentle, and a sovereign lord. And if any person will meddle of my cause, I require them to judge the best. And thus I take my leave of the world, and of you all, and I heartily desire you all to pray for me. O Lord have mercy on me! To God I commend my soul.'[55]

There is very little in this speech to suggest that Anne was a Protestant. Far from it - some of her remarks, notably her desire to be prayed for after her death and her apparent lack of assurance of salvation ('O Lord have mercy on me!') indicate that she was probably quite orthodox in her belief. Be this as it may, one may wonder how Foxe dealt with this anomoly. Is there any sign that he found Anne's confession embarrassing? His first response, as has been noted, seems to have been to ignore that she said these things. Her last words before she died, according to Foxe, 'declared no less her sincere faith

and trust in Christ, than did her quiet modesty utter forth the goodness of the cause and matter' (i.e. Henry's allegation of treason and adultery).[56] There are indications in what follows, though, that Foxe was deeply troubled by Anne's speech. For example, Foxe continues his account of Anne's execution by launching into a powerful panegyric about her virtues as queen.

> 'Certain this was, that for the rare and singular gifts of her mind, so well instructed, and given toward God, with such a fervent desire unto the truth and setting forth of sincere religion, joined with like gentleness, modesty, and pity toward all men, there have not many such queens before her borne the crown of England.'[57]

It is interesting to note that Foxe begins this passage with the words 'certain this was', as if unsure of his previous statement that Anne's speech 'declared no less her sincere faith and trust in Christ'. But what is more significant is the highly inflated language of the extract, for example, 'there have not many such queens before her borne the crown of England' and a 'fervent desire unto the truth and setting forth of sincere religion'. It is doubtful that Foxe would have used such language unless he was worried about the effect of Anne's speech.

Another indication that Foxe found the speech embarrassing is that the story of Anne's death repeats claims he makes elsewhere. For example, he notes 'how bountiful she was to the poor, passing not only the common example of other queens, but also the revenues almost of her estate'.[58] It is curious that Foxe should introduce a discussion on Anne's philanthropy when his main concern was her conduct at her execution. Even more dubious is the fact that he had made this point before, in describining Anne's coronation in 1533.[59] Again it is unlikely that Foxe would have done this had there not been some anxiety in his mind about Anne's last words.

However, the clearest expression of Foxe's embarrassment is his conclusion to 'The Story of Queen Anne': 'What a zealous defender she was of Christ's gospel all the world doth know, and her acts do and will declare to the world's end.'[60] Given the fright Foxe must have

experienced when he found himself reading Anne's speech, the words 'all the world doth know' are scarcely appropriate. Plainly, all the world did not know that Anne was a Protestant. One only had to examine her speech to realise that. Somehow Foxe had to convince his readers, maybe even himself, that any doubts they might have had about Anne's Protestantism were entirely without foundation.

In Foxe's account of Anne Boleyn, therefore, many of the difficulties he experienced with other 'favourers of the gospel' were to resurface. The fact that Anne was probably more orthodox in her opinions than he would have liked presented Foxe with a number of problems, mainly concerning the queen's speech at her execution. Significantly, similar tensions are apparent in Foxe's account of Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell. How the martyrologist dealt with these tensions and how far they were reconciled or resolved in his own version of Cromwell's career it is intended now to determine.

Thomas Cromwell.

Foxe's account of Thomas Cromwell, like that of Anne Boleyn, is built on the premise that he was one of 'the favourers of God's word'. 'How desirous and studious this good Cromwell was, in the cause of Christ's religion', Foxe wrote, 'examples need not be brought. His whole life was nothing else but a continual care and travail how to advance and further the right knowledge of the gospel'.[61] Elsewhere Foxe names Cromwell as 'this valiant soldier and captain of Christ.... seeking all means and ways, to beat down false religion and to advance the true'.[62] As with Foxe's claims for Anne, there is much truth in these remarks, if only in terms of Cromwell's anti-clericalism. That Cromwell regarded particular priests and the abuses of the clergy in general with some distaste is attested to by Cavendish, Wolsey's biographer, who describes an incident in 1529 in which Cromwell complained of Wolsey's partiality for the priests of his household at the expense of his lay servants. While Wolsey's chaplains were made rich with benefices, he alleged, the laymen had nothing.[63] Another

indication of Cromwell's dislike for priests is found in Foxe's account of his journey to Rome in 1510, in which he had been requested to secure for the town of Boston in Lincolnshire certain pardons from the Pope. Though this fact in itself showed that he was 'as yet not grounded in judgment of religion' yet, Foxe argues, his hatred of the abuses of the clergy was plain. Because he realised that the Pope and his servants were nothing but 'greedy cormorants' Cromwell decided to trick them by offering them dishes of jelly as if they were as expensive a fare as any in Europe.[64]

Cromwell's anti-clericalism, however, was based on far more positive feelings than lay resentment or envy. As G.R. Elton has argued, it stood rooted in his religion.[65] At the centre of Cromwell's thinking was a belief, increasingly apparent as the years wore on, in the efficacy of the Bible as the basis of belief. Cromwell's interest in the Scriptures began early. Foxe describes him as having learned Erasmus' New Testament 'without book' while journeying to and from Rome[66] and this is attested to, to some extent, by his evident command of the Scriptures when communicating with well-known prelates later on in his career. Writing to Nicholas Shaxton, the Bishop of Salisbury, in 1538, Cromwell made so bold as to charge the bishop, 'as greate a clerke' as he was, with alleging his Scriptures, 'owt of their place'.[67] A similar dexterity with handling the Bible is shown in a letter to Bishop Fisher in which he debates the authenticity of the so-called Nun of Kent.[68]

Yet Cromwell's relationship with the Scriptures was not simply an intellectual one. As has been stated, in later years he was increasingly of the opinion that they represented the very word of God and ought to be acknowledged as the one sure foundation of belief. This can be detected, in the first place, in Cromwell's Injunctions of 1536 and 1538. The 1538 Injunctions, for example, called the Bible the 'very lively word of God'. Moreover, it was a document 'that every christian person is bound to embrace, believe, and follow, if he look to be saved'.[69] A similar impression is gleaned from the 1536 Injunctions, the Bible here being referred to in marginally less fulsome terms as the 'very word of God'.[70] But Cromwell's real position is perhaps most

apparent in the oration he is supposed to have given to an assembly of bishops in 1537. This is described for us by a Scottish Reformer, Alexander Alane or Alesius, in a tract published some years later, about 1540, and transcribed by Foxe into The Acts and Monuments. Apparently Cromwell had stated that it was the king's desire that they 'set a stay' of religion for 'the unlearned people'. This, significantly enough, was not to be done by brawling or scolding, nor by any authority of doctors and councils. Rather it was the king's wish that they 'determine all things by the Scripture', and they should not admit 'any articles or doctrine not contained in the Scripture, but approved only by continuance of time and old custom, and by unwritten verities, as ye were wont to do'.[71] It appears that this was Cromwell's view too. When Bishop Stokesley, one of the more conservative of the bishops, criticised Alane's speech on the efficacy of the sacraments Cromwell and Archbishop Cramner 'smiled a little one upon another, forasmuch as they saw him flee, even in the very beginning of the disputation, unto his old rusty sophistry and unwritten verities'.[72]

Cromwell's Scriptural fundamentalism resulted in what seem to have been some fairly radical departures in terms of doctrine. His views on pilgrimages are an example of this, as are his ideas on the abuse of images and relics. Commenting in the 1538 Injunctions on the works of charity, mercy and faith 'specially prescribed and commanded in Scripture', Cromwell asks the clergy to warn their flocks not 'to repose their trust.... in other works devised by men's fantasies besides Scripture: as in wandering to pilgrimages, offering of money, candles, or tapers, or feigned relics or images, or kissing or licking the same, saying over a number of beads not understood nor minded on, or such like superstition: for the doing whereof ye not only have no promise or reward in Scripture, but, contrariwise, great threats and maledictions of God, as things tending to idolatry and superstition'.[73] Cromwell also appears to have inveighed against praying to saints. The 1536 Injunctions are particularly significant in this respect, the clergy being told to advise their parishioners that 'all goodness, health, and grace ought to be both looked and asked for only of God, as of the very author of the same, and of none other'.[74]

Cromwell's view on the sacraments, however, is less easy to determine. An injunction of 1536 requires that 'the sacraments and sacramentals be duly and reverently ministered in their parishes' so it could be that the Vicegerent did not differ from many of his more conservative colleagues in this respect.[75] On the other hand the story of the assembly of bishops in 1537, told by Alane, gives an impression that Cromwell's mind was moving in a rather more radical direction. It is interesting to note that one of the most pressing concerns of the conference was the status of the sacraments. Should there be two sacraments only, that is to say baptism and the Supper of the Lord, or should the Church recognize other sacraments such as confirmation, orders and annoiling? It appears that Cromwell was very much in favour of the former. His connections with Alexander Alane - apparently Cromwell had met him in the street that very day and introduced him to the assembly as 'the king's scholar'[76] - is alone significant in this respect, as Alane spoke most vociferously, and controversially, on the validity of the two sacraments as opposed to the many. But is is also apparent in Cranmer's curiously loaded introduction to the discussion in which he remarks that the 'ceremonies' of confirmation, orders and annoiling 'cannot be proved to be instituted of Christ, nor have any word in them to certify us of remission of sins'.[77] Cranmer's connections with Cromwell - they are both described by Alane as defending 'the pure doctrine of the gospel' - suggest that this would have been Cromwell's view too.[78]

So far, then, we have seen that Foxe's account of Cromwell as 'this valiant soldier and captain of Christ' contains an element of truth. A man of strongly anit-clerical convictions, Cromwell also seems to have come to a belief in the supremacy of the Bible as the received word of God. This seems to have led him to reject traditional notions of the efficacy of pilgrimages, prayers to the saints, the worship of images and relics as well as the validity of certain sacraments. Yet it would be a mistake to regard Cromwell as a fully-fledged Protestant. Some of his beliefs were distinctly orthodox in tone, such as his opinion on the sacrament of the altar. Replying to an accusation in 1540 that as well as being a traitor he had caused to be printed many 'false and erroneous books.... tending to the discredit of the blessed sacrament of the

altar' Cromwell, in a very moving appeal, told the king that it had grieved him that he should be noted 'a sacramentary' and that he was 'guiltless' of the crime.[79] Similar remarks were made at his execution a few days later. Here Cromwell affirmed his faith in the 'catholic faith of the holy church' and denied doubting 'any article of my faith, no nor doubting in any sacrament of the church'.[80] There is no reason to suppose Cromwell was lying. That both he and Cranmer were worried about the spread of sacramentarian heresy is attested to by a letter written in April 1538 in which Cranmer warns him that 'the error of the sacrament of the Alter was.... greatly spredd abrode in this realm and dayly encreasing more and more.'[81] A similar concern is demonstrated in a letter to Sir Thomas Wyatt in Paris in which Cromwell remarks on the judgment of 'a myserable heretik sacramentary' (John Nicholson or Lambert) and lauds the king's role in his interrogation.[82]

More importantly, Cromwell's religious enthusiasm was tempered by his pragmatism. He would not, for example, believe anything the king did not believe, as he told the Lutheran envoys in 1538,[83] while his prime concern in the religious controversies that governed his ministry was the unity of the realm not the establishment of Protestant doctrines. Cromwell's oration to the assembly of bishops in 1537 is an example of this. The king, he said, 'studieth day and night to set a quietness in the church'. Many, he continued, especially among the unlearned sort, were in some doubt 'what they may believe'.[84] A similar move is evident in his Injunctions of 1536 and 1538. The king's articles, Cromwell declared, were for 'the decent and public order of the said church'.[85] Moreover, although it was the king's wish to set up a Bible in English in every parish, it was not the authorities' intention to let it become a focus of contention. Rather squabbling parishioners were to 'refer the declaration of those places that be in controversy, to the judgment of them that be better learned'.[86] Finally, in April 1539, a draft proclamation was prepared, attacking both those who sought to 'restore into this realm the old devotion to the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, the hypocrite religion' and their opponents who used the Bible 'to wrest and interpret and so untruly allege the same to subvert and overturn as well the sacraments of Holy Church as the power and authority of princes and

magristrates'.[87] There is every reason to suppose Cromwell to have been behind this scheme, as shown by his jotted remembrance the previous March for 'a device in the parliament for the unity in religion'.[88]

Implications for Foxe.

Foxe's account of Cromwell as a 'valiant soldier.... of Christ' must, therefore, be qualified to some extent. While continuing to hold to perfectly orthodox opinions on the mass, 'his faith was not hot enough to override his awareness of the political possibilities'.[89] In this much he shared the opinions of one of his humanist clients, Thomas Starkey, who argued that the Church should keep to the middle path, avoiding irrational superstition on the one hand and arrogant personal opinion of the other.[90] That said, one may wonder how Cromwell's beliefs may have affected Foxe. Is there any sign that the martyrologist had second thoughts about his hero? First impressions appear to suggest not. For Foxe, there were three things that marked Cromwell out as a supporter of the Protestant cause. The first were his various proclamations, designed as they were 'to advance and further the right knowledge of the gospel, and reform the house of God'.[91] Among the most important, from Foxe's point of view, concerned the Lord's Prayer and the availability of the Scriptures. Cromwell's part in the translation of the Bible 'for every Englishman to understand' was particularly indicative, Foxe argued, of his concern for the 'truth'.[92] Equally significant were his injunctions against images and image worship, rescuing many from 'damnable idolatry' Foxe thought.[93] Among the more abonimable of these practices was the worship of the Blood of Hales, a file which reputedly contained the blood of Christ but, according to Foxe, was afterwards found to comprise that of a duck. Cromwell was no less active in regulating holy days and superfluous fasting, as, for example, in his articles concerning the eating of eggs and white meat during Lent; while his commitment to the Protestant religion could be attested to, in large part, by his strictures against clerical absenteeism. According to Foxe, one of Cromwell's most important measures resulted in beneficed men being resident in their own cures and parishes.

Another aspect of Cromwell's Protestantism was his part in the dissolution of the monasteries. Cromwell's role in the dissolution by Wolsey of minor religious houses in 1525 resulted in him becoming unpopular 'with divers of the superstitious sort'.[94] But his most lasting contributions were the Acts of 1536 and 1539. Foxe writes that it pleased 'Almighty God, by means of the said lord Cromwell, to induce the king to suppress first the chantries, then the friars' houses and small monasteries, till, at length, all the abbeys in England, both great and less, were utterly overthrown, and plucked up by the roots'.[95] Foxe doubts whether anyone else would have undertaken this task. If God had not raised up Cromwell 'what other men see I know not; for my part, I never yet saw in this realm any such Cromwell since Cromwell's time, whose heart and courage might not sooner have been subverted with the money and bribes of abbots, than he to have subverted any abbey in all England.'[96]

But, as with Anne Boleyn, Foxe seems to have been most gratified by Cromwell's protection of heretics. 'It were too long and tedious a declaration', he writes, 'to declare, how many good men, through this man's help and defence, have been relieved and delivered out of danger'.[97] 'Briefly, his whole life was full of such examples.... to do many men good, and especially, such as were in danger of persecution for religion's sake.'[98] Having said this, Foxe does cite some examples, such as Cromwell's part in the 'trouble' of one of Cranmer's secretaries in 1538. According to the martyrologist, the passing of the Six Articles was hotly disputed by Archbishop Cranmer, who, having been interviewed by the king, wrote a book condemning them out of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. This he ordered his secretary to deliver to the king. Unfortunately the secretary's journey to the king's palace was impeded by a crowd watching a bear-baiting contest near the Thames. The spectacle does not seem to have been handled with a great deal of care as half-way through the contest, the bear escaped, causing the secretary, the bear itself and various other spectators to tumble into the Thames. As a result the book was lost, only to be recovered by the bearward, an 'arrant papist', who happened to be standing nearby. Seeing that was a refutation of the Act of Six Articles he made 'much ado' about it, eventually resolving to show it to

those of the Council he knew to be opposed to Cranmer. No amount of persuading by the secretary would induce him to return the book. In the end the secretary was forced to appeal to Cromwell who, understanding that the bearward had resolved to show the book to Cranmer's enemies, marched up to him and requested its immediate surrender. He then returned the book to the secretary.[99] The Acts and Monuments includes many such stories.

However, Foxe's account of Cromwell was also plagued by numerous difficulties. Not all the evidence at Foxe's disposal was as convincing as the above. One such case was Cromwell's part in the execution in November 1538 of John Lambert, a heretic noted for his sacramentarian views. Apparently the king had ordered Cromwell to read the bill of condemnation, which was duly done, the accused being sent to the stake a few days later. Clearly, from Foxe's point of view, the fact that Lambert had been condemned by Cromwell was not going to be very helpful to his plan of promoting Cromwell as a 'valiant soldier.... of Christ'. One indication that he found the story embarrassing is the fact that, in retelling it, he immediately lays the blame for Cromwell's actions onto Bishop Gardiner. It was only because Gardiner wanted to trap Cromwell, Foxe argued, that the Vicegerent had been asked to read the bill in the first place. If he had declined to read it he would have been considered to have been sympathetic to Lambert's doctrine and should 'likewise have incurred the like danger'.[100] Of the implausibility of such an occurrence there can be little doubt. Cromwell himself wrote to Sir Thomas Wyatt in Paris, a few days after the trial, that he had been present at the interrogation of a 'myserable heretik sacramentary' and that the king had dealt with Lambert with 'most highe wisdom and Jugement'. Although this letter seems to have been written with the intention of impressing the French Court with Henry's 'excellent grauite and Inestimable maieste', it cannot be affirmed with any degree of conviction that Cromwell's religious views were any different to what he contended them to be.[101] In fact Cromwell was one of several 'favourers of the gospel' whose roles in the burning of Lambert Foxe was anxious to hush up. Equally problematic was the conduct of Robert Barnes, who delated Lambert in the first place, not to mention the highly

confrontational behaviour of Dr. Taylor, a man whom, Foxe notes rather unhappily, was 'in those days not far disagreeing from the gospel'.[102]

Equally indicative of Foxe's embarrassment is the story of Lambert's execution. Apparently Foxe had it on good authority that on the day of his burning Lambert was conveyed to Cromwell's house, where in an inner chamber Cromwell asked him his foregiveness for what he had done. Cheered that the hour of his death was close at hand, Lambert spent the early morning having breakfast with some of Cromwell's gentlemen before being carried off to the place of execution.[103] The veracity of this story is at the very least open to question. As H. Maynard Smith long ago suggested, Cromwell would scarcely have wanted to get the reputation of a protector of convicted sacramentaries, something which undoubtedly would have happened given the large number of people who allegedly witnessed the scene.[104] Moreover, such an action would have been a reflection on the king himself and the justice of the whole proceedings, an eventuality which the usually obsequious Cromwell would have been anxious to avoid. Cromwell's letter to Wyatt four days after the execution seems to clinch the matter. As has been noted, Cromwell not only abused Lambert as a 'myserable heretik sacramentary' but showed little hesitation in demonstrating that he heartily approved of the king's role in the affair.[105] The fact that Foxe accepted the story, however, betrays his deep concern for Cromwell's behaviour. He must have guessed that his information was, at the very best, implausible but printed the story anyway out of embarrassment over Cromwell's earlier actions.

If Foxe found the case of Lambert difficult to deal with this was only secondary to the problems he faced in handling Cromwell's execution. Apparently, Cromwell had said a prayer at his death which, according to Foxe's main source, Edward Hall, was 'long, but not so long as both godly and learned'. This prayer presented few problems to Foxe as it tended to confirm his view that Cromwell was a Protestant. As well as acknowledging that there was in himself 'no hope of salvation' Cromwell spoke of his faith in Christ's blood, putting 'all my confidence, hope, and trust.... in thy most merciful goodness'.[106] Unfortunately for Foxe Cromwell was also said to have made a speech

which lent support to the view that he was a Catholic. Here the deposed minister asked the crowd to bear witness that he did 'in the catholic faith, not doubting in any article of my faith, no nor doubting in any sacrament of the church'. Instead of expressing his hope in Christ's blood for salvation Cromwell beseeched his audience to 'pray to God with me, that He will forgive me. O Father forgive me! O Son forgive me! O Holy Ghost forgive me! O three persons in one God forgive me!'[107] One indication that Foxe was embarrassed by this speech is that he cuts out some of the more tendentious sections from later editions of The Acts and Monuments. The ejaculatory portion of Cromwell's address - O Father forgive me! O Son forgive me! O Holy Ghost forgive me! O three persons in one God forgive me! - only appears in the 1563 edition for example.[108] Also apparent is an attempt by Foxe to 'tone down' or lessen the impact of the speech, hence its somewhat dubious title - 'A true christian confession of the lord Cromwell at his death'.[109] In 'The History of.... Lord Thomas Cromwell' Foxe's difficulties with Anne were, therefore, only amplified and developed. While it was in the martyrologist's interests to capitalize on Cromwell's support for Protestants in trouble, as well as his legislative reforms, he could not very well ignore Cromwell's part in the conviction of sacramentarian heretics and his own denial of heresy at his execution.

Henry VIII.

The concept of a 'favourer of God's word' receives its most formidable expression in the figure of Henry VIII.[110] Not only had he 'exiled and abolished out of the realm the usurped power of the bishop of Rome', but according to Foxe, the king was also responsible for repressing idolatry and superstition, by defacing images and pilgrimages and pulling down abbeys and monasteries.[111] Apparently, even from early in his reign, Henry had been much troubled in spirit by a 'certain unlawful marriage' between himself and the lady Katharine' his brother's wife.[112] This, coupled with the fact that he was worried about who would succeed him after he died - Katharine had only produced a baby girl - resolved him to inquire further to 'feel what the word of God, and learning, would say unto it'.[113] Therefore, he gathered together

the chief scholars of the realm, as well as consulting Europe's major universities. These confirmed his earlier suspicions - to such an extent, indeed, that he then set about obtaining the Pope's assent as well. Foxe suggests that he knew this was going to prove difficult, not least because Henry and Katharine's marriage had been granted by a papal dispensation. It was doubtful that what one Pope had inaugurated another would undo. A further complication was that any action against Katharine was bound to secure the emnity of her nephew, the Emperor Charles V.

Nevertheless, Henry appealed to Rome, eventually being granted a hearing by a Papal delegation under Cardinal Campeius. According to Foxe, matters moved very slowly at first, particularly as the queen quickly siezed the opportunity of Campeius' visit to appeal directly to Rome. But in June 1530 it was finally agreed by all the judges presiding that the marriage was against the law of God if it could be proved that Katharine was 'carnally known by the first brother'.[114] At first Katharine denied this, but sufficient evidence was presented to convince even her own counsellors that the queen was not a virgin when she married Henry. In the first place, at the time of the death of Prince Arthur 'she thought and judged that she was with child'.[115] Secondly, it appeared in a book of records, which had since come into Foxe's hands, that certain ambassadors had been sent from Spain 'to testify concerning the full consummation of the said matrimonial conjunction'.[116] Foxe is reluctant to surrender the precise details of this investigation ('sparing the reverence of chaste ears')[117] but he argues that there was little doubt about the outcome. All the ambassadors being 'solemny sworn.... did affirm to both their parents, that the matrimony was consummated by that act'.[118]

Katharine's lawyers resorted to other tactics in response to this. Foxe, rather quaintly, calls them 'persuasions of natural reasons' why the marriage should not be undone. The first one was that the king's only child would be made a bastard, 'a great mischief to the realm'.[119] The second was that the divorce would incite the emnity of Charles V. And the third that the 'the continuance of so long a space had made the marriage honest'.[120] Foxe is clear about the purpose behind these

objections. They were, he says, merely delaying tactics. Another strategy apparently adopted by the papists was to say that Cardinal Campeius was on holiday and therefore could not be present at any hearings until the following October. Nevertheless Henry reacted surprisingly calmly and was content to wait. Even when Campeius was suddenly called home, the king, 'patiently forbearing', continued to plead his case and 'sent again to Clement' in Bologna.[121]

However, according to Foxe, it was only going to be a matter of time before the king's patience ran out. This, Foxe relates, is how it happened. Apparently, the Pope had received the king's request civilly but fearing for his authority as well as the Emperor's displeasure, tried to put off the ambassadors with this 'delay': that he would hear Henry's case once he was in Rome. At first Henry seemed prepared to accept this. Although he 'owed no such service to the pope, to stand to his arbitrement either in this case, or in any other, having both the Scripture to lead him, and his law in his own hands to warrant him, yet, for quietness' sake, and for that he would not rashly break order (which rather was a disorder indeed), he bare so long as conveiently he might.'[122] Finally, though, seeing no hope of redress, he began 'to look about him' so as to see 'what was best both for his own conscience, and the establishment of his realm to do'.[123]

No one should be in any doubt, argues the martyrologist that this had been ordained by God himself. The reason for this was that the Pope was soon to be despatched clean out of the kingdom. Henry first moved to bring down the traitorous Cardinal Wolsey, who had aided Campeius in his delaying tactics. This was done by the reintroduction of the ancient law of praemunire, the Cardinal at length poisoning himself and so 'procuring his own death'. Thereafter he sought to deal with the Church as a whole. Because the whole clergy had supported and maintained Wolsey's legatine power, they were equally culpable under the praemunire. Foxe relates how they were forced to pay a fine of some eighteen thousand pounds and to acknowledge Henry as the supreme head of the Church of England, a title which 'they never confessed before'.[124]

Henry next switched his attention to Parliament. First it was declared that those who spoke against the laws and constitutions made by the 'pretensed authority of the bishop of Rome' should not be liable to charges of heresy. For Foxe, this was a major breakthrough: the large number of heretics who had been 'troubled' and burned in the years leading up to the breach with Rome had left their mark on him, one which was not easily eradicated. Secondly, a law was passed ratifying the children of Anne Boleyn as the king's lawful successors. Here, Foxe believed, was 'the occasion that the pope lost all his interest and jurisdiction in England'. Two of his chief agents, Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, was summarily despatched. Others, 'which had so long clogged this realm of England', were utterly 'abolished, eradicated and exploded out of this land'.[125]

One of the clearest expressions of Henry's support for the Protestant cause was, therefore, the king's part in the break with Rome. To some extent, Foxe believed the latter to have been achieved against his will, Henry having at first been reluctant to act the aggressor. But in other respects Henry knew exactly what he was doing. His reintroduction of praemunire, for example, was part of a deliberate attempt to curb the power of the Papacy, an attempt, furthermore, which even in its early stages had one aim in view - the abolition of Papal authority in England.[126] For Foxe, this impression of Henry as an active opponent of Romanism was confirmed by his doctrinal reforms. These spanned several years, beginning with the Injunctions of 1535. Foxe is again keen to point out that Henry did not 'by and by reform all at once'.[127] He moved slowly, as the views of his less enlightened subjects dictated. For example he accepted in 1535 that there were only three sacraments - baptism, penance and the sacrament of the altar - but did not alter the way in which they were administered, 'the old trade received heretofore from the church of Rome'.[128] Likewise with the issue of justification, Henry acknowledged that salvation depended upon the 'mercy and grace of the Father, promised freely unto us for his Son's sake Jesus Christ, and the merits of his passion and blood', but stressed the value of good works, which 'must needs concur also in the remission of our sins'.[129] According to Foxe, other laws were introduced to similar effect; how images ought to be used as 'examples'

to stir men's minds although not in so far as to be used idolatrously; how the saints could be looked to as advancers of our prayers yet 'no confidence, nor any such honour be given unto them, which is only due to God'.[130]

By the 1536 and 1538 Injunctions, however, Henry had apparently resolved to be more radical. No longer would he bear the 'weaklings which were newly weaned from their mother's milk of Rome'.[131] Among the reforms instituted were the banning of superfluous holy days, the translation of the Paternoster into English and the instillation of an English Bible in every parish. He also ordered images to be pulled down and sermons to be made 'purely and sincerely' declaring 'the very gospel of Christ'.[132] If any vicar had of late advised his congregation to worship images he should now openly 'recant and reprove the same'.[133] Foxe, therefore, gave equal emphasis to Henry's doctrinal reforms and the abolition of the power of the Papacy. In these three years, he argued, the king did more good for the 'redressing and advancing of Christ's church and religion here in England' than the pope with all his bishops and prelates had done in the three hundred years that had gone before.[134]

Problems for Foxe.

However, there were occasions when Foxe's verdict about Henry as a 'favourer of God's word' was open to question. One such occasion was the help he gave Bishop Longland in hunting down heretics in the Amersham area of Buckinghamshire in 1521. Apparently Henry had ordered his officers to spare no expense in the 'excuting and ministering of justice' to the aforesaid heretics. Henry had issued a letter to this effect and this had been found by Foxe and transcribed into The Acts and Monuments. Foxe's first reaction seems to have been to blame Bishop Longland. It was only because he had been 'incensed with his suggestions and cruel complaints' that, Foxe contended, the king had been persuaded to act in the first place. As he was then a young man

and 'inexpert in the bloody practices and blind leadings' of his bishops it was not surprising that this should have happened.[135]

A similar explanation is given for Henry's part in the institution of the Act of Six Articles. These established the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, communion of only one kind, the necessity for clerical celibacy and aurricular confession, as well as the immediate execution of heretics found to have denied the Real Presence, so they were hardly good evidence for Foxe's view of Henry as a 'favourer of the gospel'. Again Foxe argued for compulsion, the king having been 'seduced and abused' by Bishop Gardiner into withdrawing 'his defence from the reformation of true religion'.[136]

Sadly for Foxe, not all of Henry's failures could be explained so easily. The execution of Anne Boleyn in 1536 was here a case in point. At first, Foxe tried to blame the papists. He did not doubt, he wrote, that Anne's death had something to do with their 'secret practising.... considering what a mighty stop she was to their purposes and proceedings'. Stephen Gardiner was an obvious candidate for a 'crafty setter-on', as Edmund Bonner, in succeeding him as Henry's ambassador in France, 'did manifestly detect him of plain papistry'.[137] Nevertheless, these arguments failed to carry with them a great deal of conviction. In the first place, it was clear that Gardiner was in France - out of harm's way. In the second place, the king's role in the affair was obviously more culpable than Foxe had initially imagined it to have been. One indication of this was his behaviour after the queen's execution, the king having immediately 'married in his whites' to another (Jane Seymour).[138] Indeed, in his account of the case of John Lambert, the heretic burned for sacramentarian views in 1538, Foxe gave full vent to his scorn: Henry 'showing the part of a hard husband had beheaded queen Anne his wife'.[139]

A similar tension is apparent in the case of Lambert himself. The basic facts of this trial have already been recorded, how Lambert, a 'myserable heretik sacramentary', had been interrogated by the king in November 1538 and had eventually been sent to Smithfield to be burned, apparently at the command of Thomas Cromwell. The roles of Barnes,

Taylor and Cromwell himself in the affair have already been mentioned as a source of some embarrassment to the martyrologist. But Foxe's embarrassment was made worse by the behaviour of the king. Apparently, it was Lambert himself who first requested that Henry should become involved, appealing 'from the bishops to the king's majesty'.[140] Yet as soon as he heard about the case, Henry reacted with the utmost severity. Not only did he decide to judge the case for himself but he inaugurated a special commission to deal with future outbreaks of sacramentarian heresy. That Henry was determined to find Lambert guilty was attested to by his very countenance - 'brows bent unto severity' - and his contention at the beginning of the trial that it was his intention not to give 'liberty unto heretics to perturb and trouble the churches of England, without punishment'.[141] Indeed, as soon as he clasped eyes on Lambert he treated him with great disdain. When Lambert said he had two names, John Nicholson and John Lambert, the king answered that he would not trust him, 'having two names, although you were my brother'.[142]

Lambert's ordeal had only just begun however. When he praised Henry's 'great gifts of judgment and knowledge' he received only a stinging rebuke, in which the king tried to convict him out of his own mouth.[143] And when he eventually yielded himself to the king's clemency, he was simply condemned to death for 'I will not', the king said, 'be a patron unto heretics'.[144]

Clearly, Foxe was faced with serious problems in dealing with these facts. If Henry was even half the loyal son of the Church Foxe said he was then something would have to be done to set the record straight. Foxe's first response seems to have been to blame Bishop Gardiner again. Because the Bishop of Winchester had 'privily [admonished] him.... with fair flattering words' Henry had been lured into taking a course of action that might otherwise have been unthinkable. Apparently, Gardiner had told the king that he was universally hated because he was thought to be a supporter of heretics, a view to which the over-sensitive Henry reacted most favourably.[145] However, Foxe could not quite hide his embarrassment at Henry's role in the affair. This is illustrated, in the first place, in his account of Gardiner's 'pernicious counsels'.

The king should hever have listened to such 'fair flattering words', Foxe argued, but 'giving ear more willingly than prudently or godlily to this siren, immediately received the wicked counsel of the bishop'.[146] But it is also indicated in Foxe's account of Lambert's trial in the 1563 edition of The Acts and Monuments. Aside from all the other 'lamentable and unworthy acts' that governed this case, none seemed to Foxe 'more unworthy than the undecent and uncomely behaviour of the king's majesty of that day'.[147]

In the stories of Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII, therefore, many of Foxe's initial aspirations for his heroes were unrealised. In brief, none of these so-called 'favourers of God's word' were what Foxe said they were. How Foxe reacted to this problem varied from case to case. In his treatments of Cromwell and Henry VIII, for example, he tried to shift the responsibility for his heroes' failures onto the king's evil counsellors and, in particular, Bishop Gardiner. In his account of Anne, on the other hand, he appears merely to have attempted to lessen the impact of his evidence, remarking simply that it 'declared no less her sincere faith and trust in Christ'.[148] Alternatively, Foxe was not averse to tampering with the evidence in some way - the text of Cromwell's speech, in which he is said to have implored God's forgiveness, is an example of this; while Foxe's ability to accept even the most implausible narratives, if the significance of the expected disclosures appeared to warrant it, is attested to by his description of Lambert's execution, in which Cromwell is supposed to have asked him his forgiveness. The reality of Foxe's 'favourers of God's word' was that they were very rarely the 'martyrs' he imagined them to be.

Notes to Chapter 8.

1 A&M v. 135.

2 A&M v. 403.

3 M. Dowling, 'Anne Boleyn and Reform', Journal of Ecclesiastical History XXXV (1984), 30-46.

4 E. Ives, Anne Boleyn (Oxford, 1986), esp. 302-331.

5 L.P., X, 797.

6 Calendar of State Papers Spanish, 1531-1533, 866; L.P., VI, 1460.

7 Ives, 303.

8 Ives, 303-304. C.f. Bodleian MS C. Don. 42 fos. 20-33 ('A Brief Treatise or Chronicle of Anne Boleyn').

9 Dowling, 38. C.f. L.P., IX, 203, 252, 272-273; X, 1257 (ix).

10 L.P., VII, 693.

11 L.P., VII, 89.

12 L.P., IX, 561.

13 Ives, 330.

14 Dowling, 36-39.

15 L.P., IV, Appendix no. 197.

16 However J. Fines has recently conjectured that the clerk in question was the perfectly orthodox Laurence Cook and that the letter is in any case a forgery. The main evidence for this is that it also includes a request for benefices for John Barlow which he already possessed (Biographical Register of Early English Protestants (Part 1) (Sutton Courtenay Press, 1981)).

17 A&M v. 37.

18 Ives, 315. C.f. Ellis, Original Letters Illustrative of English History (1824-1846), I, ii, 46.

19 Ives, 319. C.f. Latimer, 'Treatyse' fos. 28-29.

20 B.L. Sloane MS 1207. Printed in Maria Dowling, 'Anne Boleyn and Reform', 30.

21 Ives, 314-318.

22 Dowling, 35-36. C.f. A&M iv. 657-658; Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, 171-173.

23 Ives, 327-328.

24 A&M v. 63.

25 Dowling, 34.

26 L.P., X, 793, 910 (Kyngston to Cromwell).

27 Ives, 326; Dowling, 44.

28 Ives, 322-323.

29 L.P., X, 793.

30 L.P., X, 797.

31 L.P., X, 890, 902; A&M v. 135.

32 Dowling, 37-38.

33 Ives, 303. Fox was the official Boleyn family representative in Rome.

34 Dowling, 37-38.

35 Dowling, 35-36.

36 Ives, 315, C.f. Ellis, Original Letters Illustrative of English History, I, ii, 46.

37 Ives, 326-327.

38 Dowling, 30.

39 A&M v. 135.

40 Ibid.

41 A&M v. 61.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 A&M v. 44.

45 A&M v. 135.

46 A&M v. 62.

47 A&M v. 37; iv. 656-658.

48 A&M v. 63.

49 A&M v. 135.

50 Ives, 327 and n.

51 A&M v. 135.

52 A&M v. 136.

53 Ibid.

54 A&M v. 135.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 A&M v. 62.

60 Ibid.

61 A&M v. 384.

62 A&M v. 403.

63 G. Cavendish, The Life of Cardinal Wolsey, New Universal Library, 126-134.

64 A&M v. 363-364.

65 G.R. Elton, Reform and Reformation (London, 1977), 171.

66 A&M v. 365.

67 R.B. Merriman, The Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell (Oxford, 2 vols., 1902), II, 128-129.

68 Merriman, I, 374.

69 A&M v. 168.

70 A&M v. 167.

71 A&M v. 379.

72 A&M v. 383.

73 A&M v. 169.

74 A&M v. 166.

75 A&M v. 167.

76 A&M v. 378, 380.

77 A&M v. 380.

78 A&M v. 383.

79 L.P., XV, 498 (Cromwell's attainder); B.M. Otho, C,X, fol. 247 (L.P., XV, 824) printed in J.J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (London, 1968), 379n. I am indebted to Professor Scarisbrick for his reconstruction of this passage.

80 Hall, Chronicle, 839; A&M v. 402.

81 S. Brigden, 'Popular Disturbance and the Fall of Thomas Cromwell and the Reformers, 1539-1540', Historical Journal XXIV (1981), 260; L.P., XIII(i), 1237.

82 Merriman, II, 161-162.

83 Merriman, I, 279.

84 A&M v. 379.

85 A&M v. 166.

86 A&M v. 167.

87 S. Brigden, 'Popular Disturbance', 261.

88 L.P., XIV(i), 655.

89 G.R. Elton, Reform and Reformation, 172.

90 A.G. Dickens, Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation (London, 1972), 86.

91 A&M v. 384.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 A&M v. 366.

95 A&M v. 368.

96 A&M v. 369.

97 Ibid.

98 A&M v. 384.

99 A&M v. 388-391.

100 A&M v. 234.

101 Merriman, II, 161-162.

102 A&M v. 228, 227.

103 A&M v. 236.

104 H. Maynard Smith, Henry VIII and the Reformation (London, 1948), 450n.

105 Merriman, II, 161-162.

106 A&M v. 403.

107 A&M v. 402.

108 A&M v. 402n.

109 A&M v. 402.

110 It is not the intention of this chapter to examine the veracity of Foxe's claim. This was deemed too extensive a task in view of the purposes of this thesis. However, Foxe's treatment of Henry VIII is worth examination in its own right as particularly indicative of the tensions he experienced in dealing with God's holy saints and martyrs.

111 A&M v. 167.

112 A&M v. 46.

113 A&M v. 47.

114 A&M v. 51.

115 Ibid.

116 A&M v. 52.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 A&M v. 53.

122 A&M v. 55.

123 Ibid.

124 A&M v. 56.

125 A&M v. 69.

126 This view of Henry is, of course, open to question. I hope to explore this possibility elsewhere.

127 A&M v. 163.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 A&M v. 164.

132 A&M v. 169.

133 A&M v. 170.

134 A&M v. 171.

135 A&M iv. 241.

136 A&M v. 261.

137 A&M v. 136.

138 A&M v. 135.

139 A&M v. 228.

140 Ibid.

141 A&M v. 229.

142 A&M v. 230.

143 Ibid.

144 A&M v. 234.

145 A&M v. 228. Note the alliteration in 'fair flattering words' intended to give the description added pith. Foxe appears to have deliberately ignored his own (sometimes over-elaborate) rules of grammar because of this. His use of commas is often particularly generous but note their absence here!

146 A&M v. 228-229.

147 Foxe, Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes (London, 1563), 533.

148 A&M v. 135.

# CONCLUSION

What conclusions can be drawn from this study of Foxe? First, that Foxe's narrative sequences cannot be relied upon as straightforward records of historical fact. Although Foxe's stories have often been taken at face value, they are not supported by other evidence that survives from the period as well as some of the material transcribed into The Acts and Monuments itself. Second, it has been seen that Foxe's arguments concerning the significance of his evidence must be treated critically. The idea that the Lollards and the popular heretics of the 1520s and 1530s believed the same things as the Church of Foxe's own day cannot be sustained by the facts of the case, even those presented by Foxe himself.

A third consideration of this thesis has been the issue of his reliability. It has been seen that although Foxe was sometimes 'honestly misled' there were many occasions in which he omitted evidence or altered the facts to suit his case. There is no need to suggest Foxe attempted to deceive his reader. His main purpose in composing The Acts and Monuments was not to write an objective account of the period but to prove that his own Church was part of a vital spiritual tradition going back to the time of the Apostles. If some of the facts at his disposal failed to meet the expectations demanded of them then he felt he was under no obligation to report them accurately. On the other hand, it cannot be asserted with conviction that Foxe was a largely 'honest' compiler of evidence as has often been assumed as he was invariably only too willing to distort sensitive information.

Finally, and connected to this, Foxe's treatment of his evidence has been analysed as having been marked by uncertainty and anxiety. Much of the material at his disposal was deeply embarrassing to him, resulting in numerous alterations and additions in his own comments on the period in The Acts and Monuments. This is not an aspect of Foxe's

work that has received much attention in the past but deserves close examination if a balanced appraisal of the martyrologist's usefulness as a historian is to be made.

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