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**NEGOTIATING EARTHLY AND SPIRITUAL
DUTY:
FEMALE MARTYRS AND THEIR FAMILIES
IN TUDOR ENGLAND**

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ABSTRACT

The institution of the family was integral to the identity of all women in Tudor England. Yet the familial duties of some of the most noteworthy women have been neglected. These include sixty women who perished in the flames of the Marian persecution. This thesis offers a new insight into women's roles, in this era, by treating female martyrs and confessors as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. These radical and unruly women would never have been accepted as God's witnesses if their martyrologist, John Foxe (1516/17-1587), had not moulded them into unremarkable but dutiful housewives. The families of female martyrs could be greatly affected by a female relative's willingness to die for her faith. Children of martyrs could be inspired to follow in their mother's footsteps and husbands to stay steadfast in their beliefs. Some of the consequences of a mother and wife's religious deviance could also be fatal for their family and forever tarnish their reputation. Such women were cast as the new Eves of society by their confessional adversaries. Familial bonds could operate as support networks for female martyrs. By analysing Foxe's Protestant martyrology alongside martyr's letters, family advice manuals and Catholic critiques, this thesis demonstrates that a persecuted woman's familial roles and relationships had to be carefully balanced alongside her spiritual obligations. Women forced to prioritise their devotion to a reformist religion over their familial duties could only do so because they were invested with God's power. A woman's martyrdom could be enhanced if she could be proved, in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, to have cared for her family to the best of her ability before being called to martyrdom.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. This thesis has not been presented to any other institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed..... Date...30/05/16.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	i
MOTHERS, WIVES AND MARTYRDOM: AN INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. MOULDING THE EARLY MODERN FEMALE MARTYR: GENDER, FAMILY AND THE MARTYROLOGIST	13
2. MARITAL TIES AND SOCIAL DISORDER: COMMITMENT, COMMUNITY AND MARTYRDOM.....	28
3.THE JOURNEY FROM MOTHERHOOD TO MARTYRDOM: UNDERSTANDING MATERNAL SACRIFICE.....	51
MOTHERS, WIVES AND MARTYRDOM: CONCLUSION	79
THESIS BIBLIOGRAPHY	86
APPENDIX ONE: BIOGRAPHIES OF MARIAN FEMALE MARTYRS	92
APPENDIX TWO: TABLE OF POST-REFORMATION TUDOR FEMALE MARTYRS	119

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 3.1: *'A lamentable spectacle of three women, with a sely infant brasting out of the mothers wombe, being first taken out of the fire, and cast in agayne, and so all burned together in the isle of Garnesey.'* Source: John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2129.....54
- Fig. 3.2: *'The burning of Rose Allins hand, by Edmund Tyrell, as she was going to fetch drink for her Mother, lying sicke in her bedde.'* Source: John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2199.....70

MOTHERS, WIVES AND MARTYRDOM: AN INTRODUCTION

The first edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was published in 1563 and it was subsequently published in three more editions during his lifetime. Foxe told the stories of fifty seven women who were burnt at the stake for heresy during the reign of Mary I (1553-58), and many more Protestant women who faced persecution during these turbulent years. Over half of the female martyrs were recorded in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* as being wives, and a significant number of these definitely left behind children after their executions. Other women died alongside their husbands and children or parents, such as Joan Lashford:

[B]oth suffered for the same, first the man in the moneth of May, then the wife in July after: and now the daughter in the moneth of Ianuary followed her parentes in the same Martyrdome.¹

Foxe was not the only martyrologist of sixteenth-century England and neither were his female martyrs the only women to face persecution. In these years, Foxe had to use his text to prove that the Protestant men and women he presented in his stories were the true martyrs, not those candidates that were offered martyrdoms by his Catholic counterparts. The women portrayed in Foxe's martyrology, 'contented to runne from their husbands into...the dongion of heretickes' were prime targets for his Catholic opposition aiming to expose Protestantism as a vehicle for social disorder.²

Not every woman who gained a place in Foxe's martyrology was executed for her beliefs during the Marian persecution, but no woman's story was safe from being attacked by Foxe's Catholic adversaries, such as Robert Parsons and Thomas Harding. Every female martyr, as a result, had to be demonstrated to have negotiated effectively her spiritual and familial obligations to the best of their ability. By studying the relationships that existed between persecuted women and their family members, this thesis sheds light on how the language of female duty, both to God and to their household, could be used to enhance women's position as martyrs in Foxe's book. This demonstrates that female martyrs need

¹ This example of families suffering together for Protestantism is taken from the account of Joan Lashford in John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes of thynges passed in euery kynges tyme in this realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2030.

² Miles Huggarde, *Displaying of Protestantess* (London, 1556) STC 13558, p.75.

to be considered in a wider spiritual context, where women's pieties and spiritual values started to operate separately from, and frequently could be stronger than, their male relatives during the reformation period.

At first glance, the women willing to face death rather than conform to the official religion of Catholicism in Mary Tudor's England represent every aspect of what the ideal Tudor woman should not be. They were vociferous in their rejection of Catholic teachings, especially the Sacrament of the Altar, disobedient to the husbands who attempted to force them to go to Church, denounced the authority of those in power, even in some cases that of the monarch, and had the knowledge to understand complex theological concepts without the benefit of having access to education and despite their limited literacy. Despite this, Foxe, as the most prominent English martyrological writer, was able to mould these unconventional and radical women into an alternative vision of the ideal. A large part of how Foxe managed to do this relied on him being able to prove that these women did not choose the path to martyrdom but were predestined to it. They were good and godly mothers, daughters, sisters and wives. These women, Foxe argued, did not want to sacrifice their families. In the words of one of Foxe's most famous martyrs, Agnes Prest: '[s]o long as she was at libertie, she refused not neither husband, nor children'.³ In this light, the framework of the family was used to enhance and legitimise the martyrdom of otherwise ordinary Marian Protestant women.

This thesis focuses on a selection of the women who were persecuted for their Protestant beliefs during the Catholic years of the 1550s. Not all of these women died for their faith but all were connected by their differing constructions as wife or mother in Foxe's martyrology and other works, such as Thomas Brice's poetic martyrology, *Briefe Register*, and Robert Parson's seventeenth-century Catholic critique of Foxe's work.⁴ The stories of these women show that their families could either help or hinder their aspirations to martyrdom in ways which have not previously been considered. Just as family members could effect a wife or mother's journey to martyrdom, a woman's devotion to a reformist faith could heavily impact upon the welfare, reputation, aspirations and identities of her spouse and children.

³ Foxe (1570), p.2249.

⁴ Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise Intituled of Three Conversions of England* (St Omer, 1604) STC 19416; Thomas Brice, *A briefe register in meter containing the names and patient suffrings of the martyrs [and] members of Iesus Christ, afflicted, tormented, and cruelly burned here in England, in ye time of Q. Marie, together with the yeere, moneth, day, and place of their martyrdoms* (London, 1599) STC 3727.

Historians and Understanding Female Martyrdom in Tudor England

For much of the early 20th century, the study of martyrdom was largely overlooked. Following previous centuries, when discussion of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was dominated and overworked by writers motivated by 'confessional prejudice', the famous martyrology was disregarded as a valuable historical document.⁵ Foxe and his stories of the sufferings of Marian martyrs were not revisited until the 1960s, when his martyrology began to be appreciated as a piece of early modern literature rather than scrutinised as an accurate and factual historical document.⁶ Despite this, martyrs remained an understudied group of early modern society until the 1980s, when historians began to consider how the stories of martyrs were more representative of larger trends in society than previously considered. Works such as those by Ellen Macek and Retha Warnicke started to use the female martyrs presented in Foxe's accounts to analyse gender and gender roles in sixteenth-century England.⁷ More recently, historians such as Susannah Brietz Monta and Megan Hickerson have begun to consider how the gendered constraints placed upon women in society informed the shaping of Foxe's female martyrs. By drawing together methods of three historiographies- the English Reformation, the role of women and the family- this thesis demonstrates how the stories of martyrs, particularly of female martyrs, can be used to analyse much more than the phenomenon of martyrdom.

The position of women in martyrologies of the Tudor era has attracted rising historical attention in the past decade. These Protestant women were exceptional characters both as women and as martyrs. This is because whilst these women were venerated in the Tudor period, the ideals of martyrdom clashed with the traditional values associated with womanhood. The main debate within the historiography of female martyrdom is how women qualified and could be accepted as martyrs. The two main arguments put forward

⁵ Thomas S. Freeman, 'Over their Dead Bodies: Concepts of Martyrdom in Late Medieval and Early Modern England', in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c.1400-1700* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp.1-34 (p.4).

⁶ For more information on the developments to the historiography of early modern martyrdom during the 1960s, see Patrick Collinson, 'Truth, Lies, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century Protestant Historiography', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.37-68. Collinson credits this shift in opinion to viewing Foxe's work as a literary accomplishment to Helen White and William Haller's works. See Helen C. White, *Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963) and William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963).

⁷ See Ellen Macek, 'The Emergence of a Feminine Spirituality in the Book of Martyrs', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 63-80; Retha M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983).

by historians such as Megan Hickerson and Susannah Brietz Monta to address this contradiction are the martyrologists' role in legitimising feminine disobedience.⁸ Megan Hickerson was the first to devote a book to the consideration of the characterisation of the female martyr represented in Foxe's famous Elizabethan martyrology. Hickerson has extensively examined how the disobedience of female martyrs was constructed by their martyrologist, noting the significance of Foxe choosing to make these unruly, unconventional women into God's witnesses.

For Monta, the exceptionality of female martyrs lay not just in their justifiable disobedience of patriarchal and political authority to burn for their faith but in defying early modern stereotypes of women as the weaker sex. Martyrdom in the early modern period, as Brad Gregory has theorised, was inseparable from the notion of extreme suffering and a willingness to endure a horrifying death (usually by being burnt at the stake) in preference to renouncing one's religious beliefs.⁹ In the light of this, the fact that a woman, believed to be physically, mentally, and spiritually weaker than man, could endure such a punishment defied early modern convention. Monta coined the 'strength within weakness' paradigm to explain how Foxe attempted to prove that his female martyrs were legitimate.¹⁰ This technique involved Foxe emphasising these women's weakness and ignorance in order to argue that without God's providence these individuals could not have endured the pain and suffering of persecution.¹¹

Monta and Hickerson's influential arguments concerning female martyrs mainly focus on how women's defiance of patriarchal authority could be justified. In this thesis, I further this argument to show how martyred women were portrayed in Foxe's work in their attempt to resist diverting the authority of their husbands until they had to choose between their allegiance to God and spouse. In addition to asking how female martyrs defied

⁸ See Megan L. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Megan L. Hickerson, 'Gospelling Sisters "Going Up and Downe": John Foxe and Disorderly Women', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35(2004), 1035-51; Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Susannah Brietz Monta, 'Foxe's Female Martyrs and the Sanctity of Transgression', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 25(2001), 3-22.

⁹ Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.97.

¹⁰ Monta, 'Foxe's Female Martyrs', p.5. For further information on the 'strength within weakness' paradigm see, Steven Mullaney, 'Reforming Resistance: Class, Gender, and Legitimacy in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', in Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol, *Print, Manuscript and Performance: the Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2000), pp.235-251 especially p.243. Although Monta first coined the phrase to describe the phenomenon, it was Mullaney who first presented this argument, which Monta later expanded upon in her work a year after the publication of Mullaney's chapter as Monta discussed in 'Foxe's Female Martyrs', p.5.

¹¹ Monta, 'Foxe's Female Martyrs', pp.4-5.

gender conventions in disobeying their husbands, it is equally significant to explore how these women tried to avoid challenging their husband's patriarchal authority in order to be seen as a good wife. Too often, disobedience is treated by historians as the principle defining characteristic of the female martyr both in England and on the continent. For example, Nikki Shepardson, writing about French Huguenot women in Jean Crespin's martyrology, argued that '[m]artyrdom is the ultimate social disobedience' because a martyr defines the self by the responsibility she owes to God rather than to the 'temporal world'.¹² Whilst important, this argument leads to the neglect of other aspects of persecuted women's characters and roles. These women were not just martyrs but wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. They were aware, in the majority of cases, of the impact their actions might have on their families and felt a responsibility to mitigate these consequences to the best of their abilities. The female martyr, as moulded by Foxe, was not content simply to defy all order and shun all familial relationships and responsibilities to achieve martyrdom. Female martyrs had to be shown to negotiate carefully their spiritual and familial roles in order to be legitimately granted a martyrdom.

Analysis of martyrdom and the family is still a vastly neglected area of historical research. Andrew Penny (1996) was the first to highlight the importance of using Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* to gain an insight into the workings of the early modern family.¹³ Penny argues this is largely because the men and women represented in Foxe's work were ordinary despite their extreme devotion to Protestantism.¹⁴ The majority of those who were persecuted during the Tudor period, especially during Mary I's reign, were of the lower and middling sorts of society that were not regularly featured in printed works from this period. Foxe's martyrs were not perfect spouses or parents in the traditional sense but they were in terms of godliness. This requires further analysis to provide a more rounded sense of the Tudor family.

Penny's work is limited by his focus on only the families of educated, and mostly clerical, male martyrs. The analysis of women as martyrs, mothers, and wives has so far only been partially discussed in texts that have aimed to analyse women, religion and the family more broadly, such as those by Alexandra Walsham and Susan Wabuda. Both Walsham and Wabuda have highlighted the importance of seeing female martyrdom as part of a

¹² Nikki Shepardson, 'Gender and the Rhetoric of Martyrdom in Jean Crespin's "Histoire des vrays tesmoins"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35 (2004), 155-70 (p.157).

¹³ D. Andrew Penny, 'Family Matters and Foxe's Acts and Monuments', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 599-618.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.600-601.

trend where, in the midst of the religious upheaval incurred by the reformation, female spirituality started to become more pronounced.¹⁵ Walsham, in particular, has emphasised how much more common religiously divided households were than has been previously thought; husbands and wives could differ both in their religious stance and the intensity of their respective beliefs.¹⁶ Foxe was not hesitant in defending women who appeared to be spiritually superior to their husbands. This thesis sheds light not only on how early modern households could become divided in matters of faith but it also charts the affects a wife and mother's extreme devotion to Protestantism could have on her family.

It is equally important to analyse the experience of female martyrs alongside those of other persecuted Protestant women. Thomas Freeman's ground-breaking study of female 'sustainers' demonstrated how important it was not to neglect the experiences of those Marian Protestants who 'did not die for the gospel'.¹⁷ Freeman argued that the maintenance of Protestantism, partly through assistance and support offered to those who did not survive persecution, depended on this section of the Marian Protestant community. This thesis illustrates that the achievements of female confessors should not be underestimated because Foxe included their experiences of persecution in his martyrology for a reason. Religiously devoted women had more paths open to them than those leading to martyrdom. In many ways, the stories of these women remaining strong to the faith must have been inspirational to the ordinary Tudor woman because they illustrated that she did not have to be called by God to die for her beliefs in order to be the ideal godly woman. These women managed successfully to negotiate their spiritual and familial duties to a greater extent than most martyrs.

A closer study of female martyrs and their families is greatly needed in order to gain a more detailed insight into how women in this period were defined by their domestic roles as mother, wife and daughter. These women earned the title of martyr partially through

¹⁵ Walsham and Wabuda present female martyrs in their works as being exceptions to the rule. Although both stress that female martyrs were not alone in feeling pressured to choose between their allegiance to their husbands and to God martyred women were treated very differently to normal women. Even then the extent of their religious radicalism was softened by Foxe in his martyrology. See Susan Wabuda, 'Sanctified by the believing spouse: women, men and the marital yoke in the early reformation', in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.111-28; Alexandra Walsham, 'Holy Families: the Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited', in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Religion and the Household* (Studies in Church History, v.50) (Woodbridge: For the Ecclesiastical History Society by Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp.122-60.

¹⁶ Walsham, p.134.

¹⁷ Thomas Freeman, "'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women": The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs', *The Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000), 8-33 (p.8).

being able successfully to juggle their responsibilities as Protestants, mothers and wives. The combination of their godly and familial identities was key to their construction as martyr by Foxe and others. This thesis contributes towards understanding how the family roles of women could help ensure their subsequent claims to martyrdom.

Women in Martyrologies

The Reformation signalled a break from medieval martyrological traditions for both Catholics and Protestants. Women gained more prominence in the new martyrological works that were created in Tudor England largely because familial chastity became a more honourable state than celibacy, which had traditionally been a requirement of a female martyr, making martyrdom to some extent more attainable. Martyrs were no longer treated as saints of myth and legend but real men and women who had sacrificed their lives and risked the welfare of their families for their beliefs. The most widely read early modern work to convey the stories of Tudor women willing to sacrifice all was John Foxe's (1516/17-1587) *Acts and Monuments*.¹⁸

Available in four different editions by the time of Foxe's death, and five more editions between 1587 and 1684- copies of which were installed in every Cathedral church and many other public spaces, such as taverns and parish churches by the mid-seventeenth century- Foxe's English martyrology has attracted much attention from historians. Originally patronised as a piece of propaganda by the Elizabethan government, Foxe styled the *Acts and Monuments* as not just a martyrology, but a history of the 'poore oppressed and persecuted Church' of Protestantism.¹⁹ He believed that by educating 'the simple flocke of Christ, especially the vnlearned sort' he could convince the English population to be Protestant, for with the correct knowledge no one would ever choose to be a Catholic.²⁰ Foxe celebrated that unlike Catholic histories of old, his would be impartial. Clearly this is not the case. Foxe was as much a historian as editor. All of the martyrs in his work were carefully constructed, their examinations and executions dramatized. Details relating to them were frequently changed, added or omitted, as can be seen by comparing the editions published during his lifetime.²¹

¹⁸ For details of Foxe's life and works see, Thomas S. Freeman, 'Foxe, John (1516/17–1587)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10050>> [accessed 10 April 2016]

¹⁹ Foxe (1570), p.iii.

²⁰ Foxe (1570), p.ii.

²¹ John King has noted that Foxe's vernacular text ballooned from 1.8 to 3.8 million words as it went through four editions between 1563 and 1583. Each of these editions, King argues, was significantly

Foxe's martyrology is more than just a compilation of stories detailing the fates of hundreds of Protestant men and women. It can also be used to give an insight into how martyrs' families, especially under Marian rule, were impacted upon by the persecution of their mothers, daughters, sisters and wives. In some light, Foxe's great book of martyrs was more accessible to the ordinary woman than the most popular family manuals of the day, many of which shared the same sentiments of Foxe's work, such as Henry Smith's *Preparative to Marriage* (1561).²² This highlights the significance of analysing Foxe's work in conjunction with different types of literature, such as early modern family manuals, to gain a better insight into the attitudes surrounding women's roles.²³

Other works are similarly useful for gauging the impact persecution could have upon families of persecuted women and how families could support or hinder a woman's sacrificial obligations to God. Male and female martyrs were chosen for martyrdom, they did not choose this destiny for themselves. Henry Bull's compilation of letters of martyred men to their supporters, friends and family highlighted that not all godly women, in this case female relatives of male martyrs, felt themselves called to be martyrs.²⁴ Not all women who were celebrated in Foxe's book, as has often been neglected, were martyrs. Nonetheless they were just as godly and worthy to be admired by his readers in the martyrologists' eyes. Thomas Brice's martyrological ballad only listed the names of women and men burnt at the stake during Mary's reign, but where familial links could be made between individual martyrs they were.²⁵ In all of these Protestant works, female

different from the others because each contained unique material and deletions. See, John N. King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp.1-3. Freeman's article also explains why historians must use the original versions of Foxe's source, instead of the Victorian reproductions or abridgements of his work, and the benefits of using all four editions in conjunction: Thomas Freeman, 'Texts, Lies, and Microfilm: Reading and Misreading Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30 (1999), 23-46.

²² Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Mar[r]iage* (London, 1561) STC 22686.

²³ To learn more about how Foxe's martyrology must not be viewed as a static or culturally isolated piece of work see, Steven Mullaney, 'Reforming Resistance: Class, Gender, and Legitimacy in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', in Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (eds), *Print, Manuscript and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2000), pp.235-251, in particular pp.237-39. Mullaney remarks that Foxe's work was so extensively written, rewritten and widely disseminated during the martyrologists lifetime that his work was 'not so much the product as the ongoing *production* of the English Reformation' (p.39).

²⁴ Henry Bull and Miles Coverdale, *Certain Most Godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true saintes and holy martyrs of God* (1564) STC 5886. Although officially this text is credited to Miles Coverdale, Susan Wabuda has conducted extensive research to reveal that Henry Bull was 'the real editor of Coverdale's *Certain most godly letters*'. See Susan Wabuda, 'Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale, and the Making of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', in Diana Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and Martyrologies: Studies in Church History 030* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp.245-58 (p.252).

²⁵ Thomas Brice, *A briefe register in meter containing the names and patient sufferings of the martyrs [and] members of Iesus Christ, afflicted, tormented, and cruelly burned here in England, in ye time of Q. Marie, together with the yeere, moneth, day, and place of their martyrdoms* (London, 1599) STC 3727.

martyrs would be referred to as wife, mother or matron interchangeably as bywords for women. This emphasises how pivotal the domestic responsibilities of women were, even to martyrs, and thereby the necessity for them to be analysed in this thesis.

Catholic texts are just as important to engage with in order to determine just how easily family roles of women could be used both to enhance and undermine the legitimacy of a woman's martyrdom. Marian propaganda, such as Miles Huggarde's *Displaying of Protestantess* printed in 1566 before Foxe's first English martyrology, was in part, aimed to deter any woman from being motivated to pursue or tempt others to martyrdom.²⁶ For Huggarde, female martyrs were the new Eves of the sixteenth century. Other critiques were direct responses to Foxe's stories. Thomas Harding picked apart Foxe's rendition of the Guernsey martyrs and the fate of the pregnant Perotine Massey.²⁷ At the turn of the seventeenth century, Robert Parsons devoted three volumes to critiquing fiercely Foxe's whole work and denouncing his ability as a historian decades after Foxe's death.²⁸ Foxe was in many cases aware of the criticism his work would receive from his opponents because in notable places of his work this potential criticism was clearly carefully considered in the construction of his female martyrs.

In Foxe's martyrology women, conventionally held to be spiritually, physically and mentally weaker than men, were prime targets of such Catholic denunciation. These women were not to be venerated but villainised by their anti-martyrologists. How these writers used the language of family roles and relationships is greatly revealing, especially when noting the radicalism of the construction of Foxe's female martyrs. These women usurped and challenged the integrity of the household structure. Yet influential family manuals such as Heinrich Bullinger's *Christen State of Matrimonye* (1541) and Gouge's seventeenth-century *Domesticall Duties* echoed Foxe's sentiments, which allowed for women to object to the authority of an 'idolatrous or profane husband'.²⁹

The women in Foxe's great martyrology were disobedient, vociferous, and generally unconventional female characters for their time period, but they were popular and inspiring godly figures. By analysing the representation of these women's family bonds

²⁶ Miles Huggarde, *Displaying of Protestantess* (London, 1566) STC 13558.

²⁷ See Thomas Harding, *A reiindre to M. Iewels replie against the sacrifice of the Masse* (Louvain, 1567), STC 12761; for a biography of Harding see, L. E. C. Wooding, 'Harding, Thomas (1516–1572)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12264>> [accessed 10 April 2016].

²⁸ Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise Intituled of Three Conversions of England* (St Omer, 1604) STC 19416.

²⁹ Gouge, p.328.

in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* alongside martyr's letters, family advice manuals, anti-martyrologies and Catholic martyrologies, a broader picture can be built of what it meant for women to be martyred during this period. This is seen not just in terms of the literary shaping of their own legacies but also in the impact their sacrifice was shown to have in moulding the religious identities of their spouses and children.

Persecuted Women and their Families: Thesis Structure

This thesis explores how female martyrs were shaped into ideal mothers, wives, daughters and sisters in order to make their martyrdom appear more legitimate. The extreme devotion of a female relative to a persecuted branch of Christianity could have great repercussions for her family members. Persecution of a wife and mother could have both positive and negative effects on their spouse and their offspring. As this thesis shows, the shaping of female martyrs' family members could be just as important as the construction of the women themselves in Foxe's stories.

Chapter one examines how the identity of each female martyr was carefully shaped by Foxe and why this careful editing process was necessary. In recent decades, the importance of scrutinising the accuracy of Foxe's accounts has waned to be replaced with a preference for understanding the meaning behind the characterisations of the martyrs. The very fact that Foxe believed that these unruly women could be made into role models demonstrates more widely that women's religiosity was not to be sacrificed or undermined by their obligations as obedient wife or daughter in Reformation England. Female martyrs, despite their challenging of social norms and patriarchal order, were represented by Foxe as aspirational and godly wives and daughters. The reputation of female martyrs was often targeted by Foxe's Catholic critics in an attempt to vilify Protestantism as a religion that allowed female temptresses to invert social order either by seducing men to convert or defying their patriarchal authority if they stayed true to Catholicism. As a result, it was important for Foxe to provide evidence that these women were not motivated by social discontent but were endorsed by God. Part of Foxe's tactic to combat this sexualised criticism was to contain female radicalism within the household. Good wives would not choose to disobey their husbands unless called to do so by God.

No Protestant woman was invulnerable, irrespective of whether she died next to her husband at the stake or was persecuted because of the words of her conformist husband, to being attacked by Catholic polemics, such as those by Robert Parsons and Miles

Huggarde.³⁰ However, the reputations of husbands who failed to protect their wives, or even encouraged the wrath of the authorities to fall upon them, were vilified by Foxe. In Chapter two, I illustrate that it was just as important for Foxe to shape the characters of female martyrs' husbands as those of his martyred women. In an effort to defeat the Catholic accusations that female martyrs were fundamentally bad wives, Foxe attempted to justify the actions of these women by arguing that they were good wives who were tied to bad husbands. In short, a wife's spiritual welfare could legitimately be prioritised over her earthly obligations to her husband. Nonetheless, it was not always necessary for a woman to sacrifice her life in order to prove her steadfast commitment to Protestantism. By analysing the experiences of martyrs against those of confessors a new insight emerges into assessing the different routes godly women could take in Marian England in order successfully to juggle their familial and religious responsibilities.

The third chapter considers how children could be affected by a mother's willingness to sacrifice her life for her beliefs. The consequences of a mother's martyrdom on her children could be profound, especially on children of dependent age. The presence of children in martyrologies has become a topic of historical debate within the last decade.³¹ Children's identities could be greatly influenced by the persecution of a loved one. For Foxe, the emotive values of stories concerning children losing parents, daughters and sons following in the footsteps of older relatives, and pregnant women being consumed in the fire were indispensable in vilifying the actions of Catholic authorities as unlawful and purposefully cruel. Added to this, hints of the parentage and upbringing of female martyrs offered in Foxe's stories are incredibly useful when determining how women grew so radicalised that they were prepared to sacrifice all for their beliefs. The stories also give a previously unconsidered insight into sibling bonds and relationships in early modern England. Benefitting from similar upbringings, siblings, particularly in the cases of brothers of female martyrs, could offer a vital support network to persecuted women.

Foxe's main goal was to enhance a woman's reputation in order to convince his reader that they were all the more worthy to be martyred and admired. Analysing the presence of family members in these women's tales of persecution highlights the necessity of

³⁰ For biographies of these two Catholic writers see, Victor Houlston, 'Persons [Parsons], Robert (1546–1610)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21474>> [accessed 10 April 2016]; C. Bradshaw, 'Huggarde, Miles (fl. 1533–1557)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14049>> [accessed 10 April 2016].

³¹ For more information on this see: Sarah Covington, 'Spared not from Tribulation': Children in Early Modern Martyrologies', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 97 (2006), 165–83.

female martyrs to be the perfect wives and mothers during their earthly lives. This is further demonstrated by attempting to calculate the impact of a mother's extreme devotion to the reformist faith on her offspring and by examining how children, as well as husbands, could help or hinder a woman's ability to be accepted as a Protestant martyr. Before these themes are considered further, it is essential to determine how great a hand Foxe and others had in moulding the personality, lives and families of female martyrs in key Protestant and Catholic works of the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.

CHAPTER ONE

MOULDING THE EARLY MODERN FEMALE MARTYR: GENDER, FAMILY AND THE MARTYROLOGIST

In whose suff[e]ring, their constancy worthely was to be wondered at, who being so simple women so manfully stode ... continuing in the torment of fyre, they held up their hands and called unto God constantly, so long as the fyre did endure.

John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2072.

In the first four editions of his famous martyrology, *The Acts and Monuments*, to be published during his lifetime John Foxe included the stories of 57 Protestant women who were burnt at the stake during the six-year Catholic reign of Mary Tudor. Added to these stories of women dying at the stake in the name of the Protestant faith were Foxe's tales of many women who suffered the consequences of persecution during these years, but escaped the death sentence for heresy. The factual accuracy of these accounts has been extensively covered by multiple historians.¹ The focus here, however, is not the accuracy of Foxe's stories of Tudor women's various paths to martyrdom but how Foxe and other prominent contemporary martyrologists and anti-martyrologists, representing both Protestants and Catholics, shaped the women described in their various works.

Female martyrs had to transgress the gendered roles traditionally prescribed to them in order to stand witness for God. This ultimately provided celestial justification for their earthly disobedience but it would be dangerous for any Tudor writer to present the disobedient woman as the ideal. The ideal woman was believed to be, above all else, silent and obedient. Martyrs, however, had to be vociferous in their rejection of heresy and to rebel against it. Martyrdom required the claimant to be disobedient, a state of being that produced great fear for early modern society which prized and venerated social order especially amongst those believed to be the most vulnerable to the temptations of the

¹ For three well-regarded examples of the debates surrounding the accuracy of Foxe's representations of the persecution of Tudor martyrs in his writings see 'Truth and Legend: The Veracity of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs' in Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), chapter 6, pp.151-78; Thomas S. Freeman, 'Fate, Faction, Fiction in Foxe's Book of Martyrs' *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 601-23; John King, 'Fiction and Fact in Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in David Loades (ed), *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp.12-35.

devil: women. As a result the character of the executed female Protestant had to be carefully moulded by the male martyrologist to uphold the traditional feminine values afforded to women in sixteenth-century England, and legitimately to push the boundaries of gendered norms just enough so that the ideal woman could be the ideal martyr.

As will be evidenced in this thesis, in this respect, Foxe managed to enhance the reputation of the female martyr by emphasising her dedication to both God and her family in order to justify her martyrdom.

Conflicting Expectations of a Martyr, Wife and Mother

A prominent gap in the current historiography surrounding the phenomenon of martyrdom in the early modern age is the exploration into how the pursuit of martyrdom could affect the family of a man or, especially, woman. Protestant women of the Marian era had to have a willingness to die in order for martyrdom to be a possible and achievable concept for them.² Little regard has been afforded to the men, women and children related to those wishing to make this extreme sacrifice. Stemming from this is the issue of how a woman could justify her loss of life if she had godly-ordained obligations to care for her children and be obedient to her husband in all matters. If this matter could not be made legitimate, martyrdom would still be unachievable for that woman. By looking into the instructions given by contemporary conduct books for women, advice given to women in letters penned by fellow male martyrs and the language used by both the martyrologist and the examiners of these women surrounding their persecution and character, it will be shown how these women could achieve the ultimate spiritual accolade with thought given to their families.

In a 1556 Catholic polemic justifying the persecution of Protestants that was being conducted at the same time that this work was written and published, Miles Huggarde complained of ‘a number [of women that] are contented to runne from their husbandes into... the dongion of heretickes’.³ Huggarde continued to mock Protestantism in his propagandist writing by showing how the reformist religion could be used as a tool for these ‘curious’ women to overstep their traditional roles, control their husbands and bring chaos to society as a result of their ungodly ambition and contempt of the social

² Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.97, p.101.

³ Miles Huggarde, *Displying of Protestantes* (London, 1556) STC 13558, p.75.

restrictions placed upon them.⁴ Huggarde's work was written to act as a warning to all those tempted to or sympathetic to the Protestant cause; he argued within it that Protestantism was a religion that was a means for the devil to destabilise and threaten the good working order of Tudor society.

Despite this, Catholics and Protestants alike both asserted within popular family advice manuals of the early modern era that a wife's disobedience to her husband could be perfectly justified, although the last resort, if her husband was a heretic and was interfering with her duties to God. As spiritual equals in the eyes of Protestants, women 'though they be weak vessells', as the Calvinist and Church of England clergyman John Dove argued, 'they [are] heirs of the kingdome of heauen as well as their husbands'.⁵ Women's duties to God must be prioritised so that 'they might be saued'.⁶

Of these advice books it was perhaps the work of Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives that was the most influential in setting a precedent that allowed for wifely disobedience in the name of religion. Originally commissioned by the first wife of Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, for their daughter Mary, Richard Hyrde's translation of *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae* went through nine English editions between the years 1529 to 1592.⁷ In it, Vives argued that despite there being 'no doubt but a woman obey her husbandes commandement/ as a devine law' that '[f]or those thynges that be agaynst the lawes of god/ she ought nat to do/though her husbande co[m]mande her.'⁸ Despite Vives' work being undeniably Catholic in its outlook, future notable Protestant guide books shared common themes.

A key debate of familial literature of the sixteenth-century was summed up in Henry Smith's Protestant *Preparative of Mar[r]iage* (1561) as '[h]ow far the wife should obey'.⁹ For Smith, wives should as St Paul taught 'submit your sleues unto your husbands as to the lord' but only if he 'co[m]mandeth...that which is good & right'.¹⁰ Wifely obedience, Smith instructed, should not be given blind and was not without its limits. Smith termed

⁴ Ibid, pp.75-78.

⁵ John Dove, *Of Divorcement: A Sermon preached at Pauls Cross* (London, 1601) STC (2nd ed) 7083, pp.60-61.

⁶ Ibid, p.61.

⁷ Susan Wabuda, 'Sanctified by the Believing Spouse: Women, Men and the Marital Yoke in the Early Reformation', in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.111-28 (p.116).

⁸ Juan Luis Vives, *A Very Frutefull and Pleasant Boke Called the Instruction of A Christen Woman*, trans. by Richard Hyrde (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1529) STC (2nd ed) 24856, pp.96-7.

⁹ Henry Smith, *A Preparative for Mar[r]iage* (London, 1561) STC (2nd ed) 22686, pp.65-6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

this concept ‘acceptable obedie[n]ce’ and mirrored Vives argument in stressing that if a husband ordered his wife to commit an act that went against God’s teachings, ‘she doth not obey him as the Lord, but as the te[m]pter’.¹¹ This debate progressed well into the seventeenth century, as illustrated in the third treatise in William Gouge’s advice manual entitled ‘Duties of Wives’ (1622).¹² Gouge built upon the arguments of Vives and Smith in asserting that if a husband forbid his wife to attend Anglican Church, to pray in English, ‘to read the word’, or ‘to teach her children the principles of religion’ then she must disobey him to protect her own salvation and to uphold the teachings of God.¹³

Family manuals penned by English Catholics after the Reformation echoed the same message regarding necessary wifely disobedience. Catholic Henry Garnet wrote of the marriage contract between husband and wife, and God and woman. He argued that the contract between God and woman must always take precedence over that between herself and her husband. Garnet used the analogy of the marital bed to illustrate his argument. A woman would be justly reprimanded by her husband if she ‘dishonour their bed’.¹⁴ Despite this, however ‘filthy’ the ‘crime of fornication’, no vice was greater than ‘spiritual fornication’ for which the wife along with her husband would suffer the ‘euerlasting fyre’ in hell for, if committed.¹⁵ Garnet argued that any woman should dishonour her husband before she dishonoured her duties to God. Just as she was loyal to her husband she must remain absolutely loyal to, in this case, Catholicism with the careful distinction that should ever the two loyalties come into competition with one another, her loyalty to God must always win even if it meant disobeying her husband. Laying with a heretic was, if Garnet’s analogy of the marital bed is to be deconstructed, far worse a crime than committing adultery.

This sentiment was reflected by the examination narratives of Foxe’s martyrs. For example, Bishop Hopton, when interrogating Peter and Anne Moon, argued that Moon’s wife would have a better conscience if she rather than committing heresy had instead ‘geuen the use of thy body vnto xx. sondry men’.¹⁶ The underlying message of the advice given by Protestant Smith and Catholic Garnet is the same: a woman’s duty to God must

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), STC (2nd ed.) 12119, pp.325-9.

¹³ Ibid, p.328.

¹⁴ Henry Garnet, *A Treatise of C[hristian Renunciation* (1593) STC (2nd ed.) 11617.8, p.145.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ John Foxe *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes of thynges passed in euery kynges tyme in this realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2125.

always take priority over a woman's duty to her husband. Following this, disobeying the orders of a heretical husband was legitimate. These examples are important when regarding the decision of female martyrs to defend their religion, disobey their husbands, and risk their lives in the process. For Garnet and Smith, obeying a heretical husband was a worse crime than breaking the marital contract. If the early modern woman obeyed a heretical husband she risked her salvation to the extent, as Garnet defined it, of enduring the 'euerlasting fyre' of Hell.¹⁷ If she disobeyed her heretical husband the worst punishment the wife could endure was being burnt at the stake, a horrific death but an event that paled into insignificance when faced with the prospect of enduring that pain eternally in the afterlife. Therefore, the disobedience martyrdom necessitated was justifiable, theoretically, for the early modern woman.

Protestant family manuals and martyrological literature were closely linked in the Reformation age. This was because martyrologists borrowed key concepts on proper female, more specifically wifely, conduct in order to shelter the actions of their disobedient martyrs from criticism. Foxe was not the first English Protestant writer to do this. John Bale set this precedent in the 1540s when he printed the examination narratives of John Oldcastle, William Thorpe and most famously Anne Askew. For instance, in the second examination of Askew, Bale's language very closely echoed that used in Miles Coverdale's English translation of Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger's family manual which was printed four years prior.¹⁸ Both Bullinger and Bale asserted that a 'sister is not in subjection' to an 'vnbeleuyng husbande'.¹⁹

The family could hinder a woman on her route to martyrdom. Andrew Penny argued that Foxe's work demonstrated that the loved ones of a martyr could interfere with a person's spiritual life and this was to be prevented at all costs.²⁰ This neglects the fact that the act of juggling spiritual and familial responsibilities actually enhanced the cause of a woman on route to martyrdom.

Foxe moulded his female martyrs so that there was no hint, in any of his stories, that they had pursued their chosen path for any reason other than that they had felt called by God

¹⁷ Garnet, p.145.

¹⁸ Heinrich Bullinger, *The Christen State of Matrimonye*, trans. by Miles Coverdale (Antwerp, 1541) STC 4045.

¹⁹ Anne Askew and John Bale, *The lattre examinacyon of Anne Askew lately martyred in Smythefelde, by the wycked Snyagoge of Antichrist, with the Eluydacyon of Iohan Bale* (1546) STC 848, p.16; Bullinger, p.7.

²⁰ Andrew D. Penny, 'Family Matters and Foxe's Acts and Monuments', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 599-618 (p.617).

to do so. These women had not chosen to sacrifice their family's welfare but had done so because they had to. This distinction is very important. Huggarde, the Marian Catholic propagandist, argued that Protestantism was used as a tool by ambitious women keen to free themselves from the social and religious constraints of society.²¹ It was Foxe's responsibility, therefore, to disprove this; to argue that these women had not only pursued martyrdom because they had been providentially chosen to do so but that these 'simple women' could not have acted in such a way without God's providence.²² As he noted in the margin of his account of two women, Agnes Potten and Joan Trunchfield, who were executed in Ipswich, Suffolk, such women were evidence of '[t]he strength of God in weake vessels'.²³ There was no other feasible explanation for how a wife of a shoemaker and a brewer's wife could have 'so manfully stode to the confession and testimony of God's word and verity'.²⁴ This argument was very important to Foxe's work for it did not just prove the validity of these women's claim to martyrdom but it demonstrated that Protestantism must be the true faith, for these otherwise unremarkable women of the lower sorts of society would not have been able to stand witness.

Exceptional Women and Martyrs: Shaping the Intransigent Protestant Woman

The women, and men, represented in the Protestant martyrologies of the Elizabethan age were remarkably ordinary. Foxe was enthusiastic, in all the editions of his great book, to stress the humble origins of his martyrs. The women were noted to be the wives of worsted-weavers, brewers and shoemakers; the daughters of rope-makers, barbers and cutlers; or they themselves were employed as spinners, seamstresses and servants. Foxe used the lowly origins of these martyrs to his advantage. Susannah Monta has argued that Foxe emphasised the lack of social status of his martyrs to force his readers to conclude that only God could have inspired such 'constancy and zeal' in such 'unremarkable' people.²⁵ As Rose Allin, a Protestant burnt beside her mother and step-father, told her inquisitor, Tyrell, when speaking of how she would be able to withstand the pain of persecution: 'if he call me to it, he will enable me to beare it'.²⁶ Allin, as portrayed in this extract, was only able to withstand the pain of persecution because she believed God

²¹ Huggarde, pp.75-8.

²² Foxe (1570), p.2072.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Susannah Brietz Monta, 'Foxe's Female Martyrs and the Sanctity of Transgression', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 25(2001), 3-22 (p.5).

²⁶ Foxe (1570), p.2199.

gave her the strength to do so. Without this divine intervention, Allin would have been an ordinary Tudor woman.

Foxe was aware that the gender and social standing of many of his martyrs would trigger criticism of his work by those who regarded ordinary people, and especially women, inadequate to receive the accolade of martyrdom. Foxe's martyrs were exceptional because they were so ordinary. This is just one of the reasons why his martyrology is considered to be the most successful English martyrology of the modern age because the readers of his work, which was displayed in all Cathedral churches in the Elizabethan age, could identify more with the men and women in Foxe's stories because of their similar social standing.²⁷ This was where part of the appeal of Foxe's stories lay.

Under debate in the Reformation period within and between various forms of Christian faiths was whether those of the lower social orders were eligible to be martyrs. Jesuits such as Robert Parsons argued that laymen and women did not possess the spiritual understanding necessary to be a martyr and only clergymen could possibly achieve such a status. For Parsons, the idea that uneducated women, forbidden to even preach, could obtain martyrdom was absurd and deplorable because he argued that they could not possibly fully understand the tenets of the religion for which they were dying.²⁸ Parson's argument further allowed him to discredit Foxe's work by suggesting that irrespective of religion, the majority of Foxe's martyrs did not deserve such a status.

As has been previously observed, Huggarde thought Protestant women of the Marian period were not risking their lives for matters of scripture but because they were discontented with the constraints placed upon them by society and the church: 'these hote soules are so fervent in spirite, that because they may not preache, they are co[n]tented to burne'.²⁹ However, not all Catholics followed this line of argument.

Biographer and hagiographer John Mush dedicated a whole work, first published in the early seventeenth century, to telling the life story of the Elizabethan Catholic martyr Margaret Clitherow and her journey to martyrdom.³⁰ Clitherow was a butcher's wife from

²⁷ The upper house of convocation at Canterbury ordered, in 1571, that a copy of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* should be placed in every Cathedral church. For more on this act see, Carole Levin, 'Women in *The Book of Martyrs* as Models of Behavior in Tudor England', *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 4(1981), 196-207 (p.196).

²⁸ Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise Intituled of Three Conversions of England* (St Omer, 1604) STC 19416, pp.224-8.

²⁹ Huggarde, p.78.

³⁰ John Mush, 'A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow', in John Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, series 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), pp.131-440.

York who was pressed to death on 25 March 1586 because she refused to plead despite solid evidence presented that she had been housing several priests in her family home.³¹ Catholic priest John Gerard dedicated several pages of his own autobiography to his friend Anne Line who was housekeeper of his safe-house for seminary priests hiding in England during the Protestant reign of Elizabeth.³² In these pages Gerard expressed his admiration for Anne Line who had been ostracised from her family when she and her husband, Roger Line, had converted to Catholicism.³³ Gerard noted her joyfulness when she eventually received the news of her death sentence despite being gravely ill and ‘so weak she had to be carried to the court in a chair’ in the latter years of her life.³⁴ Line was hanged on 27 February 1601 on the charge of harbouring priests.³⁵ For Catholics, the issue of who martyrs could be was greatly contentious.

Within Protestantism, as reflected by various pieces of Tudor martyrological literature, there was a greater consensus. Protestants believed that women were capable of martyrdom. This owed much to the character of Protestantism as a religion. Men and women were theoretically deemed spiritually equal in the eyes of God, irrespective of gender or social standing.³⁶ The most widely-read English Protestant martyrologies of the

John Mush’s autobiography of Margaret Clitherow was first published in 1619 as *An Abstracte of the Life and Martirdome of Mistres[s] Margaret Clitherowe*. This edition of his work was abridged and the most complete version of Mush’s ‘Trew Reporte of the Lyfe and Marterdome of Margarete Clitherowe’ was not printed until the nineteenth-century. For more on the publication details of Mush’s martyrology see, Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Margaret Clitherow, Catholic Nonconformity, Martyrology and the Politics of Religious Change in Elizabethan England’, *Past & Present*, 185 (2004), 43-90 (p.43).

³¹ For more on Margaret Clitherow and her biographer John Mush see, Claire Cross, ‘An Elizabethan Martyrologist and his Martyr: John Mush and Margaret Clitherow’, in Diana Wood, *Martyrs and Martyrologies* (1993), pp.271-281; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, pp.43-90; and Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community 1535-1603* (2002). Chapter 6 of Dillon’s monologue entitled ‘A trewe report of the li[fe] and marterdome of Mrs. Margaret Clitherow’, pp.277-322 is particularly useful.

³² John Gerard, *Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*, trans. by Philip Caraman (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), pp.100-106, p.105, pp.171-77. Gerard’s early seventeenth-century work was not translated, in full, from Latin into English until this 1952 version. It has been previously translated by Father John Morris, for the first time in 1881, but Morris omitted passages either considered indecent or that referred to ongoing debates and conflicts within the Catholic Church. Gerard’s autobiography was his own account of the eighteen years he lived in England and included the stories of other recusant men and women he met whilst in hiding, such as widowed martyr Anne Line.

³³ *Ibid*, pp.101-3.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.104-5.

³⁵ Relatively little is known about Anne Line other than the information that Gerard’s autobiography provides. As such there is a lack of detailed secondary scholarship surrounding her life and execution. For more information on Anne Line see, Martin Dodwell, ‘Revisiting Anne Line: Who Was She and Where did She Come From?’, *Recusant History*, 31(2013), 375-390.

³⁶ For more on the position of women and men in early modern society, particularly within marital relationships see Susan Wabuda, ‘Sanctified by the believing spouse: women, men and the marital yoke in the early reformation’, in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.111-28.

sixteenth-century, penned by John Bale, John Foxe and Thomas Brice, all claimed martyrdom for various laymen and women from antiquity to the sixteenth-century.³⁷ Perhaps it was an easier task for Catholic polemicists to choose not to acknowledge the women who had claimed to die for their religion because there were only five English female martyrs who could be argued to lay a claim to martyrdom: the teenage nun and prophetess Elizabeth Barton, Lady Margaret Pole, butcher's wife Margaret Clitherow, Cheshire widow Margaret Ward and housekeeper Anne Line.³⁸ However, there were over ten times as many Protestant English women who had lost their lives over religion. Denying these women who had sacrificed their lives for Protestantism would have been more damaging for the Protestant cause, which emphasised that men and women were spiritual equals. In addition, Parsons' Jesuit assertion that only clergymen could obtain martyrdom conflicted with a key sentiment of Protestantism: that there were no intermediaries between laypeople and God, and clergymen had no more access to God than the average person. A more practical reason for the new religion to claim these new martyrs was that they did not have the heritage of the Catholic Church. It was of far more importance for the Protestant faction to argue why ordinary men, women, and entire families had been required to die for the new church.

Women were still problematic martyrs. They were traditionally held to be weaker spiritually, physically and mentally and, therefore, were more susceptible to heresy. Foxe did not deny their weaknesses. He used it to his advantage. As Marsha Robinson has argued, female weakness was used by Foxe to evoke Protestant dependence on God, in contrast to Catholicism's overreliance on human power.³⁹ One of the major literary tropes of Foxe's work was his vilification of the Catholic inquisitors. Both Protestants and Catholics acknowledged that persecution of heretics was necessary.⁴⁰ It was important for

³⁷ These included such works as: Anne Askew and John Bale, *The lattr examinacyon of Anne Askewe latelye martyred in Smythfelde, by the wycked Synagoge of Antichrist, with the Elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (1547), STC 850; Thomas Brice, *A briefe register in meter containing the names and patient suffrings of the martyrs [and] members of Iesus Christ, afflicted, tormented, and cruelly burned here in England, in ye time of Q. Marie, together with the yeere, moneth, day, and place of their martyrdoms* (London, 1599) STC 3727.

³⁸ For more information on these women see Appendix 2: 'Table of Post-Reformation Martyrs'. Also see Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp.149-80. For more on Elizabeth Barton see, Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.28-29. For Margaret Pole's biography see, Hazel Pierce, 'Pole, Margaret, suo jure countess of Salisbury (1473-1541)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22451>> [accessed 16 May 2016].

³⁹ Marsha S. Robinson, *Writing the Reformation: 'Actes and Monuments' and the Jacobean History Play* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.121.

⁴⁰ Gregory, p.74.

Foxe not only to shape his martyrs but to shape his villains. This was necessary because Foxe was not refuting the value of persecution in his *Book of Martyrs*, he was objecting to the nature of the Marian persecutions. He argued that they were needlessly and purposefully ‘cruell’; the Marian examiners were not defenders of their religion but ‘wicked’ criminals and ‘cruell tyrantes’.⁴¹

In the same way Catholic critics of Foxe’s writings sought to cast doubt over the reputations of Foxe’s martyred women in order to discredit the nature of Protestant teachings. Foxe questioned the nature of Catholicism by highlighting the ‘cruell and furious acte[s] of the homicide Papists’, the persecutors of Marian Protestants.⁴² The shaping of Marian persecutors to bring them into the worst light was just as essential to Foxe as his moulding of his female martyrs to highlight their best qualities. Foxe was not the only English Protestant martyrologist to use this literary tactic. Thomas Brice, in his poetic piece of Elizabethan propaganda emphasised the bravery of the Marian martyrs and their joy in facing death for God’s cause against the ‘crueltie’ of the persecutors using their ‘popish power’ to ‘put them to death’.⁴³

The plight of persecuted Protestant women and their families was a key focus of Foxe’s book of martyrs. The impact of the imprisonment or torture of not just a woman but a mother, spouse or sibling, could have far-reaching implications. As shown in chapter three, children of martyrs might be influenced by their parent’s resistance to follow the same path to martyrdom. In this light the cruelty that the Catholic examiners showed to their prisoners could work against them. In the same vein, the cruelty a heretical husband showed to his godly wife could be used by Foxe to justify a female martyr’s earthly disobedience. A wife could justifiably defy the orders of a heretical and tyrannical husband.

Alexandra Walsham has theorized this as a ‘domestic form’ of the early modern resistance theory.⁴⁴ By the sixteenth century, the resistance theory had evolved from a theory

⁴¹ Foxe (1570), pp.2199-2202.

⁴² John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (London: John Daye, 1563), STC 11222, p.1541.

⁴³ Thomas Brice, *A briefe register in meter containing the names and patient sufferings of the martyrs [and] members of Iesus Christ, afflicted, tormented, and cruelly burned here in England, in ye time of Q. Marie, together with the yeere, moneth, day, and place of their martyrdoms* (London, 1599) STC 3727, pp.7-8.

⁴⁴ Alexandra Walsham, ‘Holy Families: the Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited’, in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Religion and the Household* (Studies in Church History, v.50) (Woodbridge: For the Ecclesiastical History Society by Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp.122-60 (p.135).

maintaining that subjects had the right to resist the rule of a tyrannical, and often heretical, ruler to arguing that the power of rulers must be carefully limited and controlled.⁴⁵ This radical political theory, Walsham argues, began to be echoed within household government. Just as submissive subjects could disobey their tyrant sovereign, the dutiful wife could defy the tyrannical rule of her husband. As previously discussed, a woman's disobedience to a heretical husband was perfectly justifiable. Part of the early modern female martyr's merit was her ability to align her spiritual and familial duties to the best of her abilities. Some female martyrs, such as Katherine Allin and Margery Austoo, joined their husbands at the stake. Others, such as Joan Lashford and Rose Allin, followed their mothers to the stake. The constancy of Joan Waste's and Alice Benden's Protestantism was strengthened by the show of solidarity from their similarly minded brothers. Margery Moris was accompanied at the stake by her son whilst Katherine Knight, part of the last group of Protestants to be executed during Mary's reign, was taught the key tenets of Protestantism by her son, Robert Tynley, which she would die for.⁴⁶

The martyrdom of a female relation formed a great part of the identity of many families in the Marian era. The support of their families could help a woman greatly on her path to martyrdom. There has been extensive research on women who sacrificed their families, especially through abandonment, but the study of how devotion to a dissenting faith grew, and even flourished, within families has been neglected. Even if the willingness to die for Protestantism was not shared between family members, a martyred woman's commitment to uphold her familial responsibilities to the best of her ability was essential in enhancing her claim to martyrdom. To be the perfect martyr, a woman was required to have lived her earthly life to the best idealised standard possible. This can be seen by considering the pattern of stories Foxe painted of his female martyrs. In those that included any detail, a woman's family is mentioned. This fact made them more appealing to the early modern reader because the care a female martyr showed in regard to her family softened her radicalism. Female martyrs who had been good wives, mothers and daughters were more appealing than single women with no family connections.

Protestant women who risked persecution in Marian England were exceptional. Feminist historians such as Megan Hickerson and Genelle Gertz have argued that the

⁴⁵ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, vol. II: Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.245.

⁴⁶ For a biography of Katherine Knight alias Tynley, see Appendix 1.xxx. For details surrounding Margery Moris's martyrdom see, Appendix 2: 'Table of Post-Reformation Tudor Female Martyrs'.

exceptionalism of female martyrs in sixteenth-century England was rooted in their justifiable disobedience.⁴⁷ This is not the case. Foxe's female martyrs were exceptional because they were ordinary women who worked to negotiate their family and spiritual responsibilities in order to claim martyrdom successfully. However, by choosing to follow the spiritual path to martyrdom, instead of retaining their roles as mother and wife, these women were making their reputations vulnerable to defamation.

The Problem of Femininity and the Sexualisation of Martyrdom

Women were believed to be more easily tempted to sin and, as a result, to commit heresy than their husbands and fathers.⁴⁸ Heresy was the greatest of all sins and moral failings. Therefore, women's religious radicalism was automatically linked with sexual immorality and this made martyrdom harder to obtain and sustain for women.

Protestants frowned upon martyrdom being discussed in terms of desire or ambition. Martyrdom was not a choice, it was a destiny. People did not make martyrs, God chose them. John Foxe, among others, was not making martyrs in the eyes of his readers but justifying why he thought they had been chosen to fulfil such a pivotal role in the new religion of Protestantism. As Brad Gregory has identified, visibly aiming to achieve martyrdom verged on blasphemy, and was extremely distasteful.⁴⁹ In moulding the characters of female martyrs Foxe had to be extremely careful. Hickerson argued that the 'decision to die for heresy is doubly criminal for a woman' because she had to defy her husband and the teachings of the Bible.⁵⁰ Foxe had to justify how women could legitimately serve God and temper the levels of her required wifely obedience. Aspiring to martyrdom was the norm for any good Protestant, for it was the ideal religious state. Desiring martyrdom, however, was equated with sin. Expanding on this, the female martyr, believed to be more inclined to vice than her male counterparts, faced stronger cases of character assassination by Foxe's literary opponents.

This chapter has so far been concerned with how women achieved the status of martyr, less attention has been paid to why. Both these questions were extremely contentious in

⁴⁷ See Megan L. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.7; Genelle Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers: 1400-1670* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp.1-3.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: the Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.211-12.

⁴⁹ Gregory, p.280.

⁵⁰ Megan L. Hickerson, 'Gospelling Sisters "Going Up and Downe": John Foxe and Disorderly Women', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35(2004), 1035-51 (p.1038).

Tudor England. As previously touched on, Catholic polemicist Huggarde believed that persecuted women were motivated by social ambition and discontentment.⁵¹ If the narratives of these women's examinations and executions are carefully studied, the link between women's moral failings and their motivations to pursue heresy suggest that a woman's desire for martyrdom was sexualised by their critics. James Truman has argued that within martyrologies a correspondence emerges between the language of violence and suffering used in desire narratives, or at the most extreme narratives of rape.⁵² Truman asserts that rape becomes a metaphor for the struggles of martyrdom in this period, in that the persecutors were attempting to defile the soul of the martyr through ploys of tempting persuasion and brutal force.⁵³ The emphasis is placed upon the martyr retaining spiritual purity, just as a woman attempts to defend her chastity.⁵⁴

A woman's desire for martyrdom was often sexualised as the analysis of the insults used to degrade these women's reputations by their examiners and critics shows. However, it is a step too far to suggest that Foxe's stories mirror the conventions of rape narratives. The sexualised insults, as will be shown, were levelled at women who defied gendered expectations in their examinations. Foxe included them in his work to parody the Catholic judges outwitted by women who were empowered with God's will. Their sexuality is brought under question by their examiners because they were deemed to be immoral heretics who defied social convention.

The most obvious case for this as represented in Foxe's work is Elizabeth Young. Arrested for smuggling heretical books into England, Young was examined fourteen times.⁵⁵ Of these, Foxe only had access to nine trial narratives.⁵⁶ In these nine examinations Young was called a 'whore' fifteen times.⁵⁷ Young managed to answer the questions the examiners put to her on matters of religion eloquently and eruditely. This behaviour even moved one of her examiners, Cholmley, to place a bet of the substantial sum of £20 that Young was not a woman but a man in women's clothes.⁵⁸ Young was forced to swear on the Bible that she was a woman, with a husband and children.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Huggarde, p.77-8.

⁵² James C.W. Truman, 'John Foxe and the Desires of Reformation Martyrology', *ELH*, 70(2003), 35-66 (pp.41-2).

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.36, pp.41-2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2268.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Foxe (1570), pp.2268-2274.

⁵⁸ Foxe (1570), p.2270.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

This shows how female martyrs defied the expectations laid upon them by their examiners. Rose Allin was similarly insulted when she defied the expectations of her interrogators. When Allin told Tyrell that she would withstand the pain of burning, Tyrell tested Allin's resolve by holding her hand in the flame of a candle in an attempt to threaten her into recanting.⁶⁰ Allin remained silent during the burning of her hand- fitting with the feminine ideal- whilst Tyrell yelled obscenities at her. Tyrell declared her to be a 'whore, shameless beast, thou beastly whore' amidst demanding 'wilt thou not cry?'⁶¹

These two examples show that when the character of a woman was tested either by questioning or by violence and the woman under examination did not fit the preconceived gendered model of 'the weaker sex', she must be unwomanly. This lack of femininity is justified by Foxe who declared that they were able to withstand threats, such as being racked in Young's case, because they were called by God to do so. This is demonstrated by Young's fearlessness when her interrogator, Martin, demanded to '[l]et her know the payne of the racke'.⁶² Young merely answered repeatedly to his threats: 'I can confesse no more. Doe with my carcase what ye will.'⁶³ The use of the word 'carcase' is also useful; it shows the prioritization of soul over body in the mind of the martyrs. The statement that Huggarde makes is refuted by Young's indifferent statement as contrary to his generalized argument she displays no social ambition as a motivation for achieving martyrdom.

The sexualisation of martyrdom, which arose from contemporary views surrounding the weakness of women, could be controlled by a woman's martyrologist. A woman's family was very important in this process, as illustrated further in this thesis, as it could be then argued that she did not desire martyrdom but was called to it. A woman who worked hard to be a good mother or wife was not going to sacrifice her family for the sake of ambition, but only if it was necessary. The use of sexualized language by the examiners to belittle the women they interrogated was used against them, by Foxe, to illuminate their lack of control over a woman's complete and strong devotion to her religion.

Conclusion

A female martyr's family was very important to her eventual creation into a martyr. Most importantly it was an asset that could be used by martyrologists to safeguard women's

⁶⁰ Foxe (1570), pp.2199-2200.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.2200.

⁶² Foxe (1570), p.2270.

⁶³ Foxe (1570), p.2270.

reputations from the attacks of confessional adversaries keen to strip them of their title. Foxe's main aim in the battle to defend the women he had included in his work was to prove that their claim to the title, martyr, was completely legitimate.

A woman's familial connections played a large part in how she was shaped by her martyrologist. A woman who had successfully managed to negotiate her religious and domestic roles was more readily malleable to fit the stereotypical character of the martyr than those who had not. This was because, in the eyes of many early modern commentators, managing family responsibilities alongside faith was necessary for any good Christian woman. The religiously devoted woman could not be seen to neglect the welfare of the souls of any family member, especially her children, despite the eventual sacrifice of her life. God must always come above any women's duty of care to her families, but this was the last step in achieving martyrdom.

Some female martyrs gained much support from their families. Many, as has been demonstrated, joined their husbands, mothers or children at the stake. Others, whilst their family did not accompany them, received other support, such as goods necessary to sustain them in prison or a mother's blessing when at the stake. Many female martyrs did not receive such support from their families. Women's attempts to stay true to Protestantism and avoid Catholic ceremonies could be ridiculed and taunted by various members of their family, especially their husbands. A handful of these husbands were directly responsible for their wives heretical activities to come to the notice of the Marian authorities. The next chapter explores further how women's spiritual welfare could be prioritized above her obligations to her husband.

CHAPTER TWO

MARITAL TIES AND SOCIAL DISORDER: COMMITMENT, COMMUNITY AND MARTYRDOM

This chapter explores how a woman's spiritual welfare, as put forward in Foxe's martyrology, could be prioritised over her wifely duties. The women represented in Foxe's text rarely submitted completely to their husband's authority, even in cases where husband and wife were both Protestants. There are multiple examples of women defying their husbands' wishes for them to conform, and further instances of women attempting to persuade their husbands not to conform. These wives were depicted by their Catholic critics, such as Robert Parsons, as 'obstinate', 'immodest', 'arrogant and insolent' women, and therefore unsuitable wives.¹

In attempting to defend these women from such accusations, Foxe had to portray that they were actually good wives attached to bad husbands. In this light, the shaping of the husbands of female martyrs was just as important as moulding the women themselves. The first section of this chapter considers how women's defiance of their husband's wishes was legitimised by Foxe. The second section explores, how the marital relationships of women who survived the Marian persecutions are just as important to study as those of their executed counterparts. These stories are incredibly revealing about attitudes concerning the strength of men's and women's pieties in early modern England. The ability of these survivors to be dutiful wives and committed Protestants was praised by Foxe. In large part, female confessors complimented the spirituality of their husbands by ensuring they stayed devoted to the true faith. Women who helped their husbands stay on the path to martyrdom, however, were heavily sexualised by their detractors, such as Huggarde, '[f]or the devil hath many suche pranking dames...to bryng men to mischiefe'.²

The wife's decision to commit herself to Protestantism without the consent of her husband was perfectly legitimate in the eyes of her martyrologist and the writers of Protestant

¹ Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise Intituled of Three Conversions of England* (St Omer, 1604) STC 19416, pp.160-62. These specific examples of the language Parsons used to describe female martyrs are taken from a passage, in his critique of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, where he compares the stories of three martyrs: Joyce Lewes, Cecily Ormes and Margery Austow.

² Miles Huggarde, *Displaying of Protestantess* (London, 1556) STC 13558, p.77.

family manuals. No woman should sacrifice her soul in order to please her earthly husband, irrespective of the cost. Despite this it was important that Foxe's female martyrs were moulded into good wives to quell any criticism from Catholic polemicists that they were motivated by social ambition.

The Challenge of Female Religious Radicalism to the Household

Contextualising the extreme and sacrificial devotion of Protestant housewives within the household was not an easy process for Foxe or other martyrologists. Catholic writers, such as Huggarde, argued that wives who desired martyrdom were fundamentally bad women, 'wicked daughters of heresie, and dames of the devil himselfe'.³ God had intended these women to be wives and to serve their 'deare husbandes'.⁴ Parsons argued that any ambition these 'foolish ghospelling sister[s]' may have towards martyrdom could only be self-serving for uneducated women who could not possibly comprehend the tenets of the religion they were dying for.⁵ For example, in the case of Alice Driver, Parsons alleged that the theological arguments made by Driver to her examiners could not have been her own but added for effect by Foxe: 'her learned answers framed out of Fox his owne braine. For no man of wisdome will imagine...that *Alice Driver*...could make such a conference of her selfe, with such learned men'.⁶

The most well-known case of a female martyr challenging patriarchal authority is that of Anne Askew. Gentlewoman Askew was interrogated upon suspicion of heresy in the later years of Henry VIII's reign and was finally burned in 1546.⁷ Askew's martyrologist, John Bale, wrote that Askew had begun her conversion to Protestantism after beginning to read the Bible in English.⁸ As her reformist sentiments radicalised as she continued to read the Bible more frequently, she 'offe[n]ded the pr[i]estes' and her husband, Thomas Kyme, to such an extent that Kyme 'at their suggestion, vyolentlye droue her oute of his howse'.⁹ In his commentary of Askew's text, Bale asserted multiple reasons why her defiance of

³ Huggarde, p.78.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Parsons, p.263.

⁶ Parsons, p.258.

⁷ For a full biography of Anne Askew's life and experience of persecution in the later years of Henry VIII's reign, see Diane Watt, 'Askew, Anne (c.1521-1546)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/798>> [accessed 14 March 2016].

⁸ For a record of John Bale's life and works as the first Protestant English martyrologist see, John N. King, 'Bale, John (1495-1563)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1175> [accessed 18 March 2016].

⁹ Anne Askew and John Bale, *The lattu examinacyon of Anne Askewe latelye martyred in Smythfelde, by the wycked Synagoge of Antichrist, with the Elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (1547), STC 850, p.15.

Kyme was perfectly legitimate. Firstly, Askew was ‘compelled agaynst her wyll or fre[e] consent to marrye with hym’ so the match was ‘vnlawful’.¹⁰ Bale used scripture to further defend Askew’s separation from her husband, citing the ‘doctryne of S. Paule’ that stated that a ‘fayt[h]full woma[n]...maye leave’ an ‘unbelevynge husba[n]de’.¹¹ Lastly, her seeking of a ‘dyvorcement fro[m] hym’ was legal because ‘he so cruellye droue her out of his howse’.¹² For Askew to be a martyr Bale felt compelled to defend her separation from her husband, which shows how important family roles could be in moulding the perfect female martyr. Such was Askew’s patriarchal defiance, she is only referred to by her maiden name in both John Bale and John Foxe’s accounts of her examinations.¹³ Bale’s treatment and characterisation of Anne Askew’s account set a precedent for the construction of disobedient, devout women which Foxe would both follow and expand upon.

Religious divides within marriages were more common than ever before in the sixteenth century. The martyrs discussed here were not by any means the only wives to be tied to husbands of differing beliefs. This divide went both ways. It would be wrong to give the impression that it was only female martyrs who were accused by their partners of heresy; wives, too, accused their husbands. In a similar light, it was not uncommon for wives and husbands even when united in faith, as Alexandra Walsham has highlighted, to vary in the strength and degree of their respective pieties.¹⁴ The wife may be prepared to face persecution for her beliefs whereas her husband may not. Foxe allowed for wives to be better Protestants than their husbands despite their belonging theoretically to the ‘weaker sex’. This was a troubling sentiment for some of his contemporary Protestant writers who believed the key to social stability was maintained through household unity. As Henry Smith wrote, ‘[a]s a kingdome cannot stand if it be deuided, so a house can-not stand if it be deuided’.¹⁵ However, Smith did allow that a wife could not completely submit to the rule of a heretical husband.¹⁶ In order for Foxe to defend the reputations of his female

¹⁰ Ibid, pp.15-16.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Bale’s transcription of Askew’s writing was the main source for Foxe’s story of Anne Askew’s martyrdom in his martyrology. The first-person narrative of Askew’s account of her two examinations was largely kept intact in Foxe’s work although Bale’s commentary was removed. See Foxe (1570), pp.1452-60.

¹⁴ Alexandra Walsham, ‘Holy Families: the Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited’ in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Religion and the Household* (Studies in Church History, v.50) (Woodbridge: For the Ecclesiastical History Society by Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp.122-60.

¹⁵ Henry Smith, *A Preparative for Marriage* (London, 1561) STC 22686, pp.65-6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

martyrs he attacked the character and decisions made by their husbands. A persecuted wife's reputation was easier to defend when that of her husband was so negative and ungodly in contrast.

Extreme suffering was a pre-requisite of martyrdom in the Tudor era. This suffering could consist of verbal and physical abuse inflicted upon the body, mind or soul of a man or woman; these sufferings would conventionally culminate in death and hopefully earn the inflicted a martyrdom. The physical and mental abuse a woman suffered at the hands of her husband thus enhanced her candidacy for martyrdom and, therefore, it was an incredibly useful tactic for the martyrologist to mould the husband in these instances into an antagonist of his wife's story. There are many examples of this evident in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. One of the most illustrative stories is that of 'good matrone' Agnes Prest, who was in 'many ways tried both by [im]prisonment, threatnings, tauntes, and scornes'.¹⁷

The telling of Prest's story is unique because her name is not revealed until the last line of the account.¹⁸ It must be considered why up until this point Prest is presented as an anonymous Protestant woman tied to a Catholic husband and children deliberately in the editions where Foxe was aware of her name.¹⁹ Such a tactic may have been preferred by Foxe in order to contain the radicalism of Prest's defiance as Foxe's lack of identification serves to imply how common Prest's situation would have been. Alexandra Walsham and Susan Wabuda have both displayed evidence of spiritual differences existing in a greater proportion of sixteenth-century households between husbands and wives than previously estimated.²⁰

The uniqueness of Prest's case does not lie in the fact that she was tied to a husband and children who were, in Foxe's words, 'addicted to the superstitious sect of Popery' but that she ran away from her household, taking up work as a spinner, and publicly renounced her husband and children and her obligations towards them.²¹ However, what must be

¹⁷ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, (London: John Daye, 1583), STC (2nd ed.) 11225, p.2051.

¹⁸ This is the case in three editions of Prest's story in Foxe's work. See Foxe (1570), STC 11223 pp.2249-2252; John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiastical history contaynyng the Actes and Monumentes of thynges passed in every kynges tyme in this realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted* (London: John Daye, 1576) STC 11224, pp.1942-45; Foxe, 1583, STC 11225, pp.2049-52.

¹⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2249. For more details on Agnes Prest's life see Appendix 1.xxix.

²⁰ See Alexandra Walsham, 'Holy Families: the Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited', in Doran, John, Methuen, Charlotte, and Walsham, Alexandra (eds), *Religion and the Household* (Studies in Church History, v.50) (Woodbridge: For the Ecclesiastical History Society by Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp.122-60; and Susan Wabuda, 'Sanctified by the believing spouse: women, men and the marital yoke in the early reformation', in Marshall, Peter, and Ryrie, Alec (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2002), pp.111-28.

²¹ Foxe (1570), p.2249, pp.2251-2.

distinguished is that, as is often neglected especially by feminist historiography, Prest did not disobey her husband because she believed him to be heretical but because he and their children forced her to attend Catholic ceremonies and tried to get her to renounce her own Protestant beliefs.

This distinction is important because simply defying an ungodly husband was not justifiable. A wife, as guidebooks taught, should always try first gently to convert her husband to the true faith. It was only when, as Vives' advice manual highlights, her husband's ungodliness collided with her obligations to God that she could legitimately refute his authority: '[f]or she must a[c]knowledge one for better than her husband...that is Christe.'²² One of the examples Gouge provides is: 'If an husband shall command his wife to goe to Masse...she ought not doe so'.²³ Prest's Catholic husband is shown to do exactly this in Foxe's account; Prest's wife was 'driuen to go to Church, to their Idols, and ceremonies, to shrift, to follow the cross procession, to giue thankes to God for restoryng Antichrist agayne into this realme'.²⁴ The reader is led to believe that these incidences, along with the rebuking of her as a mother and wife by her family, happened multiple times before Prest decided to leave her home.

Foxe emphasises that it was not until God gave her the strength that she learnt to resent her family and finally decided to leave them. Foxe presents Prest's decision process as if the idea to even feel resentful of her husband, nevertheless think of the idea to leave him, did not occur to her until God gave her the guidance and strength to do so after her 'spritie' could no longer 'abyde' to her husband forcing her to be Catholic:

she made her prayer vnto God, calling for help & mercy, & so at length lying in her bed, about midnight, she thought there came to her a certeine motion and feelyng of singular comfort. Wherupon in short space, she began to grow in contempt of her husband & childre[n], & so taking nothing fro[m] them, but euen as she went, departed from them, seekyng her liuyng by labour and spinnyng, as well as she could...²⁵

Prest here is moulded by Foxe into the ideal wife, or at the very least the best she could have been under such grim circumstances. It was not her choice to disobey her husband and neither would she have been capable of acting in such an outwardly defiant way if it were not God's will. In this way Prest was effectively sheltered from criticism from

²² Juan Luis Vives, *A Very Fruteful and Pleasant Boke Called the Instruction of a Christen Woman*, trans. by Richard Hyrde (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1529), p.97.

²³ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), STC (2nd ed.) 12119, p.329.

²⁴ Foxe (1570), p.2249.

²⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2249.

Foxe's Catholic adversaries and this perhaps explains why, despite her relatively long story appearing in every edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* published during his lifetime, her story does not appear in Robert Parson's critique of Foxe's female martyrs.

Prest's life story is hugely important for historians because she was the only female martyr publicly to announce her defiance of her husband to those witnessing her execution in 1558, as Hickerson has highlighted.²⁶ Upon her scaffold, Prest declared that she would 'neuer turne from my heauenly husband to my earthly husband: from the fellowship of Aungels to mortall children'.²⁷ While this quotation's importance has been variously debated by historians, for its sheer radical nature as well as its uniqueness, for the purpose of this work it is an earlier statement Prest made to her interrogators that is more illustrative of Prest's gendered struggles as a female martyr in relation to her family. When Prest was asked by the bishop examining her about her husband, her reply reveals much about the legitimacy of a wife leaving a husband in the name of religion:

To whom she aunswered agayne, declaring that she had a husband and children: and had them not. So long as she was at libertie, she refused not neither husband, nor children. But now standing here as I do (sayd she) in the cause of Christ and his truth, where I must either forsake Christ or my husband, I am contented to sticke onely to Christ my heauenly spouse, and renounce the other.²⁸

This response is extremely revealing. Prest is displayed to be a good wife until the point that she must make the choice between her husband and God; a choice she would not need to make if she had a good Christian husband. It is only when her allegiance to God and her faith are brought into danger that she was forced to disobey her husband. Therefore, it is not the fault of the godly wife that her marriage failed but her husbands. The closeness with which Agnes Prest's speech echoes the sentiments of Gouge's later well-known argument for a woman's necessary disobedience to her husband is startling. It is only when her duty to her family and God directly collided that she asked God for the strength to separate from her husband. The position of Prest's husband as antagonist of her martyrdom story only serves to emphasise the victory of God in otherwise weak women.

A tactic similarly used by Foxe to present the husband as one of the principle villains of his wife's journey to martyrdom, in order to validate her unfeminine actions, is displayed

²⁶ Megan L. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.102.

²⁷ Foxe (1570), p.2251-2.

²⁸ Foxe (1570), p.2249.

further in the stories of Alice Benden and Joyce Lewes.²⁹ The key theme in these two stories is that both of these women's husbands are portrayed as the murderers of their wives. Both Edward Benden and Thomas Lewes are presented by Foxe to hand over their wives to the forces of persecution in exchange for money. Edward Benden, in Foxe's story, to 'hys owne shame, the sayd husband tooke money of[f] the Counstable to carry her to prison, the price of hys wiues bloud'.³⁰ The action of Edward appearing to sell his wife's life is beyond deplorable if Foxe's story is to be believed. By acting in such a way Edward forfeited his right to have any jurisdiction over his wife's actions: for just as it was a wife's duty to be obedient, it was her husband's to care for her.

Alice Benden's actions at her execution are also heavily attacked by Robert Parsons' *Three Conversions* (1604). In Foxe's account, Benden at the stake left keepsakes for her loved ones including giving her brother the white lace around her waist, figuratively 'the last band that she was bound with', and to her father the shilling he had sent her when she had first been committed to prison.³¹ However, notable was the absence of any gift left for her husband as Parsons emphasised. Parsons mocked the indecency of Benden's decision not to leave anything for her husband before remarking that 'perhaps her husband was not desyrous to keep any relique of her'.³² Parsons' sympathy firmly rested with Edward Benden for by turning in a heretic wife, in Parsons' eyes, he had done no wrong. Edward Benden, in both accounts, is shown to be keen to rid himself of his wife, although Foxe strengthens his argument in support of Alice because it was not for sake of religion that he gave up his wife but for monetary gain. As confirmed in the similar story of Joyce Lewes, Foxe sees any such action made by a spouse as 'rude and vnnaturall'.³³

Alice Benden further triumphed in that ever the good wife she 'hauing much more care of hys honest and good report, then he had regard (as it is easy to see) of hys own infamy' returned herself to prison to spare her husband from doing so.³⁴ This in effect would have sheltered Alice's reputation from such critics as Parsons. Despite owing her husband no loyalty due to his treatment of her and despite not leaving any remnant of herself for him

²⁹ For the biography of Alice Benden, see Appendix 1.xiv. For that of gentlewoman Joyce Lewes see Appendix 1.xxi.

³⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2167.

³¹ Foxe (1570), p.2168.

³² Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise Intituled of Three Conversions of England* (St Omer, 1604) STC 19416, p.510.

³³ Foxe (1570), p.2168.

³⁴ Ibid.

to keep, she acted with good grace towards him, her gift to him in hindsight was sparing him from committing such a grievous sin as aiding her persecutors.

Joyce Lewes' story is very similar to Benden's, despite her increased social status. Lewes was the only gentlewoman to be executed for heresy during Mary Tudor's reign. Despite this, the motivation for her husband, Thomas Lewes of Mancetter, in committing her to the wrath of the authorities remains the same as that of Edward Benden's: money and reputation. Joyce Lewes and her husband were commanded to appear before the Bishop. Thomas submitted and his wife did not; being gentry, his wife was given a month to change her mind and her husband was bound to a £100 fine if he did not bring her to the Bishop at the end of the month to recant.³⁵ Knowing that Joyce Lewes would not recant, John Glover, Joyce's spiritual advisor and himself brother to well-known martyr Robert Glover, pleaded with Joyce's husband not to bring her to the Bishop at the end of the month but to 'seeke some ways to saue her' even if it meant forfeiting 'so much money'.³⁶ Thomas refused, replying that: 'he would not lose or forfe[i]t anything for her sake' and took her to the Bishop as he had promised to do.³⁷ As a result, Foxe paints Thomas Lewes as 'murtherer of hys owne wife' in that he 'cast hys own wife into the fire'.³⁸ Foxe did not only mould Thomas Lewes into an antagonist of his wife's story but as the principle villain. The blame for his wife's death is laid at his door for he had the power to save his wife from the inquisitors and actively chose not to act upon it, valuing material and earthly goods above her earthly life.

What is ironic in both Benden's and Lewes' stories is that their husbands, by being depicted as antagonists, were just as important characters as the martyrs themselves. The husbands' actions not only encouraged the reader to feel sympathy for Alice Benden and Joyce Lewes; they helped their wives earn a position in Foxe's martyrology. These women could have escaped the death penalty for martyrdom with their husbands' cooperation. It was Benden's husband who Foxe blamed for Alice Benden's church nonattendance to come to the attention of the authorities and her subsequent incarceration: 'through his fond talke and behaiour, he procured her to be sent to Syr Iohn Gilford, who co[m]manded her to prison agayne'.³⁹ Equally, Thomas Lewes was asked to 'forfet' his

³⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2206.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2167.

£100 to avoid ‘cast[ing] hys owne wife into the fire’, which he refused to do.⁴⁰ These men’s actions cannot be argued to have guaranteed their wife’s executions and subsequent martyrdoms. However, these examples do illustrate that the characterisation of a Protestant woman’s conformist husband could be just as important as the moulding of the martyr herself.

The relationship between a Protestant wife and a conformist husband was not always so antagonistic. For example, the imprisoned Joan Trunchfield visited her fearful husband daily to comfort him, telling him that ‘she came not to trouble him’.⁴¹ Joan promised her husband that she would make sure he did not get into trouble because of her and that she visited him in ‘good will’ and so that she may ‘shew her duety therin while she might haue libertie’.⁴² The language used by Joan Trunchfield is reminiscent of Prest’s answer to her inquisitors when she was asked about her husband in that ‘[s]o long as she was at libertie, she refused not neither husband, nor children’.⁴³ These women, despite their destiny as designed by Foxe to be martyrs, tried to be good wives for as long as they were allowed to remain on earth.

Trunchfield, who seemingly had a more affectionate relationship with her husband than the wives considered in this section so far, tried to remain a dutiful wife right up to her death. As Thomas Freeman has stressed, it must be acknowledged that such forced spousal separations were anything but painless particularly in a century when a woman’s identity was bound so tightly with her family role.⁴⁴ At least three times in the three lines Foxe gives to portraying Joan Trunchfield’s meetings with her husband after she had been arrested she is shown to reassure her husband that she does not wish him any trouble and wants to be the best wife she can be to him in the time she has left before her execution. Joan Trunchfield was more than aware of the damage that could come to her family because of her execution. Perhaps more importantly, this passage hints of Foxe’s own awareness that, irrespective of the wishes of the female martyr, her condemnation could have a negative impact on her family. Perhaps this was the reason why Foxe felt it was

⁴⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2206.

⁴¹ Foxe, *Actes and Monumentes of these latter and perillous dayes* (London: John Daye, 1563), p.1734.

⁴² Foxe (1563), p.1734 and Foxe (1583), p.1734. Interestingly, this section of Foxe’s account of Trunchfield’s life appeared separately to the story of her martyrdom under a section entitled, ‘A note of Michaels wyfe’. This note was published in the first edition of Foxe’s book but was omitted in the 1570 and 1576 versions of his work. The note was reinstated in the 1583 edition.

⁴³ Foxe (1570), p.2249.

⁴⁴ Thomas Freeman, “‘The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women’: The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs’, *The Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000), 8-33 (p.16).

necessary to remove this exchange between the Trunchfields from the 1570 and 1576 editions of his *Acts and Monuments*.

Spiritual divides within households did not always lead to a willingness of a wife to sacrifice her life for her faith. Joan Trunchfield was not the only female martyr to consider the impact her death would have on her family members. Some women used this reasoning to justify why they had not been chosen by God to pursue martyrdom despite their strong commitment to Protestantism. For example, Rose Nottingham, who attended the execution of her friends Robert Samuel, Anne Potten and Joan Trunchfield, explained to the women before that day that she understood that it was lawful for her to flee from her household in the name of religion but reasoned that she personally could not because 'I am tied to a husband and have a...sort of young children at home: and then I know not how my husband being a carnall man will take my departure from him: therefore I am minded for the love of CHRIST and his truth to stand to the extremite of the matter'.⁴⁵ Persecuted women were mindful of the impact their actions in the name of religion, whether justifiable or not, could have on their families.

Rose Nottingham's actions in not pursuing martyrdom were portrayed in Foxe's book to show that women did not choose to be martyrs but were predestined by God to achieve such a destiny. In the case of Rose Nottingham, the fact that the authorities were not able to find her to arrest her after she came up to the stake of Samuel 'tooke him about the necke and kissed him' proved for Foxe that she was not destined to martyrdom as the grace of God protected her from being found.⁴⁶ Other women chose exile over facing persecution for their beliefs.

The spirituality of the women who chose exile over martyrdom was no less admired by their relatives and Protestant friends. Again, the argument was put forward by their contemporaries that they had not been chosen to martyrdom by God but must stay on earth as Godly mothers and wives. One of their duties was to protect other Protestants from the tides of Marian persecution, as in the case of Joanna Saunders and Lucy Harrington. Joanna Saunders was the wife of well-known martyr and priest Laurence Saunders. Lucy Harrington and her husband were wealthy close friends with the Saunders and sustained the couple during the years Laurence could no longer practice.

⁴⁵ Foxe (1570), p.1879.

⁴⁶ Foxe (1570), p.1879.

The various letters Saunders sent to Lucy Harrington were compiled into Coverdale and Bull's *Comfortable Letters* (1564). In these letters, Saunders spoke of his great affection for Lucy and that he trusted her as much as 'mine owne mother'.⁴⁷ He praised her for the strength of her faith and the care and friendship she showed to him and his wife.⁴⁸ In facing the prospect of execution, he beseeched Lucy to care of his wife and children: 'I have a pore wife and childe who[m] I loue in the Lord, and whom I know for my sake you wil[l] tender when I am departed hence.'⁴⁹ In his letters to his wife, Saunders counselled Joanna not to visit him in prison for he did not want her to '[p]ut your self in daunger where it nedes not' because he believed that by merely staying true to Protestantism she would come 'farre enough into daunger'.⁵⁰ In all his letters to his female sustainer and his wife Saunders stressed the importance of them staying true to the faith which ran parallel to his wishes that they both must keep out of the hands of the persecutors and go into exile.⁵¹ Saunders believed neither woman was called to martyrdom and that their godly duties lay within the home by taking care of their families, in particular Saunders newly born son by Joanna. What is particularly interesting is that in his written counselling of Joanna Saunders he wrote that she must exercise 'your inward man' in order to stay true to God's word.⁵² This illustrates the belief that spiritual strength, just as other forms of strength in the early modern world, were characterised as masculine. In order to remain a good Protestant Joanna had to abandon, in a sense, her weaker feminine tendencies.

The order of the Tudor household could be thrown into jeopardy by a wife's dedication and devotion to Protestantism. Although a woman's disobedience was held to be justifiable in order to protect the welfare of her conscience and soul, Foxe used various other tactics to ensure that the women represented in his stories were as defended as possible from the attacks of his Catholic critics. By moulding their husbands into antagonists, Foxe tried to evidence that these women, far from choosing to be defiant, had no other choice in order to serve their God. In addition to this, these women could only

⁴⁷ Miles Coverdale and Henry Bull, *Certain Most Godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true saintes and holy martyrs of God* (1564) STC 5886, pp.191-3.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Coverdale and Bull, p.191.

⁵⁰ Coverdale and Bull, pp.195-6.

⁵¹ For more information on who female sustainers were and the role they played in the aiding of Protestants during the Marian persecutions see, Thomas Freeman, ' "The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women": The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs', *The Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), 8-33.

⁵² Ibid.

work in the ways they had because of the power God had afforded them. Not all women felt compelled by God to make the journey towards martyrdom. Nevertheless, the wives in Foxe's accounts did not only use the power invested in them by God to pursue martyrdom or justifiably to defy their husbands but also to ensure their husbands commitment to Protestantism.

Wifely Duty and the Pursuit of Spiritual Strength

One of the most difficult challenges for Foxe was to represent the female martyr as the ideal wife. The previous section considered how female martyrs justifiably resisted the authority of their husbands; this section focuses on how the actions of these women reflected upon their husbands of the same religious stance. Whereas conformist husbands were excused from being unable to control wives 'possessed with such Spirrits of pride, presumption, and arrogancy, as heresie is wont to bring forth' by the Catholic commentator Parsons, husbands of the same faith as their wives were readily held accountable for not controlling their wives.⁵³ Foxe, as a result of such potential criticism, was cautious not to show that any wife had or could directly convert her husband to the Protestant faith. Foxe did not deny that wives could have influence over their husband's spiritual decisions, but they would never force their husbands to sacrifice their lives. These women were not in a position to lead their husbands to the stake or save them from execution, this could only be the work of God's providence.

The principle criticism that was levelled at persecuted women by their Catholic contemporaries, such as Huggarde, was that they were fundamentally bad wives 'euer prone and ready to mischief.'⁵⁴ This is a theme that has been played on by many historians when discussing the contradictions Foxe makes in his expansive work. For example, Megan Hickerson has argued that Foxe made his female martyrs into women neither he nor his contemporaries would desire as wives.⁵⁵ However, Hickerson's argument here is misleading. The circumstances these women and their husbands were put under by the rapid changing tides of religion in sixteenth-century England meant that many families felt the same tensions and divisions that the families of the Marian female martyrs felt, if not to such an extreme. As Walsham argues, marriages between men and women of differing religious beliefs were not uncommon, even less unusual were the marriages

⁵³ Parsons, pp.159-60.

⁵⁴ Huggarde, p.75.

⁵⁵ Megan L. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.99.

which occurred between men and women of different levels of piety.⁵⁶ A woman with a stronger sense of spirituality compared to that of her husband was not as rare and objectionable as Hickerson's argument implies. Evidence in the form of Foxe's story of the persecution of Peter and Anne Moon contradicts Hickerson's assumption that these women may have been considered undesirable wives.

Peter Moon was an Ipswich tailor and author of various Protestant polemical works printed in the late 1540s. The chair of Moon's examination, Bishop Hopton, allegedly convinced 'Peter being timorous and weak' to accept the Pope as 'supreme head' of the Church, agree that Mary I and Phillip were the rightful successors to the English crown, and that the 'very body of CHRIST' was present in the Sacrament of the Altar.⁵⁷ As a result Moon was almost discharged until a 'portman' of Ipswich named Richard Sharpe reported to Hopton that whilst he 'had a good hope in the man' conforming, Peter 'hath a perillous woman vnto his wife.'⁵⁸

Following this discussion Moon was charged with bringing his wife to see Bishop Hopton. Moon replied that 'I am as able to comma[n]d her to come before my Lord, as ye are to commaunde ye worst boy in your house.'⁵⁹ The choice of words here is very interesting. Moon's words on the surface attested to his wife's obedience. However, underneath this veneer was a dangerous connotation which Sharpe reputedly picked up on. Sharpe apologised to the bishop saying if Moon's wife obeyed her husband to such an extent then the accusation he had made against Moon and his wife was an 'vntrouth'.⁶⁰ Sharpe added that 'if he be so able as he sayth' to command his wife 'he might haue commaunded her to haue come to Churche in all this tyme, if it had pleased him'.⁶¹ After this discussion Hopton decided that he needed to 'talke' with Moon's wife. This passage in Foxe's story of the Moon's imprisonment is very revealing about the contemporary attitudes towards men and women's role in the household. Moon was doubly at fault and liable for both his and his wife's nonattendance of church services and heretical beliefs. As a result, Moon remained under suspicion.

Moon was hesitant in bringing his wife before the judges in Foxe's account. He delayed for as long as he could before going to his house, hoping that when he arrived his wife

⁵⁶ Walsham, p.134.

⁵⁷ Foxe (1570), p.2126.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2126.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

would not be there.⁶² This shows that Moon was fearful of the implications of bringing his wife before the judges. As the speech of the port-man previously discussed implies she was more fervent in the Protestant faith than her husband was. Moon's reluctance to bring her before the judges seems to confirm this implication. Perhaps more telling is the reaction Anne Moon's appearance elicited from the bishop and his team of examiners:

O good Lord (said the Bishop) how a man may be deceaued in a woman. I promise you a ma[n] would take her for as honest a woman, by all outward appearaunce, as can be.⁶³

This quotation is of huge importance, despite being overlooked by the works of various scholars about female martyrs. Anne Moon did not *look* like a suspected heretic. From the phrasing of the text it can be gathered that Anne Moon was modestly dressed and looked no different from any other ordinary Tudor housewife. In reply to the bishop's surprise, Anne Moon challenged him that 'there is none that can charge me with any dishonestie, as concerning my body'.⁶⁴ The implication from the overall discussion is clear: by transgressing religious and gendered boundaries the image the bishop held of Anne Moon prior to meeting her was an immodest, sexualised picture. It was believed, as was discussed in chapter one, that if a woman was immoral religiously then she was held to be immoral in all other ways. The female heretic was often sexualised, as the desire for martyrdom was categorised as sinful by their catholic critics. The presentation of Anne Moon as a modest housewife defied the expectations of the bishop.

Seven of the sixty women burnt during the reign of Mary Tudor had husbands who suffered the same fate.⁶⁵ These women, it might be assumed, found it easier to position their wifely duties alongside their religious obligations because they were obeying both their earthly husband and their spiritual husband in achieving martyrdom. It would be wrong, as Warnicke has asserted, to argue that wives simply followed their husbands to the stake.⁶⁶ As Foxe stressed, martyrdom was not the individual's choice but God's. A wife achieved martyrdom because she was called to it by God, not because she was a good wife to her earthly husband. Foxe believed that spiritual strength was not dependent upon gender. A wife and husband may be of the same Protestant faith in Catholic England,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For more information on the familial relationships of the Marian female martyrs see Appendix 2.

⁶⁶ Retha M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), p.75.

but their willingness to endure the painful, even fatal, consequences of such a belief may differ. This is illustrated most clearly in the case of the George family.

The story of the respective martyrdoms of Agnes and Christian George has been neglected by historians.⁶⁷ Although the accounts of both women are relatively short, the detail in them is extremely illustrative of the position of a female martyr in early modern England as a good wife.⁶⁸ Both were wives of Richard George and both were burnt at the stake, two years apart, for holding Protestant beliefs.⁶⁹ Richard married for a third time to another Protestant wife.⁷⁰ He and his third wife were imprisoned at the end of Queen Mary's reign and were freed in the early years of Elizabeth's reign.⁷¹ It is remarkable that Richard, despite the character and fate of his three wives, managed to avoid being executed for his beliefs. This suggests that the respective pieties of Richard's wives were more intense than his own.

Foxe argued that Richard George was blessed with the grace of God's providence for not only did he marry three 'honest Godly' women, he also avoided the fatal consequences of persecution.⁷² However, Foxe's Catholic critics had a much less favourable view of Richard George's life. The tone of Robert Parsons' criticism is sardonic and scathing as he praised Foxe on the convenience of having a family of potential martyrs at his disposal: '[s]o as he [Richard] was husband of two Martyrs and one Confessor...yf Q. Mary had not died when she did, both he & his third wife had byn Martyrs also, and so they had byn a full messe'.⁷³

Considering the identity of families with more than one martyr in them is very interesting. Foxe presents the George family as an ideal to be aspired to. Richard George could not have had better women as wives. Martyrdom for Agnes and Christian George was easier to obtain as a result of being perfect godly wives; their matrimony illustrated how obligations and affection to God and husband could be managed both effectively and successfully. Richard George seems to have been more concerned with earthly matters, as illustrated by his three successive marriages in the space of three years, than by

⁶⁷ See Appendix 1.vi for a biography of Alice George and Appendix 1.xxvi for a biography of Christian George.

⁶⁸ For the account of Agnes George's martyrdom see Foxe (1570), pp.2095-97. For the story of Christian George's martyrdom see Foxe (1570), p.2234.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Foxe (1570), pp.2234.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Parsons, p.482.

commitment to his faith. Foxe implied it is the choice of bride that vindicated George's reputation in this matter, for such was the godliness of his wives that Richard George's motivations in marriage were perfectly legitimate.

Marian Protestant women, invested with the power God supplied them in order to endure persecution and remain true to the faith, could be both good wives and be stronger spiritually than their husbands. Not all of these women were chosen to martyrdom but their ability to be good godly wives in an atmosphere of intense religious persecution was applauded by their martyrologist, Foxe. Foxe continually checked the motivations of his female martyrs in all of the editions of his *Acts and Monuments*. However, Foxe's belief that a woman could be spiritually superior to her husband if she was chosen by God for martyrdom prevailed in a number of cases where wives had to persuade their husbands to remain faithful in the face of persecution irrespective of the consequences. There are a number of stories put forward by Foxe in which women are seen to remind their husbands of the duties to God and where women's responsibilities rested not on just assuring their own martyrdom but that of their husbands. These women were very vulnerable to attack by Foxe's Catholic critics. They were seen to be employing the most feared and sinful traits of women in order to convince their husbands to heresy: temptation and seduction.

The Female Martyr as Temptress: Husbands, Wives and Martyrdom

The sexualisation of the character of the female martyr presented a real problem for Foxe when consolidating the radicalism of women burnt at the stake in the name of religion. Presenting married Protestant women as exemplary martyrs and ideal wives was Foxe's key tactic for defending their reputations. Foxe's belief that the good Protestant wife could aid her husband in achieving martyrdom was incredibly controversial. The last section considers that husbands could be held accountable by the Catholic authorities for their wives' actions, but it was also the case, that husbands could be seen to be the victims of their wives' heretical ambition.

The idea that a woman could be in a position to instruct her husband in matters of religion was a troubling concept for sixteenth-century society. This fear manifested itself in the works produced by Foxe's confessional adversaries. These Catholic writers played on this fear of the inversion of gender roles when arguing for why Foxe's unruly women and men were unfit to be martyrs. Protestantism, these writers argued, was a religion that promoted societal disorder. It placed women in a position to 'allure their husbands to dye in the lordes veritie', allowed wives 'curious in all matters' to spread heresy through their

families, and celebrated chaos.⁷⁴ Catholicism was promoted as a safe form of worship, a faith that valued tradition and stood on a well-trying and tested framework. In contrast to the ‘pranking dames’ of Protestantism ‘whose talke is no-thing but of religion’, Catholic ‘matrones’, Huggarde argued, were ‘modest & sobre, obedie[n]t to their husba[n]des’, concerned only with ‘household matters’ and raising their ‘children in a goodly ordre’.⁷⁵ Married female martyrs were presented by Catholic polemicists, such as Huggarde and Parsons, as temptresses; the new Eves of society ‘to bryng men to mischeife’.⁷⁶

Huggarde was adamant that women should have ‘nothing to do’ with arguing over the tenets of religion.⁷⁷ He stressed that such fascination resulted from social discontentment rather than strong piety.⁷⁸ The language employed by Huggarde in this piece of Marian propaganda was echoed by the Catholic interrogators in Foxe’s trial narratives. Upon numerous occasions Foxe’s women were depicted as ‘whores’, by their examiners, for convincing their husbands to stray away from the officially endorsed Roman Catholic religion, as will be explored in this section. Sexuality and heresy were inextricably linked in the minds of sixteenth-century Catholics and Protestants.⁷⁹

The ability of a Tudor wife to persuade her husband to adopt the same heretical practices could lead to her reputation being savagely attacked and brought into question by both her interrogators and Foxe’s critics. The case of Edmund Allin and his wife, Katherine, is particularly illustrative of the instances where examiners would accuse wives of persuading their husbands to retain their heretical beliefs. Despite the examination of Edmund Allin being very detailed and occupying two pages of Foxe’s martyrology, his wife is only mentioned in passing in the account entitled ‘The examination of Edmund Alen’.⁸⁰ The strength of Katherine Allin’s faith is only alluded to in a paragraph entitled ‘A note of Edmund Allin’.⁸¹ This note appears in the 1570 edition of *Acts and Monuments* thirty pages after the initial account detailing the imprisonment, examinations and martyrdom of Edmund Allin. In the first account no information is provided for Katherine Allin other than her name and her position as Edmund’s wife.⁸²

⁷⁴ Huggarde, p.77.

⁷⁵ Huggarde, p.77.

⁷⁶ Huggarde, pp.76-77.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Huggarde, p.77.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: the Making of John Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.211-12.

⁸⁰ See Foxe (1570), p.2165.

⁸¹ See Foxe (1570), p.2197.

⁸² See Foxe (1570), p.2165.

In ‘A note of Edmund Allin’, Foxe records that after Edmund was persuaded by Sir John Baker to attend mass in his chapel the next day, Edmund agreed to ‘lye with his wife that night’ on the proviso that he convince her to come to mass as well.⁸³ If Edmund succeeded, they would both be released from prison.⁸⁴ When Edmund met with his wife and told her of his promise, ‘shee with tears sayd, he shoulde goe alone for her’.⁸⁵ The construction of Katherine’s refusal by Foxe is important. For while Katherine Allin is shown to decline this offer, she does so without refuting her husband’s authority outright despite being upset by his decision. Katherine importantly did not force her husband not to conform. Her emotive words gently reminded her husband of his duty to God and upon these words Edmund renounced his former decision, declaring, ‘he would go with her to death’.⁸⁶ Edmund and Katherine Allin’s marital duties coincided with their spiritual ties; their combined spirituality enhanced their ability posthumously to achieve a martyrdom. In this light it is odd that Edmund Allin’s wife is not referred to in the title of the account of their martyrdom. This suggests that Foxe was concerned about how Katherine Allin’s role in her husband’s decision to join her at the stake would be interpreted. Perhaps Foxe feared her tears would be interpreted as a manipulative tactic despite the spoken subtlety of her thoughts on her husband’s decision to attend a Catholic service.

Most revealing about this account, however, are the sexualised insults Katherine received upon the examiners discovery that she had prevented her husband’s conformity. When the interrogators found out the next morning that Edmund Allin would no longer keep to his promise to conform after spending a night with his wife, John Baker reacted violently:

[H]e called out his wife, and sayd thou old whore, thy husband would be a Christian but for thee. Then he beate her very sore with hys staffe in his ha[n]d, and sent them both to prison the next day, sending with them a cruell letter that they should be burned out of hand.⁸⁷

The implication here is clear. It was believed by their persecutor, John Baker, that Katherine had persuaded her husband to abandon his recantation through sexual means because, after spending a night with her, he was tempted back to Protestantism. Baker’s beating of Katherine worked to complete his vilification in Foxe’s eyes. Katherine Allin is dubbed as the one responsible for confirming her husband’s commitment to Protestantism and yet her actions would have been overlooked by the reader of Foxe’s

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Foxe (1570), p.2197.

work because this note is portrayed separately from the account of Edmund Allin. Perhaps Foxe did not want this detail to detract from or overshadow the importance of the examination dialogue of Edmund Allin. The separation of Edmund Allin's main story and the note concerning his wife's actions shows that Foxe was acutely aware that the radicalism of his female martyrs may have been unpalatable to the general reader of his work. By separating the two accounts of the Allins' examinations he reached a compromise, where he still managed to applaud the bravery of Katherine's actions but as reservedly as possible.

Catholics in their own respective martyrologies also struggled to represent religiously persecuted women as ideal wives. One tactic was to demonstrate that despite women's rejection of the teachings of the official church they ultimately submitted to their husband's authority even if the couple were of different Christian faiths. For example, symbolically in Mush's account of Yorkshire Catholic martyr Margaret Clitherow, who was executed upon the charge of harbouring priests in March 1586, Clitherow is seen to acknowledge her wifely submission to her husband by sending him her hat after her condemnation 'in sign of her loving duty to him as her head'.⁸⁸

A common accusation levelled at female martyrs was that they threatened to invert the patriarchal social order by trying to become the heads of their husbands. Margery Austoo and her relationship with her husband is a case in point. The line in Foxe's account of the Austoo's martyrdom which triggered such a criticism from his Catholic contemporaries is where Foxe described the way in which the pair answered the questions of the bishop interrogating them in the Tower of London. Foxe wrote that they, 'answered truly (God be prayed) as euer did any, especially the woman, to whom the Lord had geuen the greater knowledge & more feruentnes of spirite'.⁸⁹ To any early modern individual this statement would have been controversial because the idea that God might make a wife more knowledgeable than her husband went against the teachings of the Bible. Hickerson used this example to illustrate how Foxe's critics, such as Jesuit Parsons, used Foxe's text as evidence that there was a dangerous trend emerging within the evangelical movement: that of the disruption of the natural gendered order.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ John Mush, 'A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow', in John Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, series 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), pp.131-440 (p.432).

⁸⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2214.

⁹⁰ Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs*, p.95.

Foxe in his works seemed not only to admit that Protestant women were capable of guiding their husband onto the right spiritual path but he appeared to commend it. Parsons ridiculed this approach in order to attempt to clarify the evils of Protestantism. Instead of discussing the beliefs of the Austoos' and why they were deemed heretical, he dismissed them as too 'arrogant and insolent' to be worth 'reapting in this place'.⁹¹ Parsons instead concentrated on mocking the relationship that existed between Margery and her husband.

Parsons argued that Margery Austoo was brought before the examiner with her husband 'as she had byn his teacher and preacher at home; so would she also needs be his speaker in that place'.⁹² In this line Parsons argued that in these Protestant heresy trials gender roles were inverted. The husband was shown to take on the ideal feminine values of submission and silence, dependent on their wife for spiritual guidance, when it should be the other way around. To put it more bluntly, these female Protestants emasculated their husbands. This reasoning was used by such writers to illustrate that Protestantism must be heresy, for it conflicted with the social, familial and patriarchal order which was ordained by God. Parsons was clear in his argument that runs throughout his *Three Conversions* that the accommodation of Protestant teachings into early modern society would lead to its breakdown. In arguing this, Parsons was playing on one of the great fears of early modern society: disorder. By following this line of argument Parsons attempted not only to undermine the credibility of Protestantism's martyrs but the foundations upon which evangelical belief were based on. For Parsons, the ability of any woman to convert her husband, and other members of her family, to a heretical faith was a deeply troubling concept.

The steadfastness of a female family member could inspire other members of her family to show the same strong resilience in times of religious persecution. This is illustrated quite clearly by the experience of the Foxe family, who despite the shared surname bore no connection to the famous martyrologist other than their shared Protestant beliefs. John Steyre, his wife, his brother John Foxe and his wife Elizabeth, were part of a Protestant congregation in Stoke, Suffolk. They were arrested with seven men and women named by Foxe, and more besides, for not attending services at the official Catholic Church.⁹³

All members of the congregation refused to recant or even come to a compromise with the interrogators apart from brothers, John Steyr and John Foxe. Their wives, refused to

⁹¹ Parsons, pp.161-2.

⁹² Parsons, pp.161-2.

⁹³ Foxe (1570), p.2277.

recant along with the other members of the congregation. John Steyr gave his wife ‘leave to do as she thought best’, whereas, John Foxe threatened his wife by telling her that unless she agreed to the terms of the examiners and reformed her beliefs then ‘he would divorce hym selfe from her’.⁹⁴ At first glance, this seems to suggest that John Foxe cared more about his reputation than the spiritual or physical welfare of his wife. However, the fact that John Foxe was involved in the Protestant congregation prior to their arrest suggests otherwise. It is more likely that John Foxe was concerned with the shame that would befall him if his wife was seen to be more courageous in defending Protestantism than he himself was. The violence that he later showed his wife was most likely an extension of the anger he felt towards himself because of his cowardice. Elizabeth Foxe fled from her household to stay with members of the congregation, and she ‘with teares declared how violently her husband had de[a]lt with her’.⁹⁵ It is the apology Foxe offered his wife Elizabeth, a day after her flight, which implies that he threatened her because his own faith wavered.

Foxe apologised to his wife and the congregation for: ‘his owne headines[s] and rashness[s], praying them that they would forgeue him, promising ever after to be strong in faith’ to which the congregation of Stoke and his wife rejoiced.⁹⁶ Megan Hickerson argues that what makes Elizabeth Foxe’s disobedience extraordinary is that it is not only justifiable and necessary in the context, but admirable in the eyes of her martyrologist.⁹⁷ Hickerson states that it was only through his wife’s disobedience that John Foxe ‘found his salvation’.⁹⁸ What Hickerson does not comment upon is how the author Foxe downplays Elizabeth Foxe’s role in her husband’s change of heart. The martyrologist praised the congregation’s ‘earnest prayers’ as the main reason Foxe returned to Protestantism instead of the actions of his wife.⁹⁹ However, it is undeniable that his wife had a part to play. Despite this, John Foxe and his wife, his brother and his wife all eventually escaped punishment.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, Elizabeth Foxe’s actions in inspiring her husband to stay true to their beliefs earned the family a place in the *Acts and Monuments*.

Women’s sexual and religious immorality was deeply connected as was taught by historical precedent and the Bible in the eyes of many of their contemporaries. Catholic

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2278.

⁹⁶ Foxe, (1570), p.2278.

⁹⁷ Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs*, pp.96-7.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.97.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on what happened to Elizabeth Foxe and her family see Appendix 1.xxxii.

critics played on the character of the female Protestant martyr to demonstrate that these women were not saintly ideals of womanhood but represented all the ways in which a woman's nature could be corrupted by the Devil 'to bryng men to their confusion' and threaten the patriarchal stability of society.¹⁰¹ The aim of these Catholic polemicists, as has been discussed, was to demonstrate how these women should be condemned, even feared, not admired. Foxe protected the female Marian Protestants as best as he was able by minimising their involvement in their husbands decision to stay strong in their Protestant beliefs despite the dangers. Foxe did not deny the role these women had in helping their husbands to achieve martyrdom but he moulded their persuasions to be as indirect as possible. They were never seen actively to convert their husbands from Catholicism to Protestantism but merely to strengthen their pre-standing protestant convictions.

Conclusion

Marital ties, as this chapter has shown, could be justifiably broken if the vows to an ungodly husband interfered with a wife's allegiance to God. Similarly, women could use their position as wife to aid their husbands to remain steadfast in the face of persecution. Just as women could be chosen to be martyrs, they could be chosen by God to help their husbands find salvation. The strength women showed in both of these instances demonstrated that God's will must be on their side for they would not be able to have achieved this otherwise. A woman's ability to persuade her husband to remain true to Protestantism was condemned by Catholic writers as evidence of women's sinful nature: these women, they argued, exploited religion for their own social advancement. Important to be noted, however, is that none of Foxe's female martyrs converted their husbands to the Protestant faith but encouraged them to remain true to a faith they had already converted to. Foxe was well aware of the possible arguments his critics would use to attack his work. Foxe affirmed that women did not renounce their family responsibilities easily and did their best to be the best wives they could be during their lifetimes while they were at liberty to do so. By portraying his female martyrs as women who were content to be wives Foxe managed to justify their actions as selfless and ordained by God.

Undeniable is the impact these wives' decisions had on their husbands. Ironically, the husbands who resented their wives' commitment to the Protestant faith in a bid to preserve their reputation were among those who had their reputations forever tarnished

¹⁰¹ Huggarde, p.75.

in Foxe's popular martyrology. Husbands, such as Edmund Allin, would not have perished in the flames if it were not for the strength of their wife's conviction. The strength and religious purity of these women in comparison to their husbands made their plight the more admirable. The decisions of these women also greatly affected the lives of their children. In this instance, a woman's decision to prioritise religious obligations over raising her children was much harder to justify, than a woman rejecting against her husband's heretical authority, especially if their children were of dependent age.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JOURNEY FROM MOTHERHOOD TO MARTYRDOM: UNDERSTANDING MATERNAL SACRIFICE

I well hoped I should have found no mo[re] such like stories of vnmercifull crueltie shewed upon sely women with their childre[n] and young infants.

John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monuments* (1570), STC 11223, p.2139.

This line, drawn from Foxe's story of Joan Dangerfield, was intended to highlight Foxe's disbelief towards the level of suffering mothers endured during the Marian persecution. Joan Dangerfield died alongside her infant in prison. Her account in the *Acts and Monuments* followed on from the notoriously gruesome story of the pregnant Perotine Massey being burnt at the stake on the island of Guernsey. Despite his feigned reluctance to tell these women and their young children's stories of martyrdom, these cases were invaluable to Foxe to inspire hatred of Catholicism and its sentiments among his readers. Persecution was generally accepted as a just deterrent and punishment for heresy, but what made these specific cases unjust and unacceptable was the fatal impact upon innocent infants.

The presence of mothers and children in the multiple editions of Foxes *Acts and Monuments* has often been overlooked by historians. This does not mean that the stories in which these themes appear have not been discussed but that the importance of a woman's family roles and their relationship with her maternal duties has been under studied. For these women, the experience of upholding reformist beliefs could shape the identities of not just themselves but their families in the works of their respective martyrologist(s). The experience of persecution could be hugely influential upon guiding the outlook of a woman's offspring and in determining their futures.

As mothers, these women had to make significant sacrifices with regards to prioritising their own spiritual welfare over the obligations they had towards their young children. In the cases of pregnant women and women arrested straight after childbirth the impact a woman's religious leanings had on her dependent children could be fatal. The significance of this is analysed in the first section of this chapter. Many of the female martyrs, especially those in their twenties and thirties when they were executed, converted to

Protestantism in their childhood and adolescence during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. For these women the experience of persecution, especially that of their mothers, reaffirmed and strengthened their attachment to Protestantism in opposition to the values of Catholicism. The second section explores the extent to which the experience of religious oppression informed these young women's characters. The final section considers persecuted mothers as role mothers and measures the affect that their martyrdom could have on their older children.

Sacrifice of Motherhood: The Execution of Pregnant Heretics

At least twenty percent of female martyrs recorded in Foxe's Book of Martyrs were known to have children. For these religiously radical women the sacrifice of their role as mother was necessary in order to be a witness for Christ. As Thomas Freeman has argued, this sacrifice must have been excruciating for women in a period when a woman's identity was so entrenched in her family role.¹ For the early modern woman, neglect of her child's welfare in search of religious truth was harder to reconcile than disobeying an ungodly husband. Despite this, early modern theologians theorised that affection for one's child should never be allowed to overstep a good Christian wife and mother's devotion to God and vice versa.² For Foxe, as both martyrologist and Protestant propagandist, stories of women being cruelly forced to abandon their children by callous Catholic persecutors was a key emotive weapon which he used to persuade his readers to adhere to reformed teachings.

Foxe portrayed both pregnant women graphically being burnt at the stake and the struggles of good Protestant women forced from childbed to be imprisoned with their new born infant. In these cases mothers were shown to fail helplessly in their efforts desperately to preserve the life of their infant child while remaining spiritually steadfast. Foxe made clear that these women were content to die in the name of Protestantism but it was not their choice to risk their child's welfare but purely the fault of the inhumane and bloodthirsty Catholic regime. Nonetheless, due to the nature of Foxe's accusations these stories were highly controversial. The legacy of these women was subsequently

¹ Thomas Freeman, "'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women': The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs,' *The Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000), 8-33 (p.16).

² William Gouge, 'Duties of Children', *Domesticall Duties* (1622) STC (2nd ed.) 12119, p.468- 'The preferring of father and mother before the Lord Christ sheweth that such a childe is not worthy of Christ.' ; For more on this theological debate see D. Andrew Penny, 'Family Matters and Foxe's Acts and Monuments', *Historical Journal*, 39(1996), 599-618 (pp.604-607).

attacked by Catholic polemicists anxious to preserve the reputation of their church by undermining the reputations of martyred mothers. These stories provide clear examples of how heated debate could become between Protestant and Catholic writers in the literary warfare of the Reformation period.

Such stories of ‘crueltie shewed uppon sely children with their...young infants’ held much emotive value for Foxe and were incredibly useful tools of stirring a strong anti-Catholic sentiment among his readers.³ Foxe eruditely argued that burning a woman whilst pregnant or having just given birth was ‘cruell and tirannical murder’.⁴

Traditionally, the execution of pregnant criminals could be postponed, or in rarer cases suspended, if she successfully pleaded the ‘Benefit of the Belly’, as Foxe and Harding term the pardon, at her trial.⁵ Usually, following evidence provided by the ‘Jury of Matrons’ to confirm that the convicted was actually pregnant, the ‘Benefit of the Belly’ allowed the convicted to give birth before they faced punishment.⁶ None of the martyrs discussed in this section were granted this provision, a fact that allowed their critics to claim that these heretics had never admitted that they were pregnant. Following this they were able to argue these women were guilty of wilful infanticide.

In Foxe’s work three pregnant Protestant women were sentenced to death: Bradbreg’s wife, Elizabeth Pepper and most famously Perotine Massey. Not one of these stories concerning the gruesome martyrdoms of three women remained unchanged during the author’s lifetime due to their contentious contents, as this section considers.

In chapter one, this thesis considered how female Protestants’ martyrdom ambitions were sexualised by Catholic writers.⁷ This theme is most apparent in the study of the criticism stories featuring pregnant heretic women received. Foxe faced one of his greatest

³ John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiastical history contaynyng the actes [and] monuments of thinges passed in euery kings time, in this realme, especially in the Churche of England principally to be note* (London: John Daye, 1570) STC 11223, p.2139.

⁴ John Foxe, *Actes and Monumentes of these latter and perillous dayes* (London: John Daye, 1563), STC 11222, p.1541.

⁵ Protestant John Foxe and Catholic Thomas Harding refer directly to ‘the benefite of her belly’ in their late sixteenth-century works. See John Foxe (1570), p.2132; Thomas Harding, *A reioindre to M. Jewels replie against the sacrifice of the Masse* (Louvain, 1567), STC 12761, p.185.

⁶ Literature surrounding the Benefit of the Belly and its use in the early modern era is severely lacking. To see more on the history of women criminals pleading the benefit of the belly see, James C. Oldham, ‘On Pleading the Benefit of the Belly: A History of the Jury of Matrons’, *Criminal Justice History* 6 (1985), 1-64. In order to see examples of the clauses use in the early modern period see Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2003), in particular p.198.

⁷ See chapter one of this thesis, pp.24-26.

challenges in shaping these women into godly mothers. The most notorious of his stories was the burning of Perotine Massey who allegedly gave birth in the flames, as figure 3.1 illustrates.

Figure 3.1: ‘A Lamentable Spectacle of three women, with a sely infant brasting out of the Mothers Wombe, being first taken out of the fire, and cast in agayne, and so all burned together in the Isle of Garnesey’.



Source: John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history containyng the actes and monumentes* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2129.

The story of the execution of the heavily pregnant woman, Perotine Massey, alongside her mother and sister is notoriously graphic both in the seven pages that Foxe devotes to it and the large woodcut depicting the scene of the execution.⁸ As Foxe recorded in the 1563 edition of his martyrology, ‘[a]mong al[l] and singular histories in this booke...there [is] none almoste to be compared to thys cruell and furious acte of the homicide Papists.’⁹ Katherine Cauches and her two daughters, Perotine Massey and Guillemine Gilbert, were executed on 18 July 1556 in St. Peter’s Port, Guernsey. In the examinations and their subsequent execution, Perotine Massey was ‘great with child’.¹⁰ This child was delivered into the flames, as Massey burnt at the stake, as shown in figure 3.1. Massey’s son was rescued from the flames and ‘layd upon the grasse’ by a spectator of the execution. The child was then handed to the provost and then to the Bailiff who ‘car[r]ied it back agayne

⁸ In the 1570 version of Foxe’s work the Guernsey story fills seven pages. This number varies in different editions.

⁹ Foxe (1563), p.1541.

¹⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2128.

and cast into the fire.’¹¹ Following a petition penned by Perotine Massey’s maternal uncle, Matthew Cauches, in 1562, the sheriff in charge of the execution was charged and found guilty of murder.¹² In 1563, the same year Foxe’s first *Acts of Monuments* was published, the Bailiff Helier Gosselin, who was responsible for having Massey’s infant thrown back into the flames, was dismissed from his post and was later ordered to pay a fine of £1000 along with several other of the islands religiously conservative jurats during Elizabeth I’s reign.¹³

Despite the gruesome nature of this emotive case, the details supplied in Foxe’s 1563 outline of the story were surprisingly ambiguous. Foxe went into great detail in describing the child ‘issuing out of the mother’s wombe’, but the paternity of the child was not revealed.¹⁴ Whatever Foxe’s reasons were for omitting this detail, it considerably weakened his defence of Perotine’s martyrdom. The line between a woman’s religious and sexual sins was incredibly thin, and in not acknowledging Perotine’s marital status or the father of her son, Catholic critics were quick to attack Foxe’s promotion of Perotine as martyr.

Four years after Foxe first published this story, Thomas Harding’s *Reioindre*, dedicated in part to delegitimising Foxe’s Protestant ‘stinking Martyrs’, concluded that: ‘[i]t appeareth very credible, that the historiographer was a shamed to name the childes Father, leaste so he should have defaced the glorie of the mothers Martyr-dome.’¹⁵ Harding argued that Massey’s child must have been illegitimate. For Harding, no other reason could explain why Foxe omitted the name of the child’s father and why Massey was not seen to make her pregnancy known to her examiners prior to her execution. The blame for the child’s death was laid firmly with his mother, not her interrogators, in Harding’s argument. Harding did admit that the child was thrown back into the fire by the Bailiff but insisted Perotine was the ‘murtherer of her own babe’.¹⁶ Harding’s depiction of Perotine Massey as a murderer, not just the carrier of an illegitimate child, is crucial to understanding how women’s relationships with their families could be used to diminish their claim to martyrdom.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Carole Levin and John Watkins, *Shakespeare’s Foreign Worlds: National and Transitional Identities in the Elizabethan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p.47.

¹³ Tim Thornton, *The Channel Islands 1370-1640: Between England and Normandy*

¹⁴ Foxe (1563), p.1544.

¹⁵ Thomas Harding, *A reioindre to M. Iewels replie against the sacrifice of the Masse* (Louvain, 1567), STC 12761, p.185.

¹⁶ Harding, p.185.

Harding directly challenged Foxe's moulding of Perotine Massey into an innocent and godly mother. By charging Massey with the death of her child, Harding was able to present her as an 'unnatural mother':

[T]he unnatural mother...not only like an harlot or Heretique, but like a Murtherer went desperat[e]ly to the fier, and murdered bothe her selfe, and her childe conceiued within her.¹⁷

The Perotine Massey that Harding presented was far from Foxe's innocent victim but an immoral woman prepared to sacrifice her child's life rather than to admit her mistake. Ironically, it was Foxe's response to Harding's accusations that proved the effectiveness of his rival's inflammatory words. Although the contents of the *Acts and Monuments* were regularly amended by Foxe, Foxe rarely responded directly to Catholic writers and their criticism. In 1570, three years after Harding's publication, Foxe added a lengthy section to Perotine Massey and her family's martyrdom account entitled: 'Defence of this Guernsey story against M. Harding'.¹⁸

The main purpose of Foxe's 'Defence' was to disprove Harding's accusation that Massey was responsible for the death of her child. Harding had made clear in his *Reioindre*, that he believed 'how so euer the childe was begotten' Perotine would have been granted 'the benefite of her belly' and 'doubtesse her death had bene differed vntil she had be[e]n brought on bed'.¹⁹ Foxe had to justify why Massey had not claimed 'benefite of her bel[l]y'.²⁰

Foxe listed eight separate reasons why Perotine might have not pleaded the belly after her condemnation for reasons other than her being a murderess or ashamed of the infant.²¹ These reasons included Perotine being a 'simple woman' brought up 'farre from the Court, and the practise of English laws' in an 'outcorner of the land' simply not knowing that the law existed.²² Foxe reasoned that Perotine did not wilfully sacrifice her child. This child was legitimate and it was not shame, but ignorance, that explained her actions.²³ The father of the child, Foxe claimed in response to Harding's accusation, was Perotine's husband, the minister David Jores.²⁴

¹⁷ Harding, p.185.

¹⁸ See Foxe (1570), pp.2130-2134.

¹⁹ Harding, p.185.

²⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2132.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Foxe (1570), p.2132.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

By revealing the name of Perotine Massey's husband only after Harding highlighted this absence and disclosing his profession as a priest, Foxe made Massey's story more contentious. Foxe's contemporaries and historians have debated why Foxe did not reveal Jores' name sooner. Megan Hickerson's argument to explain why Foxe would not materialise the match is that Foxe would be unwilling to fabricate Perotine a priest for a husband, being more than aware that it would only provoke his Catholic critics further to attack his work because they believed clergymen must remain celibate.²⁵ While Carole Levin and John Watkins agree that Foxe would be reluctant to promote such a husband, they contend that it was because Norman Jores was an 'absent foreigner' rather than a priest as the reason that made the marriage contentious.²⁶

However, the most probable reason why Foxe did not acknowledge Perotine's alleged husband, Jores, in the first edition of his work was that the details pertaining to the marriage and especially the conception of the child were sketchy. David Jores was in Guernsey during the evangelical reign of Edward VI.²⁷ Like many French Huguenots such as Denis le Vair, Jores would have fled from the harsh religious persecution initiated by Henri II's edicts in Normandy and come to England, in this case the channel island of Guernsey.²⁸ Jores was known to have left his exile in Guernsey around 1553 when the Catholic Mary Tudor ascended the throne.²⁹ This would have meant Jores left the isle three years before his wife, Perotine Massey, gave birth to his child at the stake in 1556. If Jores had stayed or come back to the island during those three years, it seems unlikely that he would have escaped the same punishment as his wife. Therefore, even though Jores and Massey could have been married, the paternity of the child is shadowed by doubt. Therefore, it is no surprise Foxe would have wanted the details of Perotine's husband and father of her child to be kept as vague as possible.

Foxe's defence of Perotine Massey's martyrdom was not completely effective, despite broadening this defence again in his 1583 edition of the work, the last to be published during his lifetime.³⁰ In 1604, Parsons attacked Foxe's credibility as a martyrologist by criticising this case. He argued that Foxe's confession made her 'sinne to be more gr[i]evous...wher[e]as before we might have imagined that yt had byn only simple

²⁵ Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs*, pp.99-100.

²⁶ Levin and Watkins, p.48.

²⁷ See Darryl Mark Ogier, *Reformation and Society in Guernsey* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996).

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.53.

²⁹ *Ibid*; Thornton, pp.88-89.

³⁰ Foxe, 1583, p.1945.

fornication.³¹ Perhaps most importantly, Parsons highlighted the gaps in Foxe's argument: why the couple did not share the same name and how Perotine's husband had avoided persecution, if he had been in Guernsey when the child was conceived.³²

Despite this, Massey's martyrdom is one of the most evocative cases, concerning the effect persecution could have upon mothers and children. In the same way Foxe used the language of family to enhance women's statuses as true martyrs, his Catholic critics used the same tactic in order to prove them to be false heretics. As Harding argued, '[i]t is not suffering, but the cause of suffering, that maketh a martyr'.³³ For Harding, using his definition and argument, Massey was not a martyr because by sacrificing the life of her child for her cause, she brought 'condemnation' upon 'bothe of her, and of the cause for which she dyed'.³⁴ Massey's shame had interfered with her obligations to her unborn child, and for this, in Harding's eyes, she was an unfit mother and unsuitable martyr.

The story of the Guernsey women's martyrdom has captured much attention from both contemporary scholars and modern historians. Even William Cecil, arguably one of the most powerful men in Elizabethan England as Secretary of State and later Lord Treasurer, used the case of the Guernsey female martyrs as an example 'beyond heathen cruelty', to defend his body of statutes which aimed to curb papist practices and justify punishing Catholic priests as traitors to the crown, in his 1583 tract *The Execution of Justice*, printed in the same year that the last edition of *Acts and Monuments* was to be published during Foxe's lifetime.³⁵ However, it was not the only case of convicted heretics refusing to plead 'Benefit of the Belly'. While Hickerson praises Foxe for not simply omitting the more controversial details of this story of the Guernsey martyrs it must be remembered that Foxe did omit similar details from other pregnant women's cases in the 1570 edition of his work.³⁶ For example, despite Massey's story being presented in more detail in the second edition of Foxe's work, the controversial details of Elizabeth Pepper's account were removed. Information regarding Pepper's pregnancy, which had been detailed in the 1563 edition, was deleted completely and was only reinstated in the fourth edition, published in 1583.

³¹ Parsons, p.100.

³² Parsons, pp.99-100.

³³ Harding, p.186.

³⁴ Harding, p.185.

³⁵ Baron Burghley, William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice in England for Maintenance of Publique and Christian Peace* (London: Christopher Barker, 1583) STC (2nd ed) 4902, p.18.

³⁶ Megan L. Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.99-100.

The information regarding Pepper's pregnancy consisted of a conversation she had with her cell mate, Mrs Bosome, where Pepper defended her decision not to plead for the Benefit of the Belly.³⁷ When asked by her cell mate why 'she did not tell them' that she was eleven weeks pregnant Pepper replied that 'they know it well enough'.³⁸ Even when this information was presented in Foxe's 1563 and 1583 accounts, the facts were ambiguous. The reader does not know why Pepper believed the examiners knew she was pregnant, nor if she had actually tried to plead the Benefit of the Belly and was refused. The phrasing of the conversation between Pepper and Bosome suggests that she had not told her examiners, but shows an awareness that weaver's wife Pepper knew such a law existed. Possibly, Foxe chose to omit this information in the 1570 and 1576 editions because it conflicted with his argument in Massey's case that 'simple' women were not likely to know that the 'benefite' existed.³⁹ Pepper was executed on 27 June 1556.

Foxe demonstrated this same reluctance in the case of Bradbregge's wife. The suspected pregnancy of Bradbregge's wife at her execution only appears very briefly as a marginal note stating '[t]hys Bradbreges wife was thought to be with childe.'⁴⁰ At first, the fact that this statement appears in the margin, not the main text, suggests Foxe was unwilling to bring much attention to this fact and incite more Catholic criticism. However, the fact that Foxe still mentioned his belief, even though he could not definitely prove that Bradbregge was with child, is significant. Perhaps if Foxe could have confirmed that Bradbregge's was with child, knowledge of her pregnancy would have appeared in the main text. Foxe believed this detail was still worth mentioning. In increasing the notoriety of Bradbregge's suffering he was able to enhance her claim to martyrdom.

Protestant martyrologists were not alone in using the pregnancy of female martyrs as a literary weapon to villainise the reputation of their confessional adversaries. Catholic martyrologist, John Mush, similarly used the treatment of pregnant martyr, Margaret Clitherow, to demonise her Protestant interrogators. Mush was able to do this to great effect because he recorded a debate between the Protestant examiners in charge of Clitherow's trial. In this debate, these examiners argued whether it was justifiable to

³⁷ Mrs Bosome was arrested with her mother for her poor church attendance and her misbehaviour in Catholic services when she did finally agree to attend church. Bosome survived the Marian persecutions and provided Foxe with the information regarding Elizabeth Pepper's pregnancy and her reasons for not pleading to be granted Benefit of the Belly as well as details regarding her own arrest. See Foxe (1583), p.2145.

³⁸ Foxe (1583), p.2145.

³⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2132.

⁴⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2167.

execute pregnant Clitherow if she had not claimed ‘Benefit of the Belly’. In Mush’s narrative of Clitherow’s trial, Clitherow was ‘asked if she thought in her conscience that she were with child’.⁴¹ Clitherow answered that ‘she knew not certainly’ but ‘thought rather she was that otherwise’.⁴² Her family and friends spent the following week persuading her to ‘say directly that she was with child’, but Clitherow refused.⁴³

Following this, the Sherriff of York visited Clitherow’s judge, Clinch, and ‘demanded what he should do with her’.⁴⁴ Clinch believed Clitherow ‘may not be executed, for they say she is with child’.⁴⁵ His fellow councillor Rhodes declared that Clinch was too merciful.⁴⁶ The other members of the Council of York, Meares, Hurrleston and Checke agreed with Rhodes; they believed that it was perfectly lawful to execute a pregnant woman if she refused to plead.⁴⁷ The implication was that the fault was hers not theirs. After Clinch again refused to consent to sentence her, ‘four honest women’ were sent to Clitherow’s cell to ensure ‘she was with child’.⁴⁸ They concluded that she was. Again, the councillors debated. Clinch was outnumbered, and although he ultimately refused to condemn Clitherow, Clitherow was sentenced to death on 25 March 1586.⁴⁹

This debate between Clitherow’s examiners is extremely useful. It shows that executing a pregnant heretic was not an automatic response as Foxe portrayed. In his accounts of similar incidences, Foxe implied that persecutors did not display any reluctance in coming to such a decision. Mush’s account is more revealing, although just as biased, as it displayed that the majority of the Protestant examiners responsible were willing to execute a pregnant woman. It must be remembered that Clitherow was not indicted only for heresy but upon the charge of harbouring seminary priests. This crime was deemed a treasonable offence by a 1585 statute of the Elizabethan state.⁵⁰ Although this does not make the judges’ decision acceptable, Clitherow was in a more damnable position than

⁴¹ John Mush, ‘A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow’, in John Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, series 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), pp.131-440 (p.418).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mush, p.419.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mush, pp.419-20.

⁵⁰ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Margaret Clitherow, Catholic Nonconformity, Martyrology and the Politics of Religious Change in Elizabethan England’, *Past & Present*, 185 (2004), 43-90 (p.51).

any of Foxe's Protestant martyrs because her crime was not just against the church but also the queen.

The intention of Mush's record of this debate was the same as Foxe's in representing his pregnant martyrs: to malign the interrogators of the women and, in turn, the religion they confessed. Much of the language Mush used to describe Clitherow's examiners mirrored that used by Foxe. For example, Mush argued that the Protestant York councillors 'most greedily thirsted after her blood'.⁵¹ Clitherow's refusal to reveal her pregnancy was just as contentious as her martyred Protestant counterparts. It was used against her by her Protestant adversaries and by her Catholic hagiographer to victimise her plight.

The most notorious cases of mother's having to sacrifice their infants were, as considered in this section, used to demonise their examiners. The Catholic authorities, Foxe argued, were responsible for the deaths of these children. As such, whatever the crime of the mother their deaths were unjust. Catholic writers and Protestant writers fought to use a persecuted woman's pregnancy to their advantage: either to strengthen or undermine the cause the other faction's women were dying for. This shows how language of family duty could greatly effect a woman's claim to martyrdom.

Sacrifice of Motherhood: Persecuted Women and their Infants

Alongside cases of pregnant martyrs being executed at the stake, Foxe presented accounts of women struggling to preserve the lives of their young children whilst facing the forces of Marian persecution. For Foxe, these two sets of cases were inextricably linked, as the quote used to introduce this chapter illustrates.⁵² This line was used by Foxe directly to connect the case of the pregnant Perotine Massey being burnt at the stake, with his story of Joan Dangerfield dying in prison alongside her infant. Both versions of these stories were used to vilify the Catholic authorities and represent them as anti-family.

What makes Joan Dangerfield's account particularly interesting is that it illustrates that the negotiations of religious over family obligations could be very complex. Different family members could, all being accused of heresy, hold different views about how this compromise between the two should be managed.

Joan Dangerfield and her husband William were arrested in Wotton Underhedge in Gloucestershire after their 'unkynd and uncharitable neighbours' reported them as

⁵¹ Mush, p.419.

⁵² For this quotation see chapter three of this thesis, p.51.

heretics.⁵³ At this time the couple had ten children, one of whom was only four days old and upon being taken from the childbed Joan had to take this infant to prison with her.⁵⁴ Foxe continued to lay out all of the hardships Joan and her husband faced in the ‘common Jayle’ they were placed in where Joan, according to Foxe, was placed ‘amognst the[i]ves and murderers’.⁵⁵ Joan struggled to keep the new-born warm and fed, and eventually the child ‘was passed all remedy’ and was taken away from her and died shortly afterwards.⁵⁶

Ellen Macek has argued that this account illustrates that Foxe selected and constructed his stories according to their emotional appeal.⁵⁷ It is apparent that the marriage displayed in the Dangerfield account was affectionate; when Joan’s husband eventually recanted it was because he was told by his interrogator that his wife had already done so and when it was discovered that his wife’s recantation was invented to deceive him with ‘melyng hartes’, William Dangerfield committed suicide when he was released.⁵⁸ His wife shortly after passed away in prison, following the death of her child, after rejecting the interrogators persuasive arguments to recant herself.

Hickerson uses this account to argue that Foxe did not hesitate to display women as ‘stronger or more erudite’ than their husbands in stories where wives and husbands faced persecution together.⁵⁹ However, this case is more complex than this argument allows. At first it appears that William Dangerfield prioritised his familial obligations over his spiritual duties, by recanting when false documents portraying his wife’s fabricated recantation are shown to him. This picture is reversed, however, when upon returning home after his imprisonment he committed suicide leaving his nine surviving children as orphans who, according to Foxe, were ‘all undone, the same’.⁶⁰ In addition to this, ‘the old woman which was mother of the husband’, as Foxe records, perished at 80 years of age as a result of the distress caused by these events and ‘lacke of comferte’.⁶¹ Joan Dangerfield appears, as Hickerson suggests, to be stronger in her commitment to her faith than her husband was.

⁵³ Foxe (1570), p.2139.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ellen A. Macek, ‘The Emergence of a Feminine Spirituality in *The Book of Martyrs*’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 63-80 (p.74).

⁵⁸ Foxe (1570), p.2139.

⁵⁹ Hickerson, p.94.

⁶⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2139.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Nonetheless, Joan Dangerfield's faith does not seem to be as unwavering as Hickerson implies. In a tale where Joan's efforts to keep her new-born child alive, and failing, are well documented it seems hard to believe her faith remained absolutely steadfast. This account made clear just how devastating the effects of persecution could be, not just on a female martyr, but upon her entire family. Joan and William Dangerfield were brought closer together by their shared radicalism before being torn apart when William's relationship with his wife was used against him, and he recanted upon being deceived that his wife, who was reported by the interrogators as being just as 'well learned as he', recanted also.⁶² None of the Dangerfield household escaped unscathed in this case.

In the case of Agnes Bongeor, the presence of her child in prison is only commented upon by the martyrologist when she was required to send her 'lit[t]le young infant sucking on her, whom shee kept with her tenderly all the time shee was in prison...to another nurse'.⁶³ The phrase 'another nurse' raises the question of what Foxe saw Bongeor's role as mother primarily to consist. Agnes Bongeor is never referred to as a mother in Foxe's martyrology, only as a wife and martyr, which suggests there is a detachment apparent between Bongeor and her child. Although she only gave her baby away at the last minute, the implication was that all she ever was to the child was its nurse. The transformation between woman and mother to martyr was already happening when Bongeor was in prison for her beliefs. Foxe gave more priority to the upset the deferring of her execution had because she 'had put on a smocke that she had prepared onely for that purpose' than the pain that was caused at having to give her baby away in order for her to prepare for being burned at the stake.⁶⁴

Bongeor at this point seemed to have already resigned herself to her spiritual duties and had stepped away from her earthly roles much in the same light as martyr, wife and mother Agnes Prest, considered in the previous chapter, who voiced her rejection of her earthly favour in favour of her spiritual calling: 'God is my father, God is my mother, God is my sister, my brother, my kinsman, God is my fr[i]end most faithfull.'⁶⁵ Clearly, Foxe's moulding of Bongeor's martyrdom story and the shaping of her priorities cannot be taken as completely truthful.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Foxe (1563), p.1632.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Bongeor's execution was deferred because her name appeared incorrectly on the execution writ as Agnes Bowyer. To see more on this and Bongeor's execution see Appendix 1.xxiv.

⁶⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2252.

Foxe's agenda was to justify a woman's relinquishing of her family responsibilities in order to pursue her religious calling. If Bongeor had no affection towards her child it seems unlikely that she would have sent it away so late, just before her execution. It is also odd that other than the revealing of his name, no mention is made of Agnes' husband, Richard Bongeor, considering that his child was in prison. Agnes Bongeor's primary role in Foxe's story is as a future martyr; her roles as mother and wife are presented as secondary concerns although still important.

In comparing the stories of Joan Dangerfield and Agnes Bongeor against the stories of the martyred pregnant women, considered in the last section, a trend emerges whereby women risked the lives of their children to obtain martyrdom. However, this was not the full picture. Some women risked their lives in order to preserve the lives of their children. For example, Agnes Wardall returned to England from religious exile in 1556 to visit her children in St Clements, Ipswich.⁶⁶ Her children were cared for by a 'young mayde' in a house owned by Wardall's mother-in-law.⁶⁷ Agnes risked her life in returning to England during the height of the Marian persecution. When the authorities learned of her return, her household was searched by a team of men, with weapons, in order to arrest her.⁶⁸ Agnes Wardall was alerted and hidden, in a locked small cupboard, by a maid until she nearly suffocated.⁶⁹ She managed to escape her house when the constable left to search the parish; she hid in a nettle-covered ditch in a field.⁷⁰ Agnes Wardall was very nearly captured by the authorities, but was saved, Foxe argued, by God's 'prouidence'.⁷¹ Wardall was the perfect mother and Protestant because she refused to give up her beliefs while managing to care for her children. In this light, in Foxe's eyes, Wardall's roles of mother, wife and Protestant went hand in hand.

The cases of women struggling to bring up their children while remaining loyal to the Protestant cause exemplify the effects women's devotion to a dissident religion could have on their families. Despite endangering the lives of their young children by risking persecution, these women stayed devoted to caring for their children until they were forced to relinquish their responsibilities to them. These women attempted to be the best

⁶⁶ Foxe (1570), p.2124.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ Foxe (1570), p.2125.

⁷¹ Foxe (1570), p.2124: 'Agnes Wardall forthwith should be apprehended: but God in whose prouidence the direction of all thinges consisteth, by whose disposition they haue their operation, so gratusly prouided for his seruant, and preuented their malignant deuises'.

mothers possible while being willing to die for their beliefs. In being the best mothers they could be in the circumstances, these women became better martyrs.

Childhood and the Experience of Religious Persecution

The impact of the Marian persecution in the 1550s on families could be life changing and informing. The encounter with persecution for some in their childhood and adolescent years could help form their identities, in resistance to the cruelty of the Catholic forces of persecution. Those who witnessed the deaths of one or two parents at the hands of the Marian authorities were more devoted to defend their faith. The upbringing of these Protestant women also influenced their dedication to evangelical religious reform even if the consequences of doing so were fatal. By being exposed to the tenets of reform at a young age, women were more likely to develop a radical religious outlook in later life, to the extent that they were prepared to die for those beliefs. Witnessing the persecution of a loved one could only make these women more resistant to the Catholic faith. Proud parents and siblings supported women who stayed so strong in their shared Protestant sentiments even if they had no intention of following in their footsteps and helped to cement their relative's status as worthy witness to God, as examined in this section.

The appearance of siblings in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is particularly demonstrative of the role godly upbringings could have on helping a Tudor woman achieve martyrdom. Despite this, it is a relatively, almost completely, neglected area of discussion within the historiography surrounding martyrdom. The absence of this research is part of a larger gap in early modern historiography, as Patricia Crawford highlights, where sibling relationships, as a rule, are less studied than the relationships that existed between a wife and husband, parents and children.⁷² The relationships between martyrs and their sisters and brothers is very important because it gives an insight into how a female martyr's upbringing may have contributed towards her ability to defend her beliefs so eruditely and confidentially.

Foxe's story of Joan Waste illustrates how important sibling bonds could be for female martyrs.⁷³ Waste was introduced to Protestantism with her brother, Roger, shortly after her parents died during the reign of King Edward when she attended her first church

⁷² Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2004), pp.209-10.

⁷³ For a biography of Joan Waste see, Appendix 1.xxviii.

service read in English.⁷⁴ Waste, by Foxe's account, was an exemplary Protestant woman. Despite being born blind, she had been taught between the ages of twelve and fourteen to earn herself a living by making hosen and sleeves.⁷⁵ This ability allowed her in early adulthood to earn enough money to buy a copy of the New Testament in English and employ local villagers to read it aloud to her until she could 'vnderstand and haue printed in her memory...[the] sayinges of holy scriptures'.⁷⁶ Waste's story illustrates how even though these women were predestined to martyrdom, as Foxe would have any reader of his work believe, the prerequisites required by these types of women were partially instilled in many of his young Protestants through the help of their family and the values they were taught during their childhoods. Waste's characterisation also illustrates the concern Foxe had as editor to present his martyrs as admirable family figures: in Waste's case as an ideal daughter and sister. The supporting bond between Joan and Roger Waste is cemented when Foxe describes Roger holding his sister's hand while he guided her to her place of execution: 'holding the said Roger Wast[e] by the hand, she prepared her selfe, and desired the people to pray with her...'⁷⁷ The affection that must have existed between two siblings orphaned during their teenage years does not interfere with Joan's desire to be witness to God's faith but enhances the integrity and expression of her martyrdom.

The shared beliefs between siblings could interfere with a woman's allegiance to a conformist husband. The support a brother could offer could work so that male siblings could replace a wife's husband as a patriarchal figure. This is implied in the story of Alice Benden, whose husband tried to convince her gaoler not to allow her brother access to her. Benden's husband warned her gaolers to beware of her brother, Roger Hall, and to make sure that he was kept from her 'for he comforteth her, geueth her money, and perswadeth her not to return or relent'.⁷⁸

Benden believed that Alice would not be persuaded to recant if she was allowed a visit from her brother. This suggests Roger Hall was a large influence on his sister and her beliefs. This visit never occurred, Foxe argued, because although Alice's brother 'sought often for her', risking his own life in the process as a warrant was placed upon his head,

⁷⁴ Foxe (1570), p.2137.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Foxe (1570), p.2138.

⁷⁸ Foxe (1570), p.2167.

he could not find her as Alice was kept in a secret and rarely used prison.⁷⁹ Foxe's argument for Roger Hall not visiting his sister in prison cannot be taken at face value. Firstly, Alice's Protestant brothers, Roger and John Hall, wrote to Foxe three years after the publication of the first edition of his martyrology in 1566 to supply Foxe with the information of their sister's story of martyrdom, so it is not surprising that Roger's involvement was portrayed favourably.⁸⁰ The reason John Hall was not portrayed in the account was because of his own imprisonment during this time period due to his participation in the 1554 Wyatt rebellion against Mary I's Catholic marriage to Philip of Spain.⁸¹ Lastly, the argument Foxe presented that Alice Benden was kept in a secret prison so that her brother could not find her does not add up. If a warrant was placed on Roger Hall's head there would have been every likelihood that the authorities would want him to visit his sister so they could arrest him.

However, despite the hopes of her husband, Alice Benden did not need to see her brother in order to stay true to Protestantism. Indeed, at her execution Benden:

[F]rom about her middle she tooke a white lace which she gaue to the keper, desiring him to geue the same to her brother Roger Hall, and to tell him it was the last band that she was bound with, except ye chaine.⁸²

This extract reveals how important Alice Benden's relationship with her brother had been to her especially because she left no parting gift for her husband. Alice prioritised her obligations and affection to her brother over that owed to her husband. It is a demonstration that her brother supported her commitment to her faith, where her husband did not.

Further illustrative of Benden's upbringing is that she requested her brother to return a shilling to her father with 'obedient salutations' to show him that she 'neuer lacked money in prison'.⁸³ In doing this Benden showed that her birth family attempted to sustain her in prison: suggesting that they shared the same Protestant beliefs if not sympathies. The reasoning she gave to her brother for why he should return it, is to ease their father's conscience by attesting to the care she had received from the Lord in prison.⁸⁴ The truth actually was, as recounted in great detail by Foxe, that Benden endured horrific conditions

⁷⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2167.

⁸⁰ Thomas Freeman, 'Notes on a Source for John Foxe's Account of the Marian Persecution in Kent and Sussex', *Historical Research*, 67 (1994), 203-11 (p.203).

⁸¹ Freeman, 'Notes on a Source', p.208.

⁸² Fox (1570), p.2167.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

in prison, which Foxe compared to ‘a filthy hole’.⁸⁵ Foxe stated that Benden’s health suffered greatly as a result so that upon her execution she resembled someone who had been ‘with some mortal venome poysoned’.⁸⁶ These actions in bestowing gifts to her family at her execution speak volumes about the amount her Protestant beliefs that she was dying for owed to them.

The upbringing of female martyrs was important to Foxe, who was keen to chart their conversion to the Protestant faith. There are multiple examples of women converting to Protestantism in their early teenage years either during the later years of Henry VIII’s reign or Edward VI’s evangelical reign in Foxe’s martyrology.⁸⁷ Despite the importance Foxe gave to the parentage of his female martyrs, it is ironic that some female martyrs refused to be defined or hindered by their origins. Elizabeth Young, an illiterate book smuggler, when asked by her examiner Mr Hussy ‘where she was borne, and who was her father and mother’ replied ‘this is vayne talk...Ye haue not (I thinke) put me in prison to know who is my father and mother. But I pray you go to the matter that I came hether for.’⁸⁸ The implication here is that a woman’s religious views could not be taken as seriously as their male counterparts because their role was inextricably connected with their family.

In a similar fashion to Young, Alice Driver refused to let her upbringing lessen the importance and seriousness of her Protestantism when her intelligence was mocked as a result of her lowly upbringing and gender by her examiners, declaring:

Haue you no more to say? God be honored. You be not able to resist þ^e spirit of God in me a poore womā. I was an honest poore mans daughter, neuer brought vp in the Vniuersitie as you haue bene, but I haue driuen the plough before my father many a tyme (I thāke God): yet notwithstanding in þ^e defence of Gods truth, and in þ^e cause of my master Christ, by his grace I will set my foote agaynst the foote of any of you all in the maintenaunce and defence of the same: and if I had a thousand luyes, it should go for payment therof.⁸⁹

This speaks volumes about Alice Driver’s upbringing, and how it had affected Driver’s adherence to her religious principles. It demonstrates that Driver believed her godliness had not been disadvantaged by her lack of access to education. In the same way that Joan

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Such examples of women converting to the Protestant faith include the stories of Katherine Hut and Joan Horns. Hut and Horns were examined together, amongst other women. Hut confessed she had been a Protestant since she was 14 years old. Horns had converted when she was 11 years old during the reign of Edward VI. See Foxe (1570), p.2091. See Appendix 2 for details of their execution.

⁸⁸ Foxe (1570), p.2268.

⁸⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2248.

Waste's blindness did not affect her spiritual sight, Alice Driver's upbringing did not affect her spiritual knowledge. The examiners of Driver presumed that they were superior theologically because they had superior access and rights to worldly privileges but this was not the case. Ellen Macek has shown that Driver's account in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is reflective of the female martyr's growth in self-esteem, in that under threats from the Catholic interrogators Driver learned not to feel ashamed of her roots as they would not stop her from achieving her desired goal.⁹⁰ Through the narrative of family, Driver was able to recognise that she was entitled to martyrdom as the only prerequisites she required was the strength and work ethic taught to her by driving 'the plough before my father'.⁹¹

The Protestant identities of Tudor children were moulded by their parents as much perhaps as by the influence of their martyrologist. The congratulation of Elizabeth Folkes by her mother, who 'came and kist her at the stake, and exhorted her to be strong in the Lorde', exemplifies how a martyrs' parents could support their child on their journey towards martyrdom.⁹² However, a mother's ability to inspire their child to martyrdom could be much more pronounced in the cases where the persecution of a female martyr and mother encouraged their Protestant offspring to grow additionally radical and resistant in response to the cruelty of the Catholic forces of persecution, as shall now be considered.

Mothers as Martyrs and Role Models

Heresy trials were less than effective in curtailing deviant religious practices. Persecution of a mother could result in her children becoming more radicalised and resistant to the authorities' insistence they conform. The key argument here is that when the Protestant identity of families was put under pressure by the omnipresent threat of persecution it could work to either subdue or harden the steadfast evangelical beliefs of such a family. Again, as covered in the previous section, upbringing played a large role in this.⁹³

The children who followed their mothers and fathers to the stake had been raised to be good and strong Protestants. What is particularly interesting is the extent to which the call to martyrdom could be portrayed as both an individual and a familial duty. Although martyrs were believed to be predestined to their faith in early modern Protestant belief,

⁹⁰ Ellen Macek, 'The Emergence of a Feminine Spirituality in the Book of Martyrs', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 63-80 (p.71).

⁹¹ Foxe (1570), p.2248.

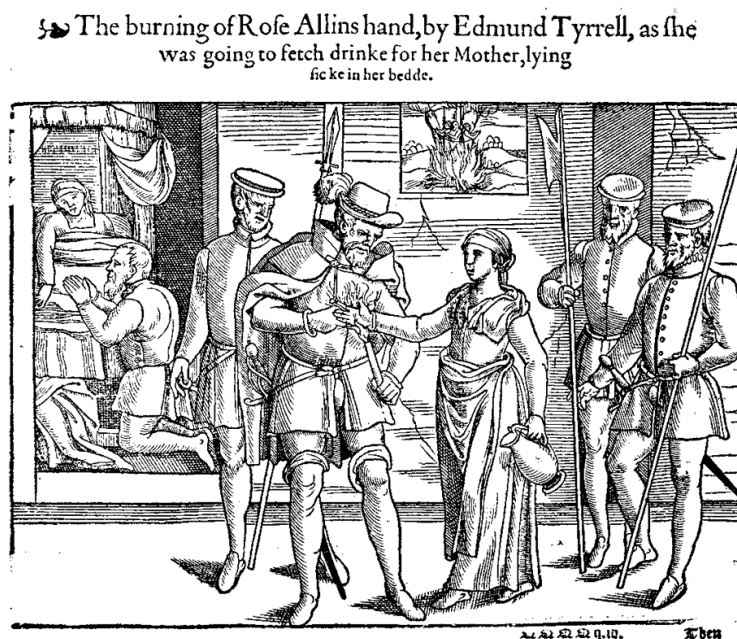
⁹² Foxe (1570), p.2202.

⁹³ See pp.69-71.

these families were among the Protestant elite. Dying together brought them closer to God but it also brought them closer together as their spiritual and familial duties aligned. Their identities were jointly formed against the regime which oppressed them and each other. The relationships of each of the women with their children who similarly aspired to martyrdom have been neglected. Mothers could inspire their children, and vice versa, to be strong and unwavering in the face of religious oppression.

The representation of the importance of the family to a female dissenter's character and the individual stories of their journey to martyrdom can be overlooked, when analysing Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, with parts of the story taking precedent over others. For example, in the case of the martyrdom of Rose Allin, the burning of her hand by notorious heretic hunter Edmund Tyrell has captured the attention of historians through its graphic depictions and implications for female disorderliness both in the text and the woodcut (see Fig 3.2). The symbolic burning of her hand in the shape of a cross by a candle held by Tyrell has captured the attention of Megan Hickerson and Susannah Brietz Monta because it shows that Foxe was not afraid to represent his Protestant martyrs, who were members of the conventionally-held 'weaker sex' as physically, mentally and spiritually steadfast and strong, superior to not only their interrogators but other Protestants not prepared to suffer in the name of God's will.

Figure 3.2: 'The burning of Rose Allins hand, by Edmund Tyrrell, as she was going to fetch drinke for her Mother, lying sicke in her bedde.'



Source: John Foxe, The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2199.

The point of interest here, however, is the relationship that existed between Rose and her mother, Alice Mount, and her mother's husband and Rose's step-father, William Mount, as portrayed not only in the work of Foxe but in Parsons' Jesuit account too.⁹⁴ This relationship is often disregarded by scholars, particularly feminist historians concentrating on the female martyr and disorderliness. For instance, in describing the woodcut present in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* that portrays Tyrell burning Allin's hand, Monta focuses on how the event is representative of Allin's bravery because it is indicative of the suffering she will face being burnt at the stake for heresy.⁹⁵ Monta argues that the woodcut shows a 'steadfast, placid Rose' with her hand consumed by flame and a foreboding image of several martyrs burning pinned to the wall of her family home above her head.⁹⁶ This picture present in the woodcut functions in two ways. Firstly, it operates in the same way as an omen in the way that it prophesied the execution not just of Rose Allin, but herself and her parents. Secondly, it is representative of the fact that because Rose was able to withstand the pain of the burning of her hand, she too will be able to overcome suffering at the stake amidst flames. In her analysis of the woodcut, Monta only addresses the interrogators testing of Rose's strength but neglects the scene portrayed in the left-hand side of the woodcut featured (see Figure 3.2).

In this woodcut, the viewer can also see Allin's step-father, William, piously kneeling in a gesture of prayer at the foot of his wife's sickbed inside the household. Rose Allin was apprehended, as Foxe describes, while fetching water for her sickly mother.⁹⁷ Tyrell 'met her, & willed to geue her father and mother good counsel, and to aduertise them to be better Catholicke people.'⁹⁸ This request illustrates how the traditional framework of familial obligation could be used by the Catholic authorities to their advantage.

In the same way a reformist mother may teach her daughter to follow in her footsteps, Tyrell hoped to convince Rose to convert her mother to Catholicism. Rose Allin's reply to this suggestion is just as illustrative. She refused Tyrell's request on the grounds that 'they have a better instructor then I. For the holy Ghost doth teach them I hope, which I will not suffer them to erre.'⁹⁹ The emphasis behind these words is clear. It shows that both Rose and her parents placed their duty to God before their duty to each other as

⁹⁴ See Parsons, pp.127-129.

⁹⁵ Susannah Brietz Monta, 'Foxe's Female Martyrs and the Sanctity of Transgression', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 25 (2001), 3-22 (p.9).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Foxe (1570), p.2199.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Foxe (1570), p.2199.

family, as advised in the Protestant family advice books of the day, such as John Merbecke's *Booke of Notes* (1581) to Gouge's seventeenth-century *Domesticall Duties* which stated that '[t]he preferring of father and mother before the Lord Christ sheweth that such a childe is not worthy of Christ.'¹⁰⁰ Rose demonstrated that she was both prepared for herself and her parents to suffer fatally for their non-attendance of the Mass and of their non-adherence to 'the Popishe seuen Sacraments'.¹⁰¹ This serves to illustrate one of the ways in which sixteenth-century family members could support each other's path to martyrdom through a shared identity and commitment to Protestantism. There is no doubt for Rose that her parents would not recant or conform irrespective of the fatal consequences of doing so. Foxe uses the framework of joint familial and godly duties to full effect here to enhance the martyrological credentials of Rose as an individual and as part of a godly familial collective.

This framework is similarly employed by Foxe in the story concerning Joan Lashford. Joan Lashford was a member of the Warne family, who, in comparable fashion to the Mount family found solidarity in their beliefs. Unlike the Mount family, the Warne's were burnt together but at separate occasions during Mary Tudor's reign. Joan Lashford was accused of heresy and burnt at the stake six months after her mother, Elizabeth Warne, in January 1556. Elizabeth Warne was executed three months after her second husband, John Warne, in August 1555. In this light, Joan Lashford's martyrdom was to an extent more remarkable than Allin's because she would have witnessed the painful death of her mother and father before being arrested, accused, and interrogated herself. Joan Lashford endured the suffering brought by her devotion to a persecuted religion without the security of enduring it alongside her mother, and therefore her commitment would have been more considered.

From Lashford's story the reader is also given an insight into the upbringing she received and how this affected her commitment. Foxe recorded that Joan Lashford had been 23 years old when she died, but that she had converted from Catholicism to Protestantism when she was eleven.¹⁰² This would have meant that she had converted to Protestantism, presumably with her mother, at the end of Henry VIII's reign and had remained Protestant for twelve years before she was executed in Mary Tudor's reign. When she was 'about

¹⁰⁰ John Merbecke, *A Booke of Notes and Common Places* (London, 1581), STC (2nd ed) 17299, pp.173-5; Gouge, 'Duties of Children', p.468.

¹⁰¹ Foxe (1570), p.2221.

¹⁰² Foxe (1570), p.2016, p.2033.

twenty', her mother and step-father were imprisoned for heresy.¹⁰³ Following this, Joan Lashford was brought in for questioning, the examiners suspecting their daughter to be of the 'same doctrine and religion' as her parents.¹⁰⁴ She too, similar to Rose Allin unrelenting even when her hand was burnt before her family and neighbours in the shape of a cross, was praised by Foxe because she 'stood so firm, that neither the flattering promises, nor the violent threats of the Bishops could turn her'.¹⁰⁵ Through comparing the experiences of Rose Allin and Joan Lashford, two daughters of female martyrs, it seems that these 'godly Damosell[s]' were more able to stand steadfast and unwavering in the face of persecution when inspired by the resolve of their mothers.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, in cases of families of martyrs, the Tudor family could and did support and strengthen one's desire to die for religion.

This sentiment was echoed in the cases of these women's Catholic counterparts as portrayed in the martyrology of Margaret Clitherow written by John Mush. The daughter of Margaret Clitherow, Anne, was, despite having a conformist father, exposed to the key tenets of Catholic religion and the importance of defending its truth regardless of the consequences from a young age. Anne's mother was known to have sheltered well-known Catholic priests in her family home during Anne's childhood including Francis Ingleby, William Hart, William Lacey and her mother's future biographer, John Mush.¹⁰⁷ Somewhat unusually for a child of her gender, as McBride has pointed out, Anne was educated alongside her brothers.¹⁰⁸ They were all taught by the Catholic school master; her biographer Mush records Margaret Clitherow as both keeping and hiding in her household, 'named Mr Stapleton'.¹⁰⁹ Anne's eldest brother, shortly before her mother's third examination and subsequent execution, was sent to France in 1585, as recorded by Mush, without the knowledge of her father 'for virtuous education and learning' in the hope that Margaret Clitherow would see her son become a priest which 'she most desired'.¹¹⁰ During her childhood Anne Clitherow would see her mother routinely be interned for her refusal to attend church and eventually be condemned for housing priests,

¹⁰³ Foxe (1570), p.2033.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Mush, pp.68-9.

¹⁰⁸ Keri Boyd McBride, 'Recusant Sisters: English Catholic Women and the Bonds of Learning', in Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp.28-39.

¹⁰⁹ Mush, p.410.

¹¹⁰ Mush, pp.409-10.

a treasonous offence. She would also, one assumes, be aware of the growing tensions that arose between her parents as a result of Margaret Clitherow's commitment to Catholicism, tensions which the reader of Mush's work sees through the arguments between the couple which are recorded in his biography of Clitherow.¹¹¹ When Margaret Clitherow was on trial for harbouring wanted priests her response is extremely revealing of her role in bringing up Anne and her other children to be diligent Catholics:

I have care over my children as a mother ought to have; I trust I have done my duty to them to bring them up in the fear of God, and so I trust now I am discharged of them. And for this cause I am willing to offer them freely to God that sent them to me...¹¹²

Margaret Clitherow showed no remorse that she was taking herself away from caring for her husband and children when she was on trial for her crimes of heresy and priest harbouring, even when she was reprimanded by her judges for doing so.¹¹³ Her duty to her children seemed to extend to bringing them up to be good Catholics and once this was achieved, as Clitherow believed it had been, then her obligations to them were void. This tactic although distasteful to the modern reader of Margaret's testimony, seemed effective as her ambitions for her children, particularly Anne, were realised. There is evidence gleaned from outside of Mush's biography that attests to Anne's dedication to her faith as inspired by her mother. Just as Clitherow's sons aspired to the priesthood Anne aspired to Catholic monastic life after enduring imprisonment for recusancy in Lancaster in 1593, shortly after she had ran away from home after her father married a Protestant and remained so himself.¹¹⁴ In 1598 Anne had become a nun in Louvain, at the St Ursula's convent.¹¹⁵ Anne Clitherow literally attempted to follow in the footsteps of her mother, a sentiment that is emphasised by Mush metaphorically when discussing what Margaret left for her husband and children in preparation for her death:

Her hose and shoes to her eldest daughter, Anne, about twelve years old, signifying that she should serve God and follow her steps of virtue.¹¹⁶

This quotation is very illustrative. McBride has argued from this that it could not be clearer Margaret Clitherow wished her daughter to follow in her footsteps in order to

¹¹¹ For an example of Mush's presentation of the arguments that occurred between Margaret and John Clitherow see Mush, pp.406-407.

¹¹² Mush, pp.426-7.

¹¹³ Mush, p.417.

¹¹⁴ Claire Walker, 'Clitherow, Margaret [St Margaret Clitherow] (1552/3-1586)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5692>> [accessed 22 May 2015]

¹¹⁵ McBride, p.36.

¹¹⁶ Mush, p.432.

suffer in the name of upholding Catholicism.¹¹⁷ Indeed when this information is combined with Margaret Clitherow's declaration in her examinations that 'I would to God my husband and children might suffer with me for so good a cause' this seems to be the case.¹¹⁸ However, it too demonstrates Margaret Clitherow's forgoing of her earthly ties and worldly possessions. The sending of these items to her daughter marked the last communication she would ever have with her. Also the presumption one can gather from this statement is that Margaret Clitherow clearly thought that by dying in the name of her faith, her fate was an ideal that should be aspired to.

Patrick Collinson has inferred from the accounts of Margaret Clitherow detailing her relationship with her husband and children that she 'must have been a deeply alienated person'.¹¹⁹ It is perhaps extraordinary to modern readers that a woman could be seen to so easily to prioritise her spiritual over her earthly duties. Nonetheless, in many early modern people's eyes, especially the more pious Catholics and in particular Jesuits, Margaret Clitherow was the perfect mother in that she brought up four children to be good Catholics thereby ensuring the salvation of her own and their souls.

Her children certainly were never seen to express any single note of resentment in their actions, both in her martyrology and the way they led their lives in the aftermath of their mother's execution. For instance, Mush tells his reader that the 'little girl', Anne Clitherow, was at first 'committed to ward because she would not betray her mother', Margaret, and she would neither 'go to church' during her mother's trial.¹²⁰ Mush continues to record that when Margaret was finally martyred the authorities told the twelve-year old that unless she went to the church and listened to a Protestant sermon her mother would be 'put to death'.¹²¹ Believing that she held her mother's life in her hands, when in fact she was already dead, Anne attended the sermon.¹²² This is not the action of a daughter who despaired of her mother. Anne Clitherow was determined not to go to church even if it meant risking her own welfare, partly out of fear for betraying her mother. Yet she would not risk her mother's welfare for the same, even if it meant risking her own status as a Catholic. Protestant and Catholic daughters were both inspired the

¹¹⁷ McBride, p.36.

¹¹⁸ John Mush, p.417.

¹¹⁹ Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), p.130.

¹²⁰ Mush, p.432.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

same by their mother's commitment to a dissident faith and suffering in the face of persecution.

This inspiration was not just confined to daughters of martyred mothers. Sons were similarly persecuted alongside their mothers. For example, mother and son Margery and James Morris were executed side by side on 22 June 1557 although little more information is given on their deaths other than this.¹²³ More interesting is the story surrounding Katherine Knight's, alias Tynley, journey to martyrdom and the influence her son had upon her commitment to the Protestant religion. In contrast to all other cases of mothers and their children's religious aspirations so far discussed in this section it was Katherine's son who taught her the sentiments of Protestantism which inspired her to die for it, rather than the more conventional other way around.

Katherine Tynley's son Robert 'was in trouble all Queene Maryes tyme' for religion and his mother 'commyng to visite him' asked him questions about pieces of scripture 'which she had seene, not by reading...for she had yet in maner no tast[e] of religion'.¹²⁴ This passage in Foxe's story shows how carefully Foxe constructed the characters of his martyrs. Although not yet Protestant, Foxe made clear that Katherine was merely uninterested in religious matters rather than Catholic, the lesser of the two evils. Despite this, Katherine was swayed by her son's commitment to Protestantism to find out more about the scriptures that she was not familiar with due to the teaching she had presumably received through the English, Catholic, church. Katherine was keen to gain knowledge about the scriptures and Foxe praised this, contrasting with Catholic Huggarde's and Parsons' arguments that women should not debate theology as it was not their place.¹²⁵ Most importantly, Katherine's son persuaded her 'to take hold on the Gospell, growing more and more in zeale and loue therof, and so continued vnto her Martyrdome'.¹²⁶ Robert inspired his previously agnostic mother not only to convert to Protestantism but to remain so steadfast in her new beliefs that she was prepared to die for them. This transformation, if it is to be believed, is remarkable and in doing so Foxe demonstrated not only that Protestantism was the superior religion, allowing people previously untouched by the word of God to find salvation, but that family was the centre for godly living.

¹²³ Foxe (1570), p.2195, p.2220.

¹²⁴ Foxe (1570), p.2254.

¹²⁵ See Parsons, pp.224-28, and Huggarde, pp.75-78. For a more in depth discussion of this criticism of women's interference with religious matters see chapter 1 of this thesis, pp.18-20.

¹²⁶ Foxe (1570), p.2254.

Martyred mothers worked as role models in inspiring their daughters and sons to defend their reformist beliefs. It is a prime example where a woman's spiritual ambitions to martyrdom and maintenance of her earthly obligations by raising her child to be a devout and pious Christian could work hand-in-hand. The extremity of persecution levied at their mothers would have encouraged the daughters of such martyrs such as Rose Allin, Anne Clitherow and Joan Lashford to be more radical in the beliefs they held and the lengths they went to defend them, whether it was flee to the continent to join a convent, or by joining their mother at the stake.

Conclusion

Through the framework of family and shared spiritual identities of children and mothers Foxe was able to portray martyrdom as both an individual and a shared accolade. The cases with the most emotional value to stimulate an anti-Catholic hatred among his contemporary readers were undoubtedly the stories where pregnant mothers met their deaths at the hands of 'cruel and tyrannical' persecutors who refused to grant benefit of the belly.¹²⁷ Combined with stories of mothers fighting to keep their infants alive in prison Foxe was able simultaneously to demonise the motivation of the catholic authorities in imprisoning such weak women and augment the reputations of the female martyrs who struggled to negotiate their earthly and spiritual duties, only when they were forced did they eventually renounce their obligations to their respective families.

The forces of persecution could, and did, mould and influence the childhoods of those either destined to the flames or related to someone who was. The impact of this could be great on both the welfare of the child and their commitment to a dissident faith. In the stories recorded by Foxe, the impact of this on older or adult children was overwhelmingly positive because the death of a parent(s) could inspire the strength to resist the attempts of the persecuting forces to root out what Foxe saw to be the true faith and to endure the suffering worthy of martyrdom.

In the majority of cases where mothers' and daughters' and sons' journeys to martyrdom are described by Foxe, family was represented as a great source of support. Even if only one member of a family went to the pyre the simple act of a sibling or parent leading the prospective martyr to the stake or offering words of support to a family member facing

¹²⁷ Foxe (1563), p.1541.

execution speaks volumes of the godly upbringing these young women received and how this influenced their spiritual strength.

Foxe's stories of mothers, children and siblings gives a new, and previously unconsidered, insight into the dynamics of the family in early modern England. Persecuted women could use their role as mother to educate the next generation of reformers or recusants. They encouraged their children to speak out against a heretical government and maintain a strong level of personal piety. Most importantly, they showed that a woman could be a good mother and sacrifice her life for a religious cause, legitimately. These women proved that their influence could extend outside of the boundaries of the household because these women's stories and their messages were immortalised in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

MOTHERS, WIVES AND MARTYRDOM: CONCLUSION

This thesis has charted how persecuted women were shown successfully to negotiate their earthly and spiritual duties to enhance their position as martyr, particularly those executed during the Marian persecution, in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. The focus has been applied to analysing how these women were constructed into the perfect wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. This construction effectively enabled their martyrologist to shield their reputations from the attacks of Catholic critics attempting to undermine Protestantism by devaluing the key representatives of this reformist faith: sixteenth-century martyrs. The stories of women who met their death at the stake were particularly vulnerable to these polemical attacks. Held to be the weaker sex, it was a harder task to defend the reputations of these martyrs compared to their persecuted male contemporaries. By aspiring to martyrdom these women had to challenge Tudor gender conventions and the patriarchal structure of society.

The language of familial duty was applied by Foxe to mask the negative implications of a woman accused of heresy, such as sexual promiscuity. Establishing female martyrs as godly wives and mothers also made their radical positions more palatable to his readers. These women, Foxe argued, did not choose to become martyrs. They were destined. How women were seen to approach the concept of sacrificing their domestic roles and earthly obligations to husband and children was a key building block used to strengthen the case to prove that these women's martyrdoms were legitimate and sanctioned by God.

As a result, the family could be an incredibly useful tool if Foxe could prove that his Protestant women did not choose but were forced to relinquish care over their families' welfare. Foxe tried to provide evidence to show that the decline of a family's well-being, as a result of the persecution of the Protestant woman he depicted, was the fault of the Catholic authorities in Marian England. In this respect, the emotive cases of families being torn apart by religious difference were highly important to Foxe in maligning the sentiments of Catholicism. Foxe was not suggesting heretics should not be persecuted but that the treatment of these innocent, lowly women and their families, by the Marian authorities, was unjustifiably cruel and largescale.

The chapters of this thesis have endeavoured to shed light on how the families featured in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* could help or hinder a female relatives' path to martyrdom.

This thesis has also demonstrated how Protestant and Catholic families were affected by their wife, mother or daughter's devotion to a heretical faith. These lines of enquiry are incredibly important, yet often neglected in the historiography. Studying the persecuted woman as a family member, not just as a martyr, has allowed this thesis a previously unconsidered perspective into the roles of women in Tudor England. Women in extreme circumstances could successfully challenge the patriarchal order of society, in order to achieve the ultimate Christian accolade of martyrdom, by rebelling against the religious views of their husbands.

This thesis has illustrated how extensively the stories of these martyrs portrayed in various types of martyrological and anti-martyrological sources can be used to analyse the workings of the family in the early modern period. In these accounts, the wives and daughters of tradesmen, a voice usually unheard in the primary sources of the sixteenth century, explain what they considered their obligations to their spouse and offspring to consist of. From Protestant Agnes Prest declaring at her execution 'if my husband, and children be faithfull, then am I theirs', to Catholic Margaret Clitherow announcing during her trial that she had brought her children up to be diligent Christians and therefore, she had fulfilled her motherly obligations towards them.¹

These women eloquently proved that they were both able to vindicate their abilities as wife and mother and were able to defend, to their interrogators, the reasons under which they had legitimately prioritised their adherence to their faith over their necessary obedience to the household. These women were exceptional, but only in the fervour of their beliefs which pushed them to defy the expectations of their gender.

Chapter one of this thesis considered how the female martyr was moulded by her martyrologist. This chapter's purpose was not to debate the accuracy of Foxe's stories but to assess why it was necessary that these female martyrs had to be so carefully constructed. In recent years, Foxe's control over the thorough editing of his martyrs and their lives has led to much criticism regarding the value of his work by historians. The control Foxe exhibited over the shaping of his martyrs was an indispensable tactic if his Protestant martyrs were to stand as acceptable, and exemplary, figures to society. The

¹ For Agnes Prest's story see John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes of thynges passed in euery kynges tyme in this realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, pp.2251-2; For a narrative of Margaret Clitherow's journey to martyrdom see, John Mush, 'A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow', in John Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, series 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), pp.331-440 (pp.426-7).

conclusions gained by charting how these women were crafted into the perfect woman and martyr- two sets of conflicting ideals that needed to be cautiously balanced- show that a woman's commitment to the Protestant cause could legitimately take precedence over her relationship with, and obedience to, her husband.

These women were not perfect wives, mothers, or daughters at first glance. In prioritising their obligations as a Protestant in a Catholic England their familial roles became secondary and the welfare of their families suffered as a consequence. This radical stance, in the minds of those that viewed these women as heretics, was equated with sexual immorality. These women were seen to be the new Eves of society. They not only defied social mores in their home lives. On a public scale they also threatened to invert the gendered order of society. These matriarchs who appeared to their denouncers to interfere with theological matters above their station, content to cause widespread disorder, tempted their husbands away from God and to sin.

For Foxe it was, therefore, crucial to place these women in their conventional places within the home. He repeatedly emphasised that the social implications of a woman's journey to martyrdom were entirely coincidental. These women had no ambition other than to follow God's calling. Rather than being directly disobedient to their conformist husband's will, they more legitimately prioritised their allegiance to God over their husband in Foxe's text.

For women tied both to God and to their husband, negotiating earthly and spiritual duties when holding religious views that went against the officially-sanctioned grain could often prove intensely complicated. As seen in chapter two, a woman's Protestant beliefs and her obedience to a conformist, Catholic husband often directly conflicted. Religious divisions within households were not uncommon during this period of religious upheaval and change. Family advice books, such as Henry Garnet's *Catholic Treatise of C[hri]stian Renunciation* of 1593 and Henry Smith's *Preparative for Marriage* of 1561, supplied justifications for women defying their husbands if the heretical views of their spouse threatened to endanger their soul's salvation. This shows that Foxe was not so radical in supplying his own justifications for the necessary social deviance of his martyred wives, a concern on both sides of the religious spectrum. These women were not prevented from following their religious duties through being bound to their husband. Foxe was not afraid to show that wives could be spiritually superior to their conformist husbands.

Husbands of female martyrs could both support and hinder their wife's effectiveness as a witness for Protestantism. More often than not they helped to cement their wife's status as martyr in Foxe's stories, however inadvertently. The most obvious examples of husbands helping their wives to achieve martyrdom are provided in the ten percent of cases in Foxe's work where it is evident that husband and wife shared the same fervent reformist views. However, a significant proportion of husbands who were determined to convert their wives into conformists actually unwittingly supported their wife's creation into a martyr. Husbands who violently accused their wives of heresy or attempted to force them to conform gave their wife's story an added notoriety and drama which captured the attention of Foxe and his readers. In effect the actions of these men helped Foxe to legitimise the disobedience shown to them by their wives.

The impact of a female relatives' persecution could be very severe upon their families. As implied in the paragraph above, a husband's legacy as the 'murderer' of his wife could be just as enduring as her martyrdom, in martyrological literature, thus forever affecting the reputation of that family.² However, as chapter three has argued, the greatest impact of a woman's extreme devotion to a dissident faith, culminating in her willingness to die for it, was upon her children. Dependent children were left orphaned by the burnings without necessary resources to survive while adult children could be inspired to follow in their mothers footsteps. In all stories, identities of these families of female martyrs were forever altered by a female relative's religious persecution.

The analysis of the presence of children, particularly those of female martyrs, in Foxe's stories is an area which requires further exploration, as the research of this thesis has revealed. These accounts expose much new material about the attitudes towards children and to the religious education of children in the early modern household. For example, the story of Joan Waste demonstrates the importance of fathers teaching their daughters trade skills, in this case rope making, and the roles male siblings played in the religious education of their sisters by encouraging them to embrace Protestantism.³ Further investigation would reveal much about the appropriate level of affection between parents and children, particularly between mothers and daughters, without interfering with either's commitment to their faith.

² Foxe (1570), p.2206.

³ Foxe (1570), p.2137.

Whilst it is important to consider martyrs as mothers, it is just as important to consider them as daughters. Through this avenue we can gain an insight into the upbringing of female martyrs as seen in chapter three. Exploring how a female martyr was raised offers a new perspective through which the patterns apparent in the female martyr's story can be charted. For instance, the religious identities of many of the younger female martyrs were shown to be moulded during their early adolescence during Edward VI's evangelical reign. In these cases often women's faith had more in common with the beliefs of her parents and siblings rather than those of her husband. This highlights the importance of looking beyond women's marital relationships for signs of conversion to a dissident faith. This is perhaps why these women were so able to resist their husband's persuasions to convert to Catholicism because their adherence to Protestantism had been guaranteed prior to marriage. In this sense, a woman's religious identity could operate separately, independently and successfully from her husbands despite the preconceived notion that her husband must be her head in all matters. This allowed Foxe to justify, using the language of godly providence and familial bonds, why and how these women were able to be steadfast in their beliefs to such an extent that they were able to legitimately defy patriarchal expectations.

In conjunction with this, identification of the existence of siblings in these stories is just as crucial. The analysis of sibling relations has been neglected in all fields of early modern historical research, largely due to the lack of primary literature available on the subject. However, martyrological sources have not been previously used in this regard but need to be. The information about sibling relationships in Foxe's work provides key details concerning the upbringings of women prepared to give up their lives for the gospel in later life. This is because sisters and brothers would have received similar religious instruction from their parents. Indeed, all sibling bonds are shown to be supportive in the stories of Foxe's female martyrs. For example, the Hall brothers communicated to Foxe the details of their sister Alice Benden's execution; Roger Waste held his blind sister, Joan's hand to guide her to the stake.⁴ In a similar fashion, mothers present at the execution scenes of their daughters offered words of support, such as in the case of Elizabeth Folkes whose mother congratulated and praised her publicly at her execution.⁵ Other mothers and daughters, such as Rose Allin and Alice Mount, endured the same

⁴ For the story of Alice Benden see Foxe (1570), pp.2167-69. For Joan Waste's martyrdom see Foxe (1570), pp.2137-38. Also see Appendix 1.xiv.

⁵ Foxe (1570), p.2202. For the biography of Elizabeth Folkes see Appendix 1.xviii.

fate.⁶ These supportive familial networks worked to ensure a female relative's martyrdom by nurturing a daughter or sister's spiritual identity as this thesis has attempted to emphasise.

The two primary objectives of this work were to explore how families could hinder or support a female family members' journey to martyrdom and to consider how these same families were affected by their mother, wife's or daughter's dedication to Protestantism. In the majority of cases families supported, however unconsciously, these women's creation into martyrs. By attempting to force uncooperative wives to conform to Marian religious practice such as attending Mass, husbands unwittingly made their wives more radical and resistant in their outlook. This resulted in men accusing their wives of heresy thereby leading to their arrests. If these men had not made such a spectacle out of their wives refusal to conform it is likely these women never would have gained the attention of the authorities to the extent necessary for them to be condemned to burn for their beliefs. In a similar manner, the added notoriety of a violent husband to these stories of suffering and sacrifice equalled greater textual space in the *Acts and Monuments*, thus securing the married persecuted woman's martyred status.

Daughters' and sisters' commitment to a dissident faith could also be cemented by the supportive networks of her family. Inspired by their mothers suffering or their Protestant upbringing these young martyrs, both married and single, were seemingly never dissuaded in Foxe's tales from following such a dangerous path. Sons, too, though on fewer occasions, inspired their mothers to die for the gospel. Cases of husbands and wives, parents and children, and in the most gruesome of stories mothers and unborn infants dying at the stake were hugely important weapons in Foxe's arsenal to criminalise the actions of the Catholic authorities and demonstrated the durability of Protestantism, styled by Foxe as the religion of the people. The negative effects such suffering had on these families were used by Foxe to enhance this point.

Families were severely affected by the persecution of a female relative. In some cases, whole households were eradicated in the flames. Conformist husbands were shamed by their inability to control the ferocity of their wives adherence to heresy; moulded by Foxe into the antagonists of their wife's story. Young children were left orphaned and without provision though their suffering is only hinted at towards the end of their parent(s) stories. In some cases adult children followed their mother to the stake; in others they accused

⁶ For the biographies of mother and daughter Alice Mount and Rose Allin see Appendix 1.xvi and 1.xvii.

their mothers of heresy. Families were shown to be torn apart by Marian persecution. This was the image that Foxe successfully aimed to convey. Foxe, through including the families of female martyrs in their stories, hoped to illustrate the evils of Catholicism as a destructive and outdated mode of worship. It was Catholicism, not the actions of the martyred women, which brought disorder to society in Foxe's piece of Elizabethan propaganda.

In conclusion, family was a useful veneer for Foxe to apply to his stories in an attempt to shelter the reputations of his female martyrs from criticism. Foxe used the language of the family and household order to contain the sexuality of his female martyrs. Throughout his work, Foxe emphasised the weakness of these lowly, uneducated women. Where these women's service to their families and to God came into conflict, Foxe expressed how these weak vessels were only able to sacrifice the welfare of their families through God's will. There were no social motivations behind women's aspirations to be martyrs. Those godly women not called to stand witness were content to continue being diligent mothers and wives for the rest of their lives. Any hint that the execution of a woman had caused upset for her family was blamed purely on the Catholic authorities. In the stories of female martyrs it is clear that the presence of family could work to cultivate, nurture and enhance a woman's claim to martyrdom. The earthly and spiritual duties of a woman had to be aligned, in print, in order to cement a persecuted woman's legacy as martyr.

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APPENDIX ONE: BIOGRAPHIES OF MARIAN FEMALE MARTYRS

The biographies listed here provide brief outlines of the lives and stories of a selection of women who were persecuted for their protestant beliefs during the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558). Over 50 women were executed during this period and the biographies here cover the lives of 28 of these women and the experiences of four women who avoided the death sentence for heresy. These women have been selected as a representative group because the information surrounding their relationships with their family and relatives are provided by primary accounts of their suffering. Where possible the date and place of birth, as well as the date and place of execution, of these women is detailed. The majority of the information used by the following accounts is based on the stories recorded in John Foxe's 1570 edition of his *Acts and Monuments* (STC 11223). The page numbers where these women's stories can be found in Foxe's work are given below each account. Where this is not the case other work(s) have been similarly referenced. The following biographies of these persecuted Protestant women are presented in the order that they appear in John Foxe's martyrology.

i. ELIZABETH WARNE (d.23 August 1555, Stratford Le Bow, London)

Elizabeth Warne had one known daughter with her first husband, cutler Robert Lashford. This daughter was Joan Lashford who was twenty years old when she followed in her mother's footsteps and was martyred six months after her mother's own execution. Elizabeth Warne's second husband was the upholsterer, John Warne, who would suffer execution for his religious beliefs in May 1555.

Elizabeth had been arrested with other suspected Protestants on 1 January 1555 in a house in Bow churchyard in London where the group had been gathered in prayer. She was kept in prison at the Counter until 11 June. She was then brought to Newgate prison and stayed there until 2 July. She was then sent for questioning before Bishop of London, Bonner with other suspected heretics such as Robert Smith and George Tankerfield. Elizabeth was found guilty of refusing the presence of Christ in blood and body in the sacrament of the altar, not coming to church, speaking against the mass, and disagreeing with catholic ceremonies. After being brought before Bonner multiple times she was asked one final time to recant but she refused arguing that if Christ was in error then she would be in

error. Following her refusal on 12 July she was judged to be a heretic and sentenced to death.

See John Foxe, *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monumentes of thynges passed in euery kynges tyme in this realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted* (London: John Daye, 1570), STC 11223, p.2030, pp.1868-9.

ii. JOAN TRUNCHFIELD (d. 19 February 1556, Ipswich, Suffolk)

Joan was married to Michael Trunchfield, a shoemaker. Joan was imprisoned with Agnes Potten, and their accounts are joined in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. During her imprisonment Joan was allowed to visit her husband daily before keeping to her promise and returning to prison. Joan comforted her husband who was fearful. Joan told Michael that she did not mean to trouble him and that she hoped he would not sustain trouble for her. She willed him to be of good cheer for she wanted to see him and her children, not to bring them into any trouble, but to do her duty to them as long as she had the liberty to do so.

Trunchfield and Potten struggled to come to terms with the harsh reality of imprisonment and examinations when they were accused of heresy. However when Trunchfield came to the stake to be executed she showed great joy and strength; they both called to God constantly whilst being burnt.

See Foxe (1570), p.1879, p.2072, and John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Daye, 1583) STC 11225, p.1734.

iii. AGNES POTTEN (d. 19 February 1556, Ipswich, Suffolk)

Agnes was the wife of a brewer, Robert Potten. In the night before her death, she was asleep in bed, and saw a bright burning fire in the shape of a pole and thought on the side of the fire stood a number of Queen Mary Tudor's friends watching the flames and she wondered if her fire would burn so bright.

See Foxe (1570), p.1879, p.2072.

iv. JOAN LASHFORD ALIAS WARNE (d. 27 January 1556, Smithfield, London)

Joan Lashford was born in the parish of Little Saint Hallows in London; she was the daughter of Elizabeth and Robert Lashford, a cutler. After the death of her father, her mother remarried to John Warne, an upholsterer. At her examinations Joan Lashford informed her interrogators that she had converted from Catholicism to Protestantism when she was 11 presumably following the example of her mother and step-father who were also by this point Protestants at the start of Edward VI's evangelical reign and would also be persecuted for their adherence to Protestantism during Mary I's reign. Joan Lashford's step-father was executed for heresy in May 1555 and her mother in July 1555.

Joan Lashford was arrested when she was twenty years old upon her mother and step-father in prison. Her parents being convicted heretics, it was suspected that Joan would hold the same Protestant sympathies and she was sent to Bishop Bonner for questioning. Joan admitted to Bonner that she had not attended the Mass for 12 months because she did not believe in being confessed or the sacrament of the altar, protesting that neither Christ's blood or body was contained in the bread or wine given at Mass and that it was only a superfluous ceremony. After refusing to be turned by either flattering promises or violent threats, the bishop attempted to reason with her. He promised that she would be pardoned of all her errors if she conformed; Joan refused. Her sentence was then read against her and she was condemned to be burnt at the stake on 27 January 1556.

See Foxe (1570), p.2016, p.2030.

v. ELIZABETH PEPPER (d. 27 June 1556, Colchester, Essex)

Elizabeth was married to Thomas Pepper, a weaver, and lived in the parish of St James' in the town of Colchester, Essex. Elizabeth Pepper was arrested, imprisoned and executed with twelve other Protestants who were all from Essex but were brought to London to be examined and executed in one fire at Stratford Le Bow. Elizabeth Pepper was one of two women to be executed that day, the other was Agnes George, whose account is listed below.

Elizabeth Pepper had been arrested in Essex by two constables and one alderman for not attending church. She was then sent to London to be examined by Bishop Bonner. Pepper was thought to be pregnant when she was examined and then executed. Elizabeth Pepper was eleven weeks pregnant when the death sentence was passed against her. Pepper confessed this knowledge of her pregnancy to Mrs Bosome, who faced imprisonment for her own religious beliefs but conformed to avoid execution. When Bosome asked Pepper

why she had not told the examiners that she was pregnant, Pepper replied that they knew it well enough. Bosome informed Foxe of Pepper's story and her alleged pregnancy. Despite Pepper's pregnancy being published in the 1563 edition of Foxe's work it was omitted from the 1570 and 1576 editions; it was re-admitted in the 1583 edition.

Elizabeth Pepper was around thirty years old when she was executed as Stratford Le Bow. While the eleven men were tied between three stakes, the two women were left loose and put in the middle of the three stakes to be burnt for heresy.

Foxe (1570), pp.2095-6, p.2276; Foxe (1583), p.1916.

vi. AGNES GEORGE (c.1530-d. 27 June 1556, Colchester, Essex)

Agnes George was the first wife of husbandman, Richard George of Great Bardfield, Essex. Richard George himself would be imprisoned for heresy but escaped execution because he was pardoned when Elizabeth I came to the throne. Richard George had two other wives who were also both imprisoned for heresy (see Christian George, Appendix 1.xxvi.). During Agnes' examinations she admitted that she had converted to Protestantism during the reign of Edward VI when she was a child.

Agnes George was one of two women (the other being the reputedly pregnant Elizabeth Pepper) and eleven men who were executed on 27 June 1556, in Stratford le Bow, London. Despite being executed in London all of the thirteen Protestants executed on this day originated from places in Essex because it was feared that executing such a large group in the county may trigger rebellion owing to the high level of Protestant allegiance and sympathy present in Essex. Upon condemnation this group of thirteen was split into two groups to reside into separate chambers in Newgate prison to await their execution the following day. During this day's imprisonment the sheriff visited each group separately to inform them that the other group had recanted and that they should follow suit in order to avoid execution the next day. They answered that their faith did not rely on man, but upon Christ being crucified. When they went to the stake, they all kissed and embraced it. The 11 men were tied on three stakes between them, the two women (Agnes George and Elizabeth Pepper) were left loose in the middle of the three stakes, without being attached to any one stake. Agnes was 26 years old when she was burnt at the stake.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2095-97, p.2234.

vii. AGNES WARDALL (Ipswich, Suffolk)

Wardall managed to escape being captured by the Marian authorities when she returned from exile to visit her children in Ipswich. Agnes was the wife of Robert Wardall, a fellow Protestant who during the years of Mary I's reign served on a ship in order to avoid the mounting forces of persecution at home in England. Shortly after returning home in July 1556 the constable of Ipswich, Matthew Butler, alerted Doctor Richard Argentine, one of the main persecutors in Ipswich and rector of St Clements and St Helen. Argentine demanded that Wardall must be apprehended.

Argentine and Butler sent to men, with weapons, to search Agnes' house and that of her mother-in-law's. When Argentine knocked on the door to the Wardall's house at night, Agnes did not hear it because she was in bed in an 'inner chamber' with her maid and two children. The maid finally heard the knocking at the door, woke Agnes up and informed her that 'the watch is at the doore'. Agnes dressed quickly and silently. The maid locked Agnes in a cupboard in the parlour of the house and then went immediately to speak to the watch out of the bay window of the main chamber. The maid tried to deter them from coming in, saying she should not invite them in because they had no candles. The watch told her to come and open the door or 'we will lay it in the flore'.

The maid opened the door to the watch and they asked her who lived inside the dwelling. The maid told them that a woman lived here with her two children, but she had not seen the woman since she had left in the evening and was not currently at home. She denied their accusation that she knew where the woman was. They fetched a candle from their neighbours and began to search the house. They started in the bedrooms but only found Robert's mothers' tenant and her young infant. They stripped the bed and looked underneath it, finding the bed was hot they demanded to know who the woman was that had been sleeping in it. The tenant replied that she and her baby had been. They searched the parlour, examining the locked cupboard in which Agnes was hidden in and decided she could not possibly be hidden in it for it was too small. They searched the yard but found only a horse and a thirteen year old boy sleeping in the outhouse. The boy was forced to get up and dressed to be questioned. He told them he did not know where the woman of the house was. The maid and the boy were sent to the cage while the men continued their search.

The watch finished searching the Wardall's house and began to search the houses of Agnes' neighbours. Agnes close to suffocating in the cupboard called to the tenant to break open the lock on the cupboard, for 'I had rather fall into their handes, then to kill my self'. Agnes fled into the garden, then to the fields, shrouding herself in a low ditch

covered with nettles. George Manning and John Bate were among the men sent to search the fields. Manning, Foxe wrote, was an honest man but Bate was a ‘spitefull’ and ‘evil’ Catholic. Manning espied Wardall’s hiding place and managed to divert the other men so they did not find her. Eventually the men departed. The boy and the maid were released, but were made to believe Agnes had been captured.

The next day, Manning sent Agnes a message that she should not continue to hide so near to her house in Ipswich. Providentially, Agnes was saved from enduring the flames of the Marian persecution. This account was first introduced in the 1570 edition of Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*. Peter Moon, referred to in the biography of his wife Anne Moon, is revealed at the end of Agnes Wardall’s account to have been Foxe’s informant for Agnes Wardall’s story.

Foxe (1570), pp.2124-25.

viii. ANNE MOON (Ipswich, Suffolk)

Anne was the wife of Peter Moon, a tailor and also the author of a handful of protestant polemics printed in the late 1540’s. Peter Moon was commanded to appear before the Bishop of Norwich, Doctor Hopton in July 1556. Hopton was able to convince Moon to acknowledge that the Pope was the supreme head of the church; that Mary and Philip were the rightful successors to the English crown, and that the body of Christ present in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Upon the release of Moon becoming a possibility Hopton was informed by one of the portmen of Ipswich, Richard Sharpe, that Moon’s wife had never attended church since Mary had come to the throne with the exception of her being churched after childbirth but even then she had only come to church once Mass was finished. Sharpe insisted that Hopton speak with Anne Moon even if he believed that Peter would conform.

Hopton ordered Peter to bring his wife to speak with him. Peter agreed, insisting that his wife was obedient to him. Peter Moon however was reluctant to bring his wife to meet the Bishop. He delayed for as long as he could hoping that his wife would not be at home if he came at the right time. His accuser, Sharpe, visited Moon’s house too and the pair were forced to meet with the bishop.

When Anne Moon was introduced to the bishop, Hopton was surprised by her modest appearance. When Anne challenged Hopton that he could not charge her with ‘dishonestie, as concernyng my body’, the bishop agreed although he informed her that it

would have been better if she had committed adultery rather than heresy. When Anne was told that her husband had recanted, she did too. The Moons were not immediately released on the grounds that there was an influx of Protestants recently arrived in Ipswich from Boxford, and so the bishop deliberated at length what to do with the Moons.

Eventually, Anne asked to be released to nurse her recently born child, which she could hear crying in the yard under the Bishop's Chamber. The bishop, at a loss what to do with the couple, let them go on the condition that they came back in the morning. When they arrived the next morning, the bishop let them go again but commanded they appear before him the next day. Upon returning home, Peter Moon grew so aggrieved by what he had done that he nearly tried to commit suicide with a sword placed on his wall for decoration. By the time the next day had arrived they decided not to keep to their appointment with the bishop although very fearful of the outcome. For some time they waited to be rearrested until they heard that the Bishop of Norwich had departed, his visitation of Ipswich concluded. They rejoiced, believing themselves to be saved by God's providence.

Foxe (1570), pp.2125-27.

ix. PEROTINE MASSEY (d. 17 July 1556, St Peter's Port, Guernsey)

Perotine was the eldest daughter of Katherine Cauches and sister to Guillemine Gilbert. The three women were originally arrested on account of Perotine having a stolen silver cup that belonged to her neighbour, Collas Coran, in her possession. Perotine had been keeping this cup because the woman who had actually stolen it from Coran's house, Vincent Gosset, had attempted to sell it to Perotine. Perotine suspecting the cup had been stolen refused to buy it but took it from Gosset in order to return the valuable cup to its rightful owner the next day. The women were put in prison at the castle and their house was searched and an inventory was produced listing all the valuable goods and moveable items in their family home. The women were put on trial and found not guilty of thievery by their neighbours who attested that they lived truly and honestly, however it was discovered that they did not follow the commandments of the Catholic Church. Perotine, her mother, and her sister, were returned to prison. Gosset was found guilty of committing theft and was banished from Guernsey after she had been punished by whipping and had her ear nailed to the pillory. Perotine, Guillemine and their mother were found guilty of heresy and sentenced to death.

Throughout the proceedings Perotine Massey was heavily pregnant, a fact that was only revealed during Foxe's description of the execution scene. The women were first strangled before they were submitted to the flames in order to shorten their suffering however the rope broke before they had died and Perotine fell into the fire. Landing on her side Perotine's stomach burst and a baby boy was born. A member of the crowd, a man called W. House, took the infant out of the fire and laid him on the grass. The authorities ordered that the child should be put back into the fire and the bailiff took the boy and threw him back into the flames.

In the 1570 edition of Foxe's work he added a multiple page defence of the Guernsey story against Catholic critic Thomas Harding, who published an account arguing that Perotine could not be a martyr because she was not innocent but guilty of thievery, whoredom and of murdering her own child. Foxe justified why Perotine had not saved her child's life by claiming Benefit of the Belly by insisting she did not know such a clause existed. Foxe argued that Perotine was married to Protestant minister David Jores and that he was the father of the deceased child. Nevertheless, the account of the burning of Perotine Massey, her sister, mother and baby remained deeply controversial.

See John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (London: John Daye, 1563), STC 11222, pp.1541-45; Foxe, (1570), pp.2127-34; and Thomas Harding, *A reioindre to M. Iewels replie against the sacrifice of the Masse* (Louvain, 1567) STC 12761, pp.178-186.

x. KATHERINE CAUCHES (d. 17 July 1556, St Peter's Port, Guernsey)

Katherine was the widowed mother (as noted in the above account) of Perotine Massey and Guillemine Gilbert. Katherine was executed with her two daughters, one of whom (Perotine) was heavily pregnant when they were burnt at the stake.

Katherine's brother, Matthew Cauches, with the help of his neighbours wrote a petition to Queen Elizabeth I in 1562 (four years after the Protestant Elizabeth had come to the throne following Mary Tudor's death in November 1558) proclaiming the innocence of his sister and two nieces and objecting to the cruelty they suffered under the Catholic regime of Mary Tudor. The purpose of the letter was to get the women's unlawfully taken goods returned to their family members by having them pardoned officially. Following this petition, the three women were pardoned. The two main examiners and persecutors

of the women who oversaw their execution, the bailiff of Guernsey Helier Gosselin and the dean of Guernsey Jacques Amy, were dismissed from their respective posts in 1563.

See Foxe (1563), pp.1541-45; Foxe (1570), pp.2127-34.

xi. GUILLELINE GILBERT (d. 17 July 1556, St Peter's Port, Guernsey)

Guillemine was the daughter of Katherine Cauches and younger sister to Perotine Massey (see above two accounts for further information). Out of all of the three women the least is known about Guillemine. She was executed with her sister and mother in July 1556. Her marital status is unknown despite not sharing the same surname as her mother or sister, though presumably if she had been married her husband was not present as she lived in her family home with her mother and sister.

See Foxe (1563), pp.1541-45; Foxe (1570), pp.2127-34.

xii. JOAN DANGERFIELD (Wotton Underhedge, Gloucestershire. Dates unknown.)

Joan was arrested with her husband, William, two weeks after she had given birth to the couple's tenth child. William had been away from their household during Joan's pregnancy for fear of persecution and had only returned when he heard news that his wife had been 'brought to bed'. He arrived home four days after the child had been born and stayed to care for their other nine children. It was Joan and William neighbours who reported his return to the authorities who soon came to arrest William Dangerfield. William was brought to the bishop, Doctor Brookes, and endured torture during questioning. Shortly after his wife was also apprehended and placed in a common jail 'amongst theeves and murderers' according to Foxe. Joan was required to bring her fourteen day old infant with her in order to nurse it.

Once both Joan and William were imprisoned William's examiners began to attempt to untruthfully persuade William that his equally intelligent wife had recanted and to urge William to recant also, which he did, believing that his wife had already done so. William was brought to see his wife and began instantly to regret his decision when he realised that he had been deceived by the bishop of his wife's recantation when he was brought to her cell. Joan was deeply upset when her husband produced a signed copy of his recantation. On his journey home from prison William felt such guilt over his recantation that he took his own life after eleven weeks of imprisonment.

It is unknown whether Joan was aware of her husband's suicide in prison during her own examinations. Eventually after her long term of imprisonment in harsh and unforgiving conditions Joan grew too weak to nurse her baby because she was suffering from the effects of cold and famine. Joan's child, suffering from starvation, was sent away from her. However, by this point it was too late for the child to recover and so it died. Shortly after this Joan died in prison.

Foxe attested to the reader that he was unsure what happened to Joan and William's orphaned nine surviving children who had stayed at home during the couple's imprisonment. However he argued that he had knowledge that they must have been 'undone the same'. Foxe also added at the end of this horrific and emotive story that the mother of William Dangerfield had shortly passed away after her son's imprisonment suffering from 'lacke of comforte'. This story was reported to Foxe by a Mistress Bridges who lived in the same town and who was also arrested during the same period as the Dangerfield's.

Foxe (1570), p.2139.

xiii. KATHERINE ALLIN (d. 18 June 1557, Maidstone, Kent)

Katherine Allin was the wife of fellow Protestant and future martyr, Edmund Allin. Edmund Allin was a milliner; he also gave food and read and interpreted the scriptures to the poor of his parish of Frittenden, Kent. Edmund and his wife were arrested early in the reign of Mary Tudor but were released, whereupon they fled to exile in Calais. The priest of Frittenden, John Taylor, informed the authorities that the Allin's had returned from exile and had not attended the Sunday mass at his church. In the middle of that mass, Taylor reputedly commanded the members of the congregation to find Allin and his wife. Allin was found in his house and brought to persecutor Sir John Baker who accused him of preaching and reading the scriptures to the people of the parish. Both he and his wife were sent to Maidstone prison.

During their imprisonment Baker sent a group of men to search the Allin's household and to take an inventory of all the goods present. Foxe writes that the men- persecutors John Dove, Thomas Best, Thomas Lindsey, and Percival Barbell- broke into a casket hidden under the bed, cutting off the padlock and stole the money which was inside of it, which amounted to between 13 and 14 pounds. They also took Bibles, Psalters, and other books and writings. All of the goods were delivered to the priest of Staplehurst, Thomas Henden.

After this event Edmund and Katherine Allin were brought in to be questioned by Sir John Baker. Baker accused the pair of gathering people together in order not just to preach Protestantism but to encourage sedition and rebellion. Edmund Allin after his interrogation was persuaded to attend mass in Baker's chapel the next day. Upon the agreement Allin was permitted to spend the night with his wife on the condition that he must persuade her to join him at the mass and then the pair would be released from prison.

Edmund Allin spent the night with his wife and attempted to persuade her to attend the mass with him. He told Katherine what he had promised Baker. Katherine Allin became upset, and said that he should go alone for her. At which point Edmund Allin was shown to have realised his error and decided not to attend mass but instead go with his wife to their deaths. The next morning, Baker arrived at the prison to take the pair to his church. Edmund refused to come with him, no matter the consequences. Baker called out Allin's wife and blamed Katherine for her husband's change of heart and dissent back into heresy. In his anger, Baker beat Katherine badly with the staff in his hand and sent them both back to prison. He sent a letter with them saying that they must be burnt out of hand. However, from Foxe's accounts, it seems that after this interrogation the Allin's managed to escape for a second time. Only to be presumably re-arrested and tried for a third time as they were eventually executed together on 18 June 1557 in Maidstone with five women and two men.

See Foxe (1570), p.2165, p.2197.

xiv. ALICE BENDEN (d. 15 June 1557, Staplehurst, Kent)

Alice Benden was first arrested for not attending church to avoid idolatry in October 1556. Her husband, Edward Benden, persuaded his wealthy neighbours to write to the Bishop of Dover and plead that she be sent home. The next day after she was released, her husband asked her to accompany him to Church, Alice refused. Upon attending Sunday church services without his wife, Edward Benden complained to other inhabitants of the parish of his wife's behaviour. This resulted in Sir John Gilford commanding her to return to prison. Reputedly, Benden's husband took money from the constable to bring his wife back to prison himself. Benden refused to let her husband return her prison, willingly committing herself.

Alice Benden was imprisoned in Canterbury Castle along with a fellow wife and Protestant, Alice Potkin. In this prison both wives endured horrific conditions. Potkin

would eventually die from starvation in Canterbury Castle. The cell Benden was then placed in consisted of nothing but a little straw on the floor, a pair of stocks and a stone wall. She was allowed the only food which she could afford to purchase which was a half-penny bread and a farthing's worth of water a day. She stayed in this cell for four weeks during which she was never allowed to change her apparel. Eventually she was transferred to Westgate after being sentenced to death and was kept here two months before she was executed.

During her imprisonment her husband had requested that no contact be allowed between Alice and her Protestant brother, Roger Hall, on the grounds that her brother would convince her never to recant. At the stake Alice Benden bequeathed a piece of white lace to her brother and desired that her brother return a shilling which their father had sent her in prison. She also somewhat notoriously and without explanation gave her handkerchief to one called John Banks. It was Benden's brothers, Roger and John Hall, who wrote to Foxe to tell him of their sister's story and that of other Marian Protestants executed in Kent.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2167-9.

xv. BRADBREGES WIDOW/WIFE (d. 19 June 1557, Canterbury, Kent)

The first name of Bradbreges (or Bradbridge) is not known, in all editions of Foxe's work she is referred to as either as 'Bradbreges wife' or as 'Bradbreges widow'; the identity of her husband is also unknown. Bradbreges was a mother to two children named Patience and Charity. When Bradbreges was sentenced to death she asked whether he would take and keep her children; he refused.

Bradbreges was executed in June 1557 in Canterbury with three other female martyrs (Barbara Final, Wilson's wife, Alice Benden) and three men (John Fishcocke, Nicholas White, Nicholas Pardue). In a marginal note Foxe stated that Bradbreges was thought to be pregnant when she was executed. It is also possible that she was a relative of Joan Bradbridge who was executed the day before in Maidstone, Kent.

Foxe (1570), pp.2167, p.2169.

xvi. ROSE ALLIN (d. 2 August 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Rose Allin was the twenty year old unmarried daughter of Alice, and step-daughter to Alice's second husband William Mount, husbandman. Rose was brought up in

Muchbentley, Essex and had been first arrested on suspicion for heresy with her parents and sent up to London to be examined along with 19 other accused Protestants in August 1556. The family were released and returned home to Muchbentley. It must be noted that these 22 prisoners were sent to London to face charges of heresy and the accompanying punishments because it was believed Protestant sympathies were too strong in Essex to allow for such a large group of Protestants to be executed. Despite having submitted to Catholic authority in order to be released in 1556, upon their return to their home parish the Mount family did anything but conform to Catholic teachings. They did not attend church and chose instead to read the vernacular English Bible with a group of like-minded men and women. However when they were re-arrested the following year it was not their personal beliefs that had most angered the church authorities but their persuading of others in the parish not to attend church and host conventicles of Protestants in their home and those of their friends every Sunday. Their work in hosting these groups and helping to spread heresy was evidenced when their house was searched immediately following their second apprehension by the authorities and husband and wife John and Margaret Thurston were found hiding in it. The Mount family were not only accused of heresy but sedition.

On 7 March 1557 at two in the afternoon Edmund Tyrell accompanied by Bailiff William Simuel and the two constables John Baker and William Harries and other men to beset the house of William Mount and his family. Rose Allin was apprehended by Tyrell when she returned to the house having left to fetch her sickly mother some water. Tyrell advised Rose to persuade her mother and father to be better Catholic people. Following a heated conversation Tyrell- after Rose made it clear she would not convince her parents to abandon their Protestant beliefs and that she herself held the same beliefs- took a candle from Rose's hand and holding on to her wrist burnt a cross on it. Tyrell held the candle to Rose's skin for so long that the sinews of her hand snapped at which point after much verbal abuse Tyrell thrust Rose away from him. This event was reported to Foxe by three who had witnessed it: William Kandler, Mistress Bright and her maid Anne Starky. The family were imprisoned in Colchester castle.

On 2 August 1557 the family, including Rose, were brought to the place of their execution in the yard of Colchester castle. Whilst they were being tied to their stakes to be burnt they exhorted the people in the audience to fly from idolatry.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2198-2202.

xvii. ALICE MOUNT (d. 2 August 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Alice Mount was mother to fellow martyr Rose Allin (see above account for more details) and was arrested with her daughter and her husband in the summer of 1557 and sent to Colchester castle. Alice and her second husband, William Mount, were both 61 years of age when they were imprisoned and finally executed alongside their daughter on 2 August 1557 in the grounds of the castle they were imprisoned in.

Alice Mount is recorded by martyrologist Foxe as being gravely ill and laying in her sick bed with her husband when Tyrell and his men came to arrest her family and search her household. Upon being commanded to prison, Alice requested that her daughter first fetch her a drink, perhaps in an effort to protect her. Rose did as requested and carried a stone pot in one hand to fill with water and a candle in the other. When examined Alice Mount declared that she upheld the same Protestant values as her husband.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2198-2202.

xviii. ELIZABETH FOLKES (d. 2 August 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Elizabeth Folkes was a twenty year-old servant of Nicholas Clere, a clothier. It is quite likely that Clere accused Folkes in order to disperse the rumours that he was Protestant. Folkes was brought up in the staunchly Protestant village of Stoke Nayland in Suffolk before working and living in Colchester.

Elizabeth was imprisoned with nine other suspected heretics, including the Mount family, Helen Ewring and Agnes Silverside among named others. The day before she was condemned she was examined upon only one article, and was asked simply whether she believed there was a Catholic Church and she agreed that there was. Then she was released to her Uncle Holt for safe keeping and although she may have easily escaped his keeping, she did not. When Elizabeth heard people talking about whether she had yielded to the Pope or not (which she had not, she had merely accepted the existence of the Catholic Church) she was deeply upset and went to the White Heart tavern at Colchester owned by Richard Cosin, a committed Catholic. She professed her utter defiance of them and their doctrine, and was returned to prison in Mote Hall.

She was condemned for heresy for denying the presence of Christ in the Sacrament, not going to church, and not believing in the authority of Rome. When her examiner, Doctor Chedsey, read the sentence against her tears ran down his cheeks. Elizabeth Folkes

responded by kneeling, lifting up her hands and eyes towards heaven; praying audibly to give her thanks to God that he should deem her worthy to suffer for the testimony of Christ and pleaded that He show mercy to her persecutors. A writ was issued authorising the execution of Elizabeth Folkes and the other nine martyrs.

On 2 August 1557 between six and seven in the morning Elizabeth Folkes, along with William Bongeor, W. Purcas, Thomas Benold, Agnes Silverside, and Helen Ewring, was brought from Mote Hall to the town wall of Colchester; the place of their execution. When they had made their prayers they rose and made their preparations for the fire. The mother of Elizabeth Folkes came to her and kissed her and told her daughter to be strong in the Lord. Elizabeth Folkes wished to give her petticoat to her mother but the persecutors forbade her from doing so. In defiance, before she came to the stake, Elizabeth took her petticoat and threw it into the crowd and bided the world, hope and faith farewell and said 'welcome love' when she took the stake in her hand. One of the officers nailed the chains around her to attach her to the stake, however he missed his aim and struck the hammer on her shoulder bone. Folkes merely turned her head, lifting her eyes up to the sky and smiled. Foxe estimated that thousands had gathered to watch the six die and many cried out in support of the martyrs when the martyrs began to clap as the flames were lit around their feet.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2202.

xix. HELEN/ ELLEN EWING (d. 2 August 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Helen was married to miller John Ewring and was around 45 years old. Ewring had been indicted in 1556 for attending a protestant conventicle and had been brought to answer Bishop Bonner in London and had submitted. She had been returned to her husband for a short period before the bailiff of Colchester, Robert Maynard, recognised her and came up to her and kissed her, bidding her welcome home from London. Ewring objected and accused him of delivering her a Judas kiss, for she told him she knew he would betray her. She was proved correct because not long after their conversation she was arrested for a second time and was put in the town prison, called Mote Hall along with nine others, including Elizabeth Folkes and Rose Allin as mentioned above.

Upon examination, Ewring's views on the Sacrament of the Altar were brought into question. Ewring denied the laws of the Pope of Rome. Foxe argued that Ewring was thick of hearing, but was quick of understanding as demonstrated in her examinations.

Ewring was executed along with five others (Elizabeth Folkes, William Bongeor, W. Purcas, Agnes Silverside alias Smith, and Thomas Benold) on 2 August 1557 by the town wall of Colchester in front of an alleged crowd of thousands.

Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2202.

xx. AGNES SILVERSIDE ALIAS SMITH (d. 2 August 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Agnes Silverside was the sixty year old widow of priest Thomas Silverside, who had been her second husband. The Marian authorities would not have recognised this marriage believing that priests had to remain celibate. Silverside was also known by the name Agnes Smith and was referred to as this by fellow martyr, Ralph Allerton, in his letters to her. Her first husband was most likely Thomas Downes who died in 1517 when Agnes was around twenty years of age.

Agnes Silverside was imprisoned alongside Elizabeth Folkes and Helen Ewring in Mote Hall, Essex. When examined, Silverside proclaimed that she loved no consecration and did not believe in the Sacrament of the Altar. Agnes answered all the questions put to her with sound judgement and boldness. She was reputedly taunted frequently by her questioners and the reverence and patience she showed, particularly as an aged woman, brought hope to the other suspected heretics in the same prison. Agnes Silverside also showed a great strength of character when she stood while her death sentence was being read.

Agnes Silverside met her death with five other Protestant martyrs in Colchester, at the outward side of the city wall, on the morning of the 2 August 1557 in front of a large crowd who supported the martyrs in their cause.

Ralph Allerton, also of Essex, was executed for heresy on the afternoon of the same day as Silverside, and in the same place. Allerton had composed a letter to Agnes while they were both in prison which was written in blood because he lacked the ink to write it. Foxe published the letter, which Agnes herself never received, in his *Acts and Monuments* (1570, p.2212). Allerton wrote to his 'dearly beloued sister' to encourage her to stay strong and not make any agreement with the Antichrist currently wreaking havoc upon England, to take patience and comfort in the scriptures, and to bid her farewell. During his interrogations where Allerton was being questioned about the intentions, construction and legality of his many letters and the recipients of them, his letter to Agnes Silverside alias Smith came into the conversation. Allerton refuted the bishop's claim that she was

a heretic, and to be burnt as such; he argued that she was in better case than himself, or any of them.

Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2201, pp.2212-13.

xxi. JOYCE LEWES (d. 10 July 1557, Lichfield, Staffordshire)

Joyce Lewes unlike the other Marian female martyrs of Foxe's book was a gentlewoman and because of this received a very different upbringing because she experienced the material 'pleasures of the world'. As a young woman Lewes had been brought up to care more about her appearance than religiosity, she was interested in fashion and other 'folishnes' as Foxe describes it, and was infected by the same vanity that Foxe suggests most of the elite suffered with. After the death of her first husband, Appleby, Joyce had married the gentleman Thomas Lewes of Mancetter, Warwickshire. At the beginning of Mary I's Catholic reign she attended church and listened to the Mass. When she heard of the news of Protestant priest Laurence Saunder's execution at Coventry she began to reconsider her position on religious matters. Joyce began to visit John Glover, who would become her spiritual mentor and a Marian martyr himself, who reproved her for her worldly vanities. Joyce began to stop attending church services and retreated from the world.

Her husband, Thomas Lewes, was furious at her decision. Thomas forced her to attend church with him but Joyce turned her back on the holy water when it was cast. A citation was sent to her husband's house requiring Thomas Lewes and his wife to appear before the bishop. When the summoner delivered the citation to Joyce's husband, Thomas threatened that if the summoner did not take the citation back he would force him to eat it. The summoner refused; Thomas Lewes set a dagger to the summoner's heart and forced him to eat the citation. Then Thomas made the summoner drink to it, and sent him away. Thomas and Joyce Lewes were commanded to see the bishop; Thomas submitted, Joyce did not. On the grounds that Joyce was a gentlewoman the bishop granted her one months respite in order that she change her mind and her husband was bound to £100 to return his wife to the bishop at the end of the month.

During the month's respite Joyce Lewes became even more committed to Protestantism. She visited her spiritual mentor frequently and Glover warned her of the dangers that she was putting herself in and instructed her that she must be doing so for the right reasons, not out of vain glory or to get her name known. Glover pleaded with Thomas Lewes not

to return his wife to the bishop even if it meant forfeiting £100, he acknowledged that it was a lot of money but that it was better to sacrifice it than cast his own wife in the fire. Thomas Lewes refused; he would not lose or forfeit anything for her sake. He brought her to the bishop at the end of the month as promised. Joyce Lewes was examined and imprisoned in Lichfield. She was examined multiple times and the bishop tried to reason with her but she remained strong in her refusal to submit to Catholicism. Joyce Lewes was condemned but was kept a whole year in prison before her execution; the authorities were reluctant to execute a learned gentlewoman and hoped she would eventually recant.

On the night before her execution Lewes was allowed to bring her friends down from London. She consulted with them on how best she might present herself at her death. Two priests from Lichfield came to her that evening to hear her confession, for they would be sorry if she were to die without it. Lewes replied that she had already made her confession to Christ and needed no authorisation from the Pope to do so, nor did she require absolution. The priests in conversation with the sheriff doubted Lewes strength, they argued that she was only able to refuse confession because she had her friends whispering in her ears with her and that her resolve would be tested upon her execution. They doubted that her friends would dare be so supportive as to come near her when she was tied to the stake.

At eight the next morning Lewes was informed she only had an hour to live. Lewes was abashed at being given these words so frankly and suddenly. Her friends reminded her that she must praise God that He wished to take her out of this world so quickly. Lewes then thanked the sheriff for his news and declared her gratefulness to the Lord. When the sheriff came- with swords and clubs- to bring her to the stake, two of Lewes friends were granted leave to accompany her, a decision the sheriff later regretted.

The walk from the prison to the stake was so long, the throng of people so great, and Joyce was so unused to fresh air after being kept so long in prison that her friend sent a messenger to the sheriff's house for some drink. After Lewes had prayed, she took the cup in her hands declaring that she was drinking to those that loved the gospel and wished to abolish papistry. When she had drunk, her friends drunk also and after that a number of the towns people, particularly women, drank with her. All these people who drank with her were later sentenced to open penance in the church.

When Lewes was tied to the stake in Lichfield, she appeared cheerful and calm. When the fire was lit she raised her hands toward heaven. Her death was quick because the

undersheriff had, at the request of her friends, made sure that she would be despatched quickly, most likely by using gunpowder.

After the death of Joyce Lewes multiple men and women of Lichfield were brought before the bishop and chancellor and punished for kissing Joyce and drinking with her at the time of her death. Their names included: Joan Love, Elizabeth Smith, Margaret Biddell, Helen Bowring, Margaret Cotesfoot, Nicholas Bird, John Hurlestone and his wife Agnes Glynn, Agnes Glover (wife of John Glover, Joyce Lewes' spiritual mentor), and Agnes Pennyfather.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2206-7, p.2220.

xxii. MARGERIE ASTOO (d. 17 September 1557, London)

Margery and her husband James Austoo were apprehended together, although Foxe admits he cannot say why, how or when. Despite this Foxe believes it could have been their neighbours that informed the authorities.

On 16 July 1557 the couple were brought before Bonner, the Bishop of London, to be examined. Bonner asked James whether he had confessed at Lent and whether he had received the Sacrament of the Altar at Easter, James answered that he had not and explained why he believed the true body and blood of Christ was not present in the Sacrament. Bonner, dissatisfied with James' answers, then turned to his wife and asked how she liked the religion, Catholicism, of the Church of England. She answered that the religion of the Marian Church was false and corrupt. She argued that people who attended it did so because they were merely afraid of the law and not because they believed in Catholic rituals. Bonner then asked her if she would go to Mass if it meant she could pray for the estate of the king, she answered that she defied Mass and would not go to any idolatrous church.

The couple with Rafe Allerton, who was similarly accused and would later be executed alongside the Austoos, were brought for a second time to be seen by Bishop Bonner on 10 September 1557. They were brought to meet him at his chapel in Fulham, of which one of the Austoos (it is not clear whether it was James or Margery) complained that they had been brought to an idolatrous temple. The accusations levelled against them were read out, both the Austoos stuck to their beliefs, and Bonner condemned them to burn. They were imprisoned in the Bishops prison to await their deaths.

One night before they were to be brought to the stake, Foxe claimed that the Bishop procured and sent a ‘stout champion’ at midnight to Margery Austoo’s cell. He opened the door without warning and drew a knife upon Margery, pinning her to the ground as if to cut her throat. She called out to God for help, the man wielding the knife let out a grunt, and losing his nerve, he fled from her cell and no harm came upon her as a result of the incident. The next night, the persecutors continued upon their mission to frighten Margery Austoo into presumably recanting, as they created great rumbling and great thunder to be made over her head. Margery was not deterred however and joined her husband, Rafe Allerton and Richard Roth to be executed at Islington.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2214-5.

xxiii. MARGARET THURSTON (d. 17 September 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Margaret and John Thurston were discovered by the authorities when the household of the Mount family, who were known to host meetings of their Protestant congregation, was searched following the arrest of William Mount, his wife Alice and her daughter Rose Allin. The Thurston’s were taken to Colchester castle and examined.

Margaret was subsequently widowed when her husband John Thurston died in prison. In the 1570 edition of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* Margaret’s execution was deferred until after her husband’s death, although it is not clear why. Margaret assured Joan Cook, who by the time the *Acts and Monument* was published was married to Margaret’s fellow prisoner John Sparke, and was also Foxe’s informant on the story of her martyrdom, that it was not deferred because she was afraid of dying and she greatly regretted that she will not be joining her fellow imprisoned Protestants at the stake. However later in Foxe’s 1570 account it is implied that Thurston was close to recanting after her husband’s death which was perhaps the reason why her execution was deferred. In the earliest version of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, published in 1563, the suggestion that Thurston did recant, being the reason her execution was deferred, is much clearer despite the martyrologists’ insistence that Thurston was only temporarily deceived.

The account of Margaret Thurston in Foxe’s martyrology is combined with the tale of Agnes Bongeor. Both women were burnt at Colchester after having their first death sentence deferred for different reasons. Both, though in separate prisons for the duration of their examinations, prayed and burnt together on their day of execution in September 1557.

See Foxe (1563), p.1631; Foxe (1570), p.2200, pp.2215-6.

xxiv. AGNES BONGEOR (d. 17 September 1557, Colchester, Essex)

Agnes Bongeor was a young wife and mother. In prison she kept her new-born with her at all times, only sending it away to be cared for by a nurse on the day of her execution. However Bongeor's execution was deferred because her name wrongly appeared on the writ as Agnes Bowyer. This mistake was only spotted by the authorities when the group of Protestant prisoner's names were called out on the morning of their execution. When Bongeor was commanded to return to prison she was distraught.

The accounts of Agnes Bongeor and Margaret Thurston were not only joined in all editions of the *Acts and Monuments* but the same woman, Joan Cook, was Foxe's informant for both. Both Bongeor and Thurston shared the problem of having their respective executions delayed. When they finally were delivered to the stake for execution in Colchester they were presented by Foxe as being joyous in their deaths.

See Foxe (1563), pp.1631-33, and Foxe (1570), pp.2215-16.

xxv. CECILY ORMES (d. 23 September 1557, Norwich, Norfolk)

Cicely was the daughter of tailor Thomas Haund, and wife of worsted-weaver Edmund Ormes. She was 32 years old when she was executed.

Cicely Ormes was present to watch the deaths of Protestant martyrs Simon Miller and Elizabeth Cooper (d. 13 July 1557) at the so-called Lollard's Pit because it had been used for burning heretics, namely Lollards, since the 1420s in Norwich. She took a pledge on the same cup they had drank from, on witnessing this Mr Corbet of Sprouson, Norwich took her and sent her to the chancellor, Michael Dunning. The chancellor questioned Cecily about the Sacrament of the Altar. Among other things he asked her what is was the priest held above his head, Cecily replied it was merely bread. With many threatening words he sent to the bishop's prison.

On 23 July Cecily was called to meet the chancellor again who was joined by Mr Bridges and others. The chancellor said if she went to church and kept her tongue she would be released from prison. Cecily refused, it did not matter what they did with her she argued for if she agreed God would send plagues upon her. The chancellor then reminded Cecily Ormes that he was showing more favour to her than any other accused heretic because she was an ignorant, unlearned and foolish woman. Ormes told him that if he did show

her more favour than it was because he was 'desirous of her sinfull flesh'. Dunning rose from his chair and demanded that she be taken to Guildhall prison in Norwich and for her to remain there until her death.

According to Foxe's account, twelve months before Ormes had been arrested she had recanted, but struggled with her conscience and eventually was driven away from all popery. Between the time of her recantation and the time in which she was re-arrested at Miller's and Cooper's burning she had, being unable to write herself, got a letter made for her to give to chancellor Dunning which said that she had repented her recantation and would never recant again. Before she could send this letter she had been arrested and imprisoned.

Ormes was burnt alone in September 1557, between 11.00 and 12.00pm, at Norwich in front of a crowd of 260 people. After she had kneeled to pray at the stake, she arose to address the spectators. She promised she would not and would never recant again except to recant the doings of the Pope of Rome, his priests, and clergymen. Cecily declared to the audience that her death should be a witness of her faith to all those present. Finally she asked the audience to pray for her before she came to the stake and touched it. When she removed her hand and it came away blackened, with the ashes of Elizabeth Cooper and Simon Miller and all those who had died there before her, she wiped it upon her smock. She kissed the stake, and then allowed herself to be chained to the stake and the fire kindled. She was in silent prayer until death.

Foxe (1570), p.2219.

xxvi. CHRISTIAN GEORGE (d. 26 May 1558, Colchester, Essex)

Christian George was executed at Colchester in May 1558, the last year of Queen Mary's reign, along with two men, William Harries and Richard Day.

Christian was the second wife of Richard George, the widower of Christian's fellow martyr Agnes George who had been executed two years previously to her own execution. After the death of Christian, Richard George quickly got married again to another Protestant woman before the death of Queen Mary I on 17 November 1558. In the six months between the death of his second wife and the death of the catholic queen, Richard George had not only gotten married for the third time in the space of a roughly estimated decade but had been arrested and imprisoned with his third wife, accused of heresy.

Richard and his third wife remained in prison until the end of Mary's reign, to be released in the Protestant reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

See Foxe (1570), p.2234.

xxvii. ALICE DRIVER (d. 4 November 1558, Ipswich, Suffolk)

Alice Driver was a 30 year old wife of a husbandman. Driver was notoriously found in a hay bale with her spiritual advisor and possible lover, Alexander Gouch when they were both arrested by the authorities.

Alice Driver upon being examined was not only sentenced to death for committing heretical acts but also had her ears cut off for likening Mary Tudor to Jezebel during her interrogations. Alexander Gouch and Alice Driver were burned at the same time on 4 November 1558.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2247-48.

xviii. JOAN WASTE (c.1535- d. 1 August 1556, Derby)

Joan Waste was a blind, and unmarried, daughter of William Waste, barber and rope-maker, and his wife. Her mother taught her to knit hosen and sleeves. Her father taught her how to construct ropes. When she was a teenager her parents passed away and she was cared for by her brother Roger Waste. During the evangelical reign of Edward VI Waste went to church daily and used the skills her parents had taught her to earn the money to buy a copy of the New Testament which she employed two men of her parish, John Hurt and John Pemberton (Clerk of the parish church), to read to her and attempted to commit the scriptures read aloud to memory.

During the Catholic reign of Mary I, Joan refused to believe in the sanctity of the Mass and the sacrament of the altar, believing that the bread and wine were only representations of Jesus' body. Joan Waste was arrested in June 1557 and charged of committing heresy. Joan Waste was 22 years old when she was executed and being blind it was necessary for her brother Roger to hold her hand and lead her to the stake where she was to be burnt.

See (1570), pp.2137-38.

xxix. AGNES PREST (d. 1558, Exeter, Devon)

The 54 year old Agnes Prest was a wife and mother, although apart from their last name no Christian names are given. Presumably her children were adults when she endured her imprisonment for heresy because her husband and children were said to frequently rebuke her Protestant beliefs and force her to go to Catholic services and give thanks to a God who had restored Antichrist in England. Prest began to grow contemptuous of her husband and children and one night after making her prayers she fled from the household at midnight. Agnes Prest worked as a spinner, living off her own labours, until eventually she was returned home to her husband again. Upon her return, her neighbours accused her of heresy and she was brought before the bishop at Exeter, Doctor Turberville and his chancellor Blackstone.

Turberville mocked Prest in her examinations, demanding to know why she as a foolish, unlearned person and women would trouble herself to meddle in such high matters which not even doctors could fully understand. Prest acknowledged that she was a poor woman and lived by her hands but argued that it meant she got her money fairly and truly and of that, what she did not need she gave to the poor. The bishop preceded to question her about her marriage and family. Prest agreed she had a husband and children but that she had renounced them in favour of the Lord. She argued that she had never disobeyed her husband and children when she was at liberty to do so; but when she had had to choose between obeying her husband and obeying God she had chosen God. Prest stated that she would sooner die than worship idols at Mass. Turberville told her that if she was an honest woman she would not have abandoned her family and run like a fugitive. Prest argued that her husband and children had persecuted her and that she fled because she had to.

The next day after her examination her husband was sent for, Agnes Prest refused to go home with him. The bishop attempted to persuade her to leave her wicked opinion and that the devil had deceived her, but she objected saying that the Pope was Antichrist and the devil. Her persecutors laughed at her. In response, she argued that they had more reason to weep than to laugh because they were the chaplains of the whore of Babylon and asked them how they could preach nothing but damnable lies and destroy souls; she stated that she would sooner lose her life before she would follow their teachings.

During her imprisonment Prest was visited by the mother of the future Elizabethan courtier, Sir Walter Raleigh. After a discussion with Prest the gentlewoman returned to her husband to declare that never in her life had she ever heard a woman talk so godly, perfectly, and earnestly. Others who visited her were also impressed. Despite this, her inquisitors continued to threaten and taunt her, calling her a mad woman, a drunkard, a

whore, and an Anabaptist. When this tactic did not work, in order to get her to recant, they used flattery and gave many promises and assurances. Then they tried her with her husband and children present, but nothing persuaded her. Eventually they brought her to the Guild Hall in Exeter after a final failed attempt to persuade her that she should go home to her husband and stop meddling in matters out of her reach. In order to prove the corruptness of Catholicism while the persecutors persuaded Prest to be a good wife, Foxe attested that the church treasurer kept his concubine with him and others of his gossips in order to humiliate Prest further during her examinations.

Eventually Prest was condemned to be burnt at the stake. An innumerable crowd gathered to watch her execution. The priests again tried to persuade her but Prest stood firm. Agnes cried as she was being tied to the stake, begging God to forgive her.

See Foxe (1570), pp.2249-52.

xxx. KATHERINE KNIGHT ALIAS TYNLEY (Thornham, Kent, d.10 November 1558)

Katherine Knight was the mother of Robert Tynley. Robert Tynley had in Foxe's words been 'in trouble' for all of Mary's reign, presumably for religious matters, and was allegedly responsible for his mother's conversion to Protestantism. Katherine visited Robert and asked her son about how he interpreted the scriptures. Robert educated her about religion and the importance of the word of God. In return, Katherine Knight began to grow in zeal and love of Protestantism.

Katherine Knight was burned with five others in Canterbury six days before the death of Queen Mary I. These six were the last martyrs to be made in Mary Tudor's reign.

Foxe (1570), pp.2253-54.

xxxi. ELIZABETH YOUNG

Elizabeth Young is an anomaly in Foxe's book of martyrs. Despite enduring thirteen examinations Young was not executed during Mary's reign but still awarded a martyrdom for her suffering. Added to this, unlike the accounts of other martyrs, despite her husband sharing, and also being persecuted, for the same beliefs as Elizabeth he is mentioned only once in reference to their once being apprehended together. No other information is offered about Young's husband other than this. Elizabeth Young was also not arrested upon suspicion of heresy but for smuggling anti-Catholic books into England from the

continent, particularly from Emden. Nine of Young's thirteen examinations are detailed in Foxe's work.

Elizabeth Young was forty years old when she was first examined. In this examination Young revealed that she had converted to Protestantism after twenty years of attending Mass. In her fourth interrogation Young was accused of being a man dressed in women's clothes based on her manner and the answers she gave her questioners. In her ninth examination, and the last that Foxe had information for, two women stood as sureties for Young. These two women sued for Young's release on the grounds that her children, which were in their care whilst Young was in prison, were in ill-health and needed to be nursed back to good health by their mother. No more information is given on what happened to Young after this last record of her trial other than that she avoided being executed.

Foxe (1570), pp.2268-74.

xxxii. ELIZABETH FOXE (Stoke, Suffolk)

Elizabeth Foxe was wife to John Foxe (no relation to the martyrologist). The Foxes were part of a Protestant congregation of Stoke along with several others, including John Foxe's brother John Steyre and his wife. Within the three years of Mary's persecution, the members of the congregation had not attended church to receive the Sacrament of the Altar. Foxe argued that it was remarkable that they had managed to avoid imprisonment until 1558. Foxe put this down to the congregation being so large in number that the 'Papistes thought it not best to lay handes vpon them'. All refused to participate in communion upon being commanded by the Catholic authorities in Easter 1558 to do so, with the exception of John Steyre and John Foxe. John Steyre gave his wife leave to do as she wished whilst Foxe threatened his wife to relent otherwise he would push for divorce.

Elizabeth Foxe was forced to flee her husband's house and to the company of the members of the congregation that had not recanted. Crying, Elizabeth told the congregation how 'violently her husband had de[a]lt with her'. The women of the congregation told her to be in 'good cheare' and promised to pray to God on her and her husband's behalf. The next day Foxe visited his wife and the congregation to beg their forgiveness; he promised he would now remain strong in the Protestant faith. The congregation and his wife forgave him and rejoiced.

Six months after the congregation were commanded to reform their ways, every female member was commanded to attend Church the next Sunday. If they did not, the Bishop of Norwich warned them that they would have to appear before the Commissary. The women being alerted of this beforehand escaped the parish in order to avoid being summoned when they did not attend the church service. Three weeks after this incident they were excommunicated. By leaving Stoke, the women managed to escape danger just two months before the Protestant Elizabeth I would succeed Mary as Queen of England.

Foxe (1570), pp.2277-78.

APPENDIX TWO: TABLE OF POST-REFORMATION TUDOR FEMALE MARTYRS

Name	Date and Place of Death	Married	Children	Family Information	Martyrology and Page Number
Women executed for religion during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547):					
Elizabeth Barton (Catholic = C)	1534. London	N	N	From a family of lower social status. Servant before becoming a nun. Around sixteen years old.	N/A
Anne Askew (Protestant = P)	1546. Smithfield, London	Y	Y	Seperated from violent, conformist husband. Second daughter of Sir William Askew of Lincolnshire. Her cousin Christopher Brittain applied for Askew's bail. Imprisoned again.	Anne Askew and John Bale, <i>The first examination of Anne Askew</i> (1546), STC 848; Askew and Bale, <i>The lattre examination of Anne Askew</i> (1547), STC 850.
Women executed for religion during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553):					
Joan Boucher (Anabaptist)	1550. Smithfield, London	Y	?		John Foxe, <i>Actes and Monuments</i> (1570), STC 11223, p.1552.
Women executed for religion during the reign of Mary I (1553-1558):					
Margery Polley (P)	July 1555. Tonbridge, Kent	Y	?	Wife of Richard Polley.	Foxe (1570), pp.1859-60.
Elizabeth Warne (P)	23 August 1555. Stratford Le Bow, London	Y	Y	Wife of martyr John Warne. Mother of martyr Joan Lashford.	Foxe (1570), p.2030, pp.1868-9.

Isabel Foster (P)	27 January 1556. Smithfield, London.	Y	?	Wife of John Foster.	Foxe (1570), pp.2014-15, p.2030.
Joan Lashford (P)	27 January 1556. Smithfield, London.	N	N	Daughter of martyr Elizabeth Warne.	Foxe (1570), p.2016, p.2030.
Agnes Snoth (P)	31 January 1556. Kent	Widow	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2031.
Anne Albright alias Champnes (P)	31 January 1556. Canterbury, Kent	?	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), pp.2031-2.
Joan Sole (P)	31 January 1556. Canterbury, Kent	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2032.
Joan Catmer (P)	31 January 1556. Canterbury, Kent	Widow	?	Widow of martyr George Catmer.	Foxe (1570), p.2032.
Agnes Potten (P)	19 February 1556. Ipswich, Suffolk	Y	?	Wife of brewer, Robert Potten.	Foxe (1570), p.1879, p.2072.
Joan Trunchfield (P)	19 February 1556. Ipswich, Suffolk	Y	Y	Wife of shoemaker, Michael Trunchfield. Visited husband and children during imprisonment.	Foxe (1570), p.1879, p.2072. John Foxe, <i>Actes and Monuments</i> (1583) STC 11225, p.1734.
Joan Beach (P)	1 April 1556. Rochester, Kent	Widow	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.1898, p.2125.
Katherine Hut (P)	16 May 1556.	Widow	?	Hut converted to Protestantism	Foxe (1570), p.2091-2.

	Smithfield, London			when 14 years old.	
Elizabeth Thachvel	16 May 1556. Smithfield, London	N	N	Maid.	Foxe (1570), p.2091-2.
Joan Horns (P)	16 May 1556. Smithfield, London	N	N	Maid. Converted to Protestantism when 11 years old. Between 14 and 20 years old when executed.	Foxe (1570), p.2091-2.
Margaret Ellis (P)	16 May 1556. Smithfield, London	N	N	Maid.	Foxe (1570), p.2091-2.
Elizabeth Pepper (P)	27 June 1556. Colchester, Essex	Y	Y	Wife of Thomas Pepper, weaver. 11 weeks pregnant when burned.	Foxe (1570), pp.2095-6, p.2276. Foxe (1583), p.1916.
Agnes George (P)	27 June 1556. Colchester, Essex	Y	?	Married (possibly unlawfully) to Richard George. Richard subsequently married future martyr, Christian George.	Foxe (1570), pp.2095-7, p.2234.
Katherine Cauches (P)	17 July 1556. St Peter's Port, Guernsey	Widow	Y	Burned alongside daughters Perotine Massey and Guillemine Gilbert. Her brother wrote a petition to Elizabeth I to request the pardon of Cauches and her two daughters.	John Foxe, <i>Actes and Monuments</i> (1563) STC 11222, p.1541- 45. Foxe (1570), pp.2127-34.

Perotine Massey (P)	17 July 1556. St Peter's Port, Guernsey	Y	Y	Heavily pregnant when martyred. Contested wife of Priest David Jores.	Foxe (1563), pp.1541-5. Foxe (1570), p.2127-34.
Guillemine Gilbert (P)	17 July 1556. St Peter's Port, Guernsey	?	N	Burned alongside sister, Perotine Massey, and mother, Katherine Cauches.	Foxe (1563), pp.1541-5. Foxe (1570), p.2127-34.
Anne Tree (P)	18 July 1556. Grinstead, Sussex	Widow	?	Referred to as 'Mother Tree' by Foxe.	Foxe (1570), p.2134.
Joan Waste (P)	1 August 1556. Derby	N	N	Blind daughter of barber, William Waste. Her brother, Roger held the same Protestant beliefs.	Foxe (1570), pp.2137-38.
Alice Potkins (P)	November 1556. Canterbury Castle, Kent	Y	?	49 years old.	Foxe (1570), p.2140.
Margaret Hide (P)	12 April 1557. Smithfield, London	Y	?	Wife of innkeeper.	Foxe (1570), pp.2159-61.
Agnes Stanley (P)	12 April 1557. Smithfield, London	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), pp.2159-61.
Joan Bradbridge (P)	18 June 1557. Maidstone, Kent	?	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2165.
Petronil Appleby (P)	18 June 1557. Maidstone, Kent	Y	?	Burnt on the same day as her husband, Walter Appleby.	Foxe (1570), p.2146, p.2167.

Katherine Allin (P)	18 June 1557. Maidstone, Kent	Y	?	Burned alongside husband, Edmund Allin.	Foxe (1570), p.2165, p.2197.
Joan Manning (P)	18 June 1557. Maidstone, Kent	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2167.
Elizabeth Lewes (P)	18 June 1557. Maidstone, Kent	N	N	'[A] blynd maiden'.	Foxe (1570), p.2167.
Barbara Final (P)	19 June 1557. Canterbury, Kent	Widow	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2167.
Bradbrege [unknown 1 st name] (P)	19 June 1557. Canterbury, Kent	Widow	Y	Thought to be pregnant at execution. Possible her late husband was Matthew Bradbridge, executed 4 days prior to her death in Kent. Two children: Patience and Charity.	Foxe (1570), p.2167, p.2169.
Wilson [unknown 1 st name] (P)	19 June 1557. Canterbury, Kent	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2167.
Alice Benden (P)	19 June 1557. Canterbury, Kent	Y	?	Wife of conformist husband who accused her of heresy. Her brothers, Roger and John Hall, were also deeply committed Protestants.	Foxe (1570), pp.2167-9.

Thomasine a Wood (P)	22 June 1557. Lewes, Sussex	N	N	Maid servant to William Maynard. Thomasine died alongside Maynard and her fellow servant Alexander Hosman.	Foxe (1570), p.2195.
Margery Moris (P)	22 June 1557. Lewes, Sussex	?	Y	Moris was executed alongside her son, James Moris.	Foxe (1570), p.2200.
Ashdon [unknown 1 st name] (P)	22 June 1557. Lewes, Sussex	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2195.
Christian Groves (P)	22 June 1557. Lewes, Sussex	Y	?	N/A	Foxe (1570), p.2195.
Elizabeth Cooper (P)	13 July 1557. Norwich, Norfolk	Y	?	Wife of pewterer, John Cooper.	Foxe (1570), p.2197-8.
Agnes Silverside nee Smith (P)	2 August 1557. Colchester, Essex	Widow	?	Sixty years old. Widow of a priest (Thomas Silverside, her second husband).	Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2201, pp.2212-2213.
Helen Ewring (P)	2 August 1557. Colchester, Essex	Y	?	45 years old. Wife of John Ewring.	Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2202.
Elizabeth Folkes (P)	2 August 1557. Colchester, Essex	N	N	20 year old servant. Placed in the custody of her uncle after her first examination. Her mother encouraged her to stay strong at her execution.	Foxe (1570), pp.2200-2202.

Alice Mount (P)	2 August 1557. Colchester, Essex	Y	Y	Burned with her daughter and husband, Rose Allin and William Mount.	Foxe (1570), pp.2198-2202.
Rose Allin (P)	2 August 1557. Colchester, Essex	?	N	Arrested when fetching water for her sick mother. Mother and step-father martyred.	Foxe (1570), pp.2198-2202.
[No Name] (P)	20 August 1557. Rochester, Kent.	?	?	Sister of fellow martyr George Eagles.	Foxe (1570), p.2206.
[No Name] (P)	20 August 1557. Rochester, Kent	?	?	N/A	Thomas Brice, <i>A Brief Register</i> (1599), p.12.
Joyce Lewes (P)	10 September 1557. Lichfield, Staffordshire	Y	?	Gentlewoman, over 30. Widow of one Appleby and then wife of Thomas Lewes, who returned her to prison.	Foxe (1570), pp.2206-7, p.2220.
Margery Austoo (P)	17 September 1557. Islington, London	Y	?	Burned with husband, martyr James Austoo	Foxe (1570), pp.2214-5.
Agnes Bongeor (P)	17 September 1557. Colchester, Essex	Y	Y	Wife of Richard Bongeor. Nursed her new-born in prison.	Foxe (1563), pp.1631-33. Foxe (1570), pp.2215-6.
Margaret Thurston (P)	17 September 1557. Colchester, Essex	Y	?	Husband John Thurston died accused of heresy in prison.	Foxe (1563), p.1631. Foxe (1570), p.2200, pp.2215-6.
Cecily Ormes (P)	23 September 1557.	Y	?	32 year old wife of Edmund Ormes, worsted-	Foxe (1570), p.2219.

	Norwich, Norfolk			weaver. Daughter of Thomas Hawnd, Tailor.	
Margaret Mearing (P)	22 December 1557. Smithfield, London	Y	?	Wife of James Mearing, a London cobbler. John Rough was her pastor, he excommunicated her before his own arrest for heresy. Mearing pretended to be his sister so she could visit him in prison.	Foxe (1570), p.2227-8.
Christian George (P)	26 May 1558. Colchester, Essex	Y	?	Second wife of Richard George who was imprisoned with his third Protestant wife.	Foxe (1570), p.2234.
Agnes Prest (P)	1558. Exeter, Devon	Y	Y	Rebuked by her husband and children who were committed Catholics. 49 year old Prest was driven to leave her family and earn a living by from spinning.	Foxe (1570), pp.2249-52.
Alice Driver (P)	4 November 1558. Ipswich, Suffolk	Y	?	Wife of a husbandman. When arrested she was found with her spiritual advisor, Alexander Gouch, in a pile of hay. Driver and Gouch were executed together.	Foxe (1570), pp.2247-48.
Alice Snoth (P)	10 November	N	N	At the stake Snoth called for her	Foxe (1570), pp.2253-4.

	1558. Canterbury, Kent			Godmothers and Godfather. When Snoth saw them she asked for their council.	
Katherine Knight [alias Tynley] (P)	10 November 1558. Canterbury, Kent	Widow	Y	Mother of Robert Tynley whom was in trouble for all of Mary's reign on grounds of religion. It was through her son's teaching that Katherine became a zealous Protestant.	Foxe (1570), pp.2253-4.
Women executed for religion during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603):					
Margaret Clitherow (C)	25 March 1586. York	Y	Y	Married to conformist Protestant husband John Clitherow (although her brother-in-law was Catholic). Her son, daughter and two step-sons were raised and stayed Catholic. Her daughter became a nun in France. Margaret was executed whilst pregnant.	John Mush, 'A True Report of Mrs Margaret Clitherow', in John Morris (ed.), <i>The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers</i> , series 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), pp.331-440.
Margaret Ward (C)	Summer 1558. Congleton, Cheshire	Widow	?	Gentlewoman, helped her 'spiritual father', the seminary priest William Weston escape from the Tower of London.	William Weston, <i>An Autobiography from the Jesuit Underground</i> , trans. by Philip Caraman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955)

Anne Line (C)	27 February 1601. London	Widow	?	Gentlewoman, married Roger Line in 1583. When Roger and Anne Line converted to Catholicism, they were disinherited and lived in poverty as a result. Roger died in prison for not attending Mass. Their only child was taken to be brought up by Protestant relatives. Anne ran a safe-house for Catholic priests during 1590s.	John Gerard, <i>Autobiography of a Hunted Priest</i> , trans. Philip Caraman (New York: Pellegrini, 1952), pp.101- 5, pp.171-8.
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