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Martyrs' Blood in Reformation England

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Contents | 2 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Declaration and Inclusion of Published Work..... | 7 |
| Abstract | 8 |
| Conventions and Abbreviations | 9 |
| Introduction..... | 11 |
| Constructions of Martyrdom | 14 |
| Constructions of Blood | 20 |
| The Significance of Martyrs' Blood..... | 24 |
| Corpus of Primary Texts and Structure of Thesis | 39 |
| Chapter One: Constructions of Blood and Martyrdom from the Bible to Medieval Europe..... | 47 |
| Blood and Martyrdom in the Old and New Testaments | 47 |
| (i) The Old Testament | 47 |
| (ii) The New Testament..... | 52 |
| Blood and Martyrdom in the Early Church..... | 61 |
| Blood and Martyrdom in the Medieval West | 70 |
| Conclusion | 84 |
| Chapter Two: The Henrician Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood. | 88 |
| Bloody Enemies..... | 91 |
| Apocalyptical Martyrs' Blood | 101 |
| Eucharistic Theology and Martyrs' Blood | 109 |
| Confessional Theology and Materiality | 120 |
| Conclusion | 130 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 3: John Foxe and the Protestant Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood | 132 |
| John Foxe..... | 133 |
| Martyrs' Blood as Witness to the Truth | 136 |
| Bloody Enemies..... | 141 |
| Apocalypticism | 156 |
| Martyrs' Blood and the Eucharist | 159 |
| Martyrs' Blood and Materiality..... | 162 |
| English Protestant Discussions of Martyrdom After the <i>Acts and Monuments</i> | 173 |
| Conclusion | 177 |
| Chapter Four: The English Catholic Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood, c.1525-c.1575. | 182 |
| Thomas More and his Legacy | 183 |
| From the Death of More to the Reign of Edward VI (1536-1552) | 192 |
| The Reign of Mary I (1553-1558) | 199 |
| The Earlier Part of Elizabeth's Reign, 1559-c.1575 | 208 |
| Conclusion | 211 |
| Chapter Five: English Catholicism, c.1575-c.1625..... | 215 |
| The Emergence of a Pervasive Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood..... | 217 |
| Martyrs' Blood Like Christ's Blood..... | 227 |
| Martyrs' Blood and Materiality..... | 236 |
| Bloody Enemies..... | 244 |
| Martyrs' Blood, the Apocalypse, and Time..... | 252 |
| Martyrs' Blood as Witness | 259 |
| Conclusion | 263 |
| Conclusion | 267 |
| Bibliography | 282 |
| Primary Texts..... | 282 |
| Reference Works..... | 293 |
| Secondary Criticism..... | 294 |

To my parents, with all my love.

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Declaration and Inclusion of Published Work

This thesis is entirely my own work, and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

An article based on some of the research contained in this thesis has been published as:

Anastasia Stylianou, 'Martyrs' Blood in the English Reformations', *British Catholic History* 33-4 (2017), 534-560.

Abstract

This thesis analyses how martyrs' blood was constructed in sixteenth-century English martyrological writings, confessional apologetics and polemics, c. 1520-c. 1625. It uses the topic of martyrs' blood as a lens onto wider confessional constructions of both martyrdom and confessional theologies. It argues that, despite superficial similarities, Protestants and Catholics constructed martyrs' blood in very different ways, and that this calls into question recent scholarly trends towards seeing the confessions as having a common conception of martyrdom.

Chapter One surveys the treatment of blood and martyrdom from the Bible to the medieval West, demonstrating the main threads on which early-modern constructions of martyrdom drew. Chapter Two discusses Henrician Protestant constructions of martyrs' blood. Chapter Three focuses on John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. Chapter Four examines the relatively unbloody rhetoric of English Catholic discussions of martyrdom, from the 1520s to 1570s. Chapter Five looks at the emergence of a rich rhetoric of martyrs' blood in English Catholic writings from the 1580s to the 1620s.

Authors examined include William Tyndale, John Bale, John Foxe, Thomas More, Reginald Pole, Robert Persons and William Allen. The thesis focuses particularly on five key elements relating to the texts' treatment of martyrs' blood: Eucharistic theology; materiality; temporal worldview; bloody enemies; martyrs' blood as witness.

Conventions and Abbreviations

I have followed the original spelling and punctuation when citing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, except that I have followed the normal conventions of resolving abbreviations (including ampersands) and distinguishing i/j and u/v. When citing titles of these works, given the range of early-modern typographical practices, I have followed the current practice of capitalization recommended by the MHRA Style Guide.

Full bibliographical references for all items cited or discussed are given in the Bibliography. In the body of the thesis, I have given the title and bibliographical details on the first occasion a work is cited, but thereafter used a short title.

I have used the following abbreviation for John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, as it is cited extensively:

A&M John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* [1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions]. Editorial commentary and additional information. (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011). <Accessed at: <http://www.johnfoxe.org>>.

When citing the Bible, I refer throughout to the New International Version (*The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Biblica, Inc., 2011) [First ed. 1973], accessed at <https://www.biblegateway.com>), unless otherwise indicated. On occasions where I cite the King James version, I indicate this with the abbreviation (KJV). All editions of the Bible cited in this thesis are listed under 'Reference Works' in the Bibliography.

When referring to saints of the early Church, shared by early-modern Catholics and Protestants, I have used the form 'St [Paul]' on the first occurrence in my discussion, and thereafter only the name '[Paul]'.

Introduction

On 25 March 1586, Margaret Clitherow, a Catholic woman, was executed at York. She was a butcher's wife, mother of at least four children, and possibly pregnant with another.¹ She had been accused of harbouring priests, a capital offence, but refused to plead, another capital offence. She was sentenced to:

return from whence you came, and there, in the lowest part of the prison, be stripped naked, laid on your back next to the ground, and as much weight laid upon you as you are able to bear, and so continue three days without any food except a little barley bread and puddle water, and the third day to be pressed to death, your hands and feet tied to posts, and a sharp stone under your back.²

Clitherow greeted this death sentence joyfully. Almost immediately, her death inspired a martyr's cult amid a section of the northern Catholic community. Her body was buried by the authorities under a dung heap, but allegedly was secretly retrieved by local Catholics six weeks later and found to be incorrupt – a mark of great sanctity.³ Within a couple of months, Father John Mush, a Jesuit priest and her spiritual father, had penned her martyrology, *A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow*, which then circulated in the English Catholic community. The humble mother and butcher's wife had been transformed into a member of the select and illustrious company of the saints and martyrs of the Church. She was not alone.

¹ Katharine M. Longley, 'The "Trial" of Margaret Clitherow', *The Ampleforth Journal*, 75 (1970), 334–364, 353.

² John Mush, *A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs Margaret Clitherow*, in John Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, vol. 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), 331–440, 417.

³ ?John Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, in *The Troubles*, Morris (ed.), vol 3, 61–102, 99.

Through the sixteenth century in England, around six hundred men and women – clerics and lay people, rich and poor, young and old, married and unmarried, educated and illiterate – were executed for their religious beliefs, and were thereupon propelled into the ranks of the saints and martyrs, at least from the perspective of their confessional brethren.

Martyrdom, as Shakespeare said of love, looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.⁴ The deaths of these men and women were horribly real, but their *martyrdoms* were mental, oral, textual, and visual constructions. Other contemporaries, while observing the same factual events, interpreted them in the opposite fashion – they perceived the executed to be no more than pseudo-martyrs, deluded heretics responsible for their own deaths. These differing interpretations divided broadly down confessional lines. St Augustine of Hippo had long established the principle ‘not the punishment but the cause’ [*non ... poena sed causa*] makes a martyr;⁵ those who did not belong to the true Church could not be true martyrs.

To the modern mind, this situation raises a host of questions. Why were people willing to die like this? What was the *point* of early-modern martyrdom? Why was martyrdom so important that these deaths spawned a flurry of textual, visual, and oral accounts, and sometimes cults? How did people construct martyrs and pseudo-martyrs? Were Protestant and Catholic constructions of martyrdom similar or different? There is already a substantial body of scholarship which engages with such questions, but the answers are still vigorously debated.⁶ By providing a fresh angle

⁴ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 1, Scene 1.

⁵ ‘For, it is not the suffering but the cause that makes a martyr.’ St Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 328: ‘In Natali Martyrum’, 8.6. Accessed at http://www.augustinus.it/latino/discorsi/discorso_468_testo.htm on 24/01/2016.

⁶ See, *inter alia*, the following. Diane Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and Martyrologies: Papers read at the 1992 summer meeting and the 1993 winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical Society* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1993); David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Scholar; Ashgate, 1997); Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian martyrdom in early modern Europe* (Cambridge Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1999); Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate,

from which to study the topic of martyrdom, this thesis proposes insights which will help to answer such questions.

This new angle involves focusing closely on the language of the texts, in particular, on a theme that is almost ubiquitous. Let us take an example from John Mush's martyrology of Margaret Clitherow:

In the primitive Church they persecuted her [the Church] that she should remain barren and bring forth no increase; now they labour also to the same effect, but principally to subvert and destroy her already born children; and as she then cast her seed of blood to the generation of many, so now she fighteth with blood to save those that she hath borne, that the lily roots being watered with the fruitful liquor of blood, may keep still and yield new branches hereafter with so much more plentiful increase by how much more abundantly such sacred streams flow among them.⁷

This paragraph is a typical example of the prevalence of a particular topic in Mush's martyrology, and indeed throughout most early-modern English discussions of martyrdom: namely, blood, and – in particular – martyrs' blood. This raises a second series of questions. Why do these texts frequently refer to martyrs' blood? How could the blood of executed men and women be a 'seed ... to the generation of many', and how could the Church 'fight with blood'? What exactly was meant by blood being a 'sacred stream'? And, above all, how can understanding this rhetoric of martyrs' blood illuminate for us early-modern martyrdoms and Reformation worldviews?

2002); Megan Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Susannah Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) [First ed. 2005]; Thomas Freeman and Thomas Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c.1400-1700* (Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2007); Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ Mush, *A True Report*, 362-363.

Constructions of Martyrdom

This thesis analyses how a rhetoric of martyrs' blood was constructed and debated in sixteenth-century English martyrological writings. It uses martyrs' blood as a lens onto wider confessional constructions of both martyrdom and confessional theologies. It argues that, despite superficial similarities, Protestants and Catholics constructed martyrs' blood in very different ways. Protestant martyrological writings referred quite frequently to martyrs' blood, from the 1520s onwards. In these texts, Protestants ascribed to martyrs' blood two main functions: it witnessed to the true faith, and it witnessed to and called for the impending apocalypse. Catholic martyrological writings mentioned martyrs' blood less frequently before the 1580s. Thereafter, Catholic martyrological writings became suffused with a rhetoric of martyrs' blood. This change highlights a shift in Catholic apologetical tactics and self-perception. Catholic references to martyrs' blood ascribed to it three main functions: it witnessed to the true faith; it was an expiatory and salvific sacrifice which was united with Christ's own expiatory and salvific blood sacrifice; it was a holy substance which contained and conveyed God's grace. Protestants especially, and – to a lesser degree – Catholics also, used a polemic rhetoric of martyrs' blood to describe their enemies as 'bloody', 'bloodthirsty', and 'bloodstained'. The extent to which, and how, each confession used a rhetoric of bloody enemies illuminates their soteriological theology. Martyrs' blood functioned as a lynchpin of key confessional theologies, and examining how Protestant and Catholics constructed martyrs' blood illuminates not only these different soteriologies and theologies of martyrdom, but also important, wider differences in their worldviews. Through their differing rhetorics of martyrs' blood, we see differing confessional perceptions of the relationship between the Eucharist and martyrdom, and between Christ and the believer; differing confessional understandings of the

body; and different confessional perceptions of materiality. Examining confessional rhetorics of martyrs' blood also highlights largely opposed confessional notions of time, and attitudes to ecclesiastical history. The latter include dissimilar understandings of the relationship between the Old and New Testament; different emphases within the New Testament; and – of course – between Scripture and Church history. Finally, examining their rhetorics of martyrs' blood also reveals both significant similarities and differences in apologetic and polemic strategies and primary foci. In short, this thesis will demonstrate that the blood of martyrs provides a critical lens onto the religious landscape of early-modern England.

Following the publication of Brad Gregory's widely acclaimed *Salvation at Stake: Christian martyrdom in early modern Europe* (1999), scholars have been particularly aware of the importance of martyrdom to early-modern (and, indeed, modern) history. As Gregory wrote, 'Modern Western Christianity was forged in a crucible of conflicting convictions and dramatic deaths. In the sixteenth century thousands of men and women with divergent beliefs were executed for refusing to renounce them.'⁸ Christianity had been born and moulded in an environment of widespread and enthusiastic martyrdom; the sufferings and death of its founder, Jesus Christ, were the model for all future martyrdoms. Whereas martyrdom for the Christian faith was relatively common in the era of the early Church, by the medieval period in the West there were few contemporary martyrs and so there was less focus on martyrdom. However, the early-modern period brought a second era of widespread martyrdom. But, this time the martyrs were mostly made at the hands of other Christians, as rival confessions sought to establish their identity as the true Church and to subdue rivals. The battle was waged both in print and in blood. Those whom one

⁸ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 1.

side executed, labelling them heretics or traitors, the other side elevated to the status of martyr, using their deaths in confessional propaganda. In the medieval period, martyrology had been largely a mirror of saintly behaviour for the pious Christian to read and emulate; in the early-modern period, it became a weapon and a foremost tool in confessional polemic and apologetic. The martyrdoms influenced almost every element of early-modern culture. Executions of would-be martyrs were popular spectacles, a form of entertainment to some present, for others a special religious occasion. Martyrological texts and pamphlets filled the burgeoning print industry, some of them – like Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* – becoming best-sellers. Contemporary martyrdoms were commemorated not only in poetry and prose, but also in music and in art. They were also highly politicised events, severe statements by the ruling regime of its socio-religious policy; they could influence international relations and could even precipitate wars, rebellions, assassinations and attempted invasions. Fear of martyrdom was one cause of the waves of religious exiles, who, by forming a link between their country of origin and their country of refuge, created transnational confessional, political, academic, and economic networks. Most of all, martyrdoms and martyrologies encapsulated and shaped confessional beliefs.

The field of scholarship on early-modern martyrdom is unsurprisingly vast, given the topic’s significance and impact. This thesis, like most recent work on martyrdom, is indebted to Gregory’s *Salvation at Stake*; it follows his cross-confessional comparative approach to early-modern martyrdoms, examining similarities, differences, and intertextual relationships across the confessional divide. Gregory’s work offers a broad survey of the whole of Europe, whereas this thesis deepens, extends, and nuances his research findings in its cross-confessional approach to martyrdom in England. It shows that many of the areas of confessional difference

which Gregory covers (such as beliefs about the supernatural, and perceptions of time and the apocalypse) were indeed present and important, and, in fact, often of even greater significance than his work suggests. It also accepts the consensus across scholarly works, but particularly well substantiated in Gregory, that Protestant and Catholic martyrs' behaviour looked very similar. This, I would argue, makes it all the more important to consider the confessional perspectives inscribed onto the martyrdoms, by martyrologists, by martyrs themselves, and by their confessional allies and opponents. These differing confessional perspectives permitted deaths that – from one angle – seemed so similar nonetheless to be viewed as antithetically different.

This thesis engages in dialogue primarily with scholarship on England (although its conclusions are by no means narrowly bound to this sub-section of the wider scholarship on martyrdom and the Reformations). Its cross-confessional approach is particularly influenced by the work of Gregory, Thomas Freeman, and Susannah Monta. Many of the best works on the English martyrdoms and/or their context have remained focused on one confession or other, and Freeman, in a series of studies, has demonstrated the urgent need for Gregory's cross-confessional comparative approach to be applied to the study of English Reformation martyrdoms;⁹ my thesis takes up this gauntlet. The most acclaimed cross-confessional study of the English martyrdoms is Monta's *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (2005), which surveys Protestant (particularly focusing on Foxe) and Catholic martyrdoms, and examines their impact on and representation in literary works of the

⁹ This includes: David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe*; Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) [first ed. 1999]; Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*; Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*; 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; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, martyrdom and the politics of sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: Continuum, 2011).

sixteenth century. My research thus follows in Monta's footsteps, especially in taking up notions of the miraculous as a key concern, although I dispute some of her interpretations (both on the similarity of Protestant and Catholic martyrdoms, and on the confessions' approaches to miracles and wonders).

My research has also been heavily influenced by several studies focusing on one side or other of the confessional debate. I concur with and draw upon the position of Leslie Fairfield, in his 1973 article, that John Bale's martyrological writings crystallised Henrician Protestant notions of martyrdom, and set a precedent which John Foxe largely followed.¹⁰ This is further demonstrated and expounded in Evenden and Freeman's *Religion and the Book* (2011), which traces the process of production of the *Acts and Monuments* and its development through its editions, as well as discussing Foxe's other martyrological writings, and his theology of martyrdom. My research is informed both by its research findings concerning the context in which the *Acts and Monuments* was created, and by its arguments and material on Foxe's other martyrological writings and on his theology of martyrdom. Freeman's extensive body of work on Reformation English Protestant martyrs and martyrologists, focusing primarily on John Foxe and his *Acts and Monuments*, has greatly advanced our understanding of the meaning, creation, context, and impact of Foxe's martyrological writings.¹¹ It has also highlighted wider questions of the relationship between medieval

¹⁰ Leslie P. Fairfield, 'John Bale and the Development of Protestant Hagiography in England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 24 (1973), 145-60.

¹¹ This includes the monograph by Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*; the joint edited collections, Freeman and Mayer, *Martyrs*, and Freeman and Susan Doran, *Mary Tudor: Old and new perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and many single- or joint-authored articles. The most recent articles include: Thomas Freeman and Susan Royal, 'Stranger Than Fiction in the Archives: the Controversial Death of William Cowbridge in 1538', *British Catholic History* 32 (2015), 451-472; Thomas Freeman and Susannah Monta, 'The Style of Authorship in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500-1640*, Andrew Hadfield (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 522-543; Thomas Freeman, 'One Survived: The Account of Katherine Parr in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', in *Henry VIII and His Court*, Thomas Betteridge and Suzannah Lipscomb (eds.) (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 235-252.

and early-modern constructions of martyrdom, and the interactions between Protestant and Catholic apologists in writing about martyrdom. While this thesis, in exploring these questions, reaches some different conclusions from Freeman's, it is shaped by his research and the questions he raises. On the other side of the Reformation division, my research is indebted above all to Anne Dillon's work on the English Catholic martyrdoms, particularly her contextualisation of the Catholic martyrs within cross-confessional polemic and the pseudo-martyr debate. I have also found particularly fruitful her argument that Catholic martyrs were believed to be united with Christ during their martyrdom.¹² My thesis is also influenced by Alison Shell's discussions of the English Catholic martyrdoms in *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, especially by her argument that English recusant Catholicism should be seen as a (self-conscious) continuation of the medieval.¹³ I extend this argument, in postulating that early-modern Catholicism and Protestantism had different notions of time, which stemmed from medieval roots; I also contend that they primarily drew upon different medieval martyrological textual traditions – one orthodox, the other heretical.

This thesis owes a debt to the work of Brian Cummings, in *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (2002).¹⁴ While his work is not primarily on martyrdom, it places the English martyrdoms within an essential context: that of Reformation rhetorics. Cummings has presented the Reformations, in the words of the French essayist Michel de Montaigne, as, at heart, a 'quarrel over words,' arguing that

¹² Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*.

¹³ Shell, *Catholicism*, 11-12. Arthur F. Marotti takes a similar perspective: *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholics and anti-Catholic discourses in early modern England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2005), 3, 203-04.

¹⁴ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

'The English language became the carrier of a national religious culture.'¹⁵ My research concurs with Cummings' stance, demonstrating that English Reformation rhetorics of martyrs' blood encapsulated key confessional theologies and were wielded as a vital weapon of apologetics and polemics in the confessional struggles of the long sixteenth century.

Constructions of Blood

While martyrdom is generally seen as very important to early-modern religious history, and has thus been widely studied, the same cannot be said for blood. This is surprising, when we consider the influential roles blood still plays, and has long played, in Western society and culture. Michael Mosley's recent BBC medical documentary on blood began in dramatic fashion:

Of all the wonders of the human body, there's one that I think is more mysterious than any other. The very sight makes some people faint. Losing half will kill you. And it permeates our culture as surely as our bodies ... For centuries it's inspired our darkest flights of imagination ... But now science is finding new ways to tap its true potential ... [B]lood is such a precious fluid. In fact, almost every great religion and society has imbued blood with almost magical qualities.¹⁶

¹⁵ 'Nostre contestation est verbale'. Michel de Montaigne's *Les Essais*, III.13. Accessed at <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/montaigne/> on 17/12/2017. Translated and cited by Cummings in *The Literary Culture*, 15.

¹⁶ Michael Mosley, 'The Wonderful World of Blood with Michael Mosley' (BBC production), 00:00 – 02:50. Accessed at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b05nyyhf/the-wonderful-world-of-blood-with-michael-mosley> on 30/03/2015.

Mosley's modern scientific argument for the importance of blood is echoed by the Blood Project – an interdisciplinary venture examining medieval and early-modern discourses of blood. Their website states:

Blood is much more than simply red fluid in human veins. Throughout history it has been defined diversely by theologians, medics, satirists and dramatists, for whom blood was matter, text, waste, cure, soul, God, and the means by which relationships were defined, sacramentalised, and destroyed.¹⁷

It is, in short, undeniable that - from science to religion, literature to history - blood is, and has always been, a vital substance and also a key subject of discourse. From Antiquity onwards, Western medical thought presented blood as *the* most important bodily fluid, sometimes even as the most important bodily substance. Over the importance of blood, medicine and religion have always concurred. The Bible unequivocally presents it as the most important bodily substance, endowing the Judaeo-Christian traditions with a near obsession with blood. Unsurprisingly perhaps, blood also has a long pedigree as a common literary theme; for example, Shakespeare uses the word 996 times in his works.¹⁸ To this day, it is prominent in the idioms that we use to represent ourselves and our society - bloody minded; blood relation; bloodthirsty; blood curdling; cold blooded; new blood - to take just a few examples.

Yet, despite its undeniable prominence in almost every aspect of Western languages and societies from Antiquity to the present day, it is only over the last fifteen years or so that close attention to blood has begun to feature in the mainstream of medieval and early-modern scholarship. During the last quarter of the twentieth

¹⁷ Accessed at <http://www.thebloodproject.net/> on 04/02/2015. The Blood Project is an interdisciplinary project examining medieval and early-modern discourses of blood, run by Laurie Maguire, Bonnie Lander Johnson, and Eleanor Decamp, funded by the Wellcome Trust, The Society for Renaissance Studies, The John Fell Fund, Green Templeton College, The Faculty of English at Oxford University.

¹⁸ The result of a keyword search on <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/findform.php> on 13/05/2015.

century, discussions of blood became more common, but were largely confined to the history of medicine, and generally focused either on menstrual bleeding or on blood as part of the humoral body.¹⁹ Since the early 2000s, however, the focus on blood has expanded into the fields of medieval scholarship and of literature of the Shakespearean era. A number of seminal works have highlighted the importance of blood to the medieval West, but scholarship on blood in the early-modern period has lagged behind. The centrality of blood to medieval Christianity has been demonstrated above all by Caroline Walker Bynum's study *Wonderful Blood*, which argues that medieval religion was fixated on blood, especially that of Christ.²⁰ Other scholarship has shown that blood was also extremely significant in constructions of gender and the body, and that medieval literature was filled with bloody rhetoric, such as Peggy McCracken's *The Curse of Eve* (2003) and Bettina Bildhauer's *Medieval Blood* (2006), which examine late medieval French and German literature respectively.²¹ A number of scholars of English Literature, such as Gail Kern Pastor and David Hillman, have shown that blood is a crucial theme for our understanding of the Shakespearean stage, and, of course, a newfound recognition of the importance of blood is shown by The Blood Project, cited above.²² Yet early-modern historians' work on blood still centres upon the history of medicine, as in *Blood, Sweat and Tears*, edited by Manfred Horstmanshoff *et al* (2010),

¹⁹ For the former, see, for example, Charles Wood, 'The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, salvation, and the menstrual cycle in medieval thought', *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 710-27. For the latter, see, for example, Gail Kern Paster, 'Nervous Tension: Networks of blood and spirit in the early modern body', in David Hilman and Carla Mazzio (eds.) *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York; London: Routledge, 2013) [First ed. 1997], 107-128. A key exception to this general trend is Miri Rubin's *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Caroline Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and practice in late medieval northern Germany and beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

²¹ Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, gender, and medieval literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).

²² Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). David Hillman, *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, scepticism and the interior of the body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

and to date there has been little discussion of the socio-religious role of blood.²³ Ralph Werrell's short study *The Blood of Christ in the Theology of William Tyndale* (2015) discusses the central role Christ's blood played in William Tyndale's theology, but similar work has yet to be done for any other early-modern English theologian.²⁴ With regard to the continental scene, Neil Leroux, in 2007, discussed the rhetoric Luther used in his martyrological writings, including his rhetoric of martyrs' blood.²⁵ Leroux shows that Luther portrays martyrs' blood as sealing; staining and defeating the enemy; and being avenged by God. Luther also depicts the death of the Lutheran martyr Henry van Zutphen in bloody and gory detail in his martyrological work *The Burning of Brother Henry* (1525). The topic of martyrs' blood is also treated, albeit in less depth than in Leroux's chapter, in Gianmarco Braghi's 'The death of Charles IX Valois: an assassin's or a martyrs's blood?' (2014).²⁶ There has, however, been no published work specifically on martyrs' blood in early-modern England.²⁷

Blood was extremely important to the early-modern worldview. It was one of the four bodily humours, often seen as the most important, and the sanguine constitution was idealised as the perfect body type. The balance and quality of blood in the body was believed to affect health, character, and even spiritual state and social status. Blood was believed to be the carrier of life, both within an individual's body and in procreating and nurturing new life: all bodily fluids were believed to stem from blood, including tears, sperm and breast milk. Blood was equally important in early-modern religion. Early-modern Protestants and Catholics could agree that they were

²³ Manfred Horstmanshoff, Helen King and Claus Zittel (eds.) *Blood, Sweat and Tears: The changing concepts of physiology from antiquity into early modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²⁴ Ralph S. Werrell, *The Blood of Christ in the Theology of William Tyndale* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015).

²⁵ Neil R. Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter: Writings on death* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

²⁶ Gianmarco, Braghi, 'The Death of Charles IX Valois: An assassin's or a martyr's blood? The image of kingship during the French Wars of Religion', *French History*, 28-3 (2014), 303-321.

²⁷ With the exception of my recent article: Anastasia Stylianou, 'Martyrs' blood in the English Reformations', *British Catholic History* (2017), 33-4, 534-560. Some of the text and much of the research contained in my article are reproduced in this thesis.

saved by Christ's blood, and the writings of both confessions were peppered with references to it. The two (or three) sacraments which they shared – baptism, the Eucharist (and, for some Protestants, confession) – were all related to Christ's blood. Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross washed away the believer's sin in baptism (and confession), and his life-giving blood was drunk (whether literally or figuratively) in the Eucharist. Blood was also related to understandings of race, status, and familial and social bonds; for example, the rallying cry of Shakespeare's Henry V: 'For he today that sheds his blood with me/ Shall be my brother'.²⁸

The Significance of Martyrs' Blood

Considering the importance of both martyrdom and blood to early-modern society, therefore, it is high time to consider them in unison. This thesis argues that rhetorics of martyrs' blood functioned as lynchpins of core confessional theologies. For this reason, martyrs' blood filled Reformation martyrological writings and made a mark on wider polemic and apologetics. In Protestant texts, a rhetoric of martyrs' blood signalled that the Roman Catholic Church was bloodthirsty and blood-guilty; the martyrs' blood called for and proclaimed God's impending apocalyptic vengeance. In both Protestant and Catholic texts, martyrs' blood was also portrayed as witnessing to the true faith. In Catholic texts, martyrs' blood was depicted as united with Christ's blood, and therefore as echoing the qualities and functions of Christ's blood, especially as an expiatory, salvific sacrifice and as a powerful vessel of grace. In order to understand how and why the confessions used pervasive rhetorics of martyrs' blood, and what these rhetorics tell us about confessional theologies (both of martyrdom and more widely), our analysis will focus on five key themes relating to martyrs' blood in early-modern English writings: the relationship between martyrs' blood and Christ's blood

²⁸ William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Act IV, scene 3).

(especially focusing on confessional Eucharistic theologies); the relationship between martyrs' blood and confessional theologies of materiality; the connection between martyrs' blood and the apocalypse; depictions of martyrs' blood as a witness; and depictions of bloody enemies.

The focus on martyrs' blood also highlights a number of significant wider points. First, it gives us fresh insight into two critical questions in the field of martyrological studies. From an early-modern perspective, what was the function of martyrdom, and what did a martyr look like? Over the past two decades, scholarship has increasingly argued that early-modern Protestant and Catholic conceptions of martyrdom evolved in dialogue and must be discussed together.²⁹ This approach has often led to a supposition that Protestant and Catholic notions of martyrdom were very similar, even essentially the same. The strongest proponent of this approach has been Freeman, beginning with his 2001 review of Gregory's *Salvation at Stake*, and explicating this idea in greater depth in his introduction to Freeman and Thomas Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England* (2007). Freeman's position has influenced recent work, such as Monta's *Martyrdom and Literature* (2005). This approach is part of the wider historiographical trend emphasising similarities between early-modern Protestantism and Catholicism, even in works exploring other fundamental divergences between the two confessions. For example, Shell, whose work explores important differences between the faiths, nonetheless writes: '[there was] very little *real* difference ... between Catholic and Protestant spirituality'.³⁰ It is the contention of this thesis that, while recent historiography's emphasis on comparative martyrology is fruitful in allowing us to understand how Protestant and Catholic martyrologies evolved more in dialogue than isolation, we should be wary of

²⁹ Thomas Freeman, 'Early Modern Martyrs', review article in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52-4 (2001), 696-701. Freeman and Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs*, 1-34.

³⁰ Shell, *Catholicism*, 16.

overstating the degree of convergence, and should see what dialogue there was as revealing a substantially different understanding of martyrdom. While both shared *some* similar qualities, a superficial similarity of motifs and themes has sometimes led scholars to an overstatement of their essential similarity: these motifs and themes were generally employed in dissimilar ways, to construct two strikingly different understandings of the meaning of martyrdom, which reflected important wider differences between Protestant and Catholic worldviews.³¹ Moreover, scholarship has tended to depict a common conception of martyrdom in the early-modern world which stands in significant contrast to medieval conceptions of martyrdom.³² However, while Protestant martyrologists aimed, self-consciously, to depart from medieval Catholic precedents, Catholic martyrologists, equally self-consciously, aimed to reaffirm them, and their deployment of key medieval themes is better seen as a continuation of medieval trends than as a departure from them.³³ Representations of martyrs' blood

³¹ It is true that Protestant and Catholic martyrs often appeared to die in similar fashions (dying for their faith, subjected to painful forms of execution, yet appearing peaceful, joyful, steadfast, and intending to imitate Christ), and this similarity of deaths posed a problem to contemporaries in attempting to distinguish true martyrs from pseudomartyrs. (For discussion of the European context, see Gregory, *Salvation*, 315-341; for the English context, see Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, e.g. 2-5.) However, the construction of martyrdom encompasses far more than the manner in which individuals behaved during their deaths; it concerns the vast theological and epistemological frameworks through which these deaths are understood, and here the confessions are more different than similar.

³² 'By the late seventeenth century, the varied conceptions of martyrdom prevalent in late-medieval England had largely been replaced by a single dominant conception of the martyr', Freeman and Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs*, 27. '[In] the later half of the sixteenth century Foxe and Harpsfield between them defined and crystallised an idea of martyrdom, largely dormant through the later Middle Ages', *ibid.*, 30.

³³ This can perhaps be said of English Catholicism more widely. Recusant Catholicism could even be seen as a partial continuation of medievalism within early-modern English culture, in England and the English diaspora. Shell has argued: 'a greater awareness of the Catholic contribution to English culture would result in some important modifications to received ideas of when medievalism ended in the British Isles. Medieval patterns of life, religious and social, were sustained on the Continent by English Catholic religious orders – in some cases to this day – and continued, as far as was practicable, within many Catholic households.' (*Catholicism*, 12). This continuity was at least partly self-conscious, as Shell has demonstrated, looking at manuscript culture, imaginative writing, and antiquarianism among English Catholics. *Ibid.*, 11-12, 169-193. See also Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 3, 203-04, for further discussion of some of the important continuities between medieval and early-modern English Catholicism, which were not present in English Protestantism.

reveal these continuities and divergences particularly clearly, since a rhetoric of martyrs' blood encapsulated many discourses and theologies of martyrdom.³⁴

Focusing on martyrs' blood also highlights the influence which Eucharistic theology exerted over the meanings and functions of martyrdom. This point has not been extensively discussed in early-modern scholarship, even in works that otherwise offer penetrating insights into early-modern martyrdoms, such as Gregory's *Salvation at Stake* and Shell's *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*. Marotti notes, in his *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, that Catholic priest-martyrs often used words and gestures borrowed from the Mass at their martyrdom, and sometimes Catholic laymen behaved similarly.³⁵ He also notes, 'Even the treatment of the victims' bodies and blood after execution and dismemberment was quasi-sacramental: martyrs' relics were not just revered as ordinary saints' relics, but they took on, by association with Christ's sacrifice on the cross, a quasi-Eucharistic character.'³⁶ However, Marotti explores the connection between Catholic theologies of the Eucharist and Catholic theologies of martyrdom no further. A rather fuller explanation (which correctly states that Catholics saw the martyr as united with Christ's sacrifice on the cross, not just associated with it, as Marotti proposes) is found in Dillon's *The Construction of Martyrdom*. In discussing how the Catholic priest-martyrs constructed themselves 'in imitation of Christ', she remarks that the persecution was sometimes described in 'traditional Eucharistic images'. She explains:

Allen had warned the priests who offered the Mass every day in accordance with the Church's teaching, that it was a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, and they should now be prepared to offer themselves ... Just as the

³⁴ By examining the rhetoric of the Reformations, we gain invaluable insight into their essences. Cummings depicted the English Reformations as a 'literary struggle for the soul of England' (*The Literary Culture*, 188).

³⁵ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 84.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

Church was founded in Christ's blood, so, he warned, it would be re-established through the blood of martyrs.³⁷

And, elsewhere, she elaborates on this point.

The sacrificial shedding of blood in expiation for the collective sin of England, which, the Catholics argued, had been punished by the infliction of heresy, was a recurring motif in Catholic texts ... The Council of Trent's emphasis on the concept of the body of Christ as the body of the Church, and Allen's interpretation of this teaching in relation to martyrdom, 'to contribute any drop of blood, or iote of affliction, to the making up of the full measure of Christes passion for his body, which is the Church, far exceedeth al human dignitie and felicitie', formed an important element in the training of the missionary priests and in the eventual construction of martyrdom.³⁸

Thus, we glean from Dillon that martyrs were believed to be united with and continuing Christ's passion, that their deaths were (like his) seen as a sacrifice, that they were related to the Eucharist, and that this theology involved a connection between Christ's blood and martyrs' blood. The details of how this worked, however, even within Catholic theology remain hazy; and, since Dillon's book concentrates on Catholic martyrdoms, she does not discuss if this theology extended to Protestant martyrdoms, or how the Eucharistic theologies of Protestants impacted on their constructions of martyrdom.

The clearest explanation of how the early-modern martyr was seen to be united with Christ's Passion is found in the introduction to Andrew Redden's edition of a

³⁷ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 96.

³⁸ Ibid., 137: quotation from William Allen, *An Apologie and True Declaration of the Institution and Endeavours of the Two English Colleges* (Rheims: J. de Foiguy, 1581), 114^v.

martyrology of a Spanish priest in the Americas, Diego Ortiz, killed in 1571.³⁹ Redden provides an excellent explanation of how this union between Christ and the martyr worked within the Catholic theology of time; but, oddly, he says almost nothing about the role Catholic Eucharistic theology played in this union. This thesis, therefore, seeks to extend these promising lines of hypothesis and inquiry by providing a fuller explanation of how different confessional theologies of the Eucharist shaped the different confessional theologies of martyrdom. In brief, it argues that Catholics saw their martyrs as united with Christ's sacrificial death, above all through their unity with his body and blood, and this unity (they believed) endowed martyrs' blood and deaths with the same qualities and functions as Christ's blood and death. In doing so, they continued the traditional Christian perspective. Lutherans, embracing a theology of the real presence but rejecting transubstantiation, and believing that salvation was achieved through Christ alone, may have inhabited an intermediate position, where they saw partaking of Christ's blood as important in enabling the believer to shed his/her blood in martyrdom, but did not see martyrs and martyrs' blood as sharing the function of Christ's. Sacramentarians, who rejected the notion of the real presence, thereby rejected any material connection between martyrs' blood and Christ's blood – Christ's blood was not believed literally to be flowing in believers' veins (unlike in the theology of the real presence), but rather Christ was received 'spiritually' with the bread and wine. Thus, their martyrs were not believed to be literally united with Christ in their death, nor did their deaths and blood share the functions of Christ's; instead, they were simply believed to imitate him in their behaviour and mentality. These beliefs about the relationship between the believer's blood and Christ's blood, which are brought to the fore when one starts exploring early-modern depictions of martyrs' blood, are of importance not only to the history of

³⁹ Antonio de la Calancha, *The Collapse of Time: the martyrdom of Diego Ortiz (1571)*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Redden (Warsaw, De Gruyter Open, 2016).

martyrdom but also to the history of early-modern religion and society in general. They show the profound influence of confessional Eucharistic theologies upon people's constructions and understandings of their own and of others' bodies, and also upon perceptions of the relationship between Christ and the believer.

This thesis also builds upon and extends existing work identifying the body as a crucial site of confessional strife, and the Reformations as inscribed upon (perceptions of) bodies. Since the 1990s, the history of the body has been recognised as an important field that sheds light on most other fields of historical study. As Lyndal Roper argued in 1994: 'How a culture imagines the body is one of its most fundamental and revealing elements; and how individuals imagine their own bodies relates to their identity at the most profound level.'⁴⁰ Moreover, we should expect that times of great change might have strongly affected perceptions of the body: it is therefore essential for historians of the Reformations to investigate the relationship between the Reformations and bodies.⁴¹ Again, Roper brought the attention of Reformation historians to this point almost twenty-five years ago:

Underlying the battle of theologies between Protestants and Catholics in late sixteenth-century Augsburg were arguments about the nature of the relationship between human beings and supernatural powers. So fundamental were these disputes that, rather than finding their expression in intellectual debate alone, they were in large part internalized to the point that religious conflict became dramatized in the body itself.'⁴²

However, while some areas of the history of the body in the Reformation have been richly studied (e.g. the demonic and witchcraft, and gender and sexuality), others

⁴⁰ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 171.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 172.

remain largely unexplored. This thesis looks at the equally crucial but understudied area of sanctity (and of martyrdom more specifically).

Interactions between sanctity and the body have not yet received extensive treatment in early-modern scholarship, especially in relation to England. Those studies which do analyse the early-modern English body in relation to religion, such as Mary Fissell's *Vernacular Bodies*, have not been primarily concerned with constructions of sanctity, but rather with gender and sexuality and/or the demonic.⁴³ Studies of the role of the body in the Reformations outside of England have had a similar focus, such as Roper's work on Catholics and Lutherans in Germany, which has looked at all of these themes. Although these works are not directly concerned with the confessionalisation of notions of the bodies of martyrs, or even with holy bodies more generally, they have provided penetrating insights which are applicable to my work on early-modern martyrdom. My work also draws on some fruitful approaches in medieval studies of religion and the body, which have elucidated how Catholicism understood the spiritual to interact with the human body. Of particular importance here is Nancy Caciola's work, which has focused on the relationship between the demonic and the medieval Catholic body, but has also discussed the relationship between the Holy Spirit, sanctity, and the medieval Catholic body.⁴⁴

From this field of scholarship, we can derive the following picture of Catholic and Protestant notions of the body. Caciola has shown that in medieval Catholic

⁴³ Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The politics of reproduction in early modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Inter alia, see the following. Nancy Caciola, 'Mystics, Demoniacs and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42-2 (2000), 268-306; *Discerning Spirits: Divine and demonic possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); 'Breath, Heart, Guts: The body and spirits in the Middle Ages,' in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Communicating with the Spirits* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 21-39. Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovsky, 'Spiritual Physiologies: The discernment of spirits in medieval and early modern Europe', *Preternature: critical and historical studies on the supernatural* 1-1 (2012), 1-48.

thought, the spiritual and the material interacted very closely within the body, and there was very little separation between the soul and the body. It was believed that spirits, whether unclean spirits or the Holy Spirit, entered into the body and, once inside, interacted with the body's internal physiology.⁴⁵ Demonic spirits were confined to the viscera and were unable to enter the heart; the Holy Spirit alone was able to enter and inhabit the believer's heart, and there could replace or join with the believer's own spirit.⁴⁶ The heart was the main seat of the human spirit and soul (often conflated, although technically the spirit was material in nature, whereas the soul was not). From the heart, the human spirit flowed through the arteries to the entire body. There was, of course, a very close connection with blood, since the heart was also the seat of human blood, which then flowed through the body in the arteries.

Catrin Santing has demonstrated that early-modern medical authors believed that blood was fastened to the human spirit, carrying it through the body, and blood could likewise carry the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ Due to its importance within religious and medical understandings of the body, and its relationship with the believer's heart, spirit and the Holy Spirit, even in medical texts blood therefore 'tended to lose its materiality and took on spiritual aspects, which made devotional interpretations inevitable.'⁴⁸ We see in the works of medical authors like Levinus Lemnius (1506-1568) and Andrea Cesalpino (1525-1603) that 'no matter how much they exploited not only Aristotle but also Galen, the arguments of both ... had at their centre a spiritualisation of blood.'⁴⁹ In Catholic thought and writings, especially religious but

⁴⁵ Caciola, 'Mystics, Demoniacs', 279-80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁷ Catrin Santing, "'For the Life of a Creature is in the Blood'" (Leviticus 17:11). Some considerations on blood as the source of life in sixteenth-century religion and medicine and their interconnections', in *Blood, Sweat and Tears: The changing concepts of physiology from antiquity into early modern Europe*, ed. by Manfred Horstmanshoff, Helen King and Claus Zittel (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 415-441, 422.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 415, 437-38.

also medical, the body and the spiritual were closely united, and the Holy Spirit and God's grace were seen as physically pervading and working through the body.

Roper has argued that, in contrast, 'Protestants denied that divine forces could be captured in the physical, whether representations of saints or saints' relics, or even, as the radical Zwinglian position had it, in the host itself. The holy could not, therefore, be manifest in parts of the human body, a theological position which widened the gulf between things of the divine world and matters of the flesh.'⁵⁰ More recently, Roper has nuanced this position in relation to Lutheranism, but for sacramentarian Christianity it remains a very apt description. Overall, this thesis will suggest that she is correct to say that 'Protestantism in its early years brought not so much a secularization of the world as a desomatization.'⁵¹ Catholics, she argues, 'responded to the challenge Protestants posed to the relationship between body and spirit by reiterating and even strengthening the connection between the two.'⁵²

While there is already, therefore, some very persuasive and fruitful research on Catholic and Protestant theologies of the body, there still remains much to explore. For example, how far do early-modern Catholic notions of the interaction between the spiritual and the body concur with Caciola's findings for the medieval period? How exactly do Santing's conclusions about the spiritualisation of the body within early-modern European medical texts match those within English religious texts? And how far does Roper's description of confessionalised attitudes towards the body and the spiritual in early-modern Germany resonate with attitudes in early-modern England? Through a close focus on martyrs' blood, this thesis goes some way towards answering these questions. It demonstrates that Protestantism diluted the traditional Christian concept of somatic holiness, even as Catholicism retained it. It shows that Catholics

⁵⁰ Roper, *Oedipus*, 173.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 174.

continued to perceive holy bodies (before, during, and after death) as vessels and conduits of God's grace, but that Protestants abandoned this notion. It also indicates that early sacramentarian Protestants were less focused on the body, and materiality in general, in their discussions of martyrdom, than Christians who believed in the real presence. This largely supports, but also nuances, Roper's argument that for many Protestant theologians 'religious truths ... were not mapped out in the body of the believer as a sign for pious onlookers to interpret.'⁵³ Furthermore, this thesis suggests a relationship in Reformation thought between the spiritual condition of an individual and their body which scholarship has not yet explicitly highlighted; namely, Protestantism rejected the notion that the holiness of an individual was visibly inscribed on their body, but did not reject the same possibility in relation to evil.

In its discussion of Catholicism, this thesis sheds some light on another point that has not yet been adequately discussed in early-modern scholarship: from the Catholic viewpoint, there is a porosity to the body, and indeed all physical matter, which allows holiness to travel into and out of it, and to interact with, it. This imagery and understanding of how holiness moves and operates is very probably influenced by the porosity of the body in humoral medical thought. This is so large and important a subject that it merits a separate study, but my research lays down some groundwork for such a future project.

In investigating the relationships between the body and the spiritual, my research also utilises and extends scholarship on the interaction between the supernatural and the physical in the European Reformations. This is an established and burgeoning field. It is accepted that medieval Catholicism was centred around materiality, as Caroline Walker Bynum has explored in her book *Christian Materiality* (2011). In this work, she examines medieval Western Christian perceptions of the

⁵³ Ibid., 178.

material, including the role of matter in miracles, miraculous transformations of matter, and how matter could disclose the sacred. She argues that matter was so integral to medieval Catholicism that 'the Christianity of the later Middle Ages was ... a matter of matter'.⁵⁴ She demonstrates that matter was not seen as inert, but rather as something that could change and transform in response to sanctity: 'the basic way of describing matter ... was to see it as organic, fertile, and in some senses alive.'⁵⁵ The Reformations, however, changed how many people perceived matter.⁵⁶ The exact nature of this change remains hotly debated, in particular concerning how Protestants perceived the relationship between the supernatural and physicality.

Max Weber's famous work of 1904-5 - *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* – argued that Calvinism was responsible for the disenchantment of the world, by rejecting superstition, miracles, and magic.⁵⁷ Weber's work has cast a long shadow, and for much of the twentieth century it was largely unchallenged; for example Keith Thomas' *Religion and the Decline of Magic* advanced a Weberian view of the Reformation as a rejection of magic and superstition and embrace of reason which functioned as a crucial stepping stone towards modernity.⁵⁸ Towards the end of the

⁵⁴ Caroline Bynum, *Christian Materiality An essay on religion in late medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 265.

⁵⁵ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 30.

⁵⁶ This thesis will use the terms 'matter' and 'materiality', within the context of early-modern Christian worldviews, to refer to created substances that were natural (as opposed to supernatural) and physical (even if not tangible – such as vapours, winds, and so forth). This is within the bounds of both a modern use of the term 'matter' (OED: 'Physical material of any kind (including blood and other bodily fluids)') and an early-modern use (consider, for example, 'Ther are places in th'eath, whose vertue is to draw vaporous matter, and to convert it into water.' José de Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies*, trans. by Edward Grimeston (London: V. Sims for E. Blount and W. Aspley, 1604), III.xxv.196). Non-material substances and/or beings included God, God's grace, angels, and demons. Matter included, but was certainly not limited to, the human body. Indeed, the term body itself was understood by 'medieval theoriests, following Aristotle, Isidore, and the entire natural-philosophical tradition... to mean' not only the human body, but more widely any "'changeable thing": gem, tree, log, or cadaver... stars and statues, blood and resin...', Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 32.

⁵⁷ Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904-5).

⁵⁸ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Group, 1973).

twentieth century, however, the Weberian perspective began to be increasingly, and intensively, criticised, especially in a series of articles by Robert Scribner.⁵⁹ This revisionist stance was widely accepted until a decade ago, when it, too, began to be nuanced and questioned.⁶⁰ Some scholars, particularly Alexandra Walsham, have taken a middle road, concurring with Scribner that Protestantism was not responsible for the desacralization (a term that has become preferred to ‘disenchantment’) of the world, but that it was a desacralizing force, albeit with some innate contradictions and ambivalences, and that the early-modern world experienced cycles of de-sacralisation and re-sacralisation.⁶¹ Other scholars, such as Euan Cameron and Carlos Eire, remain heavily influenced by the Weberian viewpoint, although they have significantly revised and nuanced it.⁶² Eire argues that Calvinism was:

a drastic redefinition of the metaphysical paradigms governing Western thinking ... [a] redefinition of the boundaries between the natural and supernatural, or matter and spirit ... [Calvin’s] God was “entirely other” and “as different from flesh as fire is from water” ... Calvinists, as a whole, followed suit,

⁵⁹ Robert Scribner, ‘The Impact of the Reformation on Everyday Life’, in *Mensch und Objekt im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte, 568 (1990), 315-343; ‘The Reformation, Popular Magic and the “Disenchantment of the World”’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1993), 475-94; ‘Reformation and Desacralisation: from sacramental world to moralised universe’, in R. Po-Chia Hsia and R.W. Scribner (eds), *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe* (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, vol. 78: Wiesbaden, 1997), 75-92; ‘Magic and the Formation of Protestant Popular Culture in Germany’, in Robert W. Scribner, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400-1800)*, ed. by Lyndal Roper (Leiden, 2001), 323-45.

⁶⁰ For a classic acceptance of this stance, see Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶¹ This is seen above all in her article ‘The Reformation and “the Disenchantment of the World” Reassessed’, *The Historical Journal*, 51-2, (2008), 497-528. See this article also for a detailed overview of the historiography surrounding ‘the disenchantment of the world’.

⁶² Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first ed. 1991; 2nd ed. 2012). Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, reason, and religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The reformation of worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); *Reformations: the early modern world, 1450-1650* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); ‘Calvinism and the Reform of the Reformation’, in Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [First ed. 2015], 76-114.

bringing about a *desacralization* of the world, a “disenchantment” which made the earth less charged with the otherworldly and supernatural.⁶³

On the opposing wing, there has been a reaction in recent years against the notion that Protestantism was a desacralizing force. For example, Jennifer Waldron’s *Reformations of the Body* has attempted to nuance this idea by presenting Protestantism, rather, as shifting the emphasis of sacrality, from things made by humans to the natural world and above all to the human body.⁶⁴ And, other work has even gone so far as to elide Protestant and Catholic views of the miraculous, chiefly by arguing that Foxe evidences belief in miracles in his *Acts and Monuments*.⁶⁵ This thesis challenges Waldron’s assertion that Protestantism shifted the emphasis of sacrality to the body, and likewise the notion that Protestant and Catholic martyrologies both display belief in the miraculous. It stands with a revised version of the Weberian position, understanding the Reformation to have been desacralizing force, especially in its early years; and it extends research on sacralization and desacralization by examining it specifically in relation to Protestant and Catholic perceptions and constructions of martyrs’ bodies.

This thesis draws out another important difference in confessional worldviews which has not been sufficiently acknowledged or studied, namely that Protestants and Catholics were living within two very different temporalities. We can see from their different understandings of martyrs’ blood that they had very different apocalyptic perspectives. Moreover, the differences between their understandings of time went far wider. The Catholic model of time, drawing heavily upon the theology of Augustine, primarily envisaged time as concentric circles focused around Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The incarnation, passion, and resurrection sent ripples backwards and

⁶³ Eire, ‘Calvinism and the Reform’, 114.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, sacrifice, and early modern theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁶⁵ Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 53-75. See also Alice Dailey, ‘Typology and History in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*’, *Prose Studies*, 25:3 (2002), 1-29.

forwards throughout time in the form of events which echoed and/or were united with them. These ripples included the Eucharistic sacrifice in each Mass, and martyrs' sacrificial deaths, which were subsumed into Christ's Passion. The Protestant model, in contrast, was mainly a linear trajectory, in which events had clearly either happened, were happening, or would happen. Thus, for Protestants, Christ's life and death was a past event, which believers could imitate, but with which they could not literally be united. Early-modern Catholic understandings of time in relation to martyrdom are best explicated and explored by Andrew Redden in his preface to *The Collapse of Time: The martyrdom of Diego Ortiz (1571) by Antonio de la Calancha (1638)*. This thesis draws on Redden's insight when exploring the Catholic theology of martyrdom and time in chapter five.⁶⁶ While there is a vast literature on Protestant apocalypticism, there has been no similar, specific study of Protestant understandings of time and martyrdom.⁶⁷ This thesis aims to take a step towards answering this need by comparing and contrasting the two confessional viewpoints, although separate and fuller studies focused on confessional notions of the relationship between time and martyrdom are needed. As part of their differing perspectives on time, this thesis also touches upon differences between Protestant and Catholic approaches to the Old and

⁶⁶ Calancha, *The Collapse*.

⁶⁷ For discussion of Protestant apocalypticism see, *inter alia*, the following.

Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the civil war* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978). Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth-century apocalypticism, millenarianism and the English Reformation from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Appleford, Abingdon: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978). Katharine Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in the Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Tom Betteridge, 'From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the writing of history', in *John Foxe*, ed. by David Loades, 210-32. Robert Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998). Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Andrew Cunningham and Peter Grell Ole, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, war, famine, and death in Reformation Europe* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Thomas Fudge, 'Jan Hus as the Apocalyptic Witness in John Foxe's *History*', *Communio Viatorum*, 56-2 (2014), 136-68. Thomas Lond, 'Revising the Revelation: Early modern appropriations of medieval apocalypticism', in *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse*, ed. by Michael A. Ryan (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 378-425.

New Testaments in respect to martyrdom, again a topic which scholars (especially of England) have discussed very little and which merits further research.

Corpus of Primary Texts and Structure of Thesis

In order to address these questions, I have consulted a main corpus of sources containing discussions of English martyrdoms from c. 1520 to c. 1625. These dates correspond, on the one hand, to the advent of English Protestant martyrological writings in the 1520s, and, on the other hand, at the accession of Charles I to the throne in 1625, to the end of the largest wave of martyrdoms of English Catholics.

Martyrologies constitute a main element of the corpus, but I also interrogate discussions of martyrdom in other apologetic and polemic works of the period. In employing the term ‘martyrological writings’, I mean texts which contain extended discussions of martyrdom but are not all (or indeed mostly) strictly speaking martyrologies. Important examples which lie outside a narrower definition of martyrologies include John Bale’s *The Image*, John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, William Allen’s *An Apologie*, and Robert Parsons’ *An Epistle of the Persecution*.⁶⁸ The corpus includes Catholic and Protestant apologetic and polemic books and pamphlets, scriptural commentaries, autobiographical writings, letters, records of the (Catholic) English colleges abroad, and ecclesiastical histories. I consider both works that circulated in manuscript and those that appeared in print, and whether written in English or in Latin, wholly in prose, or wholly or partly in poetry. Because my main

⁶⁸ John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches after the Most Wonderfull and Heavenly Revelation of Saint John the Evangelist, Contayning a Very Fruitful Exposition or Paraphrase Upon the Same* (London: Thomas East, 1570) [First ed. Antwerp: S. Mierdman, 1545]. John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* [1563, 1570, 1576, 1583 editions], with editorial commentary and additional information (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011), at: <http://www.johnfoxe.org>; henceforth referenced as *A&M*. William Allen, *An Apologie*. Robert Parsons, *An Epistle of the Persecution of Catholickes in England Translated out of Frenche into Englishe and Conferred withe the Latyne Copie* (Douai: Fr Parsons’ Press, 1582).

interest is in confessional intertextuality, in the sense of discourses between works in the same confession and opposing confessions, I focus particularly on discussions of martyrdom in works which were either widely read and influential, or which responded to other martyrological writings.

My analysis is organised in five chapters. The first chapter establishes the contextual background through a survey of notions of martyrdom, blood, and martyrs' blood from the Bible to the medieval period. The next four chapters focus on early-modern England, the first two looking at Protestant constructions of martyrs' blood, and the second two at Catholic constructions.

Chapter One surveys the roles of martyrdom and blood in Christian thought and society in the Bible, the early Church, and the medieval West. Catholic and Protestant martyrological writings both frequently referred to Biblical and early-Christian martyrs, and often to medieval martyrs as well. This served the dual function of substantiating their arguments, and creating a sense of common identity with those they perceived as the forebearers of their faith. The chapter reveals the rich heritage of Christian constructions of blood and martyrdom, on which all early-modern constructions of martyrs' blood drew. It allows us to see how Protestant constructions of martyrs' blood were heavily influenced by Biblical ideas of martyrs' blood crying for vengeance and the apocalypse; by medieval orthodox trends towards seeing blood as connected with God's wrath; and by heretical texts' rhetoric of the bloody Catholic Church. We see also the threads upon which Catholic constructions of martyrs' blood would draw, in particular the New Testament idea of martyrdom as imitating and united with Christ's death; the early-Church concepts of martyrs' blood as an expiating sacrifice and grace-filled; and the continuation of these perceptions in medieval Catholic texts and practices.

Chapter Two examines depictions of martyrs' blood during the partial reformation of Henry's reign, and argues that they illuminate the wider development of Protestant theologies and worldviews. Martyrs' blood functioned as a lynchpin for both developing Protestant theologies and anti-Catholic polemics. Henrician Protestant writings continued medieval heretical depictions of the Catholic Church as bloodthirsty and antichristian, using imagery of bloody enemies to underpin political, economic, and theological attacks on Catholicism. Whereas medieval Catholic depictions of martyrdom had been primarily a mirror for the faithful, early-modern Protestant depictions of martyrdom were primarily a weapon in the confessional textual war, and intended for both the faithful and their opponents to read. The rhetoric of martyrs' blood was a key component of this weapon, capable of encapsulating and evoking many different prongs of attack. From across the various depictions and constructions emerged a clear and repeated polemic image: the Catholic Church was bloodthirsty and blood-guilty, and the martyrs' blood which it had shed called for and proclaimed God's impending apocalyptic vengeance. A close examination of the Henrician Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood also highlights internal divisions within English Protestantism. Differing and hotly-debated beliefs about the Eucharistic and the sacraments had a substantial impact upon perceptions of martyrdom and materiality. While Lutheran writers still partially adhered to traditional Catholic perceptions of the Eucharist, the sacraments, and martyrdom, sacramentarian writers largely broke away from these beliefs. For Lutherans, the Eucharistic bread and wine did not literally become the body and blood of Christ, but were physically co-mingled with them; the Eucharist was not a repetition or continuation of Christ's saving sacrifice, because – they believed – Christ had died once to save all. However, without literally consuming Christ's body and blood, believers could not be saved and no-one could be empowered to be martyred. For the sacramentarians, in contrast, the Eucharist was a commemorative act of remembrance in which the believer fed purely spiritually on

Christ, or simply a symbolic remembrance of the Last Supper and Christ's death. For sacramentarians, there was no close connection between the Eucharist and martyrdom. This same divide continued in respect to perceptions of the sacraments and materiality more widely. In sacramentarian depictions of martyrdom, there was generally a disconnection between materiality and spirituality, which stood in sharp contrast to traditional Catholic beliefs. This meant that early Protestant writers tended to construct martyrdom rather differently according to whether they were sacramentarian or non-sacramentarian. For non-sacramentarian writers, materiality displayed martyrs' holiness, and depictions of martyrdom included a focus on the martyrs' bodies; for sacramentarian writers, in contrast, the nature of sanctity was entirely spiritual (and non-physical), and so generally little attention was paid to the martyrs' bodies.⁶⁹ Sacramentarian depictions of martyrdom very rarely described martyrs bleeding during their persecutions and executions, and their blood never worked wonders or miracles, underlining the dematerialized and non-somatic nature of sacramentarian perceptions of grace and sanctity.

Chapter Three analyses the culmination of English Protestant martyrology, and of the English Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood, in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. By including medieval heretical, early English Protestant, and Marian Protestant texts, as well as Foxe's own prose, the work combines these evolutionary phases of the anti-Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood, while Foxe's idiosyncratic perspectives are also very evident. The *Acts and Monuments*, without doubt, presents the most detailed and coherent rhetoric of martyrs' blood found in English Protestant writings. We see both strong continuities with and significant differences from earlier English Protestant writings. Henrician writers had not emphasised the role of martyrs' blood as witness, but Foxe and his Marian source base highlighted this function, influenced both by the

⁶⁹ This changed somewhat in the second half of the sixteenth century, and especially in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, as discussed in Chapter Three.

pseudo-martyr debate and by apocalypticism. Foxe continued the standard English Protestant rhetoric of bloody enemies, and its anti-clerical focus, but also innovated in presenting the English Catholic martyrs not merely as pseudo-martyrs but as blood-shedding persecutors, whose bloody deaths were due to the avenging of innocent blood with guilty blood. Like earlier English Protestant writers, Foxe's rhetoric of martyrs' blood was often apocalyptic; however, Foxe was distinctive in placing a specific, and very imminent, date on the apocalypse, and in his intention that his martyrological writing should not only warn believers of the impending apocalypse, but also actually be of use in the Last Judgement. Like earlier sacramentarian writers, Foxe's narrative of martyrs' blood was primarily one of vengeance. The sacramentarian nature of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is evident, but has a different flavour from Henrician writings. Like earlier writers, Foxe, and the Marian sources he cites, firmly reject the Catholic notion that martyrs' blood had a salvific function. However, the *Acts and Monuments* are distinctive in that the martyrs' blood is not miraculous, although it is sometimes wonder-working; the martyrs' deaths are bloody and lengthy, and their persecutors almost always come to (vividly described) bloody or grisly ends – their bodies reflecting their wicked spiritual state and God's righteous vengeance. The *Acts and Monuments* is not dematerialized, unlike most earlier English Protestant depictions of martyrdom; rather it is as interested in the relationship between the divine and the material as Catholic texts, but presents an alternative model of the relationship between God and matter.

Chapter Four examines the reasons why, between c.1525 and c.1575, English Catholic writers infrequently used rhetoric of martyrs' blood, unlike their English Protestant contemporaries. This striking difference was founded on, and illuminates, a number of divides between the two confessions' worldviews and polemic strategies. It derived partly from different confessional attitudes to the emotions: English Catholic writings were often influenced by Stoicism, whereas English Protestant writings were

much more emotive and emotionalist, in line with Luther and Calvin's condemnations of Stoicism and endorsement of 'full-throated ... passion'.⁷⁰ Hence, although both confessions engaged in a pseudo-martyr debate, trying to prove each other's martyrs to be false martyrs and their own martyrs to be true ones, their approaches to the debate were different. The Protestant approach was much more emotionally evocative; Protestant apologias were filled with vivid narratives of bloody Catholic clerics, who symbolised the antichristian bloody Catholic Church, and with Protestant martyrs witnessing to their faith by their blood, and calling down God's wrath in the impending apocalypse. This trend reached its apogee in Foxe depicting the English Catholic martyrs from Thomas Becket onwards not merely as false martyrs, and so their blood witness as a false blood witness, but as bloodthirsty and blood-guilty murderers of the true martyrs. In contrast, English Catholic apologetics adopted an erudite and humanist angle on the pseudo-martyr debate, presenting their martyrs as wise and learned humanist scholars who lived ascetic and morally upright lives, and thus possessed the learning, judgement, and holiness to discern the true Church and to die for their (informed) beliefs. This rhetoric combined well with the English Catholic cultivation of an identity marked by respect for authorities and charitable love for all. These qualities were, of course, a suitable defence against the state's depiction of English Catholics as traitors, due to their ultimate allegiance to the Pope rather than the monarch, under Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth. When we look at the overall picture gleaned from the very scattered appearances of this rhetoric of martyrs' blood in Catholic writings c.1525-c.1575, it highlights some similarities but also critical differences between Catholic and Protestant worldviews and constructions of martyrdom. Both confessions sought to depict each other as 'bloody', although this was a far more popular Protestant

⁷⁰ Richard Strier, 'Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert', in Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, Mary Floyd-Wilson (eds), *Reading the Early Modern Passions* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23-42, 29.

than Catholic rhetoric. Catholic writers, like Protestants, understood martyrs' blood to have a witnessing power, but, whereas for Protestant martyrs' blood witnessed both to the true faith and to the impending apocalypse, for Catholics martyrs' blood only witnessed to the true faith. Catholics also maintained belief in martyrdom as imitating the nature of Christ's sacrificial death, and in relics as grace-filled and connected with the miraculous. Additionally, Catholic apologists stressed the importance of charity (perhaps in contrast to the Protestant emphasis on faith), and this influenced how they wrote about persecutors and confessional opponents. Even the Marian burnings of heretics were depicted as motivated by charity, and the dying Protestants were argued to be unmasked as pseudo-martyrs by their lack of charity at the stake.

Finally, in Chapter Five, we explore how, as the politico-religious situation changed, both at home and abroad, so did Catholic apologetic rhetoric and tactics. This led, from the 1580s, to a frequent and theologically-rich rhetoric of martyrs' blood in Catholic martyrological writings, endowed with a number of significant features. Most importantly, it depicted martyrs' blood as united with Christ's blood, and therefore echoing the qualities and functions of Christ's blood, especially as an expiatory, salvific sacrifice and as a powerful vessel of grace. From the unity of martyrs' blood with Christ's blood stemmed other key Catholic martyrological beliefs and worldviews. Since martyrs' blood (like Christ's blood) was a potent vessel of grace, it was believed to be able to heal the faithful, harm the impious, strengthen faith, and convert unbelievers; hence, blood relics were highly prized. Since martyrs' blood was an expiatory and salvific sacrifice, it was believed that it did not call down the apocalypse, but rather could reconvert England. Moreover, while it was linked with God's just vengeance, it was linked above all with God's mercy and forgiveness, such that it could reasonably be hoped that even the most 'cruel' persecutors who 'thirsted for the blood of Catholics' might be pardoned by God and transformed from 'a Saul [into] a Paul ...

[from] a bloody persecutor [to] one of the Catholic Church's children.'⁷¹ The contemporary Catholic martyrs' blood was perceived as one with the blood of the early-Church martyrs, both united with Christ's blood and Passion, and therefore part of an unbroken line of martyrs' blood-witness to the true Church.

⁷¹ John Gerard, *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest. John Gerard S.J.*, trans. and ed. by Philip Caraman (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988) [First ed. 1952], 84. *Acts of English Martyrs Hitherto Unpublished*, ed. by John Hungerford Pollen (London: Burns and Oates, 1891), 108; discussed in Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 77.

Chapter One: Constructions of Blood and Martyrdom from the Bible to Medieval Europe.

Early-modern martyrs and martyrologists, both Protestant and Catholic, drew heavily upon long Judaeo-Christian traditions of constructions of martyrdom and blood. Most of all, both confessions drew upon the Bible, so that their writings were rich with Biblical references. They also frequently drew on early-Church writings and theology. In addition, Protestants as much as Catholics were a product of the medieval Catholic Church, both when they defined themselves in opposition to it and when they proceeded in continuity with it. In order to understand and analyse early-modern Protestant and Catholic constructions of martyrdom and martyrs' blood, it is, therefore, essential to start from a detailed consideration of this background to their theologies and writings.

Blood and Martyrdom in the Old and New Testaments

(i) The Old Testament

In most of the Old Testament, the very notion of martyrdom is largely absent: it is rare that people are killed for their faith, and when they are this is usually not presented as a heroic act that merits eternal reward. This is rooted in cultural beliefs about good and bad deaths. In general, a good death was believed to be a peaceful one, at the end of a long life, leaving behind male descendants, and with a proper burial in the deceased's own land; a bad death was

premature, violent, without male heirs, and without a proper burial.¹ This is, perhaps, unsurprising, when we consider that a developed belief in the resurrection of the dead and post-mortem reward or punishment for earthly deeds only clearly appeared in Judaism at the end of the second century BC, and even then was rejected by some groups such as the Sadducees.² In the Old Testament, a person primarily lives on through their descendants, not through an afterlife; even where there are references to a possible afterlife (Sheol), such a place usually appears as a gloomy or shadowy existence following death. Life before death seems much more significant than whatever might come after it; death is not something to be looked forward to, but rather an enemy, so much so that dead bodies – even of the most pious men – are defiling objects.³

Generally, those favoured by God - good kings, prophets, pious men - are not killed for their faith; rather, God shows his favour by delivering them from the hands of their enemies, often in miraculous or wondrous circumstances. For example, in the book of Daniel, Daniel survives being thrown into the lions' den for worshipping his God, and so is vindicated; his accusers are thrown to the lions instead. Equally, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship King Nebuchadnezzar and so are thrown into a fiery furnace, but they emerge unscathed.⁴ Even where good men *are* killed for their faith, righteousness, or nation, this is not presented as a cause for celebration, let alone emulation, and with few exceptions they are not extolled for the manner of their deaths.⁵ For example, in Genesis, the protomartyr Abel is murdered by his jealous brother Cain, because Abel's sacrifice is acceptable to God but Cain's is not. Abel reaps no benefit from this; God punishes Cain by making him wander the earth for the rest of his life.⁶ The focus of these stories falls on the wickedness of the persecutors, who mistreat God's prophets and pious, righteous men. There is no apparent benefit to the victims

¹ Klaas Spronk, 'Good Death and Bad Death in Ancient Israel According to Biblical Lore', *Social Science & Medicine* 58 (2004), 987-995, 987.

² Ibid., 989.

³ Ibid., 989.

⁴ Other examples include the cases of Elijah (1 Kings) and David (1 Samuel).

⁵ Spronk, 'Good Death', 995.

⁶ See also, for example, the death of Uriah, in Jeremiah 26:20-23.

themselves in dying for their righteousness, faith, or nation; their deaths are usually not sacrifices to God, and do not have any expiatory or cleansing value; rather, the evil actions of those who persecute and kill the righteous result in God's wrath and judgement being executed on the nation, through rebellions, fratricide, military defeats, famines, and ultimately the exile in Babylon. In short, as Klaus Spronk has pithily summarised: 'Within Christianity and Islam, the martyrs who died for their faith are greatly honoured and believed to be rewarded in the afterlife. The ancient Israelites were not familiar with this idea.'⁷

This model changed in the very last books of the Old Testament to be written (those which early-modern Catholics viewed as deuterocanonical, and Protestants as apocryphal).⁸ In some of these, a model of martyrdom closer to the Christian ideal emerges.⁹ The 'Prayer of Azariah' in the book of Daniel, which scholars consider possibly to be a later interpolation, describes martyrdom as a sacrifice for the sins of the nation, comparable to the animal sacrifices prescribed by the Law, and therefore as something which can please God and obtain his mercy.¹⁰ Similar ideas are found in the books of Maccabees, which describes the persecution of the Jews by the Hellenistic king Antiochus Epiphanes, and the resistance led by Judas Maccabeus and his brothers.¹¹ Scholars have seen similarities between constructions of the deaths of the Maccabean martyrs and the death of Christ, and present this as a new model of expiatory and

⁷ Spronk, 'Good Death', 993.

⁸ This probably may reflect a wider, substantial shift in the Jewish community's worldview during the period the 'deuterocanonical' / 'apocryphal' books were written. See Philip Jenkins, *Crucible of Faith: The ancient revolution that made our modern religious world* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

⁹ Frederick Klawiter argues that while Maccabees begins to suggest a different construction of martyrs' blood, namely that it functions like the blood of animal sacrifices in cleansing and expiating, this idea was only fully taken up by the early Christians, during the first few centuries AD. See Frederick Klawiter, "'Living Water" and Sanguinary Witness: John 19:34 and martyrs of the second and early third century', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 66-2 (2015), 553-573.

¹⁰ The 'Prayer of Azariah' is found in the Septuagint (and the Vulgate), but not in Hebrew texts of the Bible; it is therefore often seen as deuterocanonical or apocryphal. It probably dates to the second or first century BC. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New revised standard version: an ecumenical study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [First ed. 1991], 189.

¹¹ The events occurred in the middle of the second century BC, and the first two books were written in the second half of this same century, but the fourth book sometime between the first century BC and the first century AD. See Warren Joel Heard, 'Maccabean Martyr Theology: its genesis, antecedents and significance for the earliest soteriological interpretation of the death of Jesus' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1987), *passim*.

heroic martyrdom, in contrast to earlier Jewish models of martyrdom and death.¹² In 1 Maccabees, Judas' brother Eleazer is killed fighting for the Jews against the Syrians, and the author remarks, 'So he gave his life to save his people and to win for himself an everlasting home.'¹³ In 2 Maccabees, the seven young men who choose to die rather than disobey the Jewish dietary laws are 'buoyed up by their belief in resurrection, and also by the belief that God's wrath, which had fallen on the nation for its own sins, would be brought to an end by their martyrdom, their sacrifice.'¹⁴ 4 Maccabees elaborates further on the idea that the martyrs' deaths were a sacrifice which would pacify God's wrath against Israel: the martyrs 'were a ransom for the sin of our nation', and 'an atoning sacrifice', with the result that 'our enemies did not rule over our nation [any longer], the tyrant was punished, and the homeland purified.'¹⁵ The martyrological narrative of Maccabees has been summarised thus: 'Israel's sin resulted in God's judgement [and] the sacrifice of the martyrs expiates the wrath of God.'¹⁶ This was a narrative model that would become extremely popular in Christian theology, from the New Testament onwards.

While martyrdom is not a major theme in the Old Testament, blood most certainly is. Blood plays a number of critical roles: it contains the life force; it atones for sin; it seals covenants; and innocent bloodshed stains and calls down divine vengeance.

Blood carries life. Leviticus 17:11 states: 'For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is blood that makes atonement for one's life.'¹⁷ A blood sacrifice is, thus, in a sense, giving a life in order to redeem

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 1 Maccabees 6:43-46.

¹⁴ Roger Tomes, 'Heroism in 1 and 2 Maccabees', *Biblical Interpretations*, 15 (2007) 171-199, 185. See also Pierre J. Jordan 'Ritual, Rage and Revenge in 2 Maccabees 6 and 7', *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies* 68-1 (2012).

¹⁵ 4 Maccabees 17:20-22, cited and discussed in Tomes, 'Heroism', 190.

¹⁶ Heard, 'Maccabean', Abstract.

¹⁷ Recent scholarship has seen this verse as a later addition to the text of Leviticus, and thus not reflecting the original theology of the Pentateuch. While this may be so, the verse was influential upon subsequent

another life. The life-carrying quality of blood is so important that, for this reason alone, God forbids the Israelites to eat blood on pain of exile and excommunication; they, and even every foreigner residing among them, must drain the blood from animal flesh before eating it.¹⁸

Innocent (animal) blood functions as the cleansing medium of atonement for sin. Stephen Geller has argued that Judaism, as depicted in the Pentateuch, was the first religion in which blood restored the sacrificial shrine and the whole world to its original purity, thus allowing mankind to commune with the divine.¹⁹ In the Old Testament as a whole, the blood of animals sacrificed each year has the power to atone for the sins of the Jewish people.

Blood seals covenants. Every Biblical covenant is sealed in blood, starting with the blood of circumcision and of sacrifice sealing the Abrahamic covenant, which founded the relationship between God and his chosen nation.²⁰ The indispensable role blood plays in sealing covenants highlights its critical theological importance, not only above every other part of the body, but above every other natural substance; it alone can create a binding agreement between God and his people.

Innocent blood does not simply atone for sins and seal covenants; its power is wider and more threatening. Unrighteous shedding of innocent human blood has dire consequences. The blood stains and pollutes; it also calls out for retributive justice, and can bring down the vengeance of God.²¹ Innocent blood, above all, stains the persecutors and murderers. Blood-guilt extends beyond the guilty individuals, to their descendants, their entire city, or beyond.²² The image of earth stained by innocent blood recurs through the Old Testament, beginning with

Biblical and Christian theology of blood. See William Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and power* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Leviticus 17:10-14. See also Genesis 9:4.

¹⁹ Stephen Geller, 'Blood Cult: Towards a literary theology of the priestly works of the Pentateuch', *Prooftexts*, 12:2 (1992): 97-124; discussed in David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The circulation of a symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley, California; London: University of California Press, 2007), 9.

²⁰ For a discussion of the importance of death and blood to the sealing of a covenant, see Hebrews 9:15-18.

²¹ See, for example, Deuteronomy 19:13. This can be explained by the statement in Psalm 72 that the blood of the weak and helpless (i.e. the innocent) is precious to God.

²² See, for example, 1 Kings 2:32-33; Matthew 27:25. Revelations 18: 21-24.

pious Abel, murdered by his jealous brother Cain. His blood is depicted as crying out to the Lord from the earth.²³ Building on this, Isaiah prophesies that at the end of the world ‘The earth will disclose the blood shed on it’.²⁴ Blood shed unrighteously, moreover, does not merely stain but pollutes the land, which then requires cleansing; this cleansing is often achieved through shedding the blood of the blood-shedder.²⁵ Deliberately shedding innocent blood is almost always punished with the death (i.e. blood shedding) of the blood-shedder; David Biale has noted that ‘biblical law would not allow any remission of capital punishment, a unique stringency in ancient Near Eastern law’.²⁶ The blood of the innocent is a potent force, often bringing about divine retribution if humanity has failed to avenge it. For example, God intervenes to avenge the blood of Abel by rebuking and punishing Cain. Likewise, in Maccabees, Judas Maccabeus asks God to ‘hear the blood of the victims that cried aloud to Him’.²⁷ According to Pierre Jordan, ‘The blood of the martyrs seems to be the trigger that caused God to have mercy on them’, granting Judas’ small army victory over the enemy forces.²⁸

(ii) The New Testament

The New Testament provides a rather different model of dying for the faith from that which predominated in the Old Testament. Christ tells his followers in the Sermon on the Mount, ‘Blessed are you when people ... persecute you’.²⁹ Dying a premature, violent death for the faith is no longer a tragedy, but a desirable end that brings great rewards in the afterlife. St Paul, writing to encourage the persecuted Christian community at Rome, says:

²³ Genesis 4:10.

²⁴ Isaiah 26:11.

²⁵ This law is laid down by God in Numbers 35:33. For an example in the narratives of the Old Testament, see 2 Samuel 21. For further discussion of this topic, see Biale, *Blood and Belief*, 14-17, and Gerardo Sachs, ‘Blood Feud’, *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 36-4 (2008), 261-62.

²⁶ Biale, *Blood and Belief*, 15.

²⁷ 2 Maccabees 8:3. Jordan, ‘Ritual’, 4.

²⁸ Jordan, ‘Ritual’, 4.

²⁹ Matthew 5:11.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

What is the reward of the slaughtered flock of Christ? '[W]e are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.'³⁰

The notion of sharing in and imitating Christ's sufferings and death is critical to this model of martyrdom. Before Christ's death, two of the disciples maintain that they are willing to face death alongside him if need be, but when Jesus is arrested they desert him and save their lives.³¹ It is only after he has set the precedent, and sent down 'the Comforter' - the Holy Spirit - that the disciples are spiritually strengthened and transformed to the point where many of them eagerly die for their faith in Christ.³² While Jesus predicts before his death that they will be martyred, it is presented as an imitation of his (forthcoming) death. He tells the sons of Zebedee that they will be baptized with the baptism with which he is to be baptized, and drink of the cup which he is to drink: both are metaphors for death.³³ Before his death, he tells his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it'.³⁴ This taking up their cross in imitation of Christ and dying, similarly, only makes sense after Christ's crucifixion.³⁵ The death of the first Christian martyr – St Stephen – is presented by St Luke as closely following the model of Christ's death.³⁶ Before expiring Jesus cries out with a loud voice,

³⁰ Romans 8:17.

³¹ John 11:16, 13:37

³² John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.

³³ Mark 10:37-39; Matthew 20:22.

³⁴ Matthew 16:24-25.

³⁵ John Glen Rumble, 'Take up the cross (Mark 8:34 and par.): the history and function of the cross saying in earliest Christianity' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008).

³⁶ Compare Luke 23:34, 46 to Acts 7:55, 59-60. See Sergio Rosell, 'Loving God... unto death: the witness of the early Christians', *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies* 66-1 (2010), 3. Note also that here and *passim* the term 'protomartyr' will not be used to describe Christ. Some recent scholarship on early-modern martyrdom has begun to describe Christ as the 'protomartyr'; however, this term is not normally used in scholarship on the New Testament and early Christianity, and with good reason. The etymology of

'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'³⁷ Nearing his end, Stephen calls out with a loud voice, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'³⁸ Jesus asks God the Father to forgive his persecutors.³⁹ St Stephen likewise asks God 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'⁴⁰

This imitation of Christ's Passion was not seen as merely an imitation of outward form, but as a joyous sharing in the sufferings of Christ. For example, Paul writes, 'I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.'⁴¹ Similarly, Peter writes 'rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ'.⁴² Sergio Rosell explains that 'the suffering *topos* became the means of attaining the closest union that is possible with Christ.'⁴³ For Paul, it is more than just a shared experience of suffering: the martyrs' sufferings complete Christ's sufferings; like Christ's sufferings, they are efficacious for the Church. 'Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the Church.'⁴⁴ A close reading of the texts suggests that Paul sees his martyrdom as sacrificial, like the Old Testament sacrifices which were fulfilled in Christ's perfect sacrifice. These sacrifices had the functions of expiation, purification, and cleansing. In 2 Timothy 4:6, Paul (or the author who writes in Paul's name) states, 'For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure [death] is near.' The Greek σπένδομαι means a libation, and a libation (usually of oil

'proto' is 'original' and of 'martyr' is 'witness'. Since what the martyrs' deaths witness to is Christ, he cannot be the first witness, and indeed Christ is not described as the 'protomartyr' in early Church, medieval, or early-modern texts. These texts, rather, commonly see Stephen, or sometimes Abel, as the protomartyr.

³⁷ Luke 23:46.

³⁸ Acts 7:59.

³⁹ Luke 23:34.

⁴⁰ Acts 7:60.

⁴¹ Philippians 3:10. Likewise, he writes in 2 Corinthians 1:5: 'For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ'.

⁴² 1 Peter 4:13.

⁴³ Rosell, 'Loving God', 4.

⁴⁴ Colossians 1:24.

and wine) is what the Law prescribed for the conclusion of animal sacrifices.⁴⁵ This is clearly an significant choice of word, because he writes, from prison, to the Philippians using the same imagery and the same word: 'even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you'.⁴⁶

In sum, in the New Testament, martyrdom is presented as a desirable form of death, and it brings great rewards in the afterlife. Martyrs imitate and share in Christ's sufferings and death. The martyrs' sufferings complete Christ's sufferings and are therefore efficacious for the Church. Martyrdom is also seen as sacrificial in nature, comparable to the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The New Testament both reaffirmed and developed Old Testament constructions of blood. In both, blood carries life, is an atoning sacrifice, seals covenants, and can cry out to God for vengeance. However, the blood most commonly referred to in the New Testament is Christ's blood, and here there is both continuity with and divergence from Old Testament constructions of animal blood sacrifices and innocent bloodshed. Christ's blood is depicted as the fulfilment of earlier sacrifices, bringing about the eternal atonement, salvation, and sanctification which they could not. It is also depicted as different from earlier martyrdoms and innocent bloodshed:

You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.⁴⁷

Whereas Abel's blood, and the blood of other innocent and pious people, called for God's vengeance, Christ's blood calls primarily for God's mercy and is an instrument of peace, saving people from God's wrath.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ E.g. Exodus 29:40-41. For further discussion, see Korinna Zamfir, 'The Departing Paul: Some reflections on the meaning of *spendomai* and its early Christian reception', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 93-1 (2017), 75-94.

⁴⁶ Philippians 2:17.

⁴⁷ Hebrews 12:23-24.

⁴⁸ Colossians 1:20.

The belief that life resides in blood also at least partially continued. The apostolic council at Jerusalem decreed that, while there was no need for Gentile Christians to follow the Law nor its dietary requirements in general, they must ‘abstain from ... the meat of strangled animals and from blood’;⁴⁹ although, Paul seems to dispense with this in his own guidelines to Gentile communities.⁵⁰ Most importantly, Jesus’ blood is understood to be the medium of eternal life. This is usually depicted in covenantal or sacrificial language (see below), but St John’s gospel also links this explicitly to the Eucharist - depicting consumption of Jesus’s blood as the means to obtaining eternal life.⁵¹ Whereas animal blood is not to be consumed because ‘the life of a creature is in the blood’, Jesus’s blood *is* to be consumed precisely because it conveys life.

By far the most common blood theme of the New Testament is Christ’s blood functioning as a blood sacrifice, both resembling and superseding the Old Testament (animal) blood sacrifices. This is evident in many passages. Christ’s blood is ‘a sacrifice of atonement’.⁵² It justifies and saves from God’s wrath.⁵³ It redeems and forgives sins.⁵⁴ It reconciles ‘all things’, but especially sinners, with God.⁵⁵ The relationship between Christ’s blood and the blood of animal sacrifices in the Law is explained in most detail in Hebrews, where the author writes to a community of Jewish converts to Christianity, explaining how Christ has fulfilled the Law. The epistle highlights that ‘the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’.⁵⁶ And yet, ‘It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins’.⁵⁷ So what is needed is ‘the precious blood of Christ, a lamb

⁴⁹ Acts 15: 20. Strangled animals had not been drained of their blood as was required in Leviticus. See also Acts 15:29 and 21:25.

⁵⁰ See, for example, 1 Corinthians chapter 8, where Paul permits believers to eat meat which has been sacrificed to idols (which presumably has not been drained of all its blood) so long as it does not scandalise other believers in their community who might misunderstand this as idolatry.

⁵¹ ‘So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”’ (John 6:53-54).

⁵² Romans 3:25.

⁵³ Romans 5:9.

⁵⁴ Ephesians 1:7. See also, for example, Hebrews 13:11, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5.

⁵⁵ Ephesians 2:13, Colossians 1:20.

⁵⁶ Hebrews 9:22.

⁵⁷ Hebrews 10:4.

without blemish or defect'.⁵⁸ It compares the high priest entering the Holy of Holies to offer animal blood for his own sins and the sins of the people with Christ, '[who] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption'.⁵⁹ Just as the 'blood of goats and bulls' were sprinkled to cleanse those who were ceremonially unclean, 'How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences' from sin.'⁶⁰ Jesus died 'to make the people holy through his own blood'.⁶¹

As well as being a blood-sacrifice for sin, Christ's blood also functions as a blood-sacrifice to seal a covenant (thus fulfilling both of the main Old Testament roles of animal blood-sacrifices). Paul notes that 'even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood', and so the 'new', final, and 'eternal' covenant is, like the preceding covenants, sealed in blood.⁶² At the Last Supper, Jesus describes the cup of wine as a 'covenant' in his 'blood'.⁶³

Innocent blood also stains and cries out to be avenged, as in the Old Testament. However, this is a less prominent theme, and appears more ambiguous in the New Testament. In accusing the religious leaders of the murder of all God's prophets, Jesus warns them 'And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel ...'⁶⁴ And in Revelation, the martyrs cry from under the altar (thereby also equating their blood with the blood of sacrifice), 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'⁶⁵ God's response is to pour out the seven bowls of wrath, which wreak havoc, pain and death upon the people of earth. Yet, the notion of avenging blood with blood is largely replaced by notions of forgiving and blessing

⁵⁸ 1 Peter 1:19. See also, for example, Revelation 12:11. For explication of the imagery of the bleeding sacrificial lamb, see Klawiter, "Living Water", 560.

⁵⁹ Hebrews 9:7-12.

⁶⁰ Hebrews 9:13. Hebrews 9:14.

⁶¹ Hebrews 13:12.

⁶² Hebrews 9:18. 1 Corinthians 11:25; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 12:24. Hebrews 13:20.

⁶³ Matthew 26:28; Mark 12:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25.

⁶⁴ Matthew 23:35.

⁶⁵ Revelations 6:10.

one's enemies. These notions of forgiveness perhaps even extend to alleviating the wrath of God at innocent bloodshed, since both Christ and Stephen (the protomartyr) ask God to forgive, rather than punish, their murderers.⁶⁶ Certainly, with the exception of Revelation, there is little focus in the New Testament on the blood of the innocent being repaid with divine punishment of the guilty. For example, Pilate literally washes his hands to emphasise that 'I am innocent of this man's [Christ's] blood', clearly fearing that he will be stained by Christ's blood and incur God's wrath; but, although he is evidently not innocent of Christ's blood, there is no narrative of God's wrath coming down upon him.⁶⁷ Moreover, when those who have shed innocent blood then repent, such as Paul (who participated in the murder of Stephen), there is no question of a need to repay murdered blood with the blood of the penitent murderer; rather, Christ's blood atones for their sins. Whereas in the Old Testament the shedding of innocent human blood generally called for God's vengeance, in the New Testament Christ's blood primarily calls for God's mercy. This is an important point for our understanding of the constructions of martyrs' blood from the early Church to the Catholic Reformation.

The New Testament often mentions blood when discussing martyrdom. Jesus tells the teachers of the Law and Pharisees that he will send them prophets, sages and teachers, whom they will persecute and kill, just as their ancestors shed 'the blood of the prophets', and so upon them will come 'all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel [the first prophet] to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah [the last prophet], whom you murdered between the temple and the altar'.⁶⁸ While the Old Testament does not mention Zechariah having been murdered, Christ here construes Old Testament prophecy as characterised by martyrdom and blood, and being bookended by murdered prophets whose 'righteous blood' had 'been shed'. Likewise, bloodshed is a central element in Paul's description of the death of

⁶⁶ Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.

⁶⁷ Matthew 27:24.

⁶⁸ Matthew 23:29-36. See also Luke 11:50-51.

the first Christian martyr –Stephen: ‘And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him’.⁶⁹ Again, in Hebrews, blood is used as a synonym for martyrdom: ‘In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood’.⁷⁰

Martyrs’ blood appears most frequently in the eschatological, prophetic book of Revelation, and it is important for our understanding of early-modern constructions of martyrs’ blood to highlight some of the key passages. The theme of God avenging martyrs’ blood with their enemies’ blood is recurrent and significant to its narrative; this theme appears only twice elsewhere in the New Testament.⁷¹ Since the inhabitants of earth, and especially of the allegorical city of Babylon, are mostly wicked, and will not cease from martyring the good and pious people, including God’s witnesses, Revelation depicts God sending a series of punishments as warnings to them to repent, before ultimately destroying Babylon and vanquishing the forces of evil. The souls of the martyrs under the altar call out to God for their blood to be avenged.⁷² When God turns the water on earth to blood, an angel proclaims ‘You are just in these judgments, O Holy One ... for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve’.⁷³ The Whore of Babylon (symbolising the apocalyptic forces of evil) is seen to be ‘drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus’.⁷⁴ When Babylon is defeated, in her is ‘found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth’.⁷⁵ Hereupon, Revelation depicts the great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! ... true and just are his

⁶⁹ Acts 22:20.

⁷⁰ Hebrews 12:4.

⁷¹ Matthew 23:29-36 and Luke 11:50-51.

⁷² Revelation 6:10.

⁷³ Revelation 16:5-6.

⁷⁴ Revelation 17:6.

⁷⁵ Revelation 18:24.

[God's] judgements. He has condemned the great prostitute ... He has avenged on her the blood of his servants".⁷⁶

What is not present in the New Testament is an overt depiction of martyrs' blood as a blood sacrifice. Revelation 6:10 hints at martyrs' blood playing a sacrificial role but this notion is neither explicit nor prominent.⁷⁷ In the New Testament, martyrdom is depicted as akin to Christ's death and as possessing a sacrificial character, but a clear and explicit rhetoric of sacrificial martyrs' blood only appears in extra-Biblical early-Church texts.

In summary, we see a number of critical points emerge from the Old and New Testaments' treatments of martyrdom, blood, and martyrs' blood. The Old Testament largely does not differentiate martyrdom (choosing to die for one's faith) from other forms of innocent bloodshed. In contrast, the New Testament depicts martyrdom as valuable and even desirable. This is because martyrdom has a heavenly reward, and because it allows the believer to share in and be united with the sufferings and death of Christ (the model for subsequent martyrdoms); it is perhaps also because martyrdom is (in some sense) sacrificial, like Christ's death. While, in the Old Testament, only animal sacrifices bring expiation and cleansing, in the New Testament, the sacrifice of God incarnate (in Jesus Christ) is the ultimate vehicle of expiation and cleansing that supersedes animal sacrifices. Christ's blood sacrifice saves, expiates, and sanctifies all Christians, especially through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Just as in the Old Testament animal blood sacrifices seal God's covenants with his people Israel, so in the New Testament Christ's blood is depicted as sealing this new and ultimate covenant between God and his people – now comprising all Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ. Both Old and New Testaments depict innocent blood as capable of calling down the justice of divine vengeance unless avenged by human systems of justice, but this is far more heavily emphasised in the Old

⁷⁶ Revelation 19:1-2. For further discussion of these themes, see Paul B. Decock, 'The Symbol of Blood in the Apocalypse of John', *Neotestamentica*, 38-2 (2004), 157-182.

⁷⁷ See Decock, 'The Symbol', 164, 166-68.

than the New Testament. The overall 'narrative' of innocent human bloodshed changes: in the Old Testament innocent human blood generally calls for God's vengeance, whereas in the New Testament it primarily calls for God's mercy. The New Testament also associates martyrdom with blood: martyrs' blood can cry for God's vengeance, especially in Revelation, which strongly associates martyrs' blood with the apocalypse and the end of the world. While the New Testament in general depicts martyrdom as a sacrifice, it does not explicitly depict martyrs' blood as blood sacrifice, this language only being adopted in extra-Biblical early-Church texts.

Blood and Martyrdom in the Early Church

Martyrdom and blood were of central importance to Christian theology and identity in the first five centuries of the Church, the period in which the Christian theology of martyrdom was formed and consolidated. In 64 AD, the Emperor Nero chose the Christians as scapegoats for the Great Fire of Rome; spectacular and gory mass executions followed, including victims being torn apart by dogs and burned as human torches. Over the next two and a half centuries, while Christianity remained an illegal religion within the Roman Empire and Christians risked the death penalty for practising their faith, the early Church experienced intermittent waves of heavy persecution. This was, therefore, an age of mass martyrdom. After the Emperor Constantine himself converted to Christianity (313 AD) and legalised the religion, the persecutions were halted. Some of the most influential works discussing and depicting the preceding martyrdoms were written over the fourth and fifth centuries, such as Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (written in the early fourth century). The Christian theology of martyrdom was further developed in the fifth century, in response to the state's persecution of the heretical Donatists, whom the established Church viewed as pseudo-martyrs. Between the first and fifth centuries, the popular genre of martyrology emerged and was consolidated; these texts were either narratives of the deaths of Christian martyrs or letters written to Christian communities

by those about to be martyred; early examples include the letters of St Ignatius and the account of the martyrdom of St Polycarp.⁷⁸

In the New Testament, the word ‘martyr’ means a witness, but in the early Church the word gradually came to assume the modern meaning – someone who dies for the faith, as the ultimate form of witness.⁷⁹ Christ’s death was the model which martyrs imitated, and they believed that their deaths were united with his. Christians believed themselves to be united with Christ in the Eucharist, and thereby prepared to be ‘types’ of Christ and expiatory sacrificial victims with him in their martyrdoms. For example, the Church Father Origen (184/5-253/4) argued that, just as Christ ‘has wiped out our sins by his death’, so ‘his sons, that is, the Apostles and martyrs, take away the sins of the saints’ by offering themselves as expiating sacrifices in martyrdom. Origen even goes so far as to fear that since currently,

the martyrdoms have ceased and the sacrifices of the saints are no longer being offered for our sins we may fail to win remission of our transgressions ... [The] devil, knowing that remission of sins comes through the suffering of martyrdom, does not wish to stir up against us the public persecutions of the Gentiles.⁸⁰

Martyrdom was seen as highly desirable, bringing great spiritual benefits for the martyr and their community. Thus, pious early Christians longed to die a martyrs’ death: ‘If I have ever given the appearance of any good on account of my God, whom I love, I ask him to grant this to me, that I should pour out my blood for his name among the converts and captives’, prayed St

⁷⁸ In c.107-110 Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to be martyred in Rome, wrote a series of letters expressing his desire for and understanding of the function of martyrdom, and expounding the Christian faith more generally. James Stevenson (ed.), *A New Eusebius: Documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD 337*, rev. by W.H.C. Frend rev. (London: SPCK, 1957), 12-17. Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred in c.155/156; shortly afterwards a text was circulated which was addressed to the Christian community, and intended to provide for them ‘an account of the martyrs and of the blessed Polycarp’. Stevenson, *New Eusebius*, 23-30.

⁷⁹ The earliest text in which ‘martyr’ is used in the modern sense is *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, written between the second-half of the second century and first-half of the third century. See Klawiter, “Living Water”, 565.

⁸⁰ Origen, *Hom. in Numeros*, in *Christian Fathers: a selection from the writings of the Fathers from St Clement of Rome to St Athanasius*, trans. and ed. by Henry Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; first ed. 1956), 10.2, 222.

Patrick, the fifth-century missionary to Ireland.⁸¹ Indeed, controversy emerged over whether soliciting martyrdom by deliberately putting oneself in dangerous situations was, in fact, suicide rather than martyrdom. Some writers, such as Tertullian, did not see suicidal martyrdom as sinful, but others such as St Clement of Alexandria and Augustine did. The argument was gradually won by the latter school of thought, and pious Christians were henceforth obliged to tread a tightrope between desiring martyrdom, but not committing a sin by deliberately courting death.⁸² Martyrdom thus came to be seen as a gift from God, rather than as something actively sought.

The rhetoric of martyrdom in the early Church developed within a context of intermittent conflict, not only between Christians and pagans but also between different Christian groups. In the fifth century, the Christian Roman state persecuted the heretical Donatists; in response, the Donatists called themselves the 'Church of the Martyrs'. The sufferings of the Donatists won them sympathy, and Christian apologists had to strive to combat the apologetical power of the Donatist martyrdoms. Again and again, Augustine repeated that it was not the punishment but the cause ('non poena sed causa') that made a martyr: however much a heretic suffered, they were only a pseudo-martyr, if they were not dying for the true faith. In this, Augustine built upon older foundations; earlier writers had made similar points, albeit with less polished rhetoric.⁸³ St Cyprian had denied that schismatics were true martyrs, arguing that even if schismatics died for their Christian faith at the hands of non-Christians, they would still not be true martyrs and not attain baptism in blood: 'It is not possible for one who is not in the Church to be a martyr.'⁸⁴ Over the first five centuries, the definition of a true martyr became more tightly delineated. The martyr was not simply one who died for their Christian

⁸¹ Cited in Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 175.

⁸² Joyce Salisbury, *The Blood of Martyrs: Unintended consequences of ancient violence* (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), 190, 195-200.

⁸³ Adam Ployd 'Non Poena sed Causa: Augustine's anti-Donatist rhetoric of martyrdom,' *Augustinian Studies*, 49:1 (2018), 25-44.

⁸⁴ Cyprian, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate* 14, cited and discussed in Ployd, 'Non Poena'. See also Allen Brent, 'Cyprian's Reconstruction of the Martyr Tradition', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53-2 (2002), 251-263.

faith, but also one who had not suicidally courted death, one who had voluntarily died when the only other option was to betray their faith, and one who died within the folds of the orthodox Church.

Constructions of martyrs' blood were rooted not only in the early Church's theology of martyrdom, but also in what we could call its theology of blood.⁸⁵ The blood of Christ was central to the theology and practice of the early Church: it underpinned the theologies of salvation, of the birth of the Church (from the blood and water which flowed from the spear wound in the crucified Christ's side), and of the sacraments of baptism, confession, and especially the Eucharist.⁸⁶ Edmund Fisher summarises thus the centrality of Christ's blood to the early-Church understandings of the Eucharist and salvation: 'the church united in its liturgy sees the blood-of-Christ poured out, in the Eucharist. This is the divine epiphany through which salvation is apprehended.'⁸⁷ It was through imitation of, and union with, Christ's blood that martyrs' blood could echo the sanctifying and expiating powers of the saviour's blood.

The theology of martyrs' blood also drew upon the Biblical theology of blood as the carrier of life. In the early Church, an association between life and blood continued. Some Christians did not eat blood because it was believed that the creature's life was in their blood.⁸⁸ Tertullian (c.160-c.240), one of the most influential early-Church theologians, stated that, while blood itself was not the soul or life, blood played the indispensable role of joining the flesh to

⁸⁵ When I use the term 'theology of blood' or 'theology of martyrs' blood', here and elsewhere, I mean a set of Christian beliefs or doctrines, grounded upon Scripture or tradition or both, which are sufficiently interconnected that they form a relatively coherent unit. We can thus – in this situation – refer to a 'theology of blood', or 'theology of martyrs' blood', just as we talk about a 'theology of martyrdom' or a 'theology of the Eucharist', or a 'theology of the body'. For the recent, wide-ranging scholarly use of the term 'theology' in this manner, see, *inter alia*: Jeremy H. Kidwell, *The Theology of Craft and the Craft of Work: From tabernacle to eucharist* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016); Lisa Coutras, *Tolkien's Theology of Beauty: Majesty, simplicity, and transcendence in Middle Earth* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Duane Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's challenge to the art of persuasion in ancient Corinth* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academia, 2015).

⁸⁶ Edmund W. Fisher, "'Let Us Look upon the Blood-of-Christ' (1 Clement 7:14)", *Vigiliae Christianae*, 34-3 (1980), 218-236, 218, 228, 231-4; Blake Leyerle, 'Blood is Seed', *The Journal of Religion*, 81-1 (2001), 26-48, 47; Dawn LaValle, 'Divine Breastfeeding: Milk, blood, and pneuma in Clement of Alexandria's Paedagogus', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 8-2 (2015) 322-336, 323.

⁸⁷ Fisher, "'Let us Look'", 235.

⁸⁸ Leyerle, 'Blood', 28-29.

the soul.⁸⁹ Thus, blood was a special bodily substance, highly spiritualised; for this reason, Christians especially focused on blood in their discussions of the salvific and expiatory powers of Christ's and martyrs' sacrifices. In Christian belief, the penalty for sin had been death, and the salvation that Christ brought was eternal life in heaven; salvation and expiation, at their heart, were about life versus death. Blood, of all of the parts of the body, was uniquely suited to encapsulate the belief that Christ's death and martyrs' deaths bought life, since 'the life of a creature is in the blood' (Lev 17:11). Thus, it was upon martyrs' *blood* that early Christians particularly focused when discussing the expiatory and salvific nature of martyrdom.

Depictions of martyrs' bloody and gory deaths, and references to martyrs' blood, are common in early-Church texts, especially martyrologies.⁹⁰ Due to the persecutions Christians faced, early-Church writings often presented the Church as a Church of martyrs, and martyrdom was frequently depicted through a rhetoric of blood. For example, in his commentary on Revelation, St Victorinus of Pettau portrayed the Church as 'the Church of the saints ... pouring out her blood for Christ'.⁹¹

In early-Church writings, martyrs' blood has several key qualities. First, martyrs' blood-shedding is part of their witness to the true faith. Just as Old and New Testament covenants were sealed with blood, so martyrs' witness is sealed with their blood.⁹² Secondly, martyrs' blood is a sacrifice which imitates Christ's blood sacrifice.⁹³ Christians are joined to Christ in the Eucharist: by consuming his body and blood, their bodies and blood are united with his. In partaking of Christ's sacrificed body, Christians are prepared to be sacrificial victims with him in

⁸⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁰ For example, the martyr Saturus, in *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, is 'so drenched with blood' that the crowd roars, 'Good bath! Good bath!' See Leyerle, 'Blood', 37.

⁹¹ Written in 260, popularised via Jerome's recension in 398. Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. by Robert Ernest Wallis, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds), *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1858-86), vol. 7, rev. and ed. for 'New Advent' by Kevin Knight, accessed at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0712.htm> on 05/05/2015.

⁹² Leyerle, 'Blood', 36.

⁹³ Klawiter, "'Living Water'".

martyrdom.⁹⁴ For example, Cyprian writes 'But how can we shed our blood for Christ, who blush to drink the blood of Christ?'⁹⁵ Cyprian describes martyrs as a 'type' of Christ ('types' being events, people, and statements that preceded or echoed Christ or elements of his mission).⁹⁶ This theology of martyrs' bodies and blood first being united with Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, and martyrs thereby being enabled to shed their blood and die for and with him in martyrdom, comes full circle in some texts where martyrdom itself is depicted as a Eucharistic offering.⁹⁷

Indeed, for Tertullian, blood and sacrifice are so critical to salvation that all salvation is brought about through blood sacrifice. Although some early Christians rejected the notion that God desired human blood, Tertullian affirmed it, pointing out that in the Bible all blood (whether of humans or animals) belongs to God. 'The more patent the repayment of this debt was, the more Christian the death; none therefore was better than the sacrifice of martyrdom.'⁹⁸ For those who cannot offer their blood to God in martyrdom, Tertullian writes, there are other ways in which they can offer their blood to God, such as fasting from food (offering up the 'succulence' of their blood) and from sexual activity, and other acts of asceticism.⁹⁹ Tertullian explains that God does not desire human blood from selfish motives, but rather because of his love for mankind and his longing for their salvation: only blood can cleanse from sin, and thus 'it is precisely because blood is the key to paradise that God yearns for it'.¹⁰⁰ Tertullian's theology was at the extreme end of early-Church thought; ultimately, he left orthodox Christianity and joined the Montanists, a heretical Christian sect. Nonetheless, his theology, including his

⁹⁴ Robert J. H. Mayes, 'The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Cyprian of Carthage', *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (2010), 307-324, 322.

⁹⁵ Cyprian, 'Epistle 62, To Caecilius, on the Sacrament of the Cup of the Lord', 15.35, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, accessed at orthodoxchurchfathers.com/fathers/anf05/anf0587.htm on 17/08/2017. For further discussion, see Mayes, 'The Lord's Supper', 321-322.

⁹⁶ Mayes, 'The Lord's Supper', 322.

⁹⁷ This is found in writers such as Ignatius of Antioch and St Irenaeus, and in the martyrology of Polycarp; see see Klawiter, "'Living water'", 567-68.

⁹⁸ Leyerle, 'Blood', 35.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40, 46.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

theology of martyrdom, was so influential that he is often seen as a founding father of Western Christianity.

Because, it was believed, martyrs' blood imitates and is united with Christ's blood, it echoes the functions of his blood: it purifies, expiates, and sanctifies.¹⁰¹ It does so for the martyrs themselves through 'baptism in blood'.¹⁰² The image of self-sacrificial death as a form of baptism is first used by Christ in the New Testament, referring to his own death: 'But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!'¹⁰³ The imagery of martyrdom as baptism in *blood*, and with overtones of cleansing, was developed in later writings. Everett Ferguson, a specialist on early-Church baptism, argues that it is Origen (184/185-253/254), 'that "walking concordance" of the early church', who developed this theology most clearly, and from whose writings later authors drew this understanding.¹⁰⁴ Origen presents martyrdom as either a first or a second baptism (depending on whether the individual has previously been baptized): '[The martyrs] being baptized in their own blood and washing away every stain at the altar in heaven.'¹⁰⁵ This viewpoint became widespread. For example, Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in c. 350:

For when the Saviour, in redeeming the world by His Cross, was pierced in the side, He shed forth blood and water; that men, living in times of peace, might be baptized in water, and, in times of persecution, in their own blood. For martyrdom also the Saviour is wont to call a baptism [Mark 10:38].¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ For example, Origen wrote that martyrdom relates to the sacrifice of Christ, and therefore martyrs' blood, like Christ's blood, has expiatory effectiveness; hence, martyrs were priests who offered themselves as sacrifices, and martyrdom remits sins. Decock, 'The Symbol', 164, note 17.

¹⁰² Leyerle, 'Blood', 37; Klawiter, "'Living water'", 572.

¹⁰³ Luke 12:50. See also Mark 10:37-39. On this as the basis for describing martyrdom as baptism, see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, theology, and liturgy in the first five centuries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 417.

¹⁰⁴ Everett Fergusson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 2: *Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 85-86.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 145 and 86. See also the discussion in Ferguson, *Baptism*, 417-19.

¹⁰⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 3: 'On Baptism'* (c.350), trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight, accessed at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310103.htm> on 12/11/2015, 10.

Martyrs' blood also has a communal impact, functioning as a sacrifice 'offered for the benefit of the community of the faithful.'¹⁰⁷ Origen, for example, compares how the priests who 'attended on the altar of sacrifice according to the law of Moses seemed to minister remission of sins by means of the blood of bulls and goats' with how 'the souls of those who have been executed for the witness of Jesus ... minister remission of sins to those who pray.'¹⁰⁸ He also compares the martyrs' sacrificial deaths and blood with Christ's:

we rejoice that as the high priest Jesus the Christ has offered the sacrifice of himself, the priests of whom he is high priest offer the sacrifices of themselves ... Perhaps also as we are bought 'by the precious blood of Jesus' ... so by the precious blood of the martyrs certain have been bought.¹⁰⁹

In many early-Church texts, martyrs' blood is represented as a material vessel and conduit of grace. It can transform souls and spirits by bringing people to faith, or by strengthening pre-existing faith. It can also perform miracles, transforming people's bodies, places, and objects. In some tales, it does both simultaneously. In the preface to his fourth-century account of the martyrdom of St Christopher, St Ambrose discusses how the saint's blood, mixed with earth, healed the sight of the martyr's persecutor and brought him to faith: 'one arrow struck the executioner in the eye, and the blessed martyr's blood mixed with earth restored his sight and by removing the body's blindness also illuminated his mind'.¹¹⁰ Since the

¹⁰⁷ Salisbury, *The Blood*, 138, drawing on, 'The martyrdom of Polycarp' (Apostolic Fathers, *Early Christian Writings: the Apostolic Fathers*, trans. by Maxwell Staniforth, rev. by Andrew Louth [New York: Dorset, 1968], 160-161), and on Ignatius of Antioch's 'Epistle to the Romans', (ibid., 104). See also Salisbury, *The Blood*, 137-38, 140-41, 190; Leyerle, 'Blood', 40; Ferguson, *Baptism*, 419.

¹⁰⁸ Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium*, 30, in *Christian Fathers*, 223.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Consider also Origen's homily on Numbers, where he talks about animal sacrifices under the Old Testament law and compares Christ to the lamb sacrificed at Passover 'which purifies the people'. He writes: 'and if the lamb... is referred to the person of our Lord, it seems to follow that the other animals which are appointed to the same purpose of purification should be likewise referred to persons who through the merits of the purification of the blood of Christ confer some boon on the human race. It may well be that as our Lord and Saviour... bestowed remission of sins on the whole world, so also the blood of others, holy and righteous men... has been shed for the expiation, in some part, of the people.' Origen, *Hom. in Numeros*, 24.1, in *Christian Fathers*, 221.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend Readings on the saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 2 vols, vol. II, 14.

martyrs' blood was 'precious blood', a thriving cult of martyrs' blood relics developed.¹¹¹

Martyrs' blood was carefully collected by Christian witnesses; for example, at the beheading of Cyprian in 258, and at the torture of St Vincent in 304, Christians in the crowd collected their blood on linen cloths, to keep as relics.¹¹²

For some writers, martyrs' blood, as well as being connected with God's mercy, is also connected with God's just vengeance: martyrs' blood will be avenged, and unrepentant blood shedders punished.¹¹³ First and foremost among these are the forces of evil, who are described as bloody and bloodthirsty. For example, in Victorinus' commentary on Revelation, the devil is presented as, above all, not a tempter but a murderer.¹¹⁴ Victorinus explains that the dragon, representing the devil, is red because 'the result of his work gave him such a colour. For from the beginning (as the Lord says) he was a murderer'.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the beast, which is the right hand of the Antichrist and an agent of the devil, is described thus: 'his mouth armed for blood is his bidding, and a tongue which will proceed to nothing else than to the shedding of blood.'¹¹⁶

Considering that martyrs' blood was believed to witness to the true faith, to imitate Christ's blood sacrifice, and to be a vessel of grace, we can see why Tertullian described martyrs' blood as the seed of the Church.¹¹⁷ In full accordance with Biblical and (classical) medical ideas of blood relating to life and fertility, the early Christians saw martyrs' blood as a very fertile substance, which brought fresh life to the Church despite the death of some of her members.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Augustine stated that St. Laurence 'shed his precious blood for God': quoted in Salisbury, *The Blood*, 71. See also Salisbury's citation (*Ibid.*, 276) from Augustine's *City of God*.

¹¹² Salisbury, *The Blood*, 59-62.

¹¹³ Tertullian writes in *De Resurrectione* that, at the final judgement, 'flesh will be raised up in order that blood may be avenged'; in *Ad Scapulam*, that every state that is guilty of Christian blood will be punished; in *De idololatria*, that the day of the blood of destruction and sadness has been prepared: cited in Leyerle, 'Blood', 37.

¹¹⁴ One may consider that the two roles merge, given that being responsible for the damnation of another is described, in the Old and New Testaments, as being guilty of their blood. See, for example, Ezekiel 3:18-20; Acts 18:5-6, 20:25-7.

¹¹⁵ Victorinus, *Commentary*, 13:2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17:3.

¹¹⁷ 'Plures efficitur, quotiens metimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum': 'The more you harvest us, the more we yield: the blood of Christians is seed' [my translation]: Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, ed. by T.R. Glover (London; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931), 50.13 accessed at <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:stoa0275.stoa.perseus-lat1:11> on 29/09/2017.

¹¹⁸ Leyerle, 'Blood', 45, 47.

The fact that martyrs' blood was depicted as the seed of the Church both reflects the multitude of important functions it was believed to play, and alerts us to the thriving cult which arose around it.

Blood and Martyrdom in the Medieval West

Over the next six-hundred years, in Western Europe, martyrs' blood gradually declined somewhat in importance, as martyrdom for the faith became less common. Increasingly (and especially since monasticism grew and flourished in this period), saints were those who had died to the flesh in their ascetic struggle to live Christ-like lives, rather than those killed for their Christian beliefs. When martyrdom did occur, martyrs' blood was still important, however, and textual depictions of martyrdom referred to holy and miraculous martyrs' blood. For example, in the Venerable Bede's eighth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, he described the blood of the fourth-century English martyr St Alban as having 'hallowed' the place where he had died, and, miraculously, still making the earth red, over a century later.¹¹⁹ He also described Alban's co-martyr as being baptized in his own martyr's blood.¹²⁰ Similarly, he depicted the blood of the seventh-century St Oswald as making the spot where he had been killed exceptionally 'green and beautiful', and related how 'earth from the place where Oswald's blood had been shed' worked miracles of remarkable preservation from fire and of healing.¹²¹ These are, however, the only references to martyrs' blood in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, since the vast majority of the history did not deal with martyrdom as contemporary martyrdoms had almost entirely ceased; almost all the saints Bede discussed were, instead, ascetic monastics (male and female).

¹¹⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. by Leo Shirley-Price, rev. by R. E. Latham (London: Penguin, 1990) [first ed. 1955], 53, 67.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 54.

¹²¹ Ibid, 159.

There were a small number of other cults of English martyrs' blood from this period, usually based around virgins who were murdered for their pious determination not to marry, such as St Winefride and St Arilda. It was believed that when Winefride was martyred in the seventh century, a spring had miraculously burst forth from where her head had fallen, and blood still covered the stones in the stream, and turned the water red on her feast day. Over the course of the medieval period, this pilgrimage site remained very popular and many healing miracles were attributed to it. There was a similar cult around the blood of the martyr Arilda (died circa the fifth or sixth century), at her holy well in Gloucestershire. It was believed that where Arilda was martyred the water still ran red with her blood; hence, this became another pilgrimage and miracle-working site.¹²² In sum, martyrdom became less common in Western Europe during the early medieval period, and thus discussions of martyrs' blood were not as central to Christian hagiographies and theology as they had been in the early Church; however, earlier beliefs about the nature and function of martyrs' blood continued, as did cults of it.

In the period c. 1100 – 1500, Latin Christendom was characterised by a preoccupation with blood. Peggy McCracken observes that in Western culture of this period blood 'seems to be everywhere.'¹²³ Likewise, Bynum presents medieval northern Europe as experiencing a 'great welling up of blood piety', evident in textual, literary, and iconographic sources.¹²⁴ She states that it was only during the 'later Middle Ages' that 'the bloodbath from an exsanguinated Christ moved to the centre of European piety' and claims that 'northern European devotional art and poetry seem awash in blood.'¹²⁵ This focus on blood encompassed two main themes: the centrality of Christ's blood to piety; and an increasing perception of bleeding, especially miraculous bleeding, as a form of accusation.

¹²² Jane Bradshaw, 'St Arilda of Oldbury on Severn, Gloucestershire' <people.bath.ac.uk/liskmj/living-spring/sourcearchive/ns5/ns5jb1.htm accessed on 28/08/2017>.

¹²³ McCracken, *The Curse*, ix.

¹²⁴ Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 5, 3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

Bynum's *Wonderful Blood* demonstrates the central importance of Christ's blood in medieval piety and devotion, especially in northern Europe in the later middle ages. She observes that the imagery of Christ's blood in the popular fourteenth-century English treatise *Talkyng of the Love of God* was 'inconceivable in patristic texts', being 'homey and erotic' in nature. For example, the text states: 'I suck the blood from his feet ... I embrace and I kiss, as if I was mad. I roll and suck, I do not know how long.'¹²⁶ A focus on Christ's blood was seen not only in literature: 'blood erupted in iconography and vision as well.'¹²⁷ Moreover, this textual and artistic fixation on Christ's blood was mirrored by a preoccupation with his blood in devotional practice. For example, by the late fourteenth century, the faithful were encouraged in their private devotions to count the drops of blood Christ shed, and to use the number to calculate the prayers they should say for their sins and for those in purgatory.¹²⁸ The preoccupation with Christ's blood in late medieval northern Europe was also apparent in the increased frequency of a previously extremely rare miracle: the bread and wine of the Eucharist changing visibly into flesh and blood (or, similarly, the consecrated host bleeding).¹²⁹ All these elements, taken together, demonstrate that (Western) medieval Christianity was fixated on the blood of Christ. In devotional literature and practice, iconography, and miracles alike, Christ's blood had become a dominant and ubiquitous theme.

In addition to a particular focus on Christ's blood, there is another important characteristic of medieval blood piety - its increasing understanding of bleeding as accusation. Bynum writes that 'the blood piety of the fifteenth century never forgets the horror of bloodshed.'¹³⁰ The clergy were forbidden to shed blood, even in healing contexts such as surgery or leeching.¹³¹ The shedding of blood in churches was forbidden; they had to be purified if this rule was breached.¹³² Yet, by the late medieval period, the 'horror' of unrighteous bloodshed

¹²⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ For a more detailed discussion see Chapter Two of Bynum, *Christian Materiality*.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 180.

¹³¹ Ibid, 180.

¹³² Ibid, 181.

was increasingly answered by more blood: bleeding as accusation. Thus, when blood was shed in churches, the church walls could respond by bleeding. Likewise, corpses could bleed in the presence of their murderer – the phenomenon known as cruentation.¹³³ Bleeding as accusation did not only occur in response to bloodshed; it could also signal sin more generally. Relics could bleed in protest at being divided. Bleeding corpses could signal injustice: it was claimed that Thomas of Cantilupe's corpse bled because Archbishop Peckham had denied him justice. Mechtild of Magdeburg and Margaret of Cortona believed that the wounds of Christ would bleed until Judgement Day, to accuse sinners.¹³⁴ During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, bleeding hosts were often seen as a denunciation of sin.¹³⁵ Miraculous bleeding was increasingly focused on identifying the guilty.¹³⁶ Bynum identifies this treatment of blood as indicative of a wider shift in medieval piety, 'a tendency to move from love to blame.'¹³⁷ This is an important development to note, since it comes to fruition during the Protestant Reformation.

While the ubiquitous near-obsession with the blood of Christ had developed, the focus on martyrs' blood had declined, although not disappeared. Martyrs' blood continued to be venerated and depicted as a powerful, grace-filled substance; it also continued to be a common topic in some sub-genres of martyrology. However, in the most widely-read accounts of martyrdom (those in popular hagiographical compilations), martyrs' blood was not frequently referred to. Moreover, since martyrdoms of Catholics in Western Europe had almost entirely ceased, almost all the saints of this period were not martyrs, which meant that the connection between sanctity and martyrdom was weakened.

Martyrs' blood continued to be a focus of popular devotion. From the late fourteenth century, there were many reports of the relic of the early-Church martyr St Januarius' blood (in Naples) miraculously liquifying; the same miracle was also reported to happen with regards to

¹³³ Bettina Bildhauer, 'Medieval European Conceptions of Blood: Truth and human integrity', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, S1 (2013), 557-576, 562.

¹³⁴ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 181.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 183-84.

¹³⁶ Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 181-84.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 181.

the relic of the early-Church martyr St Panteleimon's blood (in Ravello).¹³⁸ In Britain, Winefride's Well (North Wales) remained a popular pilgrimage site, visited by Richard I and Henry V, among others, and Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, built a chapel beside the well.¹³⁹ Martyrs' blood relics were also listed among churches', abbeys', and cathedrals' relic collections; for example, the Collegiate Church of St Mary in Warwick possessed a relic of the stone upon which St George was believed to have shed his blood during his martyrdom.¹⁴⁰

Most importantly, for our purposes, there was a thriving cult of Thomas Becket's blood at Canterbury Cathedral from the twelfth century. After Becket's murder, at the instigation of Henry II, in 1170, he quickly became venerated as a martyr, and was canonised by Pope Alexander III in 1173. Almost as soon as Becket had died, local lay people dipped their fingers and other objects into his blood, and some collected it in vessels, creating blood relics.¹⁴¹ This cult of Becket's blood proliferated, as the monks collected what the people had left of Becket's blood, and soon began offering it mixed with water at his shrine.¹⁴² People from across northern Europe came on pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral to venerate Becket's shrine and to drink his diluted blood; pilgrims who had been to the shrine took away ampullas inscribed with 'AQUA THOMAE SANGUINE MIXTA' ('water mixed with the blood of Thomas').¹⁴³ Dozens of miracles attributed to this blood were recorded in Benedict of Peterborough's popular collection of Becket's miracles (composed c. 1171-3).¹⁴⁴ Some of these stories were recorded in the twelve stained-glass windows of Canterbury Cathedral's Trinity Chapel, where Becket's shrine was

¹³⁸ For further discussion of the miraculous liquefaction of Saint Januarius' blood, see Francesco Paolo de Ceglia, 'Thinking with the Saint: The miracle of Saint Januarius of Naples and science in early modern Europe', *Early Science and Medicine*, 19-2 (2014), 133-73.

¹³⁹ For discussion of this site (Holywell) during the medieval and early-modern periods, see Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), Chapter Six, 'Holywell and the Welsh Catholic Revival', 177-206.

¹⁴⁰ Clifford Davidson, 'Sacred Blood and the Late Medieval Stage', *Comparative Drama* 31-3 (1997), 436-458, 438.

¹⁴¹ Rachel Koopmans, '"Water Mixed with the Blood of Thomas": Contact relic manufacture pictured in Canterbury Cathedral's stained glass', *Journal of Medieval History*, 42-5 (2016), 535-558, 543, 544.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 537.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 537, 541, 543, 545.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 537, 545, 549, 553.

housed.¹⁴⁵ Both Benedict of Peterborough and the windows explicitly paralleled Becket's blood mixed with water with the Eucharistic mixture of Christ's blood and water.¹⁴⁶

In popular piety across medieval Europe we see, therefore, the endurance of early-Church beliefs that martyrs' blood was grace-filled and able to work miracles, and also that martyrs' blood was like Christ's blood and had parallels with the Eucharist. The cult of martyrs' blood even seems to have seeped onto the medieval stage to some degree: we possess only two Middle English saint plays, and neither concern martyrs, but fragmentary details relating to several others include a note in the Canterbury dramatic records indicating that leather bags of blood were used in the Thomas Becket pageant.¹⁴⁷

In popular hagiographical compilations, however, there were relatively few references to martyrs' blood. To understand more fully the reasons for the relative scarcity of references to martyrs' blood in medieval textual depictions of martyrdom, and the functions that such depictions did play when present, we shall examine three popular medieval hagiographies: Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, the anonymous *Speculum Sacerdotale*, and John Mirk's *Festial*.

The *Golden Legend* is a collection of saints' lives and of liturgical and doctrinal instruction. Written in the 1260s by the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine, it draws on a wide range of patristic and medieval sources. Over the course of the following two centuries, it was translated into almost every major European language, and was a significant source for hagiographic compilers across Europe. Eamon Duffy describes it as 'one of the most influential books of the later Middle Ages'.¹⁴⁸ Between 1470 and 1500, there were considerably more printings of the *Golden Legend* than of the Bible.¹⁴⁹ The *Golden Legend* was undeniably the most

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 537, 541, 550.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 537-8, 541, 543.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 442.

¹⁴⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, introd. by Eamon Duffy (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012) [First ed. 1993], xi.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., xi-xii.

popular and influential martyrology of the medieval period, and both Protestant and Catholic early-modern English martyrologies would draw upon and define themselves in relation to this work.¹⁵⁰

The *Speculum Sacerdotale* and Mirk's *Festial* are both late-medieval English collections of *Sermones de Tempore et de Sanctis*, and include a large collection of saints' lives.¹⁵¹ John Mirk's *Festial* was probably written in the late 1380s, while the *Speculum Sacerdotale* is a fifteenth-century compilation.¹⁵² Both draw heavily upon the *Golden Legend* in their recounting of saints' lives.¹⁵³ They are particularly important sources when considering the legacy for early-modern hagiography, since both were still circulating on the eve of the Reformation. Indeed, the *Festial* was the only sermon collection printed in England prior to the Reformation.¹⁵⁴ Susan Powell, in her recent preface to the work, describes the *Festial* as 'an early English best-seller'.¹⁵⁵ Even after the Reformation, although these works were no longer printed (the last edition of the *Festial* being in 1532), they continued to be read, as shown by the post-Reformation interventions and marginalia discussed by Powell.¹⁵⁶

Many of the saints whose lives appear in these collections are martyrs. Their sufferings and death are nearly always described, yet on inspection they often turn out to be surprisingly 'unbloody'. Of the ninety-six martyrological accounts in the *Golden Legend*, just twelve feature any details of martyrs' bleeding during their persecution or execution. This is comparable to two out of the twenty-five martyrological accounts in the *Speculum sacerdotale* and eight out of twenty-two in Mirk's *Festial*. Altogether then, out of the 143 martyrological accounts surveyed

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, *A&M*: 1563 edition: Book 5, 1133. 1570 edition: preface, 16; Book 1, 111; Book 2, 187; Book 8, 1157; Book 11, 1723. 1576 edition: preface, 16, Book 1, 92; Book 2, 154; Book 8, 981; Book 11, 1464. 1583 edition: Book 1, 92; Book 2, 153; Book 4, 361; Book 8, 1026; Book 9, 1419; Book 11, 1535.

¹⁵¹ *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. from British Museum MS. Additional 36791 by Edward Howell Weatherly (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), i.

¹⁵² John Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Susan Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-2011), vol. 1, xix; *Speculum Sacerdotale*, i.

¹⁵³ *Speculum sacerdotale*, xlv; Mirk, *Festial*, vol. 1, xix.

¹⁵⁴ Mirk, *Festial*, Powell, vol. 1, lv.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, lvi.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, xix, lvii-lix.

in the three works, just twenty-two feature martyrs bleeding at any point, i.e. just 15% of the accounts. This is perhaps a surprisingly small number, when one considers that almost every account describes the sufferings and deaths of the martyrs (often of multiple martyrs within one martyrological account). Eamon Duffy, in the preface to his 2012 edition of the *Golden Legend*, remarks on its 'apparent fascination ... with torture and execution.'¹⁵⁷ The *Speculum sacerdotale* and *Festial* are very similar to the *Golden Legend* in this respect, as one might expect since they are largely derivative works. Thus, it is striking that, despite the common historiographical perception of these martyrologies as gruesome in their details, and despite their frequent accounts of torture and execution, there are scarcely any descriptions of bloodshed during persecution. When martyrs' blood does feature, it is often portrayed as conveying grace, whether by working miracles or by being spiritually cleansing;¹⁵⁸ in this respect, the early-Church theology of martyrs' blood endured.

An examination of the hymns of martyrs of the medieval Catholic Church also reveals that medieval depictions of martyrdom were not routinely connected with blood. For example, the traditional medieval hymn at Lauds in the Common of Martyrs, 'Rex gloriose martyrum', does not refer to blood, nor does 'Salvete flores martyrum', the office hymn for Lauds on the feast of the Holy Innocents.¹⁵⁹ Even those medieval martyrs' hymns which do refer to martyrs' blood do not do so frequently: for example, the hymn 'Hic est vere martyr' has one line 'Qui pro Christi nomine sanguinem suum fundit' ('Who poured out his blood for Christ's name').¹⁶⁰ In short, the association of martyrdom with blood which had prevailed in the early Church seems to have diminished in prominence by the end of the medieval period.

There was, however, an important exception to the un-bloodiness of medieval (textual) descriptions of martyrdom. Crusading martyrology, probably informed by chivalric literature,

¹⁵⁷ de Voragine, *Golden Legend* (2012), xvii.

¹⁵⁸ This occurs in eleven of the martyrological accounts in the *Golden Legend*, none of those in the *Speculum Sacerdotale*, and three of those in the *Festial*.

¹⁵⁹ Cantus database <<http://cantusdatabase.org/node/387664>, accessed on 29/07/2015>;

<<http://cantusdatabase.org/node/387680> accessed on 29/07/2015>.

¹⁶⁰ <<http://cantusdatabase.org/id/003056>, accessed on 29/07/2015>.

retained a strong language of blood. Megan Cassidy-Welch has noted the prominence of blood in the Cistercian Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay's *Historia Albigensis* (1213-1218), an account of the Albigensian Crusade. Cassidy-Welch argues that blood plays a number of key roles in this crusading text, and one of these is that 'blood is central to the author's accounts of martyrdom during the crusade' as blood is 'a salvific fluid which destroys evil and creates martyrs.'¹⁶¹ Similarly, the martyrologies of the fifteenth-century Hussite Crusades were marked by a distinctively strong language of blood.¹⁶² For example, the Catholic poet Hans Rosenblüt wrote of the Catholic martyrs, after the defeat of the crusaders at Domažlice in 1431:

'May you enable us here below, exalted Lord
To die in the right faith ...
May you enable us to enjoy your innocent death
And the bloodshed of all the martyrs.'¹⁶³

Likewise, a language of blood was also frequently used to describe the martyrs' enemies, for example the Hussites writing of the 'bloody hands' of the crusaders, and the crusaders accusing the Hussites of 'shedding of the blood of Christians.'¹⁶⁴

The rhetoric of blood in the Albigensian and Hussite martyrologies is, very strongly, a rhetoric of bloody vengeance. The righteous crusaders of the Albigensian Crusade are depicted as pious, even holy, in their enduring bloodthirst. For example, the Count of Foix 'never lost his thirst for blood'.¹⁶⁵ The bloodshed was depicted as necessary to cleanse the region, just as the

¹⁶¹ Megan Cassidy-Welch, 'Images of Blood in the *Historia Albigensis* of Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay', *Journal of Religious History*, 35-4, (2011), 478-491, 497 and 478.

¹⁶² Thomas A. Fudge, "'More Glory than Blood': Murder and martyrdom in the Hussite crusades", in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 5, ed. by D. R. Holec and Z. V. David (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2004), 117-37. Fudge does not discuss this language of blood in his article, yet it is evident in the multitude of quotations embedded in his text that the Hussite martyrological writings frequently used a prominent rhetoric of blood to describe both the martyrs themselves and their enemies.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 122.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 128-29.

¹⁶⁵ Petri Vallium Sarnaii (Pierre de Vaux-de-Cernay), *Historia Albigensis*, ed. by P. Guébin and E.D. Lyon, 3 vols (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Age, H. Champion, 1939; first ed. 1930), vol. 1, 209, in Cassidy-Welch, 'Images of Blood', 487.

first crusaders saw the shedding of Muslim blood as cleansing Jerusalem of 'polluted' bodies.¹⁶⁶ The blood of the righteous calls out to be avenged by further bloodshed. Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, portrays the Count of Toulouse as responsible for Pierre de Castelnau's death, and claims that the martyr's blood could only be avenged by killing the Count of Toulouse. This divine vengeance is wrought: 'the Lord brought retribution and avenged the blood of his martyr' through the Albigensian Crusade and the demise of the Count.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, in the bloody Hussite martyrology the 'holy' combine a desire to shed their own blood with a desire for righteous violence. As Fudge describes it, 'when the crusaders marched into Bohemia, they rode as avenging angels.'¹⁶⁸ They had come in response to the shedding of Christian blood. The imperial Reichstag stated in 1427, 'In times past and even now you have been aware of the significant injury and desecration which Hussites and Czech heretics have with great malice caused ... through the shedding of the blood of Christians ...'¹⁶⁹ Thus, the Catholic leader Sigismund, it was reported, 'does not intend to stop [fighting] until he exterminates the evil completely or [until] he sheds his own blood even unto death.'¹⁷⁰ These are certainly not the passive martyrs of most Christian martyrologies.

This language is, therefore, very different from the rhetoric of blood in texts such as the *Golden Legend*, where a discourse of martyrs' blood being avenged by the blood of their enemies is extremely rare, and even depictions of martyrs' blood as calling down divine vengeance are infrequent. The difference can be partially explained by the fact that crusading martyrologies functioned as a polemic against current enemies, whereas hagiographical compilations were concerned with early-Church martyrs whose persecutors had long since disappeared and thus ceased to be a threat. However, the prominence of the coupled themes of blood and vengeance in medieval crusading martyrologies is so strong that two further explanations must be

¹⁶⁶ P. Cole, 'Christians, Muslims, and the "Liberation" of the Holy Land,' *The Catholic Historical Review*, 84-1 (1998), 4-5, in Cassidy-Welch, 'Images of Blood', 486, 488.

¹⁶⁷ Pierre de Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, vol. 2, 360, in Cassidy-Welch, 'Images of Blood', 489.

¹⁶⁸ Fudge, "More Glory than Blood", 127.

¹⁶⁹ DR 9:41-44 cited in *ibid*, 128.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 129.

adduced. First, these crusading texts are best seen in the context of the late medieval shift towards using blood as a signifier of blame rather than of love. Secondly, it is undeniable that crusading martyrologies drew on chivalric literature, as well as on traditional martyrology, and this may well explain their strong rhetoric of the righteous vengeance of blood through the shedding of more blood.

In addition, there may be one further, distinct reason for the vengeful bloody rhetoric of sources relating to the Hussite Crusade: the strongly apocalyptic mindset of both the Hussites and Catholics. Fudge argues that these crusades were perceived by both sides as an apocalyptic struggle, during the 'night of antichrist'.¹⁷¹ Therefore, it is possible that the bloody rhetoric of the Hussite crusading martyrologies is closely connected with apocalypticism, and may mark a shift towards a focus on martyrs' blood as an apocalyptic signifier. If so, these sources anticipate in significant ways the martyrological and apocalyptic rhetoric of blood characteristic of the Protestant Reformation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

While bleeding martyrs and bloody enemies were only a minor theme in many Catholic depictions of martyrdom, in heretical texts they occurred more frequently. The Hussites were not alone in seeing the Catholic Church and/or its clergy as bloody. Heretics across the medieval period tended to depict the Catholic Church as bloody, blood-shedding, or bloodthirsty. To take several from among many examples: John of Salisbury stated that the heretic Arnold of Brescia claimed that 'The pope himself was not what he professed to be – an apostolic man and shepherd of souls – but a man of blood who maintained his authority by fire and sword, a tormentor of churches and oppressor of the innocent, who did nothing in the world save gratify his lust and empty other men's coffers to fill his own.'¹⁷² Similarly, Monta of Cremona's *Summa* (c. 1241) against the Cathars claims that the Cathars believed that the beast and the woman in

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 131. The quotation 'night of antichrist' comes from a sermon preached on 19 April 1419 by Jan Želivský; Amedeo Molnár, ed. *Dochovaná kázání Jana Želivského z roku 1419* (Prague, 1953) 37, in *ibid*.

¹⁷² *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, trans. by Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 148.

Revelation are references to the Catholic Church and 'are applicable to the lord pope, who is the head of the Roman Church.' The woman 'drunk with the blood of the saints' (verse 6) is cited in the same connection: 'This symbol they attach to the Roman Church because it orders their death, for they believe that they are saints.'¹⁷³ This apocalyptic identification of Catholicism as the bloody anti-Church was found not only among the Cathars, but was also widespread among the (heretical) Beguins, according to the inquisitor Bernard Gui.

Also, thus informed, or rather deformed, by the doctrine which they draw from the commentary on the Apocalypse by the said Peter John, they say that the carnal Church, by which they mean the Roman Church (not merely Rome herself, but the whole area of the Roman jurisdiction), is that Babylon, the great harlot, of which John speaks in the Apocalypse. Of her they set forth and explain the evils one reads about in that book, to wit, that she is drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus Christ – the blood, they explain, of those four Friars Minor who were condemned and burned at Marseille as heretics, the blood of the Beguins of the third order who in years past were condemned as heretics in the province of Narbonne, as we have recounted more fully above. These, they assert, were martyrs of Jesus Christ They say, too, that the first Antichrist is the pope under whom will occur and, in their opinion, is now occurring the persecution and condemnation of their sect.¹⁷⁴

This medieval bloody, anti-Catholic rhetoric was part of a widespread, enduring, and increasingly apocalyptic construction of the Catholic Church as a blood-shedding and bloodthirsty Other. It was to be reflected in - and probably even an influence on - similar bloody and apocalyptic rhetoric in English Protestant martyrological polemic.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 328.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 432; 423-425. The Beguins were also known as the Poor Brethren of Penitence of the third order of St. Francis (a name they gave themselves).

Lollard writings in medieval England also used a similar rhetoric, and consistently embraced an apocalyptic worldview.¹⁷⁵ This includes depicting the clergy through the bloody imagery of Revelation and the apocalyptic prophecies of the Old Testament, for example seeing the ‘moon of blood’ in Revelation (6:12) and Joel (2:31) as representing the Catholic priests. One Lollard preacher expounded to his audience, ‘And that schal beo whan the moone, as Joel seid, “schal turne into blood.” Bi this moone mai be understonde prelates, curates, and alle thoo that han taken the order of presthode.’¹⁷⁶ There are, additionally, a number of other elements of their rhetoric of blood and of apocalypticism which are important to note, since we shall see that they too continued in some English Protestant writings. Lollard writings often associated the clergy with blood.¹⁷⁷ They sometimes used the word ‘blood’ to stand for sin. For example, a Lollard preacher explained, ‘the more part of the presthode thanne shal be turned into synful liyf, which is understonde bi ‘blood’ in mani places of Hooli Scripture.’¹⁷⁸ There was perhaps an association between blood and sin because both are strongly connected with death: blood with literal death, and sin with spiritual death. Lollard writings also equated bloodthirst and bloodguilt with avarice and starving the poor to death, claiming that God would wreak vengeance on the clergy for their blood shedding and bloodguilt.¹⁷⁹

And thanne God tellith the cause of al this and seith thus: “Forsothe, youre hondis ben ful of blood.” For thou shalt undirstonde here that tho ypocritis that robben Cristis chirche as it is seid bifore, and maken his peple to be in mysese and ouer greet nede ben mansleers ... The clergy han her handis bathd thus in the pore and nedi peplis blood, ben

¹⁷⁵ On Lollard apocalypticism, see Curtis V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in late medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

¹⁷⁶ ‘Sermon 2, Second Sunday in Advent: Luke 21:25-33’, 13-30, in *Lollard Sermons*, Gloria Cigman (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 21. See also, ‘Sermon 2...’, *ibid.*, 22-24.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Sermon 2...’, *ibid.*, 21-24, and ‘11a. An Optional Expansion to Sermon 11’ [‘Sermon 11. First Sunday in Lent. Matthew 4:1-11, 121-130], 131-148. Egerton sermon *Omnis plantacio*, in *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, Anne Hudson (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111-114.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Sermon 2’, *Lollard Sermons*, 22. See also ‘Sermon 2’, 23-24, and ‘Septuagesima Sunday. Matthew 20:1-16’, 80, 92, and ‘Sexagesima Sunday. Luke 8:5-15’, 97.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Sermon 11a’, *Lollard Sermons*, 134, and ‘Sermon 2’, 23.

riyt unable to be herd at God the Fdir, for thei stiren not God to merci but rather to venjaunce.¹⁸⁰

Finally, they saw the clergy as antichrist, either viewing Catholic primates as antichrist, or the papacy as antichrist and the clergy as his disciples.¹⁸¹

These medieval depictions of the Catholic Church fitted within a larger social context of depicting enemies and 'others' as bloody and bloodthirsty. In particular, Europe's Jews were often accused of a thirst for Christian blood, and were at times subject to torture, trials, and executions, where they were made to state they had kidnapped and killed young children in order to eat their flesh or drink their blood in pseudo-Eucharistic rites.¹⁸² Occasionally, heretical Christian groups were accused of similar behaviour.¹⁸³ Catholics at times also accused other Catholics of either literal blood drinking, or, more commonly, of metaphorical economic bloodthirst.¹⁸⁴ The thirteenth-century German text *Heilige Regel*, in criticising those who exploited the poor, stated, 'All those who gnaw on and exploit the poor and suck out their blood and who carry hatred in their hearts and betray their fellow Christians shall justly be gnawed by the hellish dragons hereafter'.¹⁸⁵ Most commonly, however, economic metaphors of bloodthirst

¹⁸⁰ Egerton Sermon, *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, 111-114.

¹⁸¹ Titus tract, *De oblatione iugis sacrificii*, 157-165, and editor's notes 303-304, in *Works of a Lollard Preacher*. Wycliffe, *Select English Works*, vol. 1 'Sermons on the Gospels for Sundays and Festivals', Sermon 83 'Misit Jesus duodecim discipulos - Matthew 10', 280-284, 283.

¹⁸² Biale, *Blood*, 2, 99-100, 112, 114. See also: R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); R. Po-chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a ritual murder trial* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992); Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (London: Yale University Press, 1999); Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, trans. with an introduction Miri Rubin (London: Penguin, 2014).

¹⁸³ What historians, including Hsia and Racaut, describe as a 'blood libel' applied to heretics and witches sometimes presents a questionable use of terminology. What is depicted does not always seem to be a 'blood libel', since the evidence cited often features no actual blood, but rather revolves around cannibalism and infanticide. Where heretical groups were accused of bloodthirst, it was comparable to the allegations of pseudo-eucharistic rites found in anti-Semitic blood libel. Hsia, *Trent*, 4; Hsia, *The Myth*, 10; Luc Racaut, 'Accusations of Infanticide on the Eve of the French Wars of Religion', in *Infanticide: Historical perspectives on child murder and concealment 1550-2000*, ed. by Mark Jackson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 18-34, *passim*.

¹⁸⁴ The chronicler of scandals, Stefano Infessura, recorded that the dying Pope Innocent VIII was given the blood of three small boys; the account probably implies that the Pope drank this unsuccessful medicine. No doubt, this tale was intended to depict Innocent VIII not as a 'servant of the servants of God', but as a horrifically corrupt 'other'. Infessura, *Diario*, 275-76, cited in Santing, "'For the Life'", 422.

¹⁸⁵ Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, 125.

were anti-Semitic in nature, for example Hans Folz (d. 1513) writing in 'Jüdischer Wucher' '[they] suck and milk the poor Christians' blood and sweat like blood-hounds'.¹⁸⁶ These accusations of metaphorical bloodthirst had exactly the same overtone as the accusations of literal bloodthirst – that of being outside the ranks of God's people.

Conclusion

The Old Testament affords very little place to the notion of martyrdom, and where it does occur it is not presented as a cause for celebration or emulation. The main exceptions appear in some of the deuterocanonical / apocryphal books, where martyrdom is depicted as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, which pleases God, pacifies his wrath, and leads him to be merciful. In the New Testament, in contrast, martyrdom is presented as form of death to be desired, and one which brings great rewards in the afterlife. The cause of this change lies in the belief that Christian martyrs both imitate and share in the sufferings and death of Christ. Their sufferings complete his, and are efficacious for the Church. Martyrdom, like Christ's death, is an expiatory and cleansing sacrifice.

While the Old Testament largely does not develop a theology of martyrdom, it does have a rich theology of blood. Blood contains the life force, atones for sin, seals covenants, and innocent bloodshed must be avenged with the blood of the murderer, or divine vengeance will follow. These constructions of blood are reaffirmed and developed in the New Testament. The blood most commonly referred to in the New Testament is Christ's blood, which is the fulfilment of animal blood sacrifices, bringing eternal atonement, salvation, sanctification, and giving Christians eternal life. Whereas innocent human blood was previously often depicted as calling for God's vengeance, Christ's is primarily depicted as calling for God's mercy. A full theology of martyrs' blood is not developed before the early Church. All that emerges indubitably about

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

martyrs' blood from the Old and New Testaments is that martyrdom is closely linked with blood, and that martyrs' blood can call for God's vengeance.

Due to the mass Christian martyrdoms in the early centuries of Christianity, early-Church texts very frequently discuss martyrdom, and references to martyrs' blood become common. In these early-Church texts, martyrs are portrayed as shedding their blood in witness to their Christian faith, and it is believed that martyrs' blood is a sacrifice which imitates and is united with Christ's blood sacrifice, mirroring the Eucharistic union of Christians' bodies and blood with Christ's sacrificed body and blood. Through this Eucharistic union, Christians are prepared to be victims with Christ in martyrdom. Early-Church texts also depict martyrs' blood as echoing the functions of Christ's blood – it purifies, expiates, and sanctifies. As a conduit of grace, martyrs' blood is able to bring people to faith, strengthen pre-existing faith, and perform miracles. Unsurprisingly, these beliefs gave rise to a thriving material cult of martyrs' blood relics.

These themes continued to be present in medieval Christianity, but with varying degrees of focus, not least because there were so few martyrdoms in medieval Western Europe. The period 1100-1500 in Latin Christendom was particularly characterised by a preoccupation with Christ's blood. There was also an increasing perception of bleeding, especially miraculous bleeding, as accusation. However, while the cult of Christ's blood was at its apogee, the focus on martyrs' blood had somewhat waned, although it continued to be venerated and an object of popular devotion. There was a perpetuation of the early-Church beliefs that martyrs' blood was grace-filled and thus able to work miracles, and that martyrs' blood was like Christ's blood and had parallels with the Eucharist. Martyrs' blood constituted an important theme in crusading martyrologies. In most other texts from this period, however, martyrs' blood is far less frequently mentioned than in early-Church texts, and in the most popular hagiographical compilations there is little focus on martyrs' blood.

In the Early Church, it was possible for many believers to achieve the ultimate spiritual cleansing and sanctification of baptism in their own blood, as martyrs. For most Western Christians, however, by 1100, this avenue of spiritual cleansing and self-sanctification was no longer open; thus, the focus shifted to other forms of soteriology. Medieval Christianity emphasised the importance of *imitatio Christi* as a means to salvation, but this was usually in the form of asceticism and spiritual discipline alone, rather than also through death for the faith.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the absence of a persecuting enemy was also arguably significant. In early-Church and crusading literature, depicting the bloody sufferings of the innocent clearly roused indignation in the reader against the 'persecuting other', and pity for the martyred innocent: it was a considerable polemic weapon. However, crusading martyrs never featured in the most popular hagiographies, such as the *Golden Legend* or John Mirk's *Festial*. In contrast, later medieval texts depicting Christ's Passion sought to lead the reader towards sympathising with him (which would also lead to soul-washing weeping), and towards feeling guilt and gratitude for the horrific wounds which God voluntarily endured for the reader's salvation. A discussion of martyrs' blood, however, could have served little function, since there was neither an opportunity for most Western Christians to imitate these martyrs' salvific bloodshed, nor was contemplation of martyrs' sufferings and deaths as spiritually beneficial as contemplation of Christ's sufferings and death. Thus, in many medieval writings, martyrs were primarily presented as bestowers of grace and healing, and as model Christians whose pious lives should be imitated, while the martyrs most commonly written about continued to be those of the early Church, whose cults were so well established.

Against this general trend, a rhetoric of bloody enemies and bleeding martyrs did appear in heretical texts. Most heretical groups saw the Catholic Church as bloody and antichristian, and some chose to identify themselves as the bleeding Church of the martyrs, persecuted by the bloody Church of the antichrist. This rhetoric had commonalities with a wider

¹⁸⁷ This *imitatio Christi* also involved an intense contemplation of Christ's sufferings, as prescribed, for example, in Thomas a Kempis's *Imitatio Christi* (c. 1418-1427).

social perception of outsiders or enemies as 'bloody', from the anti-Semitic blood libel to Lollard criticism of those who taxed the poor excessively.

Unsurprisingly, many of these Biblical, early-Church, and medieval ideas about martyrdom and blood endured into the early-modern period. This rich inheritance would shape Protestant and Catholic worldviews and perceptions of martyrdom, and offered a vast repository of stories, themes, motifs and inspiration for apologists and polemicists. Both confessions drew heavily upon this shared precedent; what made their writings and worldviews nonetheless so different was the particular strands on which they focused, and how they chose to weave them in order to respond to the concerns of their age.

Chapter Two: The Henrician Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood.

While the early-Church's preoccupation with martyrs' blood had subsided by the medieval period, this preoccupation re-emerged during the European Reformations. Confessional polemic became saturated with a rhetoric of martyrs' blood, and, once again, martyrology became the dominant genre of hagiography. Even in the first major English Protestant works, a rhetoric of martyrs' blood started to emerge. As Protestant theology developed, so did this rhetoric, encapsulating many key Protestant beliefs and polemic strategies. Drawing on the assertion of the French (Catholic) writer Michel de Montaigne, that 'Nostre contestation est verbale', Brian Cummings has presented the Reformations as, at heart, a 'quarrel over words'. Cummings argues that the 'English language became the carrier of a national religious culture.'¹ A close examination of the early-modern rhetoric of martyrs' blood reveals that the English language, in fact, became the carrier of *two* warring religious cultures, echoing the depiction by the Huguenot poet Agrippa d'Aubigne's of the French Catholic and Calvinist confessions as two twins fighting on the very body which bore them.² The Protestant and Catholic battle over right belief was also a battle over the meaning and ownership of words and of verbal imagery. By the close of the sixteenth century, part of this battle revolved around the meaning of martyrs' blood.

In English Protestant writings, this rhetoric of martyrs' blood came to play two major roles. First, it was a lynchpin of many significant developing theologies; secondly, it became a particularly effective medium through which to attack Catholic doctrine and practice. We have seen in Chapter One how blood lent itself to multivalent meanings in religious theologies and

¹ *Les Essais*, 1069, cited in Cummings, *The Literary Culture*, 15.

² Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, ed. by Frank Lestringant (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986) [Original ed. 1616], Book I, ll. 97-130.

practices, from the world of the Pentateuch to Western medieval Christianity. Protestant reformers in turn developed fresh modes of thinking about martyrs' blood; this is the focus of Chapters Two and Three.

This chapter explores the Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood during the reign of Henry VIII. It examines four particularly significant elements of this rhetoric: its depiction of bloody enemies, its apocalyptic overtones, its connection with Eucharistic theology, and its contextualisation within a broader Reformation shift in thinking about materiality. The chapter demonstrates how a focus on martyrs' blood illuminates the wider development of Protestant theologies and worldviews during the partial reformation of Henry's reign. We see the lack of homogeneity, but also the strong anti-Catholic sentiment which bound together English Protestant writings in this period. The analysis will draw on a set of texts which span the Henrician period, and offer particularly interesting and divergent insights into Protestant depictions of martyrs' blood. We shall examine the works of the early Henrician Protestants, such as William Tyndale's writings over the decade between his New Testament (1526) and his death (1536), and those of Tyndale's contemporaries such as William Roy and Jerome Barlowe's *Rede me and be nott wrothe* (1528), Simon Fish's *A Supplicacyon for the beggers* (1529), and Robert Barnes' two significantly different editions of his *A Supplication Unto the Most Gracyous Prince Kynge Henry The. VIII* (1531 and 1534). We shall compare and contrast these works with later Henrician Protestant writings, especially those penned during the turbulent 1540s, focusing on the writings of John Bale, but also looking at some by his contemporaries, such as Anne Askew, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, John Hooper, and William Turner. Protestant writings entered England from the early 1520s, and the pace sped up towards the middle of this decade.³ However, significant Protestant works, penned in English for Englishmen, are usually

³ Frank Manley, 'Letter to Bugenhagen', in Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius, and Clarence H. Miller (eds.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963-1977), vol. 7 *Letter to Bugenhagen. Supplication of Souls. Letter Against.*, xvii-lxiv, xvii-xxiv.

considered to have begun with Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. Tyndale thereby opened a floodgate and, as Catholic apologists recognised with alarm, English Protestant works multiplied - even prior to the break with Rome.⁴

It has long been recognised that Bale's writings marked a sea change in English Protestant depictions of martyrdom: over forty years ago, Leslie Fairfield argued that Bale was a 'water-shed figure' who shaped the genre of hagiography 'into a weapon for the protestant campaign in England'.⁵ Fairfield has demonstrated that much of John Foxe's theology and approach to martyrology in the *Acts and Monuments* followed Bale's precedent.⁶ Yet, until recently, Bale remained a somewhat neglected figure in English Reformation historiography, the leading role in discussions of English Reformation martyrology being accorded to Bale's protégé, Foxe.⁷ Recent studies have re-affirmed Bale's significance, especially Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman's work on Foxe, which demonstrates Bale's heavy influence, and Gretchen Minton's critical edition of Bale's *The Image of Both Churches*.⁸ This thesis follows in this vein, adding weight to the position that close consideration of Bale is important to understanding English Protestant constructions of martyrdom, and why blood came to play so significant a role in them.

Most Protestants during Henry VIII's reign probably held Eucharistic beliefs closer to Lutheranism than sacramentarianism, and Henry himself always insisted upon the real presence, and sporadically persecuted sacramentarians.⁹ Many of the leading Henrician Protestant apologists and polemicists, however, were sacramentarians. Those among them who

⁴ Germain Marc'hadour, 'Supplication of souls', in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963-1997), vol. 7, lxx-cxvii, lxxvii-lxxviii.

⁵ Fairfield, 'John Bale', 146.

⁶ Ibid, 160. For a recent, detailed study of Bale, see Oliver Wort, *John Bale and Religious Conversion in Reformation England* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

⁷ Wort's study of John Bale's conversion to Protestantism has taken a step towards redressing this relative neglect, as has Gretchen Minton's recent edition of *John Bale: The Image of Both Churches* (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2013).

⁸ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 38- 52, 61-63, 74-79, 86-87, 123-4, 150-151, 157-8., John Bale, *The Image*, Ed. Minton.

⁹ For further discussion, see Alec Ryrie, 'The Strange Death of Lutheran England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53-1 (2002), 64-92.

discussed or referred to martyrdom were almost all sacramentarians. This is perhaps not so surprising, given that the English Protestant martyrs were those executed by Henry (and sometimes for their Eucharistic beliefs), and therefore those most likely to want to discuss them were those who felt alienated from and persecuted by the regime. In fact, the balance between sacramentarians and Lutherans in Henrician discussions of martyrs' blood is so heavily weighted in favour of the former that it is difficult to find many examples of the latter; therefore, perforce, this chapter is weighted towards sacramentarianism, although it does also discuss English Lutheranism.

Bloody Enemies

One common rhetorical trope across Henrician Protestant texts is of the Catholic Church and the Catholic clergy as 'bloody'. We shall explore what this meant and why this rhetoric was used, looking first at the early Henrician Protestant rhetoric of the 1520s and 1530s, and then turning to the 1540s, especially the writings of Bale. In doing so, we shall analyse the political, economic and religious critiques of Church and State which underlay the Protestant rhetoric of 'bloody enemies'.

The focus of Protestant writings of the 1520s and 1530s was not so much on bleeding martyrs as on bloody enemies;¹⁰ indeed, they were concerned with all innocent blood shed by the Catholic Church. For example, in the opening salvo of their attack on Cardinal Wolsey, in *Rede Me* (1528), William Roy and Jerome Barlow mock his emblem, claiming that

'The sixe blouddy axes in a bare felde

Sheweth the cruelte of the red man.'¹¹

¹⁰ For the slow development of English Protestant martyrology, see Alec Ryrie, 'The Unsteady Beginnings of English Protestant Martyrology', in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe: An historical perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 52-66.

¹¹ William Roy and Jerome Barlowe, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, ed. by Edward Arber (London: E. Arber, 1871) [First ed. Strasburg, 1528], 20.

Roy and Barlowe are not concerned primarily with Protestant martyrs (indeed, there are not really any English ones at this stage), but rather with depicting Wolsey as a shedder of innocent blood in general. Tyndale uses similarly broad brushstrokes in *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528), alleging of the Catholic clergy that, 'There is no mischief whereof they are not the root, nor blood shed, but through their cause'.¹²

These early writings tended to draw on both of the common medieval rhetorics of bloody enemies. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the first of these rhetorics, found in heretical texts, was a depiction of the Catholic Church as bloody and bloodthirsty; the second was a wider one (not limited to heretical texts), of avarice or economic exploitation as bloodthirst, which was often, but not always, anti-Semitic in nature. Early English Protestant texts drew on both, in that they depict a bloody Catholic Church, which has an avaricious bloodthirst. Roy and Barlowe say of the Catholic bishops,

'They dryncke in gaye golden bolles/
The bloudde of poure simple soules/
Perisshynge for lacke of sustenance.'¹³

This imagery of avaricious bloodthirst appears more strongly in Simon Fish's *A supplication for the beggars*,¹⁴ a text which primarily complained about the amount of money the Church took from the people. A portion of the text uses powerful imagery of blood to describe the power which the Roman Catholic clergy, especially the mendicants, had held over England since the time of King John. Fish even invented a new English term to describe those who (metaphorically) thirsted for blood – 'bloodsuppers', from 'blood' combined with 'sup' (meaning

¹² Tyndale, William *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, in William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. by Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1848), 239.

¹³ Roy, William, and Barlowe, Jerome, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, ed. by Edward Arber (London: E. Arber, 1871), 60. And consider also: 'which as wolves and bely beastes/ Eatynge and drynkyng in their feastes/ The bloude of the pover commenalte.' Ibid., 97. This latter depiction of the bloodthirsty avaricious bishops shows the early presence in Reformation polemic of what came to be a favourite trope for both confessions: the bloodthirsty wolf.

¹⁴ Simon Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* (Antwerp: J. Graphaeus, 1529).

to dine on).¹⁵ This neologism captures the function of the language of blood in this text, having simultaneous economic, political, and apocalyptic overtones. In economic terms, the invented word 'bloodsupper' must be seen within the established medieval context of accusations of economic bloodthirst, discussed in the previous chapter. Depicting the avaricious clergy as 'bloodsuppers' echoes medieval rhetoric of avaricious 'bloodsuckers'.¹⁶

In addition to this economic context, the Protestant rhetoric of the bloody Catholic clergy often also had directly political overtones. Catholicism was portrayed as undermining stable governance due to its bloody and ambitious nature. This was, no doubt, partly an ingenious *apologia* by early Protestants. Luther's opponents had long depicted him and his ideas as a vehicle for unrest and sedition, and the chaos of the German Peasants' War added fuel to such fears.¹⁷ It is in this context that we can best understand Tyndale's protest that, 'it is the bloody doctrine of the pope which causeth disobedience, rebellion and insurrection: for he teacheth to fight and defend his traditions, and whatsoever he dreameth, with fire, water, and sword; and to disobey father, mother, master, lord, king, and emperor.'¹⁸ In the years following the Peasants' War, English Protestant texts flung the Catholic rhetoric of seditious Protestants back at them, as exemplified in Fish's vigorous retaliation. Fish's term 'bloodsupper' encompassed not only the clergy's economic power but also their political power, depicting both as destructive to England. Fish describes the country, since the time of King John, as standing 'tributary' 'not unto any kind temporall prince, but unto a cruell develisshe

¹⁵ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/blood-supper> accessed on 02/09/2015.
<http://findwords.info/term/blood-supper> accessed on 02/09/2015.

¹⁶ This rhetoric of economic exploitation as bloodthirst can also be seen as part of a wider early Protestant rhetoric of economic exploitation as cannibalism, when considered alongside the German *Totenfresser* works of the early 1520s. In 1521, Pamphilus Gegenbach published a poem called *Die Totenfresser* which depicted seven types of Catholic clergy as 'devourers of the dead' due to their avaricious exploitation of the purgatorial system; Niklaus Manuel expanded Gegenbach's poem into a play, which was first performed in 1523. For further discussion of *Totenfresser*, see Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The appeal of Protestantism to sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 95, 111-116.

¹⁷ See *Letter to Bugenhagen*, in More, *The Complete Works*, 321.

¹⁸ Tyndale, *Obedience*, 166.

bloudsupper.’¹⁹ At the end of the work, he presents a stark choice: either the Catholic clergy must be removed or the crown’s power will disappear. In Fish’s view, English history of the last centuries had been a gradual invasion of the ‘bloudsuppers’ (Catholic clergy) who would take England over completely if the present state of affairs continued: ‘And which of these, ii. Kingdoms suppose ye is like to overgroe the other ye to put the other clere out of memory? Truly the kingdome of the bloudsuppers for to theym is given daily out of your kingdome.’²⁰ The political danger of the bloodsuppers is not merely that they undermine secular governance by stealing control of the realm; they also undermine the peace of the realm, by orchestrating widespread murder. In other words, Fish accuses the bloodsuppers not only of taking over the kingdom, but of inducing kings particularly, as well as their subjects, to shed the blood of the people. He depicts the bloodsuppers as having manipulated the French king to turn against King John of England, and having brought John into such a condition of fear that he sacrificed his rights and ‘submitted himself unto them’; Fish emphasises that the result of the bloodsuppers having thus manipulated the two monarchs was the ‘shedding’ and ‘effusion’ ‘of the bloude of his [King John’s] people’.²¹ Even the people themselves could not resist the bloodsuppers, and so were implicated in their own blood-shedding.²² Hence, the Catholic clergy’s violent lust for power runs parallel with the eradication of the peace of the realm and the widespread loss of life.

Bale’s writings of the 1540s show both similarities and divergences from earlier English Protestant treatment of martyrs’ blood. Like earlier Henrician Protestant writers, Bale placed the spotlight more on the martyrs’ enemies than on the martyrs themselves. For example, in his commentary on Askew’s narrative, the majority of his comments attack Askew’s persecutors and opponents and Catholic beliefs, rather than emphasising Askew’s holy life, thus breaking

¹⁹ Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggers*, in *Four Supplications*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and J. Meadows Cowper (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1871), 1-13, 6.

²⁰ Fish, *A Supplicacyon* (1871 ed.), 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

away from the medieval mould of hagiographical writings.²³ It is striking that the only epithet Bale uses to describe martyrs' blood is 'innocent'.²⁴ This word is consistent with a focus on the martyrs' enemies, as it emphasises their culpability. At the end of Bale's commentary on Askew's examinations, he depicts her as a saint in heaven because she is washed in *Christ's* blood, whereas in traditional Christian theology of martyrdom martyrs are saints because they are also washed from all sins in their own holy martyrs' blood.²⁵

As in earlier Henrician writings, Bale focuses more upon the Catholic clergy than the laity. In his *Image*, he refers to the Roman Catholic Church as 'thys bloudie church', and maintains that the bloodthirsty nature of the Catholic clergy is even indicated by their scarlet clothing.²⁶ Likewise, in his *Examinations* he presents the clergy as bloodstained, and places this within the context of Lamentations 4.²⁷ By placing the contemporary persecution of the Protestants within this context, Bale suggests to the Biblically-literate early-modern Protestant reader that the Catholic Church is defiled with blood, and that true believers must eschew it. The parallel with Lamentations 4:13-16 equates the English Catholic clergy with ancient Israel's priesthood, whose defiling embrace of unrighteous blood shedding and idolatry made them 'polluted'. God's people are warned, 'Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not', and they flee and wander among the heathens. This is therefore a warning that Protestants should respond to the polluted nature of Catholicism by avoiding all Catholic rites and ceremonies. It may also be an implicit justification of Bale's exile on the continent (which perhaps looked like

²³ For example, compare Bale's text to John Mush's extensive focus on Margaret Clitherow's holy life and character, in *A True Report*.

²⁴ For all occurrences of 'innocent' blood, see Bale, *The Image* (1570 ed.), E2^r, L3^v, R4^r; Bale, *The Seconde Part of the Image* (1545 ed.), B6^v; *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. by Elaine V. Beilin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 41, 47, 152.

²⁵ Askew, *The Examinations*, 158. See the discussion of baptism in blood in Chapter One.

²⁶ Bale, *The Image* (ed. 1570), L8^{r-v}, I8^v.

²⁷ Askew *The Examinations*, 35. 'For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not to the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.' (KJV) *Lamentations* 4: 13-16.

cowardice in the face of Askew's and other Protestants' choice to remain in England despite the risk of persecution); Bale may be suggesting here that flight was an acceptable response to the defiling blood shedding by the English Catholic clergy, following the Biblical precedent of Israel's exile. If so, Bale goes further than earlier English Protestant writers, in defending his exile from England as not merely a pragmatic choice in the face of persecution, but a theologically-mandated departure from the pollution of unrighteous bloodshed and idolatry.²⁸

In both his *Image* and *Examinations*, Bale identified and attacked not only the Catholic clergy in general, but also specifically the individual persecutors of the martyrs.²⁹ He targeted those who played a leading role in the persecutions, particularly Bishop Bonner, whom he described as a 'bloudthurstie wolfe ...'³⁰ This image of 'bloody Bonner' became so well known that Bonner actually protested, during the Marian persecutions, that he was not blood-seeking and did not deserve such an epithet.³¹

Bale certainly goes further than earlier Henrician writers in his overt criticism of the Catholic princes and their government. Earlier writers depicted the lay governing powers as naïve and manipulated by the Catholic clergy into shedding innocent blood; critical descriptions of their moral nature and agency were muted. No doubt, Tyndale and others held out hope that Henry VIII would yet convert to Protestantism, especially leading up to and in the years after the break with Rome, where Henry rejected papal authority and closed down the monasteries, two elements of Catholicism particularly objectionable to Protestants. Indeed, some of the Protestant martyrs, such as Barnes and also briefly Frith, had their time in the sun of royal favour during the 1530s, as the king's religious leanings and policies fluctuated between

²⁸ Ryrie argues that exile was becoming 'an honourable tradition... within European Protestantism.' Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93.

²⁹ Askew, *The Examinations*, 5.

³⁰ Ibid., 41. Bale's particular targeting of Bonner may have been partly due to disappointed hopes, since in the 1530s Bonner had reformist sympathies, but over the 1540s became increasingly conservative. Ryrie, *The Gospel*, 214-18.

³¹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1323.

conservative and evangelical.³² However, during much of the 1540s, the conservative party at court were in the ascendancy, albeit precariously, and Henry VIII's religious policies tended in a more conservative direction. Moreover, it was more than a decade since the break with Rome, and the Protestantisation of England had still not occurred. Such thwarted evangelical hopes help to explain why Bale's criticism of unreformed rulers is stronger than that found in earlier English Protestant writings.³³ In his *Image*, Bale still depicts the clergy, rather than the princes, as the driving power behind the unrighteous exercise of power, but the princes themselves are innately 'wicked': 'the wicked rulers and Prynces of thys world perswaded, and set forward by these bloudie beastes, hath exercised all crueltie, fiercenesse, and tyrannie.'³⁴ He sees secular and clerical powers as 'both partners in the vengeance of God for innocent blood shedding.'³⁵ In his *Examinations*, Bale presents some of the Catholic figures in government as worse than Pilate: Pilate did not want to shed even one man's innocent blood, whereas Askew's tormentors – Wriothesley and Riche - 'insacyably' thirst to shed the blood of a multitude of leading English Protestants.³⁶

Bale's rhetoric moved away from the economic context which commonly lay behind many depictions of blood-guilty Catholic clergy in medieval and earlier Henrician writings. While he strongly criticised strongly members of the Henrician regime from a moral basis, in comparison to earlier Protestant writers he focused much less upon the (perceived) politico-economic dangers of Catholicism. In particular, he was less concerned to demonstrate that

³² 'Letter against Frith', in More, *The Complete Works*, vol. 7, cxviii-clix, cxxxix. See also, Corey D. Maas, *The Reformation and Robert Barnes: History, theology and polemic in early modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 2, 9, 23-27, 35-36, 55.

³³ For further discussions of the religious and political climate of the 1540s, see Ryrie *The Gospel*, especially 'Part I: The regime and the reformers' (13-89).

³⁴ Bale, *The Image* (ed. 1570), I8^v.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, R4^r.

³⁶ Askew, *The Examinations*, 152-53. (The latter passage is also worth noting because it explicitly demonstrates Bale's understanding and usage of blood as denoting pollution in *The Image*.) Earlier Henrician Protestant writings such as those of Tyndale did, of course, contain *ad hominem* attacks on Thomas More, but this was an exceptional circumstance as More was not only attempting to stamp out Protestantism through his powers as Lord Chancellor but was also the leading English Catholic apologist writing in, highly polemic, response to Protestant apologia. And even in these texts, the rhetoric of bloody enemies is concentrated on the Catholic clergy, rather than on More.

Catholicism undermines stable government, and that it has a damaging influence upon the wealth and stability of the state. This difference in focus was perhaps because he was not trying principally to persuade the king and the secular powers, as earlier Protestant authors almost certainly were.³⁷ Earlier texts had often treated the secular regime as a potential ally, and exhorted the king and his government to suppress the overbearing Catholic clergy – the bloody enemies of all good citizens. Bale, in contrast, explicitly condemned the persecutory regimes of the Church and state alike, often depicting them both as the bloody enemies of all true Christians. Since Bale was not concerned with persuading the regime, pragmatic political arguments were unnecessary, and his anti-Catholic rhetoric was almost entirely theologically based, and more theologically developed and coherent than that of earlier writers.

Bale's friend and fellow exile William Turner took a rather different approach, his writings of the 1540s often still using a rhetoric of bloody enemies and bleeding Protestants within the context of evil clerical counsellors and a good-hearted sovereign. This is best seen in his polemical exchange with Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. Gardiner, like Bonner, was a main target of anti-Catholic polemic, and commonly blamed for the persecutions and executions of English Protestants. Like Bonner, he was caricatured as the emblematic bloody and corrupt popish prelate.³⁸ Turner's *The Huntyng and Fyndyng Out of the Romishe Fox* (1543) argued that the authority and doctrines of the Pope (the Romish fox) have not really been driven from England, but rather the foxhounds (the bishops) have concealed and protected the fox and have instead turned on the hunters (the evangelical reformers).³⁹ Turner argues that many rites and doctrines in the English Church are still papal, not Biblical, in origin and nature.

³⁷ For example, Barnes had addressed both editions of his *Supplication* to Henry VIII. The hope of earlier English Protestant reformers is also illustrated by the exiled Tyndale praying for Henry VIII's conversion, even as he was executed for heresy in Germany. Todd Marquis, 'From Penance to Repentance: Themes of Forgiveness in the Early English Reformation', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 2016), 88.

³⁸ See Alec Ryrie, "'A Saynt in the Deuyls Name': Heroes and villains in the martyrdom of Robert Barnes', in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c. 1400-1700* (Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, New York: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 144-165, 156-165.

³⁹ W. Wraughton (W. Turner), *The Huntyng and Fyndyng Out of the Romishe Foxe Which More Than Seven Yeares Hath Been Hid Among the Bisshoppes of Engelonde* (Antwerp: 1543). The metaphorical setting of the text influenced Bale's [under the pseudonym Johan Harryson], *Yet a Course at the Romishe Foxe: A disclosynge or openynge* (Antwerp: 1543).

One proof of this, alleged Turner, is the English Protestant martyrs' blood that had been shed. In the elaborate allegory, the fox and his collaborators – the foxhounds – shed the blood of the hunters and of the innocent English people.⁴⁰ The Catholic clergy are reduced to the level of bloodthirsty vermin and out-of-control dogs, who shed the blood of innocent people.

Turner's imaginative polemic imagery here draws on the prevalent bloody anti-clerical rhetoric of Henrician Protestant polemic. It also continues the tradition of treating the secular regime as a potential ally, and exhorting the king and his government to suppress the overbearing Catholic clergy, who are the bloody enemies of the good people of England. Turner chooses to portray Henry VIII as unconscious of the conservative and Catholic legislation that (allegedly) Gardiner has passed in the king's name, and evidently hopes that his book will open the eyes of the king (who is assumed to be a good reformer at heart) to the Catholic religion still lurking in his realm. Gardiner's reply highlighted the implausibility of this portrayal of English politics and religion, and accused Turner himself of not really assenting to the royal supremacy (despite his claims to do so).⁴¹ Turner strove to protest his loyalty to the supremacy in his response: *The Rescuynge of the Romishe Fox*.⁴² He insisted on portraying the Church, not the State, as the bloodthirsty, evil enemy of Protestantism.⁴³ While Bale's *Image and Examinations* showed little interest in the traditional socio-political complaint rhetoric of evil governors and good kings, Turner laboured to wield it, despite the difficulties of reconciling it with his

⁴⁰ '[The fox ran] with all the spede that he myght in to the chirche and when the scolares [the evangelicals at Oxford and Cambridge] wold haue folowed hym in to the chirche the bisshoppes and prestes bet them out agayn and so cam the scolares bak agayn with blody pates and durst no more seke the fox in the chirche.' Turner, *The Huntyng and Fyndyng*, A3^v. 'If ye say that he is dryuen out of England I will not be leue you for I saw blode lately of hys sheddyng in London stretes... I here dayly both men and wymen complayng that by thys bestis meanes theyr children and frendes ar put to dethe'. Ibid, A4^v.

⁴¹ Stephen Gardiner, *The Examination of a Prowd Presumptuous Hunter* (circulated in manuscript, ?1544).

⁴² W. Wraughton [William Turner], *The Rescuynge of the Romishe Fox* ('Wincheste by me Hanse hit Prik' [Bonn: L. Mylius], 1545).

⁴³ For example, he accuses Gardiner of being 'a blood sekyng and aflateryng canoniste [rather] then a learned diuyn'. Turner, *The Rescuynge*, C2^r. He also implicitly parallels bloodthirstiness with Catholic priests' Eucharistic sacrifice: 'It appareth that ye wrote thys at after nown as ye ba a knyght of the garter man fully myndede to shed blood ouernyght that ye may drynk in the mornynge when ye ar a blood supplyng sacrificer.' Ibid, I4^r.

theological beliefs about the king's authority and with the politico-religious realities of the Henrician Church.⁴⁴

A comparable rhetoric is found in the writings of Bale and Turner's radical fellow-exile, John Hooper, who portrays all Catholics – but especially the clergy – as bloody, and as facing God's righteous apocalyptic wrath. For example, in his 1547 *An Answer unto my Lord of Wynchesters Book*, he says of those who pray to martyrs, that – *if* a martyr is able to hear a suppliant's prayers – the martyr's response is:

“Most holy and true God, when wilt thou revenge our blood upon them that be in the earth?” [Rev 6:10] Who shed their blood, but such idolaters as he that saith God's prayer unto saints? This martyr helpeth his clients well to God, and saith, “Lord, when wilt thou kill, and destroy all these idolaters that blaspheme thy name?”⁴⁵

Like the other writers we have discussed, he especially sees the clergy as blood-guilty, since they teach the people the Catholic faith. In the same work, he asserts that the ordinary people are unaware of what ‘a sacrament is, and how, and why’, i.e. they believe the Catholic rather than the sacramentarian position (which Hooper sees as the truth). He blames this ignorance on the clergy, and warns:

my lord [Winchester] with all the bishops and priests in England shall lament full sore their ignorancy, and their blood required at their hands, and yet the poor ignorant persons excused from the ire of God nothing the rather.⁴⁶

He makes exactly the same point in his 1550 *An Oversight, and Deliberacion upon the Holy Prophete Jonas*, stating that ‘the wrath of God’ is kindled against the Catholic clergy ‘by the

⁴⁴ For further discussion of Turner and Gardiner's conceptions of the royal supremacy in this exchange, and the difficulties for Turner of reconciling the supremacy with his theology (especially of *sola scriptura*), see Christopher J. Bradshaw, ‘Protestant Polemic and the Nature of Evangelical Dissent, 1538-1553’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of St Andrews, 1998).

⁴⁵ John Hooper, *An Answer unto my Lord of Wynchesters book*, in *Early Writings of John Hooper, D.D. Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, Martyr, 1555*, ed. for the Parker Society by the Rev. Samuel Carr (Cambridge: University Press, 1843), 208.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 220.

ignorance that the whole world is lapped in almost'. He claims that God warns these unfaithful pastors, "'I will require their [the laity's] blood at thy hand.'"⁴⁷

In sum, a rhetoric of bloody enemies was common in Henrician Protestant writings, and grew from medieval roots. It continued medieval heretical depictions of the Catholic Church as bloody and bloodthirsty. Especially in earlier Henrician Protestant texts, it often made economic and political, as well as theological, points. The economic imagery of bloodthirsty Catholic Church continued medieval rhetoric of avarice and exploitation as bloodthirst. The political imagery of a bloody Catholic Church was a return attack in the face of Catholic allegations that Protestantism was seditious; these Protestant texts responded by portraying Catholicism as undermining stable governance due to its bloody and ambitious nature. In the 1540s, Bale moved away from the practice of using the imagery of bloody enemies to frame economic and political points, instead deploying it almost entirely to make religious and theological arguments. While the rhetoric remained primarily anti-clerical throughout the Henrician period, in the 1540s there were more critiques of the secular regime through a rhetoric of bloody enemies than previously, and some even included polemic directed against the king himself.⁴⁸

Apocalyptic Martyrs' Blood

Protestant writers also perpetuated medieval heretical depictions of a bloody, antichristian Catholic Church. This rhetoric first appeared in English Protestant writings in the second half of the 1520s and continued throughout the rest of the century. As in the case of allegations of sedition and unrest discussed above, Protestant accusations that the Catholic Church was the Antichrist show Protestantism turning back on Catholicism the very same polemic rhetoric

⁴⁷ Hooper, *An Oversight, and Deliberacion upon the holy Prophete Jonas*, in *Early Writings of John Hooper*, 494.

⁴⁸ For example, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Anne Askew both portrayed Henry VIII as a bloody, apocalyptic tyrant, as discussed below.

which was initially used against Protestantism. In 1520, the Catholic polemicist Ambrosius Catharinus Politus was commissioned to write a defence of the Church against Luther. Catharinus' *Apologia* suggested that Luther was Antichrist. In furious response, in 1521, Luther branded the Roman Church as Antichrist. While it is extremely likely that English Protestant writers, and indeed Luther himself, were influenced by medieval heretical rhetoric of a bloody antichristian Catholic Church, it is also very likely that English writers were additionally influenced by Luther's use of this rhetoric.

A pronounced apocalyptic colouring to discussions of martyrdom and the shedding of martyrs' blood first appeared in English texts during the late 1520s, in highly polemic works such as Roy's and Barlowe's *Rede Me* and Fish's *A Supplication*. By the 1540s, it was not only used by fervent Protestants, such as the martyr Anne Askew, but even by those less closely affiliated with Protestantism, such as Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.⁴⁹ A rhetoric of apocalyptical martyrs' blood was employed by John Bale from his early writings of the 1530s, but the frequency and depth of such rhetoric in his writings substantially increased from the mid-1540s, especially in his *Image* and his *Examinations*.

In 1528, in their satirical poem lamenting the imagined death of the Catholic mass, Roy and Barlowe depicted the whole Catholic clergy as 'under antichristis raygne' and willing to engage in bloody battle, and even to shed 'their owne hert bloude' to 'helpe masse agaynst the gospels'.⁵⁰ A similar image of a bloody antichristian Catholic Church was painted a year later in Fish's *A Supplication*. As we have seen, Fish depicted the Catholic clergy, especially the mendicants, as bloodsuckers responsible for draining the wealth of the kingdom and destroying life and peace. But this is not the full extent of the bloodsucker's evil designs and blood shedding: they are no less than apocalyptical agents of the devil. They are not merely guilty of shedding the blood of the people; England stands 'tributary' 'not unto any kind temporall prince,

⁴⁹ Ryrie says of Howard: 'the circle of young bloods around the poets Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the earl of Surrey, was characterised by an easy assumption of evangelical language and ideas without much in the way of deep religious commitment.' *The Gospel*, 10.

⁵⁰ Roy and Barlowe, *Rede Me*, 38.

but unto a cruell develisshe bloudsupper dronken in the bloude of the sayntes and marters of christ.⁵¹ The clergy are called bloodsuppers not only because of the innocent blood shed through their avarice and political machinations, but also because they make up the body of the Whore of Babylon, and, as such, delight in bloodshed for its own sake, especially that of the holy.⁵² Fish hereby identifies the Catholic Church as the antichristian Church, that sheds the blood of the martyrs.

Depictions of a bloody antichristian Catholic Church continued throughout the Henrician period, and the murderous and politically-unstable last decade of the Henrician regime perhaps made them all the more apt in the 1540s. The imprisoned Anne Askew, while awaiting her martyrdom, wrote a number of poems, as well as her famous accounts of her examinations at the hands of the Catholic clergy. These writings were all immortalised in John Bale's two-part edition of her examinations. Unlike Bale, Askew scarcely refers to martyrs' blood; but, on the sole occasion where Askew does mention it, the context is apocalyptic.⁵³ Askew describes the regime as governed by an unjust tyrant, manipulated by Satan, who sheds martyrs' blood:

I sawe a ryall trone

Where Justyce shuld have sytt

⁵¹ Fish, *A Supplicacyon* (1871 ed.), 6.

⁵² Fish here references Revelation 17:6: 'I saw that the woman [the Whore of Babylon] was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.'

⁵³ Considering the heated historiographical debate over the degree to which female martyrs are constructions of their male martyrologists, including whether Askew's portions of the *Examinations* are partially (or even fully) penned by Bale, we should note the insight afforded by analysing the *Examinations'* rhetoric of bloody enemies and martyrs' blood. Freeman and Wall, and Watt, for example, have argued that Askew's text may have been heavily edited by Bale. Freeman and Wall highlight Leslie Fairfield's point that Askew's text describes the Eucharist as 'a mutuall pertycypacyon', which was a phrase Bale often used. They argue that if Bale revised the phrasing of the text here, he may probably have made revisions and alterations elsewhere. But, if such an argument can be constructed upon this small phrase, an alternative argument can be constructed upon the (wider) rhetoric of blood: bloody enemies and martyrs' blood frequently appear throughout Bale's commentary (and his contemporaneous works); however, these topics appear only once in the sections by Askew - in a ballad which Bale reproduces after the prose of her second examination. If Askew's text is in fact partially Bale's because it bears one distinctive hallmark of Bale's style, then why does it not bear one of the most distinctive hallmarks of all, namely Bale's rhetoric of blood? See Thomas S. Freeman and Sarah E. Wall, 'Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The account of Anne Askew in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 1165-1197, 1166-70; Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God: Women prophets in late medieval and early modern England* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 94; Fairfield, 'John Bale', 158.

But in her stede was one
 Of modye cruell wytt.
 [...]
 Sathan in his excesse.
 Sucte up the gyltesesse bloude.
 Then thought I, Jesus lorde
 Whan thu shalt judge us all
 Harde is it to recorde
 On these men what wyll fall.⁵⁴

Askew was influenced by the poetry of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, which also employs imagery of apocalyptic martyrs' blood.⁵⁵ An example is his *A Satire on London, the Modern Babylon* of 1543. This poem has been seen by some scholars as playful satire, rather than serious spiritual commentary. Frederick Morgan, in his edition of Surrey's poetry, writes that 'this irrepressible young nobleman composed this waggish satire, in which he pretends that the city had become so lost in trespasses and sin that nothing short of such drastic means could arouse it to a sense of its spiritual condition.'⁵⁶ Susan Brigden's close examination of Surrey's religio-political stances in conjunction with his poetry, however, suggests that Surrey was not pretending.⁵⁷ Brigden writes that '[i]t is, above all, in Surrey's poetry that his religious beliefs become clear'; to read his poetry 'is to become convinced of his evangelical commitment.'⁵⁸ In *A Satire on London*, Surrey depicts London as on the verge of apocalyptic chaos, his language evoking the book of Revelation, especially 6:10.

⁵⁴ 'The Balade which Anne Askewe made and sange when she was in Newgate', in Askew, *The Examinations*, 150, lines 41-44, 47-52.

⁵⁵ Susan Brigden, 'Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and the "Conjured League"', *The Historical Journal*, 37-3 (1994), 507-537, 525; H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 243-44.

⁵⁶ Henry Howard, *A Satire on London, the Modern Babylon*, lines 54-68, in *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, ed. by Frederick Morgan Padelford (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1920), 190.

⁵⁷ Brigden, 'Henry Howard', 507-537.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 514.

The shopp of craft! the denne of ire!
 Thy dredfull dome drawes fast uppon;
 Thy martyres blood, by sword and fyre,
 In Heaven and earth for justice call.
 The Lord shall here their just desyre;
 The flame of wrath shall on them fall;
 With famyne and pest lamentable
 Stricken shall be thy lecheres all;
 Thy prowde towres and turretes hye,
 Enmyes to God, beat stone from stone;
 Thyne idolles burnt, that wrought iniquitie.
 When none thy ruyne shall bemone,
 But render unto the right wise Lord,
 That so hath judged Babylon,
 Immortall praise with one accord.

Surrey makes it clear that this dreadful fate will fall upon London because the blood of its Protestant martyrs calls for justice.⁵⁹

Although his evangelical commitment wavered by the second half of the 1540s, and he was suspected of returning to Catholic beliefs,⁶⁰ in one of his late works, a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes chapter III, he retained many references to the apocalyptic shedding of martyrs' blood. Referring, daringly, to the king himself, Surrey wrote: 'I saw a roiall throne wheras that Justice should have sitt; / In stede of whom I saw, with fyerce and crwell mode, / Wher Wrong

⁵⁹ Surrey is clearly referring to the Protestant martyrs here, since he speaks of those executed by 'fyre', which is not a concept found in Revelation, but rather a detail added by Surrey into his paraphrase. For further discussion of Surrey's evangelical beliefs and this poem, see also Ryrie, *The Gospel*, 207-10.

⁶⁰ Brigden, 'Henry Howard', 522.

was set, that bloody beast, that drounke the giltles blode.’⁶¹ This paraphrase heavily influenced Askew’s poem discussed above. Surrey’s continued use of this apocalyptic imagery of martyrs’ blood through the 1540s suggests that this element of the Protestant worldview had an appeal even to those who had a less stable relationship with Protestantism, in the last decade of Henry’s reign.

It is in John Bale’s writings of the mid-1540s that this imagery of apocalyptic martyrs’ blood was most fully developed and employed. Bale associated martyrs’ blood with the apocalypse even in his early works; for example, the one reference to martyrs’ blood in his ninety-three page play *The Three Laws* (1538) states that the innocent blood of saints calls to God for vengeance, an image drawn from Revelation.⁶² This imagery gradually proliferated and deepened in the mid-1540s, as Bale was working on his commentary on Revelation. For example, Bale’s *The Epistle Exhortatorye* of 1544 is an apocalyptic text, portraying the Catholic Church as the Church of Antichrist, and contains numerous references to martyrs’ blood.⁶³ In his 1545 commentary on Revelation, *The Image of Both Churches*, Bale developed his theological understanding of how martyrs’ blood is to be perceived within an apocalyptic context. He depicted the martyrs’ blood as both crying for God’s apocalyptic vengeance against the martyrs’ persecutors, and as a sign that that vengeance was approaching, and he eagerly anticipated the arrival of the bloody apocalypse.⁶⁴ In his next work, his martyrology of Anne Askew, printed in 1546-7, Bale applied this rhetoric more directly to the contemporary context of martyrdom and persecution, as he discussed the examinations and execution of Anne Askew and her fellow Protestant martyrs by a resurgent Catholic regime. His language was almost identical to that in

⁶¹ Cited in Brigden, ‘Henry Howard’, 525. This statement would have been clearly apocalyptic to the biblically-literate early-modern reader, as it featured the blood-drinking beast from Revelation.

⁶² John Bale, *The Three Laws*, Act V, l. 1774, in *Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 2, ed. by Peter Happé (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), 114. This is suggestive of the apocalyptic and vengeful bent of Bale’s notions of martyrdom and blood, even very early in his apologetic career. The work runs to ninety three pages in the c.1548 edition: *A Comedy concernynge the Three Lawes* (?Wesel: Nicholaum Bamburgensem [L. Dirik van Straten], 1538 [c.1548]), STC 1287. My thanks to Jan Tasker for drawing my attention to this reference.

⁶³ John Bale, *The Epistle Exhortatorye* (?Antwerp: 1544), A4^v, A5^r, A8^v, B1^v, B2^r, C3^r, C3^v, D3^r.

⁶⁴ John Bale, *The Image*: Part I [1570 ed.], L3^r, L5^r, D1^v, P6^r; Part 2 [1545 ed.], M6^r, O4^v, P2^r, P5^r, Q6^v.

his *Image*: a vengeful and apocalyptic polemic against the Catholic authorities, especially the clergy, directed particularly at eminent individuals such as Bishop Bonner.⁶⁵ While a Protestant rhetoric of apocalyptical martyrs' blood had been present in English Protestant writings since the 1520s, and would endure throughout the rest of the century, its apogee was arguably in these two works of Bale's – his *Image* and *Examinations* – where it was used extensively and functioned as a narrative tool for understanding past, present, and future events: the blood shedding of the Catholic Church exposed it as the Antichrist, and the blood of the martyrs (both medieval heretics and contemporary Protestants) which it had shed cried out for and witnessed to God's imminent vengeance (the end of the world).

The fact that Bale's only Biblical commentary was upon the book of Revelation in itself signals that, by 1545, he had become preoccupied with the notion of an imminent apocalypse. Throughout the work, Bale eagerly anticipates the apocalypse and the vengeance which will be wrought upon the Catholics. He sees this judgement as stemming from the cry of the martyrs' blood against their Catholic persecutors. For example, Bale's paraphrase of Revelation 6:9-10 is both passionate and merciless in its vindictive anticipation of divine vengeance:

their [the martyrs'] innocent death fercely asketh and requireth the great indignation, vengeance, and terrible judgement of GOD, uppon those tirauntes, lyke as dyd the bloude of Abell uppon that muther [sic.] Cayne ... And this is their daylye crye ... How long time wil it be ere thou judge them to dampnation? What yeares wilt thou take ere thou revenge our blood.⁶⁶

Bale's preoccupation with the apocalypse is confirmed by his language in his *Examinations*, writing, for example, of 'the bloudye remnaunt of Antichrist.'⁶⁷ While the *Image*

⁶⁵ To take one example from Bale's very frequent, derogatory depictions of Bonner, some of which portray him as bloody, bloodthirsty, or blood-guilty: he describes Bonner as 'thys Babylon Byshopp, or bloudthurstie wolfe', whose feet are swift 'in the effusion of innocent bloude' and who has fraud in his tongue, venom in his lips, and most cruel vengeance in his mouth. Askew, *The Examinations*, 41.

⁶⁶ Bale, *The Image* (1570 ed.), L3^r.

⁶⁷ Askew, *The Examinations*, 5.

was necessarily apocalyptic in tone, being a commentary on Revelation, the fact that Bale continued to employ a strongly apocalyptic language of blood, drawn from Revelation, in his *Examinations* shows that the intertwined themes of blood and the apocalypse (chiefly of St John) were dominating his thinking.⁶⁸ Bale's *Examinations* go further than his *Image* in that, in his *Examinations*, he frequently draws together many apocalyptic passages and images from different Biblical books in his apocalyptic rhetoric and theology.

A key element in Bale's *summum* of the Biblical image of the apocalypse is martyrs' blood. For example, Bale references Matthew 23, where Christ tells the Jewish religious leaders that upon them shall come the blood of all the righteous men shed upon the earth (23: 34-5) and therefore, he warns Jerusalem, 'Look, your house is left to you desolate' (23:38), and the apocalypse is coming (Matthew 24).⁶⁹ Bale combines this identification of the blood-guilty religious leaders in Matthew 23 with the apocalypse of Matthew 24 to produce an image (evoking Revelation 6:9-10) of blood-guilt bringing about God's vengeance through (apocalyptic) plague: 'But be sure of it, as hawtye as ye are now, the harde plage therof well be yours, whan the great vengeaunce shall fall for shedyng of innocentes bloude'.⁷⁰ It is notable that, as in his *Image*, it is the clergy specifically whom Bale depicts as the servants of Antichrist, for they parallel and execute Antichrist's deeds.⁷¹ Bale provides his most complete synthesis of the Biblical images of the apocalypse in the following passage, which draws together many of the Biblical prophecies of the Antichrist into a cogent picture of the Antichrist's defining characteristics, including his being inebriated with martyrs' blood:

Esaye prophecyenge the condycyons of the spirytual Antichrist, sayth amonge other, that he shulde holde men captyve in preson, Esaie 14. Ezechiel reporteth that he shuld churlyshlye checke, and in cruelte rule, Ezechie. 34. Zacharye sheweth that he shuld eate

⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁹ KJV.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁷¹ Bale, *The Image*: Part I [1570 ed.] J8^r-K1^r, N8^v-M1^r, P5^v-P6^r, R4^r; Part 2 [1545 ed.] O5^r, O4^v, P2^r, P5^r, Q6^r, Q8^v.

up the fleshe of the fattest, Zacharie 11. Daniel declareth that he shuld persecute with swerde and fyre. Daniel 11. And saynt Johan verefyeth that he shuld be all dronke with the bloude of the witnesses of Jesu, Apoca. 17. And therfor in these feates hys Byshoppes do but their kyndes.⁷²

In sum, Protestant writers perpetuated and developed medieval heretical depictions of a bloody antichristian Catholic Church. The Protestant rhetoric of apocalyptical martyrs' blood first appeared in English Protestant writings in the second half of the 1520s and continued throughout the rest of the sixteenth century. It is another case of Protestants turning back on Catholics an early anti-Protestant rhetoric. The rhetoric was most extensively used and developed by Bale in the mid-1540s. He presents Catholicism's persecutions and executions of medieval heretics and Reformation Protestants as exposing Catholicism to be the bloodthirsty persecutor of the true faith, and therefore the devil's antichristian institution that St John prophesied would appear in the Last Times. Bale understood the blood of the martyrs (medieval heretics and Reformation Protestants alike) to be both calling for God's vengeance and signposting that approaching vengeance which would be wrought through the apocalypse.

Eucharistic Theology and Martyrs' Blood

Why did Bale and other Henrician English Protestant apologists generally depict martyrs' blood as crying exclusively for vengeance, and not for mercy and redemption? We saw in Chapter One that orthodox Christians had previously often tended to see martyrs' blood as drawing down primarily God's mercy and redemption, and only secondarily his vengeance, in imitation of Christ's blood. Most English Protestant apologetical depictions of martyrs' blood moved away from this stance.

⁷² Askew, *The Examinations*, 138.

A strikingly similar description of the difference between Abel's blood and Christ's blood is found in the writings of William Tyndale and John Fisher; investigating this similarity helps us to understand why and how confessional notions of martyrs' blood nonetheless differed.

Tyndale was a sacramentarian Protestant and the most prolific English Protestant apologist and incisive English anti-Catholic polemicist of the 1520s and early 1530s. In the same period, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was one of the most active English Catholic apologists and a theologian of European renown, defending traditional religious beliefs against Tyndale and his fellow reformers. Yet, in their exposition of Hebrews 12:23-24, they are in concord.⁷³ They both contrast the blood of Abel, the first Biblical martyr, which they believe cries for vengeance, with the blood of Christ, which they believe cries for mercy.⁷⁴ Fisher writes:

The bloud of Abell cryed vengeance before almightie God. As almightie God sayd unto Caine in the booke of Genesis, *Sanguis Abelli fratris tui clamat ad me vindictam de terra.*

The bloude of thy brother Abell crieth vengeance in mine eares from the grounde where it is shead. But the moste precious bloude of a saviour Jesu Christ cryeth mercy for all sinners that doeth repent.⁷⁵

Tyndale had said something very similar, first in his 1526 New Testament, and later in his commentary on St John's gospel:

⁷³ 'You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.' See Chapter One for further discussion.

⁷⁴ The author of Hebrews does not elaborate on what exactly the blood of Abel said; and in the account in Genesis 4, it is not certain that the blood cries for vengeance. In fact, the only mention of vengeance is that anyone who killed *Cain* would suffer seven-fold vengeance. Yet, it must have become a common perception by the sixteenth century that what Abel's blood cried for was vengeance, as Fisher and Tyndale stand in no doubt upon this point.

⁷⁵ John Fisher, *A Spirituall Consolation, Written by John Fysshier Byshoppe of Rochester, to Hys Sister Elizabeth, at Suche Tyme as Hee Was Prisoner in the Tower of London* (London: W. Carter, 1578), 08^v. Fisher's Latin clause here is not a direct quotation from the Vulgate, but a paraphrase. If the paraphrase is Fisher's own, rather than a quotation from another work, it is telling that he remembers the passage in this fashion, as the Vulgate does not mention vengeance: God says, 'quid fecisti? vox sanguinis fratris tui clamat ad me de terra?' ['What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth?']

And the voice of the same blood [Christ's blood] that once cried, not for vengeance as Abel's, but for mercy only, and was heard, crieth now and ever, and is ever heard, as oft as we call unto remembrance with repenting faith, how that it was shed for our sins.⁷⁶

Thus far, the two confessional opponents stand in unity: the blood of the Old Testament protomartyr cries for vengeance, unlike Christ's blood. But, in traditional Christian thought, the lineage of martyrdom began again from the death of Christ. Indeed, the whole sacrificial and salvatory system began afresh, and as part of this, so did the nature and meaning of martyrdom. The blood of the Christian martyrs was not like the blood of Abel, but like the blood of Christ, the new Adam and the new model for martyrdom. Sacramentarian Christianity, in contrast, largely rejected this proposition. Their martyrs still imitated Christ's death in terms of outward form, but they rejected the notion that their martyrs' deaths could imitate the death of Christ in the sense of being sacrificial, sanctifying, and salvatory. Since blood was at the centre of the Biblical sacrificial system, this meant that in sacramentarian thought there was a complete dichotomy between the blood of Christ and the blood of their martyrs. From a sacramentarian perspective, the blood of Christ functioned like an Old Testament blood sacrifice, albeit with vastly amplified effects, while martyrs' blood functioned primarily in terms of the Old Testament notion of bloodguilt, demanding vengeance.

Behind these different confessional perspectives on the function of martyrdom lie differing confessional understandings of the Eucharist. The traditional position was that in consuming the literal body and blood of Christ, Christians became literal members of one body – Christ's body – and Christ physically dwelt in them, his body and blood being present in their body and blood, so that, in a sense, Christ's blood was shed at every martyrdom. While Christ's blood and martyrs' blood were, thus, similar in traditional Christian thought, sacramentarian Protestantism sharply divided the two. Christ's blood and martyrs' blood were both prominent themes in sacramentarian Protestant texts, but, while sacramentarians largely restated late

⁷⁶ Cited in Werrell, *Blood of Christ*, 124.

medieval theology of Christ's blood, for them martyrs' blood played the role Tyndale attributed to Abel's blood. In sacramentarian depictions, martyrs' blood possessed none of the qualities Tyndale attributed to Christ's blood.⁷⁷ Tyndale's description of the differing voices of Abel's blood and Christ's blood is the first reference to martyrs' blood in the English Protestant corpus. In this first and passing mention of martyrs' blood, we have an initial glimpse of the polarity that ensued, not only between Catholic (pre- and post-Reformation) and most Protestant mentalities, but between the blood of the Son of God and the blood of all other humans – no matter how faithfully they imitated and witnessed to Christ – within most Protestant writings. This cannot be divorced from the strong tendency of the English Protestant writers, even the earliest apologists such as Tyndale and Frith, to reject the notion of the literal presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist: this separated the bleeding martyr from Christ's body, and allowed Protestant writers to launch an assault on the traditional theology of martyrs' blood.⁷⁸

The sacramentarian Bale's blueprint Protestant martyrology of Anne Askew attacked the cult of the blood of England's most popular martyr, Thomas Becket. The Henrician regime, in its piecemeal assault on the cults of the saints and martyrs, had particularly focused on Thomas Becket, since he and his cult stood in ideological opposition to the royal supremacy; Becket had defied King Henry II in favour of the pope and been martyred for it, with the result that Becket had been extolled to highest heaven, while Henry II had had to undertake a penitential pilgrimage to Canterbury. Moreover, the uncomfortable parallels between Thomas Becket and his namesake Thomas More were probably too obvious for Becket's cult to be allowed to continue, as both were former Lord Chancellors, who were executed by their king for their defence of papal authority and therefore attracted a martyr's cult.⁷⁹ Thus, in choosing to attack Becket's cult, Bale was in step with royal sentiment, and in fact he had been involved in the 1538

⁷⁷ On the roles of Christ's blood, see Werrell, *The Blood*.

⁷⁸ See Tyndale's first letter to the imprisoned Frith, in Tyndale, *The Work*, 395.

⁷⁹ For further discussion of Becket's cult and its suppression, see Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 362-401.

attack on Becket's cult and the demolition of his shrine.⁸⁰ In Bale's edition of Anne Askew's examinations, the focus of his attack on Becket was specifically the popular cult of Becket's blood. There were cults of other British martyrs' blood, such as St Winefride, but none achieved the popularity of Becket's, and the Eucharistic comparisons were also particularly pronounced in Becket's case. By attacking the cult of Becket's blood, Bale could attack the cult of martyrs' blood more generally. In keeping with his sacramentarian theology, Bale emphasised that Christ's blood alone was salvific, and martyrs' blood shared none of its salvific qualities. He wrote mockingly:

'[Becket] was so gloryouse a martyr and precyouse advocate of theirs, that they made hys bloude equall with Christes bloude and desyred to clyme to heauen therby. Many wonderfull myracles coulde that mytred patrone of theirs do in those dayes, whan the monkes had fryre Bakons bokes and knewe the bestowyng of fryre Bongayes mystes but now he can do non at all.'⁸¹

This second sentence is a reference to the belief that Becket's blood could perform miracles, which are here attributed to demonic powers in an allusion to Roger Bacon (1214?-1249), a Franciscan suspected of heresy and necromancy.⁸² Thus, Bale reduces the traditional cult of Becket's salvific and supernatural blood to no more than a delusion and a hoax: not only is Becket's blood not salvific, unlike Christ's, but it does not even have any miraculous powers; rather the wonders it has performed are due to the devil.

Even within Protestantism, constructions of martyrs' blood were broadly confessionalised, reflecting the diversity of Eucharistic beliefs. Luther maintained that Christ's body and blood were physically present in the Eucharist, although he rejected Catholic

⁸⁰ Ibid., 366

⁸¹ See Askew, *The Examinations*, 80.

⁸² 'England's most important shrine after 1170, that of Thomas Becket at Canterbury, offered ampullae containing water, supposedly mixed with a drop of Becket's blood, and these were sometimes the conduit of miraculous healing.' Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, 441.

transubstantiation in favour of what scholars tend to term consubstantiation.⁸³ While Luther and many of his followers retained belief in the real presence, other influential Protestant theologians and their satellites developed sacramentarian beliefs. From the 1520s, Zwingli argued that the Eucharist was simply a memorial meal, and that the bread and wine signified Christ's body and blood symbolically. In the 1530s, Calvin developed the belief that Christ was spiritually but not physically present in the Eucharist.⁸⁴ English Protestantism contained various Eucharistic strands, but many prominent English Protestant apologists, even in the 1520s and early 1530s, already held sacramentarian beliefs. Between the Lutheran and Catholic beliefs in the real presence and the sacramentarian belief was a chasm that has been termed by Richard Marius 'the central article of the faith'.⁸⁵ As Richard Marius has argued, this belief affected how the body of every Christian, as well as all materiality, was perceived. If a Christian's body was not united in any fleshly sense with the body of Christ, but rather the union was merely spiritual, then a dualistic divide between the body and soul, between materiality and immateriality, was present, which denied that matter could be sanctified or play a role in conveying the Holy Spirit or grace.⁸⁶ Martyrs' bodies and blood could only ever imitate Christ's body and blood in a self-conscious commemoration, and were thus confined to witnessing, without being able to share in the functions and qualities of Christ's body and blood. In contrast, for those who believed in the real presence, martyrs' bodies and blood were physically united to Christ's body and blood, and through this union not only witnessed but also shared some of the same functions and qualities.

The Lutheran theology of martyrs' blood inhabited a middle ground between the Catholic and sacramentarian positions. The writings of Barnes provide some insight into Lutheran depictions of martyrs' blood. Barnes had such a fervent belief in the real presence that

⁸³ For further discussion see pp. 277-78 of this thesis.

⁸⁴ For further discussion see pp. 275-76 of *ibid.*

⁸⁵ 'Letter against Frith', in More, *The Complete Works*, vol. 7, cxviii-clix, cxxxvii.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, cxviii-clix, especially Marius's statement, 'In 1525, the same year that Tyndale published his English New Testament, Zwingli published his *De vera et falsa religione* commentaries, an influential compendium of his theology. Here he speaks much of the warfare of "flesh" and the soul, and in his Eucharistic doctrine in particular he seems to teach that body qua body is unworthy of containing Christ.'

Tyndale had warned Frith not to write anything denying the real presence or 'Barnes will be hot against you'.⁸⁷ Barnes' devotion to the real presence was related to his understanding of martyrdom. He depicted the removing of the Eucharistic cup from the laity at the Council of Constance as an act of Antichrist.⁸⁸ He took the medieval belief in Christ's complete exsanguination to extremes beyond those anticipated by Catholic proponents of this theory, claiming that because Christ's 'bloud was devyded from the body' at the crucifixion, the Eucharistic host contained only the body and the Eucharistic cup only the blood.⁸⁹ Building on this belief, he cited the Church Father Cyprian, 'Howe do we reache or howe can we provoke men to shed their bloud for the confession of christes name if we do deny them the bloud of Christ when they shalle go to batylle? Or how dare we able them unto the victordum of marterdum, if we do not first by right admit them to drink the Cuppe of oure lorde in the congregation.'⁹⁰ This point was clearly important to Barnes, as, at the end of his *A Supplication*, he has a table setting out 'the most notable saynges of doctoures and of the popes lawes' from which the reader is urged to judge if the Catholic Church is the Church of Christ or the devil's false Church, and this is one of the two sayings of Cyprian's listed.⁹¹ For Barnes, a believer could only be enabled to shed their blood for Christ's name by drinking Christ's blood in the Eucharist.⁹²

Barnes' rhetoric of martyrs' blood is less vengeful than that found in sacramentarian writings. The two versions of Barnes's *Supplication* contain several references to the blood of martyrs, but no references to martyrs' blood crying out for vengeance.⁹³ Moreover, although

⁸⁷ See Tyndale's first letter to the imprisoned Frith, in Tyndale, *The Work*, 394. For further discussion of Barnes' Eucharistic theology, see Maas, *The Reformation*, 50-57.

⁸⁸ Robert Barnes, *A Supplication Unto the Most Gracious Prince Kynge Henry the. VIII* (1531), in *A Critical Edition of Robert Barnes's A Supplication Unto the Most Gracious Prince Kynge Henry the. VIII*. 1534, ed. by Douglas H. Parker (Toronto: Buffalo, 2008), 643-5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 648-9. On the medieval belief in Christ's complete exsanguination, see Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 166.

⁹⁰ Barnes, *A Supplication* (1531), 651.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 681, 690.

⁹² Which automatically makes the Catholic martyrs false martyrs and the Lutheran martyrs true martyrs, since only the latter have shared in the Eucharistic blood of Christ, according to Barnes' theology.

⁹³ Barnes, *A Supplication* (1534), 146, 152.

Barnes discussed Antichrist and believed that he 'doth rayne in the worlde [yee and that under the name of Christ]', Barnes did not place martyrs' blood within an apocalyptic context.⁹⁴ For his sacramentarian contemporaries, martyrs' blood, like the blood of the innocent in the Old Testament, called for vengeance, and therefore it was a natural assumption that God would avenge the tide of martyrs' blood with an imminent apocalypse; this dimension is missing from Barnes' writing. Contrasting Barnes' depictions of martyrs' blood with those of his sacramentarian contemporaries thus offer an insight into the possible influence of Eucharistic theology on divergent constructions of martyrs' blood within Protestantism. It also suggests that the topic of martyrdom was perhaps not as much of an instrument of unity among English Protestants as scholars have often assumed.

While most Henrician English Protestants probably believed in the real presence in the Eucharist, many leading English Protestant apologists were sacramentarians, including almost all of those who discussed or mentioned martyrdom and martyr's blood. Therefore, to find evidence to support the argument that the difference between Barnes' construction of martyrs' blood and those of his sacramentarian contemporaries were due to their differing confessional sacramental beliefs we have to look a little beyond the confines of English Protestantism. The Lutheran Scottish theologian Alexander Alesius was in England between 1535 and 1539, and in 1537, at the request of Thomas Cromwell, debated with the Catholic Bishop of London John Stokesley over the nature of the sacraments. Alesius published his arguments in 1544.⁹⁵ In this anti-Catholic polemic, Alesius at one point strongly denounces the English Catholic clergy as debauched, murderers, and stained and defiled with the blood they had shed and with other sins.⁹⁶ He does not, however, depict the Protestants' blood as calling out for vengeance against

⁹⁴ Barnes, *A Supplication* (1531), 643.

⁹⁵ Alexander Alesius, *Of the Auctorite of the Word of God agaynst the Bisshop of London* (Strasbourg: W Köpfel, 1544?).

⁹⁶ 'These wordes be spoken unto the glotens and belly goddes of this last tyme, which for all the gret pretence and outward shewe that thei make of holines and say that thei murder men for the preservacyon of the true fayth and of the auctorycte of the church, yet thei declare evydently that thei denye the verte of holynesse seeing thei be spotted and shamefully defiled with blode, murder, whordome, disceyte' (ibid., sig. C7^r).

their persecutors, nor does he associate contemporary Protestant bloodshed with an impending, retributive apocalypse.

The impression we glimpse of a rather different Lutheran construction of martyr's blood in Barnes and Alesius' writings is reinforced when we look at the martyrological writings of Luther himself. Luther can emerge from his writings as a rather vindictive personality, exemplified by the remark attributed to him in his table talk: 'Whenever I pray, I pray for a curse upon Erasmus'.⁹⁷ It is therefore all the more striking that his depictions of martyrs' blood are not particularly vengeful. In 1525, Luther wrote a martyrological work 'The Burning of Brother Henry', about a Dutch Augustinian monk who was executed for Lutheran beliefs in Meldorf in 1522. In it, Luther states that one reason why he is writing is to urge his readers not to wish for God's vengeance upon Henry's persecutors, who have stained 'their hands so terribly with innocent blood', but rather 'to weep and lament for them' far more than for Henry himself, and 'to pray that not only they, but the whole land of Dithmarschen, may be converted and come to the knowledge of the truth'.⁹⁸ He also tells his readers 'not to speak ill of his [Henry's] murderers'.⁹⁹ He does state that God will 'punish the godless' but only 'if they do not repent'.¹⁰⁰ This is rather different from the sacramentarian depictions of bloody enemies which we have explored. Also different is Luther's confidence that 'the fruit of Henry's martyrdom' will be the conversion of his persecutors and the whole land in which he was martyred.¹⁰¹ For Luther, therefore, martyrdoms bring not so much God's vengeance and wrath as conversion and renewal of the faith.¹⁰² He echoes Tertullian's perception that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church', writing '... the more the godless spill blood the greater will become the

⁹⁷ Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. by William Hazlitt (Philadelphia: The London Publication Society, 1868), DCLXVIII.

⁹⁸ Martin Luther, 'The Burning of Brother Henry', trans. by A. Steinhäuser, revised by George Forell, in *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 36, *Career of the Reformer*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1955-86), 263-286, 268.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁰² Conversion and renewal of the faith are, in turn, believed to be achieved through God's grace, so perhaps Luther is even implying that martyrdom is a vessel of grace, as in Catholic thought.

number of believers and the smaller their own number.’¹⁰³ Luther portrays Henry’s blood as ‘precious’, and states that through it ‘God will accomplish much that is good and useful’.¹⁰⁴ He also depicts martyrs’ deaths as a sacrifice like the sacrifice of Christ himself: ‘John and Henry at Brussels, who were the first martyrs ... being sacrificed to God as a fragrant offering [Ephesians 5:2]’.¹⁰⁵ Luther’s language is similar in all these points to the Catholic rhetoric of martyrs’ blood (which we shall examine in Chapters Four and Five), and contrasts with the sacramentarian model.

Looking at these Lutheran writings together, we see that for Lutherans martyrs’ blood shared some but not all of the qualities of Christ’s blood. Lutherans did not believe that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was perpetuated in the Eucharist or martyrdom, stressing that Christ had died once for all time.¹⁰⁶ This meant that they did not see martyrdom as united with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, and so did not see it as expiatory or salvific. Indeed, this would have been repugnant to Lutherans, given their emphasis on salvation and expiation as being through Christ alone and not through the merits and intercessions of the saints. Luther did nonetheless see martyrs’ blood as a sacrifice, and paralleled it with Christ’s sacrifice. It is not clear, however, what exactly this sacrifice could achieve since it did not expiate nor save; perhaps its purpose was simply to please God. Lutherans also saw the believer as being physically united with Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist, and therefore it was in a sense Christ’s blood which was shed in every martyrdom; this point was emphasised by Barnes. Like Christ’s blood, martyrs’ blood was more associated with mercy than vengeance. Also, like Christ’s blood, in Luther’s writings martyrs’ blood was associated with converting unbelievers; Luther depicted it as a fruitful and precious substance that led to the growth of the Church. Since Luther rejected

¹⁰³ Luther, ‘The Burning’, 270.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 267. Ephesians 5:2: ‘and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Philip Melancthon, in his treatise against the Act of Six Articles, attacked the idea that the Eucharist was a sacrifice: Ryrie, *The Gospel*, 33.

the notion that the contemporary saints performed miracles, he did not see martyrs' blood as miraculous, but he did see it as wondrous.¹⁰⁷

We thus see how far reaching the impact of different confessional Eucharistic theologies was, even extending as far as confessionalised constructions of martyrdom.¹⁰⁸ In English Protestant writings, we can tease out two rather different confessional models of martyrs' blood, and thus of martyrdom. In traditional Christianity, martyrs' blood imitated Christ's blood in being sacrificial, sanctifying, and salvatory. Sacramentarian Christianity rejected this proposition. In sacramentarian Christianity, there existed a dichotomy between Christ's blood and martyrs' blood. Essentially, Christ's blood called primarily for mercy but martyrs' blood called primarily for vengeance. Many sacramentarians criticised the traditional (Catholic) position that martyrs' blood, through its unity with Christ's blood, possessed salvific, expiatory, and miraculous powers. Bale scornfully denied that Becket's blood possessed any such powers, and insinuated that any apparent miracles had been due to demonic sorcery. In contrast, Lutherans maintained a belief in the real presence. Thus, in the writings of the Lutheran Robert Barnes we see a somewhat different notion of martyrs' blood from that found in the writings of his sacramentarian contemporaries. He did not depict martyrs' blood as crying out for vengeance, and he also emphasised that it was essential for believers to be allowed to drink from the Eucharistic cup containing Christ's blood, in order for them to shed their blood for Christ's name in martyrdom. We thus see the probable impact of differing Protestant Eucharistic beliefs upon English Protestant understandings of martyrdom.

¹⁰⁷ Luther, 'The Burning', 286.

¹⁰⁸ For discussion of the divisiveness of differing Eucharistic beliefs among Henrician Protestants, see Ryrie, *The Gospel*, 138-145.

Confessional Theology and Materiality

Amid the various constructions of martyrs' blood in Henrician Protestant writings, one thing is surprisingly rare: 'real' martyrs' blood. These texts hardly ever depict martyrs actually bleeding during their persecutions. Why was this? The answer lies, once again, in the sacramental theology of early Protestantism, and by examining this question we come to understand better how the confessions' sacramental theologies impacted upon their perceptions of materiality and constructions of martyrdom.

Fish's *A Supplication*, as we have seen, often referred to blood, including martyrs' blood. Yet Fish does not depict any martyr bleeding during their persecution or death. He does not describe the deaths of any martyrs, and indeed barely separates his martyrs from a homogenous mass ('the bloude of the sayntes and marters of christ') into specific individuals. Of course, on one level, this owed something to the fact that almost no evangelicals had yet been martyred in England.¹⁰⁹ However, it was also arguably a product of the early Protestant reaction against the cult of saints. This typical lack of focus on individual martyrs in early English Protestant writings can be understood as a desire not to present detailed eulogistic depictions of individuals which could create a saint's cult around them. For these writers, martyrs function simply as cogs within the wider machinery of anti-Catholic apologetics, rather than as individuals in the spotlight. Nonetheless, this does not entirely solve the question of why Fish does not depict martyrs bleeding at their deaths, since Fish does refer (albeit very briefly) to the martyrdom of the Lollard Richard Hunne. When one considers the specifics of Hunne's case, Fish's depiction is surprisingly unbloody. Fish simply writes, 'Had not Richard hunne commenced accyon of premunire ageinst a prest he had bin yet a lyve and none heretik at all but an honest man.'¹¹⁰ Richard Hunne was found hanging dead in his prison cell, and, while the

¹⁰⁹ Three evangelicals had died at Cardinal College in Oxford the previous year (1528) from being imprisoned in the Dean's salt fish cellar, but no-one had yet been sentenced to death for their Protestant beliefs. Ryrie, *The Gospel*, 170.

¹¹⁰ Fish, *A Supplicacyon*, 9.

Catholic authorities attempted to present the death as suicide, Protestant writers were in no doubt that Hunne had been murdered for his anti-clerical attack on the Church and his Lollard leanings. Significantly, Hunne's body and cell were heavily bloodstained, so much so that the coroner's jury stated 'the great plenty of blood was shed before he was hanged.'¹¹¹ The case and its details were notorious, so it is unimaginable that Fish would have been unaware of the bloody nature of Hunne's death. A reference to this would have supported Fish's condemnation of the blood-shedding Catholic Church: why did Fish miss this opportunity?

The question becomes all the more perplexing when we consider Bale, who utilised a more traditional hagiographical framework. Bale was not afraid of his Protestant martyrs becoming the centre of a cult; rather, his response to the Catholic cult of saints was to adapt the model to Protestant sensibilities.¹¹² Bale's martyrology of Askew contained a heavy and thorough rhetoric of martyrs' blood; yet, the only depiction of the martyrs actually bleeding is one brief depiction of the bloodstained hands of Askew's torturers, Wriothesley and Rich, who 'racked her at the last with their own poluted bloudye tormentours handes, tyll the vaynes and synnowes brast [burst].'¹¹³ Bale's description of Askew's death is remarkably un-somatic:

Now to conclude with Anne Askewe as the argument of thys boke requyreth. In the yeare of our lord a M. D. XLVI And in the monthe of Julye, at the prodygyouse procurement of Antichristes furyouse remnaunt, Gardyner, Boner, and soch lyke, she suffered most cruell deathe in Smythfelde with her iii. faythfull companyons.¹¹⁴

In a text suffused with references to martyrs' blood, Bale seems surprisingly unwilling to depict martyrs actually bleeding during their deaths. Burning to death did, in fact, involve bleeding: Foxe would later give gruesome descriptions of blood and fat dripping out of the burning limbs.¹¹⁵ This absence of bloody descriptions of martyrs' deaths cannot be seen as a Protestant

¹¹¹ Cited in Richard Dale, 'Death at St Paul's', *History Today*, 64-12 (2014), 10-16, 12.

¹¹² Fairfield, 'John Bale', 145-60.

¹¹³ Askew, *The Examinations*, 153.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹¹⁵ E.g. the death of Hooper in *A&M*, 1563 edition, Book 5, 1131.

return to a Biblical precedent, since the martyrdoms in Macabees as well as Christ's death itself have depictions of physical bleeding.¹¹⁶

This question can best be approached by understanding how Eucharistic theology influenced the way Henrician sacramentarian writers conceptualised materiality, and thus the way they depicted martyrs' bodies. It seems that, for these writers, part of the move away from the traditional Catholic cult of saints and traditional Catholic theology included a rejection of the focus on the materiality of sainthood. This was a shift away from the very physical miracles performed by the saints in medieval hagiographies and martyrologies, and away from the medieval focus on the bodily performance of sanctity, including through martyrs' grisly deaths.¹¹⁷ In traditional hagiographical and martyrological accounts, miracles (supernatural physical manifestations of divine power) had been physical signs that demonstrated the holiness, piety, and right belief of an individual. John Foxe would later replace them with natural but striking physical manifestations of divine power, which served the same purpose in his martyrological accounts. Earlier sacramentarian writers, however, shied away even from wonders, and likewise from the very bodily and grisly depictions of martyrs' deaths that had been commonplace in traditional martyrological accounts.¹¹⁸ For example, compare Bale's depiction of the death of John Oldcastle to the depiction of the death of the early-Church martyr Vincent in the medieval *Golden Legend*:

And upon the daye appointed he [John Oldcastle] was brought out of the Tower with his armes bounde behynde him, havyng a verye cherefull countenaunce. Than was he layed upon an hardle, as though he had bene a most heyhouse traytour to the crowne, and so

¹¹⁶ 1 Macabees 7:17, 2 Macabees 14:45-46, John 19:34. Note that Oldcastle is compared to the Macabean martyrs: John Bale, *A Breve Chronycle concernynge the Examinacyon and Death of the Blessed of Christ Syr Johan Oldecastell the Lorde Cobham, Collected Together by Johan Bale* (London: Anthony Scoloker and Wyllam Seres, 1544), G7^r.

¹¹⁷ This earlier, bodily performance of sanctity must be seen as closely connected to the cult of relics.

¹¹⁸ I use here the term 'grisly' rather than 'gory' since 'gory' (from 'gore') refers to blood being shed. While martyrological accounts in popular medieval texts, like the *Golden Legend*, usually described the martyrs' brutal deaths in great detail, including bodies being broken dismembered and guts spilling out, references to bleeding were less common (cf. Chapter One).

drawne forth into saynct Gyles felde, where as they had set up a new payre of Galowes. As he was comen to the place of execucyon, and was taken from the hardle, he fell downed enoughtlye upon his knees, desyerynge almyghtye God to fogeve his enemyes. Than stode he up and beheld the multytude, exhortynge them in most godlye maner to folowe the lawes of God wrytten in the scripturs, and in anye wyse to be ware of soche teachers as they se contrarye to Christ in theyr conversacyon and lyvyng, with manye other specyall counsels. Than was he hanged up there by the myddle in cheanes of yron, and so consumed a lyve in the fyre, praysynge the name of God so longe as his lyfe lasted. In the ende he commended his sowle into the handes of God, and so departed hens most Christenlye, his bodye resolved into ashes.¹¹⁹

[By] the governor's command he [Vincent] was stretched on the rack and torn limb from limb ... the torturers drove iron hooks into the saint's sides so that the blood spurted from his whole body and the entrails hung out between the dislocated ribs ... So he was taken down from the rack and carried to a gridiron with a fire under it. The saint reproached the torturers for being too slow and hastened ahead of them toward the suffering that awaited him. Willingly mounting the grill, he was seared, singed, and roasted, and iron hooks and red-hot spikes were driven into his body. Wound was piled upon wound, and, as the flames spread, salt was thrown on the fire so that the hissing flames could make the wounds more painful. The weapons of torture tore past his joints and into his belly, so that the intestines spilled out from his body. Yet with all this he remained unmovable and, turning his eyes toward heaven, prayed to the Lord.¹²⁰

Admittedly, Bale had already necessarily relaxed the earlier move away from bodily depictions of the martyrs somewhat, by moving closer to the traditional *vita et passio* model of martyrology: it was impossible not to describe a martyr's body while depicting their sufferings

¹¹⁹ Bale, *Brefe Chronycle*, G1r.

¹²⁰ Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (1993), 105-106.

and death.¹²¹ However, there is still far less focus on the details of the bodily sufferings of Bale's martyrs than in medieval Catholic sources. This is best understood by considering Bale's Eucharistic theology within the spectrum of Protestant beliefs concerning the Eucharist, and their various implications for conceptions of the relationship between spirituality and materiality.

Lyndal Roper has stated that 'Protestants denied that divine forces could be captured in the physical ... The holy could not therefore be manifest in parts of the human body, a theological position which widened the gulf between things of the divine and matters of the flesh.'¹²² As Roper has come to recognise in more recent works, this was not true of Luther's theology: 'For Luther, there was no neat division between body and spirit';¹²³ yet, it summarises excellently Calvinist and Zwinglian conceptions of the relationship between spirituality and materiality. Luther's theology still had a relatively central focus on the interaction between spirituality and materiality, above all in his belief in the real presence. Consider Luther's description of the death of Brother Henry:

Now the fire would not burn no matter how often they tried to light it ... Finally they got a long ladder, to which they bound him very tightly in order to throw him into the fire ... Then somebody stood with one foot on his chest and tied him by his neck to a rung of the ladder so tightly that his mouth and nose began to bleed. He wanted to strangle him, since he saw that in spite of his many wounds he was unable to die. Then they raised him up by means of the ladder. Somebody set his halberd against the ladder to help in raising it; for the district has no hangman. The halberd slipped off the ladder and pierced the holy martyr of Christ through the middle. Then they threw him with the ladder on the pile of wood. But the ladder fell off on one side. Finally John Holm pushed forward,

¹²¹ Traditional Christian martyrologies contained a *vita* (the life of the martyr) and the *passio* (an account of their sufferings and death).

¹²² Roper, *Oedipus*, 173.

¹²³ Lyndal Roper, 'Martin Luther's Body: The 'stout doctor' and his biographers', *American Historical Review* 115-2 (2010), 350-84, 354.

took his mace, and struck Henry on the chest until he died, never to move again. Then they roasted him on the coals, for the wood refused to burn.¹²⁴

Luther's description is very similar to the wondrous and miraculous deaths of many martyrs in medieval Catholic hagiographies and martyrologies, in terms of how spectacularly resistant the martyr's body is to death. It also echoes the medieval Catholic focus on the bodily performance of sanctity through martyrs' gory deaths. Within Luther's belief that divine forces could be contained and displayed within matter, it is logical that Henry's sanctity is strongly attested by his own body.

In contrast, sacramentarian theology reveals a profound disconnect between spirituality and materiality. Zwingli's theology displays a radical dualism separating the spiritual from the physical realm. In his *De Vera et Falsa Religione Commentarius* (1525), Zwingli dwells at length on what he sees as a warfare between 'flesh' and the soul; Richard Marius says that Zwingli's Eucharistic theology in this work 'seems to teach that body *qua* body is unworthy of containing Christ.'¹²⁵ Elsewhere, Zwingli writes, 'unless we eat his flesh, that is, unless we believe that he underwent death and poured out his blood for us, we shall not attain life ... But is Christ in anybody physically? By no means ... It is faith, therefore, not eating about which Christ is speaking here.'¹²⁶ For Zwingli it was undoubtedly true that 'divine forces could [not] be captured in the physical' and the 'holy could not ... be manifest in parts of the human body'.¹²⁷

Calvin's theology was not far away from this position, as we see in his discussions of the Eucharist. Although Calvin's theology has been described as systematic, his Eucharistic theology is seen by some scholars as not so coherent and transparent.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, it is a clear and

¹²⁴ Luther, 'The Burning', 286.

¹²⁵ Referenced in prefatory material to 'Letter against Frith', in More, *The Complete Works*, vol. 7, cxviii-clix, cxxxviii-cxxxix.

¹²⁶ Ulrich Zwingli, 'Letter to Matthew Alber' (1524), cited in Owen F. Cummings, *Eucharistic Doctors: A theological history* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), 165.

¹²⁷ Roper, *Oedipus*, 173.

¹²⁸ Wim Janse has even gone so far as to say 'The existence of *the* eucharistic theology of Calvin is ... a fiction.' Wim Janse, 'Calvin's Eucharistic Theology', in *Calvinus Sacrarum Literarum Interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research*, ed. by H.J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

recurrent theme in Calvin's writings on the Eucharist that the believer's reception of Christ in the Eucharist is entirely spiritual, and he states emphatically that Christ's body and blood are not physically present, and thus are not consumed by the believer.¹²⁹ We also see this de-emphasising of the material in Calvin's understanding of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion. Calvin's understanding of Christ's body is largely a negative one. Christ had to take on flesh because the human body is the medium of sin and therefore the body has to be present in Christ's conquest of sin. Calvin also sees Christ's flesh as a veil which hides his divinity. Beyond this, Christ's body is of very secondary importance: Calvin does not focus on the details of Christ's bodily suffering on the cross, emphasising his psychological and spiritual pain more than his physical pain.¹³⁰ For Calvin, 'the body serves only as a container for Christ's divinity, it is only a mere stage in his victory over sin and death.'¹³¹ This captures Calvin's wider attitude to the relationship between the spiritual and the material. The materiality of the sacraments is simply a veil and memorial, they do not interact directly with believer's bodies, but are rather an entirely spiritual power working upon believer's spirits. Likewise, the believer's body is simply a container for their spirit, and a mirror of, rather than tool in, their salvation and

2008), 37-69, 37. It is possible that even Calvin himself, in his attempt to provide a *via media* between the memorialist position of Zwingli and the real presence position of Luther, was uncertain exactly how his theology of a spiritual but not a physical presence functioned, since he wrote: 'Nothing remains but to break forth in wonder at this mystery, which plainly neither the mind is able to conceive nor the tongue to express.' Ibid.

¹²⁹ E.g. 'We say that it is not the natural body of our Lord Jesus nor his natural blood which is given to us in his Holy Supper. We affirm that it is a spiritual communication, by which in virtue and power he makes us participant of all that we are able to receive of grace in his body and blood; or again, to declare better the dignity of this mystery, it is a spiritual communication by which he makes us truly participant of his body and his blood, but wholly spiritually, that is by the bond of his Spirit.' John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, trans. & ed. by J.K.S. Reid (London: SCM, 1954), 44. See also, in chapter 29 of Calvin's *Geneva Catechism* (which was a summary of his *Institutes*): 'The signs are the bread and wine, under which the Lord presents to us the true yet spiritual communication of his body and blood. This communication is content with the bread of his spirit, and does not require at all a presence of the flesh enclosed under the bread, or of the blood under the wine...' Cited in Boniface Meyer, 'Calvin's Eucharistic Doctrine: 1536-39', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 4-1 (1997), 47-65, 57.

¹³⁰ Jans Frans Van Dijkhuizen, 'Partakers of pain: religious meanings of pain in early modern England' in Jans Frans Van Dijkhuizen and Karl A. E. Enenkel (eds.), *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of physical pain in early modern culture* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 211.

¹³¹ Ibid.

damnation. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Calvin denies that the physical suffering of Christians, even in martyrdom, has any soteriological efficacy.¹³²

For these magisterial sacramentarian Protestants, therefore, materiality and even their own bodies were not media through which God's Holy Spirit and grace were conveyed, but closer to an irrelevance.¹³³ And worship was largely a non-physical connection with God.¹³⁴ In traditional Catholic martyrologies, materiality had contained, conveyed, and displayed the martyrs' holiness and membership of Christ's true Church, through miracles worked in and by their bodies and through their gory, extended sufferings in which they not merely imitated Christ's Passion but were united with it.¹³⁵ In Henrician sacramentarian writers' discussions of martyrdom, the almost entirely spiritual (and non-physical) nature of sanctity and of connection with God meant that the focus was much less on martyrs' bodies, and much more on the martyrs' faith as displayed through their words and their mentality. This is clear from comparing Bale's depiction of Oldcastle's martyrdom with the *Golden Legend's* depiction of St Vincent's martyrdom. There were, thus, scarcely any depictions of martyrs bleeding during their sufferings and deaths, despite the broader interest in martyrs' blood on the part of Bale and other writers: a disconnect had emerged between spirituality and materiality.

In his commentary on Askew's text, Bale, like Askew herself, repeatedly puts forth a sacramentarian interpretation of the Eucharist. At the beginning of his commentary, Bale argues firmly that the reception of Christ's body and blood must be a purely spiritual reception,

¹³² Ibid., 211.

¹³³ Calvin said of the sacraments that God 'condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements.' He writes: 'In this way he consults our weakness. If we were wholly spiritual, we might, like the angels, spiritually behold both him and his grace; but as we are surrounded with this body of clay, we need figures or mirrors to exhibit a view of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly manner; for we could not otherwise attain to them', in John Calvin, *Catechism of the Church in Geneva* (first ed. 1536-8, this ed. 1541-5), in *Treatise on the Sacraments, Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Forms of Prayer, and Confessions of Faith*, trans. and ed. by Henry Beveridge (Fearn: Christian Heritage, 2002) [First ed. Edinburgh: 1849], 84.

¹³⁴ 'Scripture itself also not only carefully recounts to us the ascension of Christ, by which he withdrew the presence of his body from our sight and company, to shake from us all carnal thinking of him, but also whenever it recalls him, bids our minds be raised up, and seek him in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father.' Cited in Meyer, 'Calvin's Eucharistic Doctrine', 55.

¹³⁵ See Chapter Three for further discussion.

dependent entirely on the communicant's faith, since when Judas ate the bread dipped in wine at the Last Supper, Satan then entered into him; he subsequently produces a multitude of arguments for a purely spiritual presence throughout the rest of the *Examinations*.¹³⁶ Bale repeatedly mocks the idea of the Eucharist being in a material manner the body and blood of Christ, for example expostulating 'Who ever redde in the scripture or autorysed Chronycle, that breade in a boxe shuld be Christes bodye?'¹³⁷ Bale's theology, in general, demonstrates the same disconnect between spirituality and materiality that is found in other sacramentarian writers.

However, Alexandra Walsham has cautioned, when examining the Protestant 'desacralization' of the world, that 'ambivalence and contradiction should not be regarded as anomalies but normalities, at the level of both theory and practice', and it would be too neat were we to conclude that Henrician Protestant sacramentarian writers, without exception, broke cleanly away from traditional Catholic hagiographical notions of materiality.¹³⁸ While erudite sacramentarian theologians such as Zwingli, Calvin, Tyndale, Hooper, and Bale demonstrated a general consistency between their de-materialised sacramental theology and a wider denial 'that divine forces could be captured in the physical', this jettisoning of the miraculous and sacred materiality was not consistently embraced by 'ordinary' Protestants. It is well-attested that, despite the official Protestant stance against relics, a considerable number of ordinary Protestants continued to try to collect relics of their martyrs.¹³⁹ Likewise, they continued to report the material world dramatically attesting to the sanctity of martyrs. At the very end of his *The Lattre Examinacyon*, Bale finally, briefly, gives way just a little to the popular mentality. In order to refute the Catholic claim that the appearance of dark clouds and a thunderclap during Askew's death signified her damnation, Bale reports that he has been

¹³⁶ Anne Askew and John Bale, *The First Examinacyon of Anne Askewe, with the Elucydacyon of J. Bale*, in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. by Elaine V. Beilin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) [First ed. Marburg: D. Van der Straten, 1546], 22-23. For a fuller explanation of why the reception is purely spiritual and not material see *ibid.*, 88-90.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48. See also *ibid.*, 27-29, 48-49, 100-104, 108, 110-115, 141.

¹³⁸ Walsham, 'The Reformation', 527; see also *ibid.*, 504 for her discussion of the term 'desacralization'.

¹³⁹ As satirised by the Marian Catholic polemicist Miles Huggarde in *The Displaying of the Protestantes, [and] Sondry their Practises, with a Description of Divers their Abuses of Late Frequented* (London: Robert Caly, 1556), 54^v-54^r.

‘Credyblye’ informed by ‘dyverse duche merchauntes’ (presumably Protestants) that these events did occur and ‘declared therein the hygh dyspleasure of God for so tyrannouse a murther also expreslye sygnyfed hys myghtye hande present to the confort of them whych trusted in hym, besydes the most wonderfull mutacyon which wyll within short space therupon folowe.’¹⁴⁰ Yet this lone wonder actually demonstrates Bale’s discomfort with the notion of contemporary divine manifestations in materiality. In narrative terms, he lets the merchants describe what they have seen and how they interpret it, and confines himself to a lengthy, Biblically-based criticism of ignorant Catholics who think that thunder is a sign of damnation. He leaves open the question of how exactly to interpret the thunder with the ambiguous statement ‘What Anne Askewe and her companyons both hearde and se in thys thonder to their sowles consolacyon in their paynefull sufferynge, no mortall understandynge can dyscerne’:¹⁴¹ As with the Eucharist, the thunder seems to be of significance not materially, but in its reception spiritually by those who have faith.

Behind an apparently puzzling absence of descriptions of martyrs’ bleeding during their sufferings and deaths lies a deep well of Protestant understandings of the Eucharist and materiality. As in other sacramentarian Henrician writers, Bale’s rhetoric of martyrs’ blood is shaped by his theology of the Eucharist, the consequent divide between martyrs’ blood and Christ’s blood, and between the realms of the material and the spiritual. Bale is far more concerned with martyrs’ blood as a theological concept, and a loaded polemic image, than with its material reality. For these reasons, he uses a rhetoric of martyrs’ blood far more often in attacks upon confessional opponents than in descriptions of the martyrs’ themselves. In the latter case, as we have seen, his rhetoric of martyrs’ blood is in fact rather under-developed and limited, almost exclusively confined to the epithet ‘innocent’.

From investigating the early sacramentarian rhetoric of martyrs’ blood, we gain insights into how early sacramentarian Protestants conceived of the connection between the realms of

¹⁴⁰ Askew, *The Examinations*, 154.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

the material and spiritual. In traditional, non-sacramentarian, Christian thought, grace was transmitted through materiality (both the sacraments and sacramentals), and matter could be holy. However, for Henrician sacramentarian Protestants, there was a disconnect between materiality and spirituality, both in their sacramental theology and more widely. In traditional, orthodox Christianity, materiality had contained, conveyed, and displayed martyrs' holiness, and depictions of martyrdom had included a focus on the martyrs' bodies. In contrast, for Henrician sacramentarian writers, the nature of sanctity was entirely spiritual (and non-physical), and so generally little attention was paid to the martyrs' bodies.¹⁴² This disconnect between materiality and spirituality was not fully absorbed within popular Protestant theology, however, as exemplified in the tension between Bale's attitude towards the thunder which accompanied Askew's burning and the attitude of the Dutch merchants present.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a focus on martyrs' blood illuminates the wider development of Protestant theologies and worldviews during the partial reformation of Henry's reign. Through an examination of four key aspects of this rhetoric of martyrs' blood, we have seen how this rhetoric functioned across Henrician Protestant writings as a lynchpin for both developing Protestant theologies and anti-Catholic polemics. In their rhetoric of martyrs' blood, Henrician Protestant writings turned back on Catholicism the early Catholic depictions of Protestantism as an anarchic, destabilising, and antichristian movement. Henrician Protestant writings continued medieval heretical depictions of the Catholic Church as bloodthirsty and antichristian, using imagery of bloody enemies to underpin political, economic, and theological (including specifically apocalyptic) attacks on Catholicism. These threads were drawn together by John Bale, who also transformed the genre of martyrology from being primarily a mirror to becoming

¹⁴² This position would change somewhat in the later sixteenth century, however, as we shall see in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

above all a weapon, setting the model for later Protestant martyrological writings. A rhetoric of martyrs' blood was an important element in this weapon, due to its ability to encapsulate and evoke many different prongs of attack.

A close examination of the early Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood also highlights the impact of internal divisions within Protestantism. Differing Eucharistic beliefs, which were hotly debated during this period, affected perceptions of materiality and martyrdom. While Lutheran writers largely continued to adhere to some traditional Christian perceptions of materiality and martyrdom, sacramentarian writers generally broke away from many of these traditional beliefs. In sacramentarian writings, the traditional similarities between Christ's blood and martyrs' blood disappear, as the primary function of martyrs' blood stands in contrast to the function of Christ's blood, the one calling for vengeance and the other for mercy; martyrs' blood is not a sacrifice, nor connected with wonders, nor in any physical sense connected with Christ's blood. Moreover, in Henrician sacramentarian depictions of martyrdom there is generally a disconnect between materiality and spirituality, which again stands in sharp contrast to traditional beliefs. Sacramentarian and non-sacramentarian writers tend to construct martyrdom differently. For non-sacramentarian writers (whether Lutheran or Catholic), materiality strongly attests to martyrs' holiness, and thus depictions of martyrdom often include a focus on the martyrs' bodies; for sacramentarian writers, in contrast, the nature of sanctity is almost entirely spiritual (and non-physical), and thus little attention is usually paid to the martyrs' bodies.

Henrician references to martyrs' blood underline, above all, the multivalent meanings of blood, which enabled it to be co-opted as a lynchpin of different theologies, polemics, and apologias. Yet, from across the various themes and constructions there emerges a repeated polemic image: the Catholic Church is bloodthirsty and blood-guilty, and the martyrs' blood calls out for and proclaims God's impending apocalyptic vengeance upon it.

Chapter 3: John Foxe and the Protestant Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood.

This chapter focuses on how England's premier martyrologist John Foxe used a rhetoric of martyrs' blood, principally in his *Acts and Monuments*. By examining John Foxe's work from this angle we gain fresh insights into the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe's idiosyncratic theology, and English Protestant worldviews in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In the *Acts and Monuments*, we see important continuities with earlier rhetorics and perspectives, particularly in the construction of Catholicism as inherently bloody and bloodthirsty, and in the work's apocalyptic tone. There are, however, also significant departures from Henrician precedents, especially in a fresh emphasis on the role of martyrs' blood as witness, as well as in a closer relationship between sanctity and materiality than is found in earlier English sacramentarian writings.

John Foxe's focus on martyrdom began in his *Commentarii in ecclesia gestarum rerum* (Strasbourg, 1554), and continued in his *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum* (Basel, 1559), as well as in other works such as his play *Christus triumphans* (1556). This earlier material was subsumed into his martyrological magnum opus, the *Acts and Monuments*, of which four editions were published in his lifetime. His perspective on the relationship between martyrdom and the apocalypse was further expanded in his last work, a commentary on Revelation, entitled *Eicasmī seu meditationes*, which he left unfinished upon his death in 1587. The *Acts and Monuments* was the last widely-read and highly influential martyrology of the English Protestant Reformation. It crystallised the English Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood until the civil war era of the 1640s, when the deaths of royalists, parliamentarians, and the king himself presented a new opportunity for textual constructions of the relationship between sanctity and the suffering

body.¹ In the interim, as the *Acts and Monuments* was frequently reprinted and widely read, its treatment of martyrdom and martyrs' blood continued to shape English Protestantism's rhetorics and mentalities.

John Foxe

John Foxe (1516/7-1587) was one of England's leading Protestant writers and historians. He can be seen as the main successor to the English Protestant martyrological tradition established by John Bale whose influence upon subsequent English Protestant apologia, polemic, theology, and martyrology was immense. Indeed, Evenden and Freeman have argued that 'the word "influence" does not do justice to a relationship that was to form the predominant preoccupations and to inspire the undertaking that would occupy the rest of Foxe's life.'² It could almost be said that Foxe took up where Bale left off. While Bale turned to more antiquarian and autobiographical writings after 1547, Foxe took up the mantle of England's premier martyrologist, under Bale's guidance. Evenden and Freeman have demonstrated in great detail Foxe's heavy reliance on Bale, not only as a friend, patron, and close colleague, but also in the large volume of manuscripts, copies of manuscripts, and notes that Bale lent to Foxe, and upon which Foxe drew heavily in his *Commentarii*, his *Rerum*, and his *Acts and Monuments*.³ Bale also possibly inspired, and certainly supported and guided, Foxe's great interest in the Apocalypse.⁴

¹ Consider, for example, Charles I being called a 'man of blood' by his Parliamentary enemies, the quasi-martyrological Royalist work *Eikon Basilike*, and the material culture of the collection of Charles' blood at the scaffold and the attribution of miracles to it. See, *inter alia*: ?Charles I, *Eikon Basilike*. *The pourtracture of his sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings, with a perfect copy of prayers used by His Majesty in the time of his sufferings. Delivered to Dr. Juxon, Bishop of London, immediately before his death* (London: 1549); Walsham, 'The Reformation', 512; Patricia Crawford, "'Charles Stuart: That Man of Blood'", *Journal of British Studies*, 16 (1997), 41-61; Kevin Sharpe, "'So Hard a Text'? Images of Charles I, 1612-1700", *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 383-405; Robert Wilcher, 'What Was the King's Book for? The Evolution of *Eikon Basilike*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 21 'Politics, Patronage and Literature in England 1558-1658', (1991), 218-228.

² Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 39.

³ For Foxe's heavy reliance upon Bale, *ibid.*, 38- 52, 61-63, 74-79, 86-87, 123-24, 150-51, 157-58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

It was in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and his *Eicasmī seu meditationes* that most of the themes and preoccupations of previous Protestant writings concerning martyrdom were developed. The *Acts and Monuments* can be seen as the culmination of English Protestant martyrology, since they contain not only Foxe's own theology and the fruits of his earlier martyrological efforts, but are also a gigantic anthology of Christian texts (both orthodox and heretical) from the early-Church to the Elizabethan period. In particular, it is the best source we possess for the Marian persecutions. In Foxe's first edition, of 1563, he drew upon a mass of written and oral material which he had already collected concerning the Marian persecutions. His second edition was greatly helped by the publication, in 1564, of 219 letters of the Marian martyrs by his friend Henry Bull.⁵ '[B]etween them Foxe and Bull all but stripped the field bare'; we possess only three pieces of the Marian martyrs' correspondence which escaped Foxe and Bull.⁶ In the 1570 edition, Foxe appropriated Bull's work, republishing the bulk of it, including Bull's marginalia. The dominance Foxe had now achieved over the genres of martyrology and Marian Protestant writings is illustrated by the fact that Bull's collection – previously the sole competitor to the *Acts and Monuments*' printed anthology of the Marian martyrs' writings – was not republished until the nineteenth century.⁷ In short, Foxe possessed an almost unmanageable amount of written material (both public and private) produced by the Marian martyrs and their supporters. Thus, the *Acts and Monuments* is a uniquely rich source, containing both the Marian Protestant constructions of martyrdom (including many letters, autobiographical accounts, poems, etc., which Foxe reproduces verbatim), and the Elizabethan editor Foxe's shaping and extension of these into a (largely) smooth and unified narrative, which spoke to his own day. It is almost impossible to distinguish a 'Marian' rhetoric of martyrs' blood from Foxe's own, because it is often not clear when Foxe is closely paraphrasing or even quoting unacknowledged a Marian source. What can be shown, demonstrated by a striking consistency across thousands

⁵ Ibid., 133. Miles Coverdale [Henry Bull], *The Letters of the Martyrs: Collected and published in 1564* (London: J.F. Shaw, 1837).

⁶ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 134.

⁷ Ibid., 134.

of Marian sources cited by Foxe and Foxe's 'own' prose, is that, by the 1550s, a deep and rich English Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood had developed, which endured well into the Elizabethan period, when it was preserved for posterity in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

The compendious nature of the work made its production a herculean effort. Over twenty years, Foxe and Day produced four editions of a book six times the length of the Bible.⁸ The work would have been extremely difficult and expensive to produce even in Europe's foremost printing centres, and England was in fact a marginal backwater: 'producing the *Acts and Monuments* stretched the sinews of the possible'.⁹ Considering the many potential obstacles standing in the way of its creation, the fact that it was nonetheless produced says something of the perceived necessity of this monumental work of Protestant martyrology and apologetics (as well as the zealous devotion of Foxe and Day to the project). The work had the backing of a cluster of powerful figures, including Edmund Grindal, Matthew Parker, and William Cecil (the latter providing the patronage), and thus, to an extent, spoke for a highly influential group within the Elizabethan regime, whereas earlier English Protestant martyrological writings had all spoken for a narrow, often marginalised, group of Protestant reformers, or even just a subsection of that group.¹⁰

The *Acts and Monuments* was, therefore, in many ways, the apogee and culmination of English Protestant martyrology, its compendious detail unrivalled by any previous work. It proved to be the last significant English Protestant Reformation martyrology, leaving no void for a successor to fill, except to pare down the *Acts and Monuments* into a more digestible length. Moreover, it included the weight of previous English Protestant writings concerning martyrdom, both in its verbatim or paraphrased reproductions of earlier texts, and in its heavy borrowing from the ideas, schema, and rhetoric of previous Protestant writers. It stood as the authoritative construction of England's Protestant martyrological self-image, not only in its

⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

narrative (focusing particularly on the history of the English Church from its ancient birth and subsequent persecution to its final glorious emergence into the full light of the gospel in the present Last Times), but also in its endorsement by the chief politician of the Elizabethan regime, William Cecil.

The *Acts and Monuments* also presented the most complete English Protestant martyrological theology of blood, depicting the multitude of qualities and functions Protestant thought had inscribed onto martyrs' blood. This chapter examines five particularly significant elements of this rhetoric: its depiction of martyrs' blood witnessing; its construction of bloody enemies; its apocalyptic overtones; its connection with Eucharistic theology; and its contextualisation within sacramentarian notions of materiality. As in previous English Protestant texts, the chief function of the rhetoric of martyrs' blood was to attack the Catholic establishment and the individuals responsible for the deaths of the martyrs. However, the work not only offered a Protestant theology of martyrs' blood, but also voiced the fullest and most systematic English Protestant criticism of Catholic beliefs relating to martyrs' blood.

Martyrs' Blood as Witness to the Truth

Far more than earlier English Protestant martyrological writings, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* highlighted that martyrs' blood was a form of a witness. This reflected Foxe's intention that the *Acts and Monuments* should serve as an eschatological witness against Catholics. He saw the book as functioning as a testimony and denunciation on the Day of Judgment of the blood-guilt of the 'Persecutors of Gods truth, commonly called Papistes.'¹¹ He threatened them in the preface: 'In that day when you shal be charged with the bloud of so many Martyrs, what wil ye or can you say? ... This booke wyl testify and denounce against you. Which if you cannot deny now to be true, then loke how you wil answer to it in that counting day.'¹² The narrative of the

¹¹ *A&M*, 1563, Preface, 12.

¹² *A&M*, 1563, Preface, 13.

book, therefore, simultaneously depicts and inverts the earthly realities of martyrdom. When read literally, the Protestant martyrs are on trial, with Catholics witnessing against them, and are condemned and punished by the Catholic Church. However, when read with Foxe's Protestant eschatology in mind, the *Acts and Monuments* also placed the Catholic persecutors on trial, witnessed against by the Protestant martyrs; ultimately it is the persecutors who will be condemned and punished by Christ, the head of the true Church. Thus, the martyrs' blood witnesses both to the eternal truth of Protestantism and to the impending eternal condemnation of Catholic persecutors.

Foxe states explicitly that 'The blood of Martyrs standeth for the verity of Christ against the world and Sathan, who would suppress the same.'¹³ The early-Church martyrs in Persia, for instance, 'also gave such a faithfull testimony of the Lord Jesus with their blood'.¹⁴ Similarly, the marginalia commenting on a letter from the Marian martyr John Bradford to Mistress Hall, imprisoned in Newgate for her faith, explains that martyrs' blood functions as a form of testimony or witness.¹⁵ In the *Acts and Monuments*, martyrs' blood thus serves to unite martyrs of the true Church, from its beginning to its zenith, in contemporary Protestantism.

The Marian martyrs' blood is also repeatedly depicted as 'confirming' their faith, with their blood functioning essentially as a synonym for witnessing. One might expect, given the emphasis in early Protestantism on *sola fide*, that this rhetoric of martyrs' blood 'confirming' would refer to confirming that the martyrs possess the faith they have professed in their lifetime - proving their faith to be genuine and saving by its unyielding nature even during torture and execution. However, the sense in which martyrs' blood confirms is different: it confirms the truth of Protestantism. Hooper writes 'I have taughte the truth wyth my tong, and with my pen hereto fore, and here after shortly wyll confirme the same by gods grace with

¹³ *A&M*, 1576, Book 11, 1590.

¹⁴ *A&M*, 1570, Book 1, 151.

¹⁵ Although the marginalia identifies just one function of martyrs blood here, we must presume, given the multitude of roles martyrs' blood plays in the *Acts and Monuments*, that this is not actually being depicted as its sole function, but merely one of the chief functions and the one most relevant to the context.

my blood'; and, Foxe presents the imprisoned Hooper using such language to the mayor and aldermen who have imprisoned him: 'For the which most true and sincere doctrine ... I am sent hither ... to dye, and am come where I taught it, to confirme it with my blood.'¹⁶ We see here a good example of how Protestant martyrology and hagiography had moved away from the medieval 'mirror of holiness'; instead martyrs' lives, words, actions, and even bodies were primarily utilised as weapons: the martyrs' blood does not confirm the sanctity of individuals (as in traditional accounts of baptism in blood), but rather plays the more anonymous and corporate role of confirming that Protestantism is the true Church, and Catholicism the false Church.

Similarly, Foxe and his Marian martyrs depicted martyrs' blood as sealing. For example, Foxe described Jerome of Prague as sealing 'with his blod and death ... the fervent and true confession of the truth', while the Marian martyr Laurence Saunders wrote to his wife and fellow believers, as he awaited martyrdom, 'I am made worthy to magnify my god, not onely in my life, by my slow mouth and uncircumcised lips, bearing witnes unto his truth, but also by my blood to seale the same, to the glory of my God and confirming of his true church... the truth of Christ, which is shortly to bee sealed, with the blood of their pastor [Saunders]'.¹⁷ Such depictions drew upon a rich Christian tradition around the imagery of sealing: the act had a wide range of meaning within Christian theology, but one unifying strand, drawing together different uses of 'seal', was confession of Christ and the Christian faith.¹⁸ Additionally, there was a strong association between sealing and the Holy Spirit; the New Testament states that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks through the persecuted Christian when they witness to their faith during their interrogation.¹⁹ In a Protestant context, rhetoric of martyrs' blood sealing also had an

¹⁶ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1129.

¹⁷ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1116.

¹⁸ Ferguson, *Baptism*, 8, 20, 155, 196, 208, 218-19, 348, 431, 449-50, 468, 560, 590, 595, 597, 599, 613. This association of sealing with proof of faith could be constructed also from a *sola scriptura* basis, explaining its enduring and popular presence in Reformation Protestant texts. In 1 Corinthians 9:13 'seal' seems to be associated with proof, and in Romans 4:11 circumcision is depicted as a seal of the righteousness of faith.

¹⁹ Ferguson, *Baptism*, 155, 208, 431, note 9. Luke 12: 11-12;

apocalyptic dimension, since sealing is a key element in the book of Revelation (the narrative of which is structured around the opening of seven seals). In the *Acts and Monuments*, therefore, an important quality of martyrs' blood was that it was a seal which bore witness both to the true Church and to the apocalypse.

Imagery of martyrs' blood witnessing was scarcely found in Henrician Protestant writings, but became more common in the writings of the Marian martyrs, and plays a central role in the *Acts and Monuments*. This change was due, in part, to the pseudo-martyr debate. Almost half a century before the *Acts and Monuments* was penned, the Catholic polemicist Thomas More, drawing upon the teaching of the Church Fathers Cyprian and Augustine, denounced the Protestant martyrs as mere 'pseudomartyrs', the term literally meaning false witnesses.²⁰ This was the opening salvo in the protracted English pseudomartyr debate – a fierce confessional strife over who the true and false martyrs were. In the Henrician period, the Catholic position had (first) been established by More, and the Protestant position (later) by Bale,²¹ but the pseudomartyr debate became particularly heated under Mary. It was strongly emphasised from 1554, when, in the wake of Wyatt's rebellion, John Christopherson, speaking on behalf of the regime, criticised the Protestants who saw Wyatt as a martyr. Christopherson argued at length that Wyatt and his followers were but 'false martyrs'.²² As the executions for heresy began in 1555, the topic became ever more relevant. Miles Huggarde set out the regime's apology for the burnings in *The Displaying of the Protestantes*, arguing at length that those executed were pseudomartyrs.²³ To bolster the regime's pseudomartyr propaganda, Thomas More's anti-Protestant polemics were reprinted and circulated, and More himself was cast as the exemplary true martyr, with his cult promoted. In short, the witnesses of Protestant martyrdoms were being loudly denounced as mere false witnesses.

²⁰ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

²² *Ibid.*, 48-49. John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to All Menne to Take Hede and Beware of Rebellion* (London: 1554).

²³ *Ibid.*, 49-50. Huggarde, *The Displaying*.

The Protestants felt compelled to respond. As we have seen, the Marian martyrs, in their writings and words, proclaimed that their martyrs' blood was a witness to the true faith and true Church, but English Protestantism needed a stronger and more comprehensive response, to match the weight of Catholic pseudomartyr polemics which had been sponsored by the Marian regime. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* presented this opportunity. As Gregory has demonstrated, true and false martyrs looked so similar (in terms of their brave, Christomimetic words and behaviour during trial, torture, and execution) that one could scarcely distinguish between them by their appearance; identifying true and false martyrs, therefore, hinged almost entirely on one's confessional allegiance, despite the fact that the pseudomartyr debate was trying to prove which was the true faith.²⁴ How were martyrological apologetics to prove to the English people (or at least those who were willing to listen) where the true martyrs and true Church really lay? In some ways, it came down to a competition of who could shout loudest, and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, an exhaustively compendious volume backed by some of the leading men in the Elizabethan regime, could shout much louder than the now beleaguered and marginalised English Catholics. Foxe's systematic depiction throughout the *Acts and Monuments* of martyrdom and martyrs' blood as witnessing to the true faith and Church can, therefore, be seen as a very powerful blow in the English pseudomartyr debate.

The pseudomartyr debate was not the only reason why Foxe highlighted the role of martyrs' blood as witness. Martyrs' blood in the *Acts and Monuments* witnesses to the truth of Protestantism and to the condemnation of Catholic persecutors. In doing so (considering Foxe's continuous preoccupation with the apocalypse) it evokes the martyrs' blood crying out for justice in Revelation, and thus is part of Foxe's overall apocalyptic worldview. Whereas earlier English Protestant writers had believed that the end of the world was drawing near, but its exact date was uncertain, Foxe confidently dated the end of the world to 1594, or even earlier if God shortened the days for the sake of the elect.²⁵ Therefore, for Foxe, the apocalypse was a

²⁴ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, *passim*.

²⁵ Fudge, 'Jan Hus', 155.

particularly pressing concern; indeed, he believed that he might live to see the Second Coming. Hence, it is unsurprising that his *magnum opus* was a work designed to serve that great event, a book which bore witness in support of the elect and in condemnation of their persecutors and the false Church.

In sum, Foxe emphasised that martyrs' blood is a witness to the truth of the Protestant faith, 'witnessing', 'testifying', 'confirming', and 'sealing'. His rhetoric of martyrs' blood witnessing served two important purposes. First, Foxe saw the apocalypse as imminent, so the *Acts and Monuments* was intended to serve as an eschatological witness against the Catholics, functioning as a testimony and denunciation of their bloodguilt on the Day of Judgement. Secondly, the pseudomartyr debate had grown more heated in the Marian period, and a good deal of Marian Catholic apologetics was produced featuring the pseudomartyr theme; a Protestant response was needed, and the *Acts and Monuments* stepped up to the challenge. Foxe's rhetoric of martyrs' blood as witness addressed this wider context of confessional apologetics and apocalyptic fervour.

Bloody Enemies

Foxe used a frequent rhetoric of bloody enemies within his anti-Catholic polemic. Like earlier English Protestant writers, he concentrated on the clerical rather than the secular powers.²⁶ Innovatively, he also attacked the cults of the English Catholic martyrs by presenting them as blood-shedding persecutors rather than bleeding martyrs, setting a precedent for subsequent English Protestant conceptions of Catholic would-be martyrs. His *Acts and Monuments* used a consistent narrative of 'blood for blood': innocent martyrs' blood being providentially avenged with the blood of their persecutors. Significantly, Foxe's depictions of bloody enemies

²⁶ The Protestant focus on attacking the Catholic clergy (rather than laity) was an international rather than merely an English phenomenon. Where Foxe concentrated on attacking the Catholic clergy with the printed word, French Calvinists were attacking them with the sword, and indeed the Elizabethan regime would soon likewise focus on executing Catholic priests. Anti-clericalism had been a dominant feature of early Protestantism, and it endured. For discussion of the strong anti-clericalism within Huguenot anti-Catholic religious violence, see Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Rites of Violence: Religious riot in sixteenth-century France', *Past & Present*, 59 (1973), 51-91, 77.

encapsulated many of the important wider messages of the *Acts and Monuments*, such as signalling the identities of the true and false martyrs and thus true and false Churches, emphasising God's providence and justice both in this life and the life to come, and conveying guidance to the Elizabethan regime on its socio-religious policies.

Foxe mostly focuses on attacking the religious elites (especially the bishops, Cardinal Pole, and a few other key figures such as Archdeacon Nicholas Harpsfield), rather than the Queen and the secular authorities.²⁷ He frequently names and shames prominent contemporary individuals, while at the same time placing them in a long line of somewhat faceless Roman Catholic hierarchs who have been bloody persecutors within the 'false' Church, during the gradual corruption of the visible Church over the past millennium. Foxe uses his discussion of the early Church in the opening portion of the *Acts and Monuments* to attack the contemporary Catholic clerical elite, depicting the early-Church Fathers as holy, peaceful and obedient, and - implicitly but clearly - depicting the contemporary clerical elites as ambitious, disobedient, and polluted with blood.²⁸ While there are a handful of medieval Catholic prelates whom Foxe lauds, they are overwhelmingly presented as 'the bloudye bishops'.²⁹ Once Foxe's narrative arrives at the Marian period, the Catholic clergy are collectively bloodthirsty, bloodstained and depraved.³⁰ They can no longer be deluded members of the invisible Church misguidedly co-

²⁷ It is notable, for example, that while he frequently called Catholic clerical elites such as Bonner 'bloody', he never called Queen Mary herself 'bloody'.

²⁸ Foxe praises Cardinal Panormitan, 'The holye and auncyent fathers... neuer intermedled, nor intangled them selves, with politike affayres of the commen weale... The sharp and two-edged sword they toke geven to the church of Christ, to save, and not to kill... So farre were they from that, to thrust out any Prince or kinge, though he were out of the way, yea an Arrian from his kingdome, to curse him, to release his subiectes from their oth and their allegiance, to chaunge and translate kingdomes, to subvert Empires, to pollute them selves wyth christen blood, and to warre with their Christian brethren for rule and principality.' *A&M*, 1563, Book 1, 37.

²⁹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 418. An example of a medieval Catholic prelate whom Foxe praises is Cardinal Panormitan (see footnote above): 'For that he was a cardinal and did wear his red hatte for this purpose, that he should shed his blood in the defence of the faith', and the marginalia to this passage states 'Verely this is no rabinonically Cardinall but of the immaculat spouse Jesus Christ.' *A&M*, 1563, Book 2, 367.

³⁰ Foxe was, here, building on and echoing Marian and pre-Marian rhetoric. Consider, for example, the anonymous print 'The Lambe Speaketh' (1555) which depicts the Protestant clerics as lambs being bound and killed by the Catholic clerics, who are depicted as wolves. Bishop Gardiner bites into the neck of one Protestant lamb-cleric, who is being slaughtered on the altar table, the print here clearly paralleling the Catholic clergy's bloody executions of Protestants with the Catholic clergy's bloody belief that they sacrifice and eat Christ's body and blood in every Mass (i.e. the image is also an attack on the real presence). The print first appeared with Latin captions in William Turner's *The Huntynge of the Romyshe*

operating with the visible Church, for the true light of the gospel has been presented to them and they have rejected it – they are ‘popish and bloody Byshops’.³¹

As Foxe’s narrative reaches the Reformation, his *ad hominem* attacks increase immensely. Echoing the Marian texts, he pours the weight of his derogatory polemic on Bishop Bonner, the perfect figure to encapsulate the image of the murderous, depraved and corrupt Roman Catholic cleric (which in turn served as a signifier for the murderous, depraved and corrupt Roman Catholic – i.e. false – Church). As David Loades suggests, explicitly attacking Mary herself, or even her chief secular counsellors, would have been politically dangerous in Elizabethan England.³² It would also not have been particularly effective as a denunciation of Roman Catholicism. It made more sense for Foxe to portray the clerical hierarchs as those chiefly responsible for the persecution and execution of the Protestants, and Bonner was the obvious target. Almost a third (113) of all the Marian executions for heresy were under his jurisdiction. Moreover, as we have seen, Bonner was already known as ‘Bloody Bonner’ before Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*.³³ This name was used to his face by some of the Marian Protestants he interrogated, and a bloody caricature of him had circulated widely even before that in Bale’s Henrician writings.³⁴ Bonner was alive and imprisoned in 1563. He was therefore, not a long-dead and half forgotten (thus futile) target, but he was also unlikely to retaliate effectively.

Wolfe, Made by Wylliam Turner Doctour of Phisik (Emden?:1555), and then in anonymous English (‘The Lambe Speaketh’) and German prints, also probably in Emden in 1555, and partially reproduced in Turner’s *The Hunting of the Fox and the Wolfe, Because They Make Havocke of the Sheepe of Christ Jesus* (London: 1565). For further discussion, see: Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 114 and plates 28-29 (unnumbered pages); Rowena J. Smith, ‘The Lambe Speaketh... An English Protestant Satire’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 61 (1998), 261-267; Malcolm Jones, ‘The Lambe Speaketh... An Addendum’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 63 (2000), 287-294.

³¹ *A&M*, 1563, B5, 1092.

³² David Loades, ‘Foxe and Queen Mary: Stephen Gardiner: Edmund Bonner’. <Accessed at *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011), <http://www.johnfoxe.org> on 09/08/2016>.

³³ This was clearly an epithet and reputation Bonner was troubled by, as we know from the *Acts and Monuments* that Bonner got Doctor Chedsey to publish openly, at Paul’s Cross, in May 1555, some letters from the king and queen, in order to defend Bonner’s executions of Protestants and to ‘protest that he was never so cruell nor bloudthirstye, as he was slaundersously reported and charged withall’, *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1692.

³⁴ See Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 162.

In short, Bonner presented the perfect individual onto whom Foxe could pin his polemical image of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁵

In the *Acts and Monuments*, again and again in Bonner's trials of Protestant martyrs, the soon-to-be martyr accuses Bonner of bloodthirst and predicts that he will voraciously go on to shed other martyrs' blood.³⁶ At times, Bonner is depicted as denying this.³⁷ The narrative proves Bonner to be an incessant liar, as well as a murderer, since just pages later the same scene recurs and Bonner is once again shedding blood. Perhaps this recurrent falsity is even supposed to have a comic element, since the lie becomes laughably unbelievable when following this ceaselessly recurring scene. The bloody language used to attack Bonner is particularly strong and vivid. For example, at his examination of the Marian martyr Thomas Browne, Bonner attempts to defend himself from the charge of bloodthirst, stating, 'Browne, ye have bene before me many times and oft, and I have travailed with thee to wyn thee from thine errours: yet thou and such lyke have and do report, that I go about to seke thy blood'. The martyr-to-be, unconvinced by Bonner's protests of innocence, replies, 'yea my Lord (sayd he) in deede ye be a bloudsucker, and I would I had as much bloud, as is water in the Sea, for you to sucke.'³⁸ We see in these passages Foxe's intention for the *Acts and Monuments* to function as a witness in Christ's trial of the Catholic persecutors, including of Bonner, at the Last Judgement. While, in the present reality, the Protestant martyrs are on trial and Bonner is the judge, in an eschatological sense, Bonner is on trial and the Protestant martyrs witness to his insatiable bloodguilt.

³⁵ Foxe did, of course, have some spin work to do, as Bonner was not an enthusiastic executor of Protestants: the large number of Protestants executed in his jurisdiction was due to the fact that he presided over the most heavily Protestant area, rather than an unparalleled zeal for burning heretics. In fact: he 'took endless pains to secure recantations, even from the relatively humble, and succeeded far more often than Foxe found it expedient to admit': Loades, 'Foxe and Queen Mary'. See also Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 109-110.

³⁶ E.g. John Ardley says to Bonner at his examination 'beare as good face as ye can, ye will kyll the inocent blood, and you have kyllled manye, and you goo aboute to kyll more, etc.'. *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1240.

³⁷ E.g. *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1323. In this scene Bonner actually protests, 'Yet nevertheles for somuch, as they reporte me to seke bloud, and call me bloudye Boner, where as, God knoweth, I never sought any mannes bloud in all my lyfe'.

³⁸ *A&M*, 1570, Book 11, 2068.

Like Henrician English Protestant writers, Foxe also presents a narrative of the clergy having unrighteously seized increasing power over the last millennium, and depicts the present clergy as puppet masters over the secular authorities, using their power to shed innocent blood. While Fish's *A Supplication for the Beggars* (reproduced in the *Acts and Monuments*) had presented this as a particularly English problem, Foxe emphasises this most in his comments on the French Wars of Religion. This may be because depicting as puppets the English Henrician and Marian secular figures of authority (many of whom were still alive) would have been an unwise political move, or perhaps it reflects the fact that France was most evidently the kingdom in Europe where secular authority was in turmoil, and the Church could thus wield an immense amount of power. We see this theme of manipulative clerical elites, eager to shed blood, in Foxe's account of the execution of the Protestants in Provence. It is the Bishop of Aix who pushes the reluctant President to act against the local Protestants. The President protests that it is 'a great sinne to shed the innocent bloud', but the bishop, on behalf of the clergy (clearly, in Foxe's narrative, stepping into the role of the Jewish authorities who pushed Pilate to execute Christ), replies 'the bloud of them of Merindale, be upon us and upon our successours.' The President still attempts to stall, claiming that 'the king wil not be wel pleased to haue suche destruction made of his subjectes', but here Foxe shows the Catholic clergy to have the power as well as the desire to bring about bloodshed, since the bishop responds 'although the king at the first do thinke it evill done, we wyll so bring it to passe that within a short space, he shal thinke it wel done. For we have the Cardinals on our side'. Foxe thus depicts the Roman Catholic clergy as doubly corrupt – both in their desire to shed blood (which, Foxe repeatedly claims through the *Acts and Monuments*, contravenes the spirit of the laws forbidding the clergy to shed blood)³⁹ and in the power they have to bring about this bloodshed by over-riding, and even altering, the wishes of the king and the secular authorities.

³⁹ E.g. see 1563, Book 3, 413.

Foxe also attacked the cults of the most prominent English Catholic martyrs through a focus on martyrs' blood. This was a two-pronged attack: he criticised the function of martyrs' blood in Catholic soteriology; and he also presented the Catholic martyrs as bloody persecutors, rather than bleeding martyrs. Foxe's attack on the Catholic martyrs was unique in English Protestant martyrological polemic because of its systematic nature, and because he alone undermined the Catholic martyrs' claim to be true martyrs (i.e. they who shed their blood for Christ) by presenting them instead as shedders of martyrs' blood.⁴⁰ In the *Acts and Monuments*, the Catholic martyrs are not merely pseudomartyrs, but wicked persecutors and killers of the true martyrs.

Foxe particularly directed this rhetoric against Fisher and More, whose cults the Marian regime had worked to establish.⁴¹ For example, as discussed earlier, Foxe wrote in relation to Fisher (with a passing *ad hominem* attack against More): "But thus commonly we see come to passe, as the Lorde saith: That who so striketh with the sworde, shall perishe with the sworde, and they that staine their handes with blood, seldome do bring their bodies drie to the grave: as commonly appeareth by the end of bloody tyrantes, and especially such as be persecuters of Christes poore members. In the number of whom was this Bishop and sir Thom. More, by whom good John Frith, Teukesbery, Thomas Hytten, Bayfield, with divers other good saintes of God, were brought to their death'.⁴² The construction of More as a blood-shedder occurs particularly frequently. This is presumably due in part to More's enduring popularity (through both his writings and the memory of his personality), especially among the English Catholic community, but also to a lesser degree among English Protestants.⁴³ And, it must also reflect the fact that the

⁴⁰ Cf. 'Hic est vere martyr, qui pro Christi nomine sanguinem suum fundit' – 'This is a true martyr, who poured out his/her blood for Christ's name': popular medieval and early-modern Catholic hymn 'Hic Est Vere Martyr'. See the Cantus Database.

⁴¹ See Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 38-44. Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 35-36, 38-39, 45-46, 177, 179-186.

⁴² *A&M*, 1583, Book 8, 1093.

⁴³ On the threatening popularity of More's writings, consider Foxe's statement 'Yet for so much as his [More's] bookes be not yet dead, but remaine alyve to the hurt of many': *A&M*, Book 8, 1186. On the enduring popularity of More's character, see Monta's discussion of the play *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (c.1592-5), penned by Protestant authors, which featured Thomas More as its hero, delighting in his

Marian regime had promoted the cult of More particularly. (For example, Nicholas Harpsfield was commissioned to write a hagiography of More, whereas Fisher's cult did not receive the same level of attention.) Moreover, because More, as Lord Chancellor, had been involved in sentencing a number of heretics, and thus had been attacked as a persecutor even in his own lifetime, he was, like Bonner, an easy target.⁴⁴ Repeatedly, Foxe depicts More either as shedding the blood of heretics literally, or as responsible for their blood since he sentenced them to death. For example, we see the former image in the following passage, where Thomas More, as Lord Chancellor, is trying the heretic John Tewkesbury: 'Then was he [Tewxbery] caried to Jesus tree in his [More's] privy garden where he was whipped and also twisted in his browes wyth small ropes that the bloud started oute of his eies, and yet woulde not accuse no man.'⁴⁵

Even Thomas Becket is constructed in this manner.⁴⁶ For example, in Foxe's depiction of the martyrdom of James Bainham (which also contains the standard passing attack directed at the caricature of More the blood-shedder), Bainham says:

Sir Thomas More being both my accuser and my judge, and these be the articles that I die for, whiche be a very truthe and grounded on Gods worde and no heresie ... They lay to my charge that I should saye that Thomas Becket is no saint but dampned in hell, for this I reade on him that he was a wicked man, a traitour to the crown and Realme of England, and enemy to al Christes religion, and a shedder of innocent bloud, for even for murdering and shedding of bloud, was he made a saint.⁴⁷

famous wit while glossing over the religious reasons for his martyrdom, Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 160.

⁴⁴ Nor was it only in his *Acts and Monuments* that Foxe targeted More. Foxe and Day produced *The Whole Works of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct. Barnes* (London: 1573), which contained these English Protestant apologists' responses to the greatest English Catholic apologists of their time: John Fisher, John Rastell, and Thomas More. The marginalia attacked all three Catholic apologists, but it was More who was attacked the most frequently and fiercely. See Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 245.

⁴⁵ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 542. This passage is of questionable veracity: More denied personally torturing heretics, and modern scholarship has tended to accept his claim.

⁴⁶ This depiction of Becket as a blood shedder is found also in Tyndale's writings, who disapprovingly described Becket as a warrior priest: 'from bloud shedyng was he made Bishop.' Aston, *Broken Idols*, 389.

⁴⁷ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 549.

This passage suggests not merely that Catholic martyrs are not really saints but blood-shedders, but additionally that the Catholic Church made them into saints because of their blood shedding. It follows logically from the overall picture of Catholicism in the *Acts and Monuments*, that the bloody Church must have, and honour, bloody saints. We see, thus, how coherent the bloody anti-Catholic polemic of the *Acts and Monuments* is.

The *Acts and Monuments* depicts the innocent blood of martyrs as crying out to God for vengeance against their persecutors. This is a theme found both in Foxe's own prose and in that of the Marian texts he reproduces. For example, Laurence Saunders writes in his account of his examination that he warned those examining him, 'I exhort you to beware of sheading of innocent blood. Truly it will crie.'⁴⁸ Foxe himself writes repeatedly of innocent blood crying out to God and so bringing down divine vengeance. He tells the tale of Raphe Ellerker, who sentenced a Protestant martyr to death and would not even let the martyr give a testimony of faith at his execution, and so Ellerker was brutally killed and mutilated in a battle shortly after, his body being a terrible example to 'al bloudy and merciles men ... it is wrytten, faciens iustitias dominus et iudicia, omnibus iniuria pressis: And because his innocent bloud, as Abels cried unto God.'⁴⁹

Martyrs' blood could be so vengeful that it cried not only against its persecutors but even also against those who compromised with the persecutors. Fears of Nicodemite Protestants grew from the 1540s; both abroad and in England, religious compromise was increasingly vilified.⁵⁰ Foxe reproduces a letter by the Marian martyr John Bradford who darkly warns the Nicodemites in his congregation that his blood will call for vengeance against them unless they amend their ways.⁵¹ This strong sentiment makes sense when one considers that Nicodemism presented a threat to martyrdom by implicitly suggesting that martyrdom was futile, since faith did not have to be openly displayed at the cost of death, but rather could be

⁴⁸ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1115.

⁴⁹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 722.

⁵⁰ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 153-162.

⁵¹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1250-1251.

safely practised in secret. The enemies of men like John Bradford therefore included Nicodemite Protestants as well as Roman Catholics, and so the martyrs' blood cried out indiscriminately against these opponents.

A prevailing narrative of blood vengeance runs through the *Acts and Monuments*, as Foxe depicts martyrs' blood calling for retribution and being avenged with the blood of their persecutors, whether more metaphorically, through their deaths, as blood equated to life in Judeo-Christian thought, or more literally, in gruesome tales of persecutors' bleeding. This is a theme which he explains at the end of the work in his admonition to persecutors, stating:

'The bloud of Abell cryed long, yet it wrought at length. The soules of the Saintes slayne under the altar, were not revenged at the first. Apocal. 6. but read forth the Chapter, and see what folowed in the ende. Bloud, especially of Christes servauntes, is a perilous matter, and cryeth sore in the eares of God, and wyl not be styllled with the lawes of men. Wherefore let such bloud gyltie homicides beware, if not by my counsell, at least by the examples of their felowes.'⁵²

Foxe thus emphasises here (especially since this passage follows a long description of the terrible fate which inevitably descended upon bloodstained persecutors), at the close of his work, the power of innocent blood to call down divine vengeance upon the blood-guilty. The rest of the *Acts and Monuments*, leading up to this forceful conclusion, reveals the multiplicity of forms this vengeance could take.

These terrible deaths of the persecutors are embedded within a theology of blood for blood, as is unambiguously stated at various points. For example, Foxe explains the death of Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More in this light, as we have seen;⁵³ the marginalia to this

⁵² *A&M*, 1576, Book 12, 2031.

⁵³ 'But thus commonly we see come to passe, as the Lorde saith: That who so striketh with the sworde, shall perishe with the sworde, and they that staine their handes with blood, seldome do bring their bodies drie to the grave: as commonly appeareth by the end of bloudy tyrantes, and especially such as be persecuters of Christes poore members. In the number of whom was this Bishop and sir Thom. More, by whom good John Frith, Teukesbery, Thomas Hytten, Bayfild, with divers other good saintes of God, were brought to their death.' *A&M*, 1583, Book 8, 1093.

passage states 'Bloud revenged with bloud'. Likewise, Foxe cites from the Protestant martyr Richard Gybson, who writes of Bonner, Bishop of London, 'he [is] not onely most unworthy of his office, but also hath most worthelye deserved to be recompensed blood for blood, as equity requireth'. The context suggests that Gybson means that God, rather than man, should be the one to bring about justice by shedding Bonner's blood.⁵⁴

Several times, Foxe depicts the shedding of martyrs' blood as repaid with the literal bleeding to death of their persecutor. He writes of Charles IX of France, whom Foxe sees as partially responsible for the St Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572,

The constant report so goeth, that his bloud gushing out by divers partes of his body, he tossing in his bedde, and casting out many horrible blasphemies, layed upon pillowes with his heeles upward, and head downeward, voyded so much bloud at his mouth, that in few houres he dyed. Which story if it be true, as is recorded and testified, may be a spectacle and example to all persecuting kinges and Princes polluted with the bloud of Christian Martyrs.⁵⁵

In the case of Charles IX, Foxe's language is undoubtedly drawn from French Protestant depictions of Charles' death. Since 1574, when the king had died coughing up blood, the blood of his deathbed had been depicted by his French Protestant opponents as divine punishment for shedding the blood of French Protestants, and by his Catholic supporters as the blood of a martyr.⁵⁶ For example, we see the construction of Charles as bloodthirsty, blood-guilty, and so punished by bleeding to death in a letter, from Theodore Beza to pastor Laurent Durnhoffer, of 23 June 1574. Beza writes that the king's death was due to 'the magnificent will of God' and reported that Charles had been 'shooting blood from every orifice of his body, and, as they say, he is still bloodthirsty even in the event of his own death.'⁵⁷ This language was later employed

⁵⁴ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1726.

⁵⁵ *A&M*, 1583, Book 12, 1231.

⁵⁶ This is discussed in Braghi, 'The death of Charles IX'.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

by the French martyrologist Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné in both his *Histoire universelle* and *Les Tragiques*.⁵⁸

If Foxe had used this language merely in the case of Charles IX, we might postulate that he was simply lifting it from Huguenot depictions of the king's death, but Charles is not the only persecutor whom Foxe portrays as being punished with a bloody death. Another lurid example of martyrs' blood being repaid with the persecutor's blood is Foxe's repeated depictions of the death of the Frenchman Minerius, who was responsible for persecuting and executing a multitude of Protestants. Foxe attributes his bleeding to death to the amount of innocent blood he had shed:

the just iudgement of God lightyng upon him, brought him by a horrible disease, unto the tormentes of death, whiche he most justly had deserued. For hee beyng strocken with a straunge kynde of bledyng at the lower partes, in maner of a bloudy flixie ... a certein famous Surgeon named La Motte, which dwelt at Arles, a man no lesse godly then expert in hys science: was called for ... he [the Surgeon] began to exhorte Minerius with earnest wordes, saying how the time now required that he should aske forgivenes of God by Christ, for his enormous crimes, and crueltie in shedyng so much innocent blood, and declared the same to be the cause of this so straunge profusion of blood commyng from hym.⁵⁹

This consistent narrative of blood for blood is distinctively Foxean. Earlier Protestant writers were not concerned with creating an overall narrative of martyrs' blood being avenged specifically with their persecutors' blood. Foxe's prevailing blood-for-blood narrative is the fruition of many Christian and late-medieval perceptions of bleeding. The theme of blood-guilty persecutors dying bloody deaths is partly based on the Old Testament notion of blood for blood;

⁵⁸ Ibid., 316-319.

⁵⁹ *A&M*, 1570, Book 7, 1125. See also, for the same theme of Minerius being repaid with bleeding because of his bloodshed, 1570, Book 12, 2347; 1570, Book 7, 1125; 1570, Book 12, 2349; 1576, Book 7, 950; 1576, Book 12, 2026; 1583, Book 7, 977; 1583, Book 12, 2131.

but it also suggests a continuation of the medieval tendency to interpret bleeding (especially supernatural bleeding) as an indicator of divine blame rather than divine love.⁶⁰ Considering Foxe's preoccupation with the apocalypse and the retributive role blood plays in Revelation, Foxe's vengeful narratives of martyrs' blood being repaid with the blood of their persecutors undoubtedly also have apocalyptic resonances.

Foxe was probably also drawing on late medieval perceptions of the relationship between bleeding and individuals' spiritual and moral states. It was a fundamental medical belief that bodily ailments reflected spiritual conditions, and so, to the early-modern mind, it was plausible that the bodies of persecutors such as Charles IX and Minnerius could bleed copiously in reflection of the fact that they were culpable of shedding copious amounts of innocent blood. The behaviour of their bodies, additionally, is perhaps a twist on the popular belief in cruentation, where the body of the innocent bled to reveal their persecutor; here instead the persecutor themselves bleeds to reveal their guilt and their victim's innocence.⁶¹ Additionally, since emphasising the notion of blood for blood is particularly Foxean in the English context, not being found in Bale or earlier English Protestant works, it is possible that Foxe drew this from French Protestant sources, given that it most frequently appears in his discussions of the persecution of French Protestants. This probable multiplicity of different influences behind Foxe's prevailing narrative of blood for blood illustrates how Foxe effectively drew together a wide range of disparate source material and topics in the *Acts and Monuments* through the multivalent theme of blood.

⁶⁰ Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 181.

⁶¹ Foxe also features cruentation in his *Acts and Monuments*, perhaps drawn from his medieval source(s), in his description of the death of Henry II. Foxe blames the king's death on his errant son Richard II (the Lionheart), whom, Foxe claims, caused his father such distress that he fell ill and died. Henry's cruentation reveals Richard's guilt for his father's death: '[Henry's] corps, as it was caried to be buried, Rychard his sonne comming by the way and meting it, and beginning for compassion to weape, the bloud burst out incontinent out of the nose of the king, at the comminge of his sonne, geving thereby as a certaine monstration [later editions: 'demonstration'] howe he was the autor of his deathe.' *A&M*, 1563, Book 1, 105. See also 1570, Book 4, 308; 1576, Book 4, 256; 1583, Book 4, 252.

The *Acts and Monuments*, in its tales of bloody enemies, contains deliberate warnings for the Elizabethan state and people about the dangers of shedding blood. It is a historical commonplace that Foxe was rare among early-modern writers and martyrologists in believing that people should not be executed for their religious beliefs. What has not commonly been noticed, however, is that this position proceeds partly from Foxe's strong belief that bloodshed is spiritually staining, and that blood is often repaid with blood. The *Acts and Monuments* make it clear that Foxe did not merely denounce execution of Protestants (or proto-Protestant medieval heretics) by the Roman Catholic Church. Rather, Foxe did not believe that the Church should ever execute heretics. Indeed, as we have seen, he highlighted the hypocrisy of Catholic clerics ignoring the fact that canon law forbade the clergy from shedding blood. He did not endorse the secular powers executing heretics either.⁶² For example, he shows how David, though he killed rightfully by the command of God, was nonetheless thereby bloodstained, and therefore was not worthy to build the Temple. It is likely, that here Foxe was implicitly criticising any state-led execution of religious dissidents. This cannot be seen as a direct comment on the execution of Elizabethan Catholics, since these had not yet begun in 1563, but it can be seen as a warning to the Elizabethan Protestant regime not to risk defiling itself by executing religious dissidents (including Catholics) as the Marian Catholic regime had done.

This reading of the *Acts and Monuments* is supported by Foxe's behaviour in relation to the state's execution of heretics. He certainly disapproved of, and had possibly petitioned the Edwardian religious authorities (specifically, John Rogers) against, the burning of the Anabaptist Joan Boucher for heresy in 1550.⁶³ Foxe also possibly petitioned Elizabeth's government not to execute the Jesuit missionary priest Edmund Campion in 1581.⁶⁴ He certainly wrote to Elizabeth and her Council in 1575, pleading with them not to sentence to death for

⁶² E.g. see 1563, Book 3, 413.

⁶³ John T. McNeill, 'John Foxe: Historiographer, disciplinarian, tolerationist', *Church History*, 43-2 (1974), 216-229, 222.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 223. Glyn Parry, 'John Foxe, Father of Lyes', and the Papists', in Loades (ed.) *John Foxe*, 295-305, 300, 303.

heresy two Flemish Anabaptists, who rejected not only infant baptism but also standard Christian theology of the incarnation. Foxe was certainly not in sympathy with their views, but he believed that it was against the gospel 'to burn with fiery flames ... the living bodies of wretched men ... It is [not their beliefs, but] the *life* that I favour, since I myself am a man.'⁶⁵ In the *Acts and Monuments*, not only is the state warned not to execute religious dissidents, but even more importantly and overtly the state and people are urged to repent if they are to escape punishment for bloodguilt through active or passive participation in the Marian persecutions. In this sense, the *Acts and Monuments* is somewhat different from earlier sacramentarian Protestant texts which, as we have discussed, strictly separated the elect from the reprobate, and focused on martyrs' blood calling for vengeance against the martyrs' persecutors rather than on urging the martyrs' persecutors to repent and receive God's merciful forgiveness. While Calvin depicted St Paul, in his commentary on Acts, as turning from a 'bloody enemy of the church' and a bloodstained wolf into 'a sheep' with 'the character of a shepherd', contemporary narratives of bloody enemies and bloodthirsty wolves turning into innocent sheep were, at least in the English context, non-existent.⁶⁶ Even exhortation to persecutors to repent and become faithful believers were, in English Protestant martyrological writings, surprisingly rare. Most of the *Acts and Monuments*, as we have seen, follows in the standard vein, but, although it is not emphasised in the main body of the text, Foxe does not see the bloodstaining of individuals as irrevocable.

Despite having constructed throughout the *Acts and Monuments* a largely black-and-white narrative of bloodstained persecutors who have incurred terrible vengeance, Foxe actually adds a twist to this image at the end of the work in 'The terrible end of Persecutors. An admonition to the same.' Certainly, one aim of the *Acts and Monuments* was to convert Catholics, the work even having a preface addressed specifically to Catholics at the start. Presumably, as

⁶⁵ McNeill, 'John Foxe', 223. See also, Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A history of the English Reformation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017) 512-513.

⁶⁶ John Calvin, *Acts by John Calvin*, ed. by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer (Wheaton, Illinois; Nottingham, England: Crossway Books, 1995), 149.

part of this, the work aimed to convince those who had taken part in the persecutions under Mary of their guilt, and frighten them with tales of the terrible punishment (in this life and the life to come) that would befall those who had shed the blood of the martyrs. The admonition at the end of the work functions in this light: once the former persecutors are suitably guilty and frightened, Foxe offers them a means of redemption from their bloodguilt. At the end of a series of paragraphs relating the terrible fates of those who are blood-guilty, Foxe writes:

But these hitherto for this present may suffice, which I thought here to notifie unto these our bloody chyl dren of the murdering mother Churche of Rome, of whom it maye well be sayde: Manus vestræ plenæ sunt sanguine etc. Your handes be full of bloud. Essay Chapt. 1. to the intent that they by the examples of their other felowes before mentioned, may be admonished to folowe the Prophetes counsell, which foloweth and byddeth: Lavamini, mundi estote. etc. Be you washed, and make your selves cleane. etc. Essay. 1.⁶⁷

This means of cleansing is repentance; Foxe finishes his admonition to persecutors by stating,

I have exhibited in these histories the terrible ends of so many persecuters plagued by Gods hand: so woulde I wish all such, whom Gods lenitie suffereth yet to live, this wisely to ponder with themselves, that as their cruell persecution hurteth not the saints of God, whom they have put to death: so the pacience of Christes church suffryng them to lyve, doth not profite them, but rather heapeth the great judgement of God uppon them in the day of wrath, unlesse they repent in tyme, which I pray God they may.⁶⁸

In this sense, Foxe differs from early English Protestant writers who scarcely ever called their confessional opponents to repentance, but rather depicted them as bloodstained reprobates.

This difference is probably due to historical circumstances rather than theological differences.

Foxe was writing within and for a population many of whom had passively or actively been

⁶⁷ *A&M*, 1576, Book 12, 2031.

⁶⁸ *A&M*, 1576, Book 12, 2032.

involved in the Marian persecutions but most of whom had now, to varying degrees, returned to Protestantism. These included not only those who had been or were still Catholics, but also those who had been Nicodemite Protestants, against all of whom the blood of martyrs like Bradford still called for vengeance. Therefore, in discussing the Marian persecutions, Foxe needed to offer a route to redemption to all those who would read the work with a guilty awareness of their active or passive collaboration with the Marian regime, and a self-narrative which could help them to understand, from a faith-based perspective, their trajectory from their previous collaboration with the persecutory Catholic regime to their current identity as Protestants.

Foxe's frequent rhetoric of bloody enemies was an important facet in the *Acts and Monuments'* anti-Catholic polemic. Foxe continued the standard English Protestant anti-clerical focus, but also innovated in presenting the English Catholic martyrs as not merely pseudomartyrs with pseudomartyrs' blood (as in Bale's attack on the cult of Becket's blood), but also blood-shedding persecutors whose bloody deaths were due to God's just and reliable avenging of innocent blood with guilty blood. A narrative of 'blood for blood' ran through the *Acts and Monuments*, primarily highlighting God's providence and justice, but also functioning as a dire warning of the consequences of participating in bloodshed or collaborating with blood shedders.

Apocalypticism

Foxe's apocalypticism was a lynchpin holding together significant aspects of the worldview and purpose behind his writings, and it became progressively more important over the course of his apologetic career. By the time Foxe had penned his four editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, and then turned his attention to a commentary on Revelation, he believed that the apocalypse would occur within his lifetime. The *Acts and Monuments* was intended to be useful not merely as Protestant apologetics to his contemporaries but to Christ and the elect on the Day of

Judgement. In the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe continued earlier Protestant depictions of apocalyptic martyrs' blood, shed by the antichristian Catholic Church, and in *Eicasmī* (his commentary on Revelation) the central theme of the apocalypse brought together Foxe's constructions of martyrdom and martyrs' blood.⁶⁹

Foxe's early interest in the apocalypse was possibly inspired, and was certainly supported and guided, by Bale, whose perspective on martyrdom and history was heavily apocalyptic. Like Bale, Foxe saw Biblical prophecy, and especially Revelation, as 'a description of human history *before* the Second Coming', which 'elucidated' human history 'in precise detail'.⁷⁰ Additionally, the battle between the true and false Churches, explored by Bale in his *Image*, 'was the foundation of the *Acts and Monuments*'.⁷¹

While Foxe's first two martyrological works contained little apocalypticism, his contemporaneous drama *Christus Triumphans* (1556) shows that he was already perceiving Revelation as a detailed prophetic narrative of Christian history, and as a lucid guide that could be understood and applied to every detail of Christian history, past and present.⁷² *Christus Triumphans* was Foxe's first work to position martyrdom within a detailed apocalyptic schema of Christian history.⁷³ The play features the persecutions of the character Ecclesia (the Church) by Pseudamnus (the Antichrist) and Pornopolis (the Whore of Babylon). In *Christus Triumphans*, as in earlier English Protestant writings, bloodthirst is a hallmark of the Antichrist, and martyrs' blood functions as a signifier of the apocalypse.⁷⁴

These themes were developed in the *Acts and Monuments*. In Revelation, the martyrs appeal to God to avenge their blood, and therefore in the *Acts and Monuments*, the martyrs'

⁶⁹ For many of the Marian martyrs' own apocalyptic constructions of their martyrdoms, see Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 123, 139, 142.

⁷⁰ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 79.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁴ E.g. A5^v, E8^r, F5^r: John Foxe, *Christus triumphans, comœdia apocalyptica* (London: Rob. Clavel, 1672) [First ed. Basel, 1556].

blood which the persecutors have shed not only leads to their terrible bloody deaths on earth but also to Christ's just damnation of them on the Day of Judgement.⁷⁵ For Foxe, as for Bale, the ranks of the martyrs asking God to avenge their blood include not merely sixteenth-century Protestants, but the whole, invisible Church from the early Christian martyrs, to medieval heretics and early-modern Protestants. Foxe depicts medieval heretics and Protestant martyrs as united in recognising the Catholic Church as the antichristian Church drunk on the blood of the saints, and likewise united in being those martyred bleeding saints. For example, Foxe writes of the medieval anti-clerical and heretical Franciscan provincial, Michael Cesenas, 'This foresayd Michael ...wrote agaynst the tyranny, pride, and primacie of the pope, accusing hym to be antichrist: and the church of Rome, to be the whore of Babylon, drunke with the bloud of the saintes.'⁷⁶ The Marian martyrs are depicted as using similar language: Rafe Allerton describes the Catholic Church as 'the church of antichrist, a persecuting church, and the church malignant', and John Alcock writes of 'the tyranouse captivitie and rage of the Romaine antichrist, and suche ravening wolfes, as have without all mercy murdered thy godly and learned prachers'.⁷⁷

Foxe's apocalyptic rhetoric of martyrs' blood did not end with the *Acts and Monuments*. Towards the end of his life, he emulated his mentor Bale by writing a Biblical commentary, and, like Bale, the book he chose was Revelation. For both men, Revelation was 'the hermeneutical key to all ecclesiastical history'.⁷⁸ While Bale's *Image* was extremely influential, Foxe's *Eicasmī* was not finished before his death in 1587, and, although posthumously published in 1588, it never achieved the success of Bale's bestseller.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the work remains important as Foxe's most focused elucidation of his apocalyptic theology.⁸⁰ In *Eicasmī*, as in his *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe depicts the Catholic Church, and especially the papacy, as the Antichrist and

⁷⁵ *A&M*, 1563, Preface, 12-13.

⁷⁶ *A&M*, 1570, Book 4, 508.

⁷⁷ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1708. *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1747.

⁷⁸ Fudge, 'Jan Hus', 150.

⁷⁹ *Eicasmī* is New Testament Greek for 'speculations': Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 317. The very title of Foxe's work suggests it was directed at a limited audience of erudite scholars.

⁸⁰ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, 318.

Whore of Babylon.⁸¹ In *Eicasmī* especially, he elides the classical pagan persecutors of the early Christians with the Catholic persecutors of the Protestants as bloody idolaters.⁸² He reiterates the typical Protestant stance that martyrs' blood plays no role in salvation, as this is the function of Christ's blood alone.⁸³ And, as in Robert Smith's poem in the *Acts and Monuments*, where the Whore of Babylon feasts on blood so greedily that she explodes, the persecutors in *Eicasmī* have an insatiable bloodthirst.⁸⁴ Foxe's idiosyncratic pacificism and condemnation of violent bloodshed is also glimpsed in his description of wars (which he sees as one of the hallmark of the depraved end times) as 'filthy with fire and blood'.⁸⁵ *Eicasmī* strongly reinforces the connection, found in the *Acts and Monuments*, between apocalypticism and blood, especially martyrs' blood.

Martyrs' Blood and the Eucharist

As we examined in the last chapter, differing confessional perspectives over the Eucharist had strong repercussions on the ways in which confessions constructed martyrdom and martyrs' blood. The traditional position was that Christians consumed the literal body and blood of Christ, and in doing so became literal members of one body, Christ's body, and Christ therefore physically dwelt in them, his body and blood being present in their body and blood. This meant that it was, in a sense, Christ's blood that was shed at every martyrdom. The martyrs' blood thus imitated Christ's blood in being sacrificial, sanctifying, and salvatory. However, sacramentarian Christianity rejected the notion that the Eucharist was the literal body and blood of Christ, and in doing so rejected also much of the traditional theology of martyrs' blood. For sacramentarians, whereas Christ's blood called for mercy and brought salvation, Christian

⁸¹ John Foxe, *Eicasmī Seu Meditationes in Sacrum Apocalypsin* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1587), Q6^r.

⁸² *Ibid*, C1^r. Although apparently discussing the Romans here, in referring to their 'monasteriis' and 'regulis' Foxe signals to the reader that he is talking also about the Catholic Church.

⁸³ *Ibid*, C1^r.

⁸⁴ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1334. Foxe, *Eicasmī*, D1^r.

⁸⁵ Foxe, *Eicasmī*, D1^r.

martyrs' blood cried for vengeance and brought down God's retributive justice. This is very evident in the narrative of the *Acts and Monuments*, as we have established in our discussion of Foxe's constructions of bloody enemies.

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* essentially followed, but nuanced, the constructions of martyrs' blood in earlier English sacramentarian writings. Unsurprisingly, Foxe and the Marian sources he cites firmly rejected the Catholic notion that martyrs' blood has a salvific function. This traditional Catholic notion was founded on the belief that Christians were united with the body and blood of Christ through the real presence in the Eucharist; therefore the blood they bled was in some sense Christ's blood, and the martyr during their martyrdom was mystically united with Christ's Passion in a similar fashion to that in which each sacrifice of the Eucharist was mystically united with Christ's sacrificial death. In rejecting belief in the real presence, sacramentarian writings rejected this whole traditional framework of martyrdom. Their martyrs' blood was not like Christ's blood, but like Abel's, which cried for vengeance. It is, therefore, a vengeful narrative of martyrs' blood which runs through the *Acts and Monuments*, as martyrs' blood is again and again avenged by God with the blood of their persecutors, in a manner reminiscent of the Old Testament concept of the avenger of blood.

The *Acts and Monuments* not only presented a Protestant theology of martyrs' blood, but also criticised established Catholic beliefs relating to martyrs' blood, including the Catholic belief that martyrs' blood shared in the qualities and functions of Christ's blood (salvific, grace-filled, expiatory, miraculous). In doing so, Foxe followed the precedent set by Bale.

Like Bale, he attacked the belief that martyrs' blood had any salvific value, and especially that it played a role in the liberation of souls from Purgatory (through the system of indulgences).⁸⁶ Both centred this attack around the cult of Thomas Becket's blood, drawing a firm line between the nature of Christ's blood and the nature of martyrs' blood. Reproducing

⁸⁶ He reiterated this position in his *Eicasmī*, reaffirming that martyrs' blood plays no role in salvation, this being the function of Christ's blood alone: Foxe, *Eicasmī*, C3^r.

part of an anthem to Thomas Becket which depicts his blood as an aid to salvation, Foxe emphasises that, even if Becket had been a genuine martyr, no-one's blood can serve to achieve salvation other than Christ's, since otherwise the unique salvific death of Christ was in vain.⁸⁷ This was in fact a fairly common Protestant critique of Catholic theology concerning the role of martyrs' blood in the purgatorial system. For example, Latimer was accused of stating that: 'the bloud of martyrs hath nothyng to do by way of redemption: the bloud of Christ is enough for a thousand worldes'. He also rejects the belief that 'Christes bloud is not sufficient without bloude of Martyrs'.⁸⁸

This Protestant representation of the Catholic teaching of martyrs' blood along with the Protestant alternative theology is most clearly laid out in the *Acts and Monuments* in the Scottish reformer John Borthwike's confutation of articles written against him. Borthwike explains the standard Catholic teaching of the superfluous merits of the saints and martyrs and the Catholic theology of the relationship between Christ's blood and martyr's blood: 'And because so great a goodnes should not be superfluous or in vain, they affirme and teach that theyr bloude was mixed and joyned with the bloud of Christ: and of them both the treasure of the church was compound and made for the remission and satisfaction of sinnes'.⁸⁹ Borthwike uses the specific question of the salvific function of martyrs' blood as a springboard to criticise Catholic theology of indulgences and Catholic soteriology and to lay out the Protestant alternative: it is not that the martyrs' blood is shed in vain, with no profit to the Church, he emphasises, lest this conclusion be drawn from his criticism of the Catholic doctrine; where he disagrees with

⁸⁷ The lines of the anthem which he reproduces are: 'For the bloud of Thomas, which he for thee dyd spend/ Graunt us (Christ) to climbe, where Tho. did ascend'. Foxe comments: 'certain it is that this antheme or collect lately collected and primered in his praise, is blasphemous, and derogateth from the prayse of hym, to whom al praise only and honor is due... [In it] is a double lye conteyned: Fyrst that he dyed for Christ. Secondly that if he had so done, yet that his blood could purchase heaven. which neither Paule nor any of the Apostles durst ever challenge to themselves. For if any mannes bloude could bring us to heaven, then the bloud of Christ was shed in vayn.' *A&M*, 1563, Book 1, 100.

⁸⁸ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1381; *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1383. This last point is a polemic overstatement of Catholic belief.

⁸⁹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 633.

Catholicism is over what that profit is, and here he reiterates the functions of martyrs' blood discussed above:

the reson that the blud of the martirs is not shed in vain ... [is] that the profet and frute therof is aboundaunt to glorify God by theyr [the martyr's] death, to subscribe and beare witnes unto the truth, by their bloud, and by the contempte of this present life to witnes that he doth seke after a better life, by his cnostancy and stedfastnes to confirm and establish the faith of the church and subdue and vanquish the ennemy.⁹⁰

The role of Protestant martyrs' blood, in short, is to witness. It does not play the salvific, sanctifying, and supernatural roles that Christ's blood does. These differing confessional perceptions of martyrs' blood were, directly due to, and an expression of, differing confessional Eucharistic beliefs. Thus, we see here the importance of martyrs' blood to key Reformation theological fault lines.

Martyrs' Blood and Materiality

Examining Foxe's rhetoric of martyrs' blood in the *Acts and Monuments* shows that Foxe saw the material universe as a witness in the pseudomartyr debate: materiality, and particularly martyrs' blood, testified that the Protestant martyrs were the true martyrs and that their Church was the true, bleeding Church of Christ, persecuted by the false, bloodthirsty Catholic Church. He also saw materiality as testifying to eschatological truths, as the persecutors' own bodies witnessed (through the retributive justice of their own bloody deaths) to their bloodguilt and the divine punishment they faced in this life and in the next. At the same time, Foxe's attitude to materiality was very different from that of Catholic writers. While the *Acts and Monuments* is far more ready than Henrician sacramentarian writings to depict divine truths being revealed through materiality and also to describe spectacular wonders, nonetheless Foxe

⁹⁰ *A&M*, 1563, Book 3, 634.

does not fundamentally diverge from the sacramentarian position that material objects (including human bodies) are not vessels of God's salvific, cleansing grace. The *Acts and Monuments* is not de-materialised, unlike most earlier English Protestant depictions of martyrdom; rather, it is as interested in the relationship between the divine and the material as Catholic texts, but presents an alternative model of the relationship between God and matter. In doing so, it shows both continuities with and changes from earlier English Protestant constructions of martyrdom. Exploring the rhetoric of martyrs' blood in the *Acts and Monuments* illuminates these points.

The vivid materiality of Foxe's narratives served two main didactic purposes: they were memorable, and they were emotive. Foxe's detailing of the martyrs' physical sufferings and the physical brutalities of their enemies served a point that any teacher will appreciate. They made his (abstract) theological points more interesting and memorable, because throughout the *Acts and Monuments* they were brought to life with gory, shocking, wondrous, or unusual tales. Consider, for example, the scene of the execution of Doctor Taylor, in the 1563 edition. Foxe opens by teaching about the attributes of Protestant martyrs:

They shed their bloud gladlie in the defence of the truthe, so leaving example unto all men of true and perfect obedience: whiche is to obeye God more then man, and if the neade require it, to shed their owne bloud, rather than to depart from Gods truthe.

Foxe's description is corroborated by the words of Doctor Taylor at his execution, who says to the people:

Good people, I have taught you nothing but Gods holy worde, and those lessons that I have taken out of Gods blissed booke, the holy Bible: and I am come hether this day to seale it with my bloud.

The scene of Taylor's death then memorably illustrates this message. When the fire is made:

Warwicke cruelly cast a fagot at him, whiche light upon his head, and brake his face, that the bloud ran downe his visage: then sayde Doctor Taylour. Oh frend, I have harm enough, what needd that?’

The vignette reinforces the points of Foxe and Taylor, and also Foxe’s wider points about true and false martyrs and about the true Church and false Church. On one side, in this scene, stands an example of the martyrs who seal their teaching the Protestant faith in life by – quite literally – shedding their blood in witness to it in death, and who endure their torments with godly fortitude. On the other side, stand their cruel tormentors, who are all too eager to spill the martyrs’ blood. In case the scene’s illustrations of the preceding theological points were not obvious enough, Foxe adds in the marginalia: ‘Warwick a cruel tormentour’ and ‘D. Taylor is pacient’.⁹¹ As we have already examined, Foxe also used memorable gory and shocking tales to illustrate his belief that God’s justice would be wrought on blood shedders in this life through ‘blood for blood’, and that this earthly judgement mirrored their fate in the final judgement.⁹²

Foxe also used gory descriptions of the martyrs’ deaths as a tool to engage the emotions of the reader against the cruel persecutors and with the suffering martyr. Details of literal bleeding are often graphic, and placed in contexts which are particularly well suited to win natural human sympathy. For example, Foxe tells the tale of a child of one of the Protestant prisoners who calls the Bishop’s chaplain a heretic, whereupon some of the Bishop’s household ‘did most shamelesly and wyth oute al pitye, so whippe and scourge, being naked, this tender child, that he was al in a gore bloud, and then, in a jolye brag of their beastly tyrannye they caused Clunye, havinge hys coate upon his arme, to carye the childe in his shirt unto his father, being in prison, the bloud running downe by his heeles.’⁹³ Clearly, the image of a bleeding child presented to his father is an effective emotive tool. Equally, the gory death of Hooper, who still prayed for Christ’s mercy and beat his breast, even as ‘bloud dropped out at his fingers endes’, is

⁹¹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1148.

⁹² Consider, *inter alia*, the cases of Raphe Ellerker, Thomas More, John Fisher, the French official Minierius, and Charles IX of France, discussed above.

⁹³ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1774.

a scene designed to arouse sympathy.⁹⁴ When we consider Foxe's audience (as clearly identified in prefaces and conclusions), the purpose of such emotive depictions of martyrs' bleeding becomes apparent. On the one hand, this was a work designed for the general, now nominally Protestant, English readership, and for the queen herself: undoubtedly the intentions of the *Acts and Monuments* concerning its Protestant readership were to warm their Protestant faith from a tepid and somewhat still-papist state to reach the hotter sort of Protestantism that Foxe himself held, and to eradicate all traces of papist superstition from their beliefs by creating in them an abhorrence of Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, as Foxe's preface and conclusion addressed directly to Roman Catholics show, the *Acts and Monuments* was also intended as a tool of conversion – both conversion of faith to Protestantism (by revealing the cruelty and falseness of Catholicism), and conversion of the hearts of the guilty persecutors to repentance. Thus, the vivid and gory depictions of bleeding martyrs, suffering meekly under the sentence of bloodthirsty Catholic clergy, functioned to address both aims. For Foxe, materiality testified to eschatological truths, and thus served as a valuable witness in the *Acts and Monuments*.

While Foxe evidently esteemed highly the material world's potential to witness to God's truth, and recognised its importance within compelling religious narratives, his attitude to materiality was nonetheless markedly different from the Catholic position. The blood of Foxe's martyrs is, at times, wondrous; but this does not make it miraculous. There has been a recent scholarly trend towards perceiving Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* as an example of the endurance of a belief in miracles in mainstream Protestantism martyrology. Monta uses the terms 'miracle', 'marvel' and 'wonder' interchangeably in her discussion of the *Acts and Monuments*.⁹⁵ She therefore draws the conclusion that Protestant martyrologies, like Catholic ones, have a miraculous dimension, and that there is not a clear line between the two confessional martyrological genres.⁹⁶ Dailey goes further, claiming that there are four genres of miracle in

⁹⁴ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1131.

⁹⁵ Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 53-75.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53-75, 64-65.

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*: divine providence; prophecy; the fortitude displayed by martyrs; and the unpleasant deaths of persecutors.⁹⁷ She claims that what is absent from Foxe's description of contemporary martyrdoms are only 'spectacular miracles.'⁹⁸ She argues: 'It is not that Foxe is opposed to any specific category of miracles, like speaking heads or marvellous preservation; he merely requires a higher level of proof than his medieval counterparts.'⁹⁹ Her evidence that Foxe is not opposed to 'spectacular miracles' relies on the fact that he accepts them when found in early-Church authors such as Eusebius and Origen.¹⁰⁰ However, on closer examination, Monta and Dailey's positions are not entirely convincing.¹⁰¹

It is true that some of Foxe's Catholic critics alleged that the *Acts and Monuments* contained miracles, and that Foxe's criticism of Catholic miracles was therefore hypocritical.¹⁰² It is also true that in some ways the spectacular wonders in the *Acts and Monuments* are very similar to miracles in Catholic hagiographical and martyrological writings. But, while these are important points that scholars such as Monta and Dailey have highlighted, if we do not simultaneously highlight how and why Foxe saw these wonders as different from Catholic miracles then we lose a significant insight into the difference between Catholic and Protestant understandings of materiality.

Leading patristic and medieval theologians had concurred that miracles were supernatural events, which were intrinsically outside of what could occur naturally without any divine (or demonic) intervention.¹⁰³ As Michael Goodich has summarised it, a miracle was understood to be 'a phenomenon which confounds or even appears to contradict the normal

⁹⁷ Dailey, 'Typology and History', 10.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁰¹ And they are, in fact, not in accordance with the mainstream definition of 'miracle', as a supernatural event. See the *OED*, *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, and the philosopher of religion Richard Swinburne's introduction to his edited collection *Miracles* (New York; London: Macmillan, 1989), 1-17.

¹⁰² *The History of the Church of Englande. Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman. Translated out of Latin in to English by Thomas Stapleton student in divinite* (Antwerp: John Laet, 1565), 9r, *inter alia*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8-28. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1259-1265), 3.99.9-3.102.3, in Swinburne, *Miracles*, 19-22.

rules governing nature or society'.¹⁰⁴ Highly rare or extraordinary phenomena, which nonetheless are explicable in natural terms, were not seen as miracles; following the tradition of encyclopaedists and natural philosophers, these were termed by the thirteen-century theologian Albertus Magnus 'mirabilia' (often translated in English as 'wonder').¹⁰⁵ The magisterial Protestant reformers emphasised the difference between miracles and wonders.

As his theology crystallised from the early 1520s, Luther usually refuted the notion that supernatural events which broke the laws of nature (i.e. miracles) still occurred in the present day; he preferred to see these as limited to the apostolic age. He did, however, retain a strong belief in natural wonders (*mirabilia*) through which God's will and nature was revealed.¹⁰⁶

Calvin continued this position: being cessationist, he maintained that miracles had ceased with the end of the apostolic age.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the apostolic miracles recounted in writers like Eusebius and Origen were perfectly plausible, but the subsequent continuation of miracles was not. Foxe evidently concurred with the official Calvinist stance, disavowing the contemporary existence of the miraculous throughout his *Acts and Monuments*. For example, he writes scathingly when discussing Thomas Becket, 'If God in these latter dayes geveth no myracles to glorify the name of his owne sonne: much lesse wil he geve miracles to glorify, T. Becket.'¹⁰⁸

What some modern scholars and some of Foxe's contemporary Catholic critics have identified as 'miracles' in the *Acts and Monuments*, are thus better understood, by and large, as

¹⁰⁴ See Michael Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The development of the concept of miracle, 1150-1350* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 8-28.

¹⁰⁵ See Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, 8-28. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* in Swinburne, *Miracles*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant Imagination: The Evangelical Wonder Book in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33-66.

¹⁰⁷ For example, Calvin wrote, 'Therefore when miracles other than those by which the dignity of the gospel was ratified of old and demanded of us, no others need be produced but those which were performed through the apostles. For they happened once, but served to confirm the gospel forever. And what a wide field would be open for me here to speak both of the ingratitude and ill will and also of the shamelessness of those who not only demand that the gospel of Christ be established afresh by new miraculous signs, just as if it were new and of recent origin, but turn those very miracles which ought to contribute to its glory into a cause for insults and mockery!' Jean Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A defence of the orthodox doctrine of human choice against Pighius*, trans. by Graham I. Davies, ed. by A. N. S. Lane (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 13.

¹⁰⁸ *A&M* 1563, Book 1, 100. See, in contrast, Foxe's acceptance of the possibility that at St Paul's execution he bled milk instead of blood, *A&M*, 1570, Book One, 68-9.

mirabilia.¹⁰⁹ This is an interesting point to bear in mind when considering Foxe's Catholic critics, as it suggests that they either did not understand, or deliberately misunderstood, the careful Protestant line (based solidly on medieval Catholic theology) between supernatural *miracula* and extraordinary but natural-explicable *mirabilia*. What Monta identifies as miracles in Foxe's 1570 edition are best seen not as miracles, as they are not supernatural (they do not break the laws of nature), but rather as *mirabilia*.¹¹⁰ This is not, therefore, a clear discrepancy between official Protestant theology and Protestant practice, since Protestant theology did not explicitly reject divine manifestations in the forms of non-supernatural wondrous events. However, it does stand in contrast to the divide between materiality and spirituality in earlier, leading Protestant sacramentarian writers such as Tyndale and Bale.

What we see in the *Acts and Monuments* is the replacement of supernatural signifiers (e.g. of holiness, right faith, evil, etc.) with natural signifiers (including martyrs' blood). God communicates and operates exclusively through the natural: this communication is divine providence operating through the laws of nature (which is also seen in Catholic texts, alongside the supernatural). These providential natural wonders occur at points where Foxe's narrative, had it been Catholic, might have introduced a miracle. They play the same narrative role, in identifying the true and false Church, the pious and the impious, God's revelation of the future, and God's answering of prayer. For example, Bishop Hugh Latimer had prayed that he would shed his heart's blood for Christ; at his burning his prayer was answered very literally, most of his blood gushing out of his heart in astonishing abundance, making the godly onlookers marvel.¹¹¹ This is an unexpected occurrence, yet there is nothing clearly supernatural about the event, as Foxe recounts it:

¹⁰⁹ Although, bearing in mind Walsham's caution not to expect comprehensive continuity, we should equally not be too hasty to declare that absolutely no miracles crept into Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* anywhere. (Walsham, 'The Reformation', 527).

¹¹⁰ See the examples given by Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 53-65.

¹¹¹ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1424. This event functions, textually, to construct Latimer as Christomimetic. The blood of Christ bled when pierced by the spear (the redemptive flood of blood and water) was supposed to be his heart's blood. Indeed, following from St Augustine, it was commonly believed that the Church was born from this flow of blood and water from Christ's side, thus from his heart's blood; therefore,

the which bloud ranne out of his harte in such abundaunce, that all those that were present, being godly, did mervell to see the moste part of the bloud in his bodye so to be gathered to his hart, and with such violence to gushe out, his bodye being opened by the force of the fire, by the which thing god most graciously graunted his request, which was that he might shed his hart bloude in the defense of the gospell.¹¹²

The gushing of the blood out of Latimer's body is, Foxe states, due to the force of the fire opening up his body. The 'moste part of the bloud in his bodye' being 'gathered to his hart' is not explained, but there is no evidence that Foxe sees this as supernatural (indeed, considering Foxe's stance on miracles, we can conclude that he almost certainly did not), but as rather an unusual, but not intrinsically unnatural, event which signifies that God heard Latimer's prayers, and 'graciously graunted hys request', which in turns implies that Latimer is a true child of God and a true martyr belonging to the true Church.¹¹³

The *Acts and Monuments* is not a largely dematerialized construction of martyrdom (like many earlier English Protestant depictions of martyrdom), but rather a text which is, like Catholic texts, strongly interested in the relationship between the divine and the material, but which presents an alternative – and fully Protestant – model of this relationship. In this way, the *Acts and Monuments* reflected aspects of wider European Protestant attitudes to materiality in the second half of the sixteenth century. Across Europe, Protestants were increasingly seeing God speaking through the material world to denounce sin.¹¹⁴

Walsham's seminal *Providence in Early Modern England* has demonstrated that between the 1570s and 1640s there was 'an explosion' of cheap printed news texts relating remarkable,

Latimer can perhaps be seen here to be (constructed as) aiding with his heart's blood the self-same Church which Christ, his model, founded in his heart's blood, since this marvel of Latimer's points out the true Church to onlookers. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson, ed. by G.R. Evans (London; New York: Penguin, 2003) [First ed. 1972], IV.xv.26, 567.

¹¹² *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1424. This account is repeated verbatim in the 1570 edition, book 11, 1498-1499.

¹¹³ 1570, Book 11, 1949.

¹¹⁴ We see here a continuity with the late medieval shift towards seeing wondrous and miraculous blood as God denouncing sin (see Chapter One).

and often gruesome, events which manifested God's providential intervention in the world.¹¹⁵ Sometimes these striking occurrences concerned God blessing the righteous, but most often they related to God punishing sin. In the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these tales were collected by pious Protestants, especially preachers, into manuscript and print encyclopaedias; they were also often inserted into sermons.¹¹⁶ Walsham sees the collection of such tales as beginning with 'Foxe's lengthy appendix to the *Acts and Monuments* (1563) listing the gruesome penalties inflicted upon "popish" persecutors'.¹¹⁷ Foxe was, thus, somewhat innovative in inserting so many providential tales of wonders into English Protestant martyrology. In doing so, Walsham reminds us, he brought the genre closer both to medieval and early-Church martyrological accounts and ecclesiastical histories and to popular culture.¹¹⁸

This trend was not a natural result of Foxe's Calvinist or sacramentarian theology. Indeed, Calvin's discussions of providence do not focus primarily on the manifestation of God's providence through the material world, but on rather more abstract theological questions such as predestination, free-will, repentance, salvation, and grace. In his *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God*, Calvin does not discuss anywhere whether (and, if so, how) God communicates through bodies and physical matter, nor indeed whether he manifests his will and messages through physical wonders.¹¹⁹ In his *Institutes*, Calvin does discuss how the existence and providence of God is manifested through the beauty and order of the created world, and how every event of every person's life is not random but pre-ordained by God's providence.¹²⁰ He is not, however, concerned with the manifestation of this divine providence through striking wonders and extraordinary spectacles of divine punishment of sin. The plethora of wonders that fill the *Acts and Monuments* cannot be attributed to Foxe's Calvinist

¹¹⁵ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [First ed. 1999], 33.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, *passim*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 67.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 73, 95-6, 96-7, 101.

¹¹⁹ See Jean Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: A treatise on the eternal predestination of God (a defence of the secret providence of God)*, trans. by Henry Cole (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1856-7).

¹²⁰ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2008), 15-17, 114-115.

theology, but rather exist *despite* it. They are due to a pan-European Protestant shift in perceptions of the material world, which included a move away from sacramentarian theology's rift between the material and spiritual, and which incorporated pre-existing elements of popular religion and traditional hagiography.¹²¹

In sixteenth-century Germany, Lutheran *Wunderzeichenbücher* (wonder books) were booming. These were erudite books, largely written by clerics for clerics, which amassed accounts of natural wonders ranging from monstrous births to comets, and interpreted them as an unprecedented level of disturbances in nature caused by humanity's increasing transgressions of God's commandments and 'a rising tide of sin'.¹²² These books usually had a strongly apocalyptic flavour.¹²³ Philip Soergel describes their perspective on divine revelation through materiality as a 'bleak vision that nature could only be understood through the lenses of sin'.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, in the French Wars of Religion, Calvinist 'rites of violence' aimed to cleanse the community of the (perceived) defiling and polluting presence of diabolical and antichristian Catholic practices and even Catholic people (especially clergy). They feared that God might wreak vengeance on the defiled communities, places and even the whole country, through plagues, famine, and other natural disasters, if they did not strive to cleanse it.¹²⁵ God's displeasure with Catholicism was displayed through Catholic bodies: for example, it was reported that when a Catholic who had been involved in anti-Protestant violence was in turn killed by Protestants, 'his body instantly became rotten and was eaten by crows and dogs'.¹²⁶

¹²¹ The fact that the emergence of this genre in English writings was part of a Continental trend is exemplified by Thomas Beard's *The Theatre of God's Judgements* (1597), which was the first English 'judgement book' to be printed and 'a classic text that can lay claim to rival John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in the affections of the late Tudor and early Stuart laity, it was part of the staple literary diet of devout Protestant families.' The work was 'for the most part a slavish translation' of a similar encyclopaedia compiled and printed by a French Calvinist minister in 1581, which in turn drew very heavily upon a similar work by a German Lutheran pastor of 1568. It is possible that, similarly, in Foxe's predilection for providential wonder stories, we see the influence of his exile from England, during Mary's reign, which was spent in Continental Protestant strongholds (including the Rhineland, where Foxe moved in mixed Lutheran and Calvinist circles). Walsham, *Providence*, 67, 70-71.

¹²² Soergel, *Miracles*, 27, 30.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁵ Zemon Davis, 'The Rites of Violence', 57-59, 69.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

Catholics who had participated in the murder or execution of Protestants sometimes died shortly afterwards, often in striking ways such as suddenly falling dead or going mad; this was seen as 'the hand of God' working through their bodies to denounce and punish their sin.¹²⁷

Protestantism was generally uncomfortable with the notion that the holiness of an individual or community was visibly inscribed upon their body and displayed through materiality, but often depicted sin and evil as visibly written onto the bodies of individuals and displayed through the material world.

Foxe particularly developed the tendency to see persecutors' deaths as God's vengeful warning; he employs this theme far more often than the French martyrologists, so that it becomes a consistently repeated narrative in the *Acts and Monuments*. He also related it specifically to blood, drawing on the Old Testament idea of 'blood for blood'. While materiality and martyrs' bodies can occasionally witness to individuals' piety, to God's pleasure, and to positive messages from God (such as Latimer shedding his hearts' blood in defence of the gospel), like Continental authors Foxe usually depicts bodies and the material world as behaving in striking and wondrous ways as a witness to individuals' wickedness, and to God's displeasure, anger, and vengeance. Consider the marvel Foxe relates in recounting the fate of Doctor Story (whose bloodthirsty and blood-guilty nature Foxe highlights), who had been eagerly involved in the Marian persecution of Protestants, and (predictably) met a 'bloody end' himself.¹²⁸ In Elizabeth's reign, although Story was living in exile in Spain, employed by the King of Spain to combat the illegal trade in Protestant books, he was astonishingly kidnapped ('by Gods providence no doubt') by an English merchant and his wife, and was convicted as a traitor and hanged, drawn, and quartered.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 66, 69, 75. The examples she cites come from Jean Crespin's *Book of Martyrs*, and the anonymous *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au Royaume de France* (generally believed to be a collection of texts which Béza encouraged Goulart to compile).

¹²⁸ In the space of less than one page Foxe calls him four times a 'bloody persecutor', and also a 'bloody tyrant', 'bloody butcher', 'bloody Nemrode', guilty of the 'cruel bloudshedding of his servauntes', a participator in the 'bloody sword of persecution', possessed of 'bloud thyrstye cruelty', 'seeking to have Protestant blood.' *A&M* (1583), Book 12, 2175.

[H]e being hanged till he was halfe dead, was cut downe and stripped, and (which is not to be forgot) when the executioner had cut off his privy mēbers, he rushing up upon a sodeine gave him a blow upon the eare, to the great wonder of all that stood by, and thus ended this bloody Nemrode his wretched life.

While the wondrous behaviour of Latimer's body near to his death signalled his piety and God's pleasure with him, confirming his status as a true martyr and one of the elect, Story's body's equally wondrous behaviour near death – suddenly sitting up and punching his executioner on the ear when he was almost dead and should have been extremely weak – confirmed the opposite. Story's wondrous (perceived) violent and uncharitable behaviour demonstrated that he was a wicked man, a bloody persecutor, a false martyr, and doubtless deserving of God's wrath and judgement.¹²⁹ A comparison of the fates of Latimer and Story captures how Foxe constructed materiality as witnessing to eschatological truths, in vivid, memorable, and sometimes marvellous ways; it also illustrates the close relationship between this theme and the themes of martyrs' blood witness and - especially – their persecutors' blood-guilt.

English Protestant Discussions of Martyrdom After the *Acts and Monuments*

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was the last widely-read and highly influential martyrology of the English Reformation. It thus crystallised the English Protestant language of martyrs' blood, until the martyrdoms of the civil war in the 1640s presented a new opportunity for native martyrs and textual constructions of their bodies and deaths. As England saw almost no Protestant martyrdoms of between 1559 and the 1640s, a language of martyrs' blood as a Protestant weapon in confessional polemic gradually seeped out of English literature during this period, even as a recusant Catholic language of martyrs' blood emerged and flourished. This is not, of

¹²⁹ *A&M* (1583), Book 12, 2175.

course, to say that no Protestants texts talked about martyrs' blood after the *Acts and Monuments*, or, indeed, that the topic completely lost relevance in the Protestant world. The *Acts and Monuments* continued to be re-printed and widely read, and thus the topic and rhetoric of martyrs' blood most probably continued to have some influence on English Protestant mentalities. This is shown by the occasional references to martyrs' blood in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, which conformed to the now-established precedent. For example, in William Harrison's preface to the printed funeral sermons and *Life of Katherin Brettergh*, published in 1602, he writes in passing of the 'holie Martyrs, which sealed the truth of Christ with their owne blood', a language which entirely resonates with that of the *Acts and Monuments*.¹³⁰ Foxe's language of martyrs' blood was best preserved in anti-Catholic writings, in which references to martyrdom most frequently continued to appear. This resulted from the re-invigoration of the pseudomartyr debate in late Tudor and early Stuart England, in the context of whether or not the several hundred executed Catholics were true martyrs. The printed funeral sermons and *Life of Katherin Brettergh* was, in fact, an anti-Catholic compilation, presenting Brettergh's side of her strife with local Catholics, and therefore it makes sense that the work makes passing reference to the truth of the Protestant faith as 'sealed' by the blood of the Protestant martyrs.

William Cecil's *The Execution of Justice* (1583) reflects some of the rhetoric of martyrs' blood found in the *Acts and Monuments*. *The Execution of Justice* was a key piece of Protestant apologetic and anti-Catholic propaganda that purported to speak for the Elizabethan regime.¹³¹ It sought to justify the anti-Catholic legislation and the executions of Catholics which had been gathering pace during the late 1570s and early 1580s, and to undermine the executed Catholics' claims to martyrdom. Cecil clearly felt that the best form of defence was attack, since a main argument of the work is that Catholics are not bleeding martyrs but bloodthirsty persecutors.¹³²

¹³⁰ William Harrison, *Deaths Advantage Little Regarded, and The Soules Solace Against Sorrow. Preached in two funerall sermons at Childwal in Lancashire at the buriall of Mistris Katherin Brettergh the third of June. 1601* (London: 1602), A4^r.

¹³¹ The regime, of course, did not actually speak with one consistent voice.

¹³² See William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice in England for Maintenance of Public and Christian Peace, Against Certain Stirrers of Sedition, and Adherents to the Traitors and Enemies of the Realm, Without Any Persecution of Them for Questions of Religion, as is Falsely Reported and Published by the Fautors and*

In the face of an increasingly frequent Catholic rhetoric of English Protestants as bloody enemies, and of English Catholics witnessing to the truth with their blood, Cecil reiterates at length that the Catholics are the bloody enemies and the English Protestant martyrs witnesses to the true faith (Protestantism) with their blood. Cecil claimed the Catholic missionary priests would already have incited rebellion in England from which 'a manifest bloody destruction of great multitudes of Christians' would have ensued, had Elizabeth not wisely legislated against them and executed some of their number. Of those Catholic missionary priests that remained, the 'fruit and effects thereof [of their efforts] are by rebellion to shed the blood of all her faithful subjects.'¹³³ Cecil here echoes Foxe's earlier depictions of Catholic would-be martyrs as, in fact, bloodthirsty killers rather than bleeding innocents. It is, protests Cecil, Elizabeth herself and her regime which labour to prevent bloodshed, and he extols repeatedly 'the unwillingness in Her Majesty to have any blood spilled without this very urgent, just, and necessary cause'.¹³⁴ While the Catholic pseudomartyrs are no more than blood-seeking traitors, the Protestant martyrs have witnessed to the true faith at the hands of Catholic persecutors, as in Queen Mary's reign the Protestants 'by their blood and death in the fire they did as true martyrs testify.'¹³⁵ Cecil thus marshalled imagery of Catholic clerics and martyrs as bloodthirsty men, and of Protestants as witnessing to the true faith with their blood in the regime's Protestant apologetic response to a new situation in the English Reformation: for the first time, Catholics were being martyred in significant numbers, while Protestant martyrdoms had ceased.

Although the Catholic martyrs whom Foxe attacked were all pre-Elizabethan, there is a remarkable correlation between Foxe's depiction of them as bloody persecutors and traitors in the *Acts and Monuments* (1563-83) and the Elizabethan regime's developing policy (from the late 1570s) of presenting contemporary Catholics and their martyrs, especially the missionary

Fosterers of their Treasons (London: 1583), in Robert M. Kingdon (ed.), *The Execution of Justice in England by William Cecil and A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense of English Catholics by William Allen* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), 3-4, 7-8, 8-9, 30, 37, 40.

¹³³ Ibid, 7, 37.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 8.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 21.

clergy, as blood-seeking traitors who aim to incite bloody rebellions. This is especially worth considering when one recalls that Cecil was a main patron of the *Acts and Monuments*, and also the mastermind behind the Elizabethan government's strategy and apologetics against the Catholic mission. In this relationship, intriguingly, we perhaps see Foxe influencing Cecil, rather than the reverse, since the relevant passages appear in the 1570 edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, and many of them in the 1563 edition; yet the English mission did not begin until 1574, and the first missionary priest was only executed in 1577. When one examines how Cecil's *The Execution of Justice* describes English Protestants and Catholics, especially their respective martyrs, in similar terms to those used by Foxe in the *Acts and Monuments*, it is possible that the legacy of Foxe, a genius of English Protestant martyrology and apologetics, is even greater than has yet been recognised.

This question of who were the bleeding martyrs and who were the bloodthirsty persecutors remained a contentious topic, surfacing again at the trial of Henry Garnett in 1606. Garnett was the Jesuit Superior in England and the government was eager to depict him as having played an active role in the Gunpowder Plot in order to vilify further the Jesuits, whose growing numbers and relative success in England were causing alarm. The trial was intended to be a foremost piece of anti-Catholic propaganda, in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot; the famous lawyer Edmund Coke was given the task of framing the head of the English Jesuit mission as one of the main plotters. Coke acknowledged that Catholics described as a 'bloody law' the legislation which made it treason for Englishmen who had been ordained Catholic priests abroad to set foot on English soil; but, Coke protested, this law was, in fact, not 'made to spill their blood' but 'to save their blood by keeping them there which by coming hither would be spilt in bloody practices.' Coke reproduces, succinctly, here Cecil's depiction, over thirty years earlier, of the Catholic clergy as bloodthirsty traitors and the Protestant regime as innocently unwilling to shed anyone's blood. There are, in turn, continuities between the rhetoric used by Coke and Cecil and the rhetoric which had been used in early English Protestant writings: all portray the Catholic clergy as bloodthirsty men who incessantly meddle in politics and so pose a

great danger to the stability of the regime. Such continuities between Fish's traitorous 'bloodsuckers' in 1525 and Coke's Catholics engaged in traitorous 'bloody practices' in 1606 are striking. There were certainly mutations in the Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood over the course of the long sixteenth century, but there were also important consistencies, reflecting enduring Protestant conceptions of Catholicism and the vital role blood played in articulating them.

Conclusion

In examining Foxe's rhetoric of martyrs' blood in the *Acts and Monuments*, we see strong continuities with earlier English Protestant writings, but also a good deal of innovation. Henrician writers had not emphasised the role of martyrs' blood as witness, but Foxe and his Marian source base highlight this function, influenced both by the pseudomartyr debate and by apocalypticism. Foxe continued the standard English Protestant rhetoric of bloody enemies, and its anti-clerical focus, but also innovated in presenting the English Catholic martyrs not merely as pseudomartyrs but as blood-shedding persecutors whose bloody deaths were due to the avenging of innocent blood with guilty blood. Like earlier English Protestant writers, Foxe used a rhetoric of martyrs' blood which was often apocalyptic; however, he was distinctive in placing a specific, and very imminent, date on the apocalypse, and in his intention that his martyrological writing should not only warn believers of the impending apocalypse but also actually be of use in the Last Judgement. The sacramentarian nature of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is evident, but has an individual flavour. Like Bale, Foxe and the Marian sources he cites firmly rejected the Catholic notion that martyrs' blood has a salvific function. Like earlier sacramentarian writers, Foxe's narrative of martyrs' blood is one of vengeance. Foxe's consistent narrative of blood for blood is unique, however; this is perhaps partly because of the context which frames it, namely the detailed aerial view of Christian history that he painstakingly paints in the *Acts and Monuments*. Foxe nuanced the sacramentarian picture of

vengeful martyrs' blood by stating, albeit rarely, that this blood-for-blood punishment is not inevitable, but rather if the persecutors repent they can avoid this terrible fate. Foxe also redrew the sacramentarian depictions of the relationship between the divine and materiality. In the *Acts and Monuments*, the martyrs' blood is not miraculous, but it is sometimes wonder-working; the martyrs' deaths are bloody and lengthy, and their persecutors almost always come to (vividly described) bloody or grizzly ends – their bodies reflecting their wicked spiritual state and God's just avenging of blood with blood.

The *Acts and Monuments* presented the most detailed and theologically rich treatment of martyrs' blood found in English Protestant writings. Since England saw no further Protestant martyrdoms between Elizabeth's accession and the Civil War, from c.1583 onwards a rhetoric of martyrs' blood largely disappeared from mainstream Protestant literature (with the exception of reprints of the *Acts and Monuments* and other earlier works). However, those texts which did continue to employ some of this rhetoric tended to follow the precedent of the *Acts and Monuments*, and tended to be anti-Catholic polemics, since the contentious topic of martyrdom was still highly relevant in dialogues between English Catholics and Protestants given the continuing martyrdoms of English Catholics. It was now the Catholics who were using a frequent rhetoric of martyr's blood, as martyrdom became a prominent theme in their literary culture and confessional self-image, comparable to the Protestant situation earlier in the period.

The English Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood reveals a great shift in religious understandings of blood more generally in the early-modern period. The medieval West had been marked simultaneously by a heavy focus on Christ's blood and by a decrease in attention paid to martyrs' blood. The Reformation had changed the picture once again. It had not eradicated the intense and ubiquitous focus on Christ's blood, but it had resuscitated a versatile

and prominent mainstream of martyrs' blood.¹³⁶ Both discourses together permeated Reformation religious literature.

Martyrs' blood became a theme of critical importance over the course of the English Reformation. It was used to encapsulate a number of key Protestant theologies, and it was also a particularly effective medium by which to attack Catholic doctrine and practice. Traces of this rhetoric are already found in late medieval anti-clerical and heretical texts, and in the subsequent martyrological writings of Luther during the 1520s; but, over half a century, these ingredients were combined, blended, and developed into a ubiquitous and theologically rich rhetoric. References to martyrs' blood in early Henrician Protestant writings stand as a halfway house between the medieval and the later Protestant language of martyrs' blood, revealing an English vernacular still in flux, as English Protestantism sought to establish its theological standpoints and its linguistic identity. John Bale's works shaped the development of the theology and language of martyrs' blood in the English Reformation, as he drew together existing imagery of martyrs' blood into an omnipresent and theologically-coherent discourse, underpinned by an overarching framework of apocalypticism. In incorporating medieval heretical, early English Protestant, and Marian Protestant texts, as well as Foxe's own prose, the *Acts and Monuments* combine the evolutionary phases of the anti-Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood, while Foxe's idiosyncratic perspectives nonetheless are very evident. There are, thus, substantial differences in 'the English Protestant language of martyrs' blood' across the sixteenth century, but equally there is also a striking concordance: these texts share a distinctively polemic and apocalyptic language of martyrs' blood, which functions as a key weapon of anti-Catholic and anti-clerical polemic.

Protestant Reformation constructions of martyrs' blood encapsulate how the nature and function of martyrology changed in response to the specific preoccupations of its age. As seen in

¹³⁶ For the continuing omnipresence of Christ's blood in Reformation religious literature see, for example, David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (eds), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of corporeality in early modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009) [First ed. 1997], 85.

Chapter One, the primary functions of mainstream medieval martyrological writings were to present a model of holy behaviour to be imitated by the reader, and to draw a textual image of the saints whose intercession the believer could seek. For these reasons, martyrs' blood was of little importance in them. In the light of Reformation theology and confessional conflicts, Protestant martyrologies broke the medieval mould and created a different genre. They did not provide a textual image of saints to whom believers could pray, nor were they primarily intended as a mirror of good behaviour; rather, they were a polemic weapon in confessional propaganda. Medieval and Protestant martyrologies differed substantially in nature as well as in function. Mainstream medieval writings about martyrs were primarily backward-looking in nature: they were concerning with celebrating early-Church martyrs. In contrast, Protestant writings about martyrs did not look so much back to the golden age of the early Church as forward to the apocalypse, which they saw as impending. While martyrs' blood was of little importance in mainstream medieval martyrologies, it became of great relevance in highlighting and exploring Protestant concerns, working as a tool to attack their martyrs' enemies, to attract the sympathy of the reader, and to articulate broader theological frameworks such as the apocalyptic theology of Revelation and the difference between Protestant and Catholic soteriologies.

Discourses of martyrs' blood also encapsulate a wider change of emphasis in constructions of the holy body during the Reformation. Most evidently, while medieval hagiographical accounts (including martyrology) had been suffused with a theme of the miraculous holy body, this theme had disappeared from Protestant martyrology, due to the cessationist nature of Protestant theology.¹³⁷ This is reflected in the theme of martyrs' blood. While twelve accounts in the *Golden Legend* depict the martyr bleeding, and five depict their

¹³⁷ See Donald Weinstein and Rudolph B. Bell, *Saints and Society: The two worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5, 8, 18, 36-37, 42, 50, 53, 60, 62, 66, 77-78, 81-82, 88, 90, 97, 102-103, 112, 117, 130, 133, 136, 142-144, 147, 149, 151, 153, 160, 163-164, 177, 182, 202, 208, 222, 226-229, 249, 283, for a detailed discussion of the importance of the miraculous in medieval understandings and textual constructions of sanctity.

enemies as bloodthirsty, eight accounts portray martyrs' blood as miraculous. It was one of the most common aspects of martyrs' blood in medieval martyrological writings. In contrast, among the myriad and frequent constructions of martyrs' blood we have explored in English Protestant martyrologies, constructions of martyrs' blood as miraculous were eschewed, and even depictions of extraordinary natural marvels were scarce and ambivalent in Henrician writers, only later proliferating in the *Acts and Monuments*. We also see a change in that hagiography had shifted from being focused primarily on saints to being primarily concerned with martyrs. As part of this shift, the *vita* was now of far less importance; instead the martyrs' witness through persecution and execution was the focal concern. Hence the vivid language throughout of bloodthirsty and bloodstained enemies, and of the blood-shedding martyr. Indeed, there was now far less emphasis on the holiness of the body at all, attention shifting from the holy person to their persecutor. Martyrology was concerned less with holiness (including the body) as a textual mirror of sanctity, and more with utilising holiness (including the body) as a textual weapon to attack the 'other'. In sharp contrast to medieval martyrology, the emphasis in Reformation martyrology is placed more on the evil body of the persecutor, which is stained, revealed and destroyed by the effect of the holy martyr's blood.

Chapter Four: The English Catholic Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood, c.1525-c.1575.

During the period c.1525-c.1575, English Protestant discussions of martyrdom came to employ a frequent and aggressive rhetoric of martyrs' blood. They presented Protestant martyrs as witnessing to the true faith by shedding their innocent blood, and this blood as calling down and witnessing to God's impending apocalyptic vengeance upon their persecutors – the bloodthirsty, blood-guilty Catholics. This chapter will explore how English Catholic apologetics responded, and how English Catholicism constructed its own martyrs at a time of major shifts in the English socio-political landscape.

It is important to note at the outset that Catholic texts did not often employ rhetoric of martyrs' blood in this period. Yet, this relative absence merits discussion because the Catholic approach stands in striking contrast to the rapidly developing rhetoric and theology of martyrs' blood in English Protestant apologetical and polemical writings. We shall, thus, both analyse why Catholic texts of this period did not frequently use a rhetoric of martyrs' blood, and also explore what such a rhetoric – when it *was* used – reveals to us about Catholic theology and apologetics over the course of the English Protestant Reformations, and about major shifts in the English socio-political landscape. Our analysis will draw on the main English Catholic works discussing martyrdom, from Thomas More's apologetics of the 1520s to the early-Elizabethan apologetics of Thomas Stapleton, Nicholas Sanders, and Richard Bristow.¹

¹ More, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, and *Supplication of Souls*; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*; Nicholas Sanders, *De Visibili Monarchia Ecclesiæ, Libri Octo* (Louvain: 1571); Richard Bristow, *A Briefe Treatise of Diverse Plaine and Sure Wayes to Finde out the Truthe in This ... Time of Heresie* (Antwerp: 1574).

Thomas More and his Legacy

From the 1520s, references to martyrs' blood became increasingly frequent in English Protestant writings. As we explored in Chapters Two and Three, English Protestant apologetics and polemics, from the beginning, utilised vivid imagery of an antichristian and bloodthirsty Catholic Church to attack Catholicism on religious, economic, social and political grounds. In contrast, English Catholic writings only infrequently referred to martyrs' blood; their apologetics and polemic focused upon the purported intellectual and moral superiority of the true, Catholic martyrs, and presented the Protestant martyrs as lacking erudition, judgement, and moral character. On the limited occasions when Catholic apologists did employ a rhetoric of martyrs' blood, it was usually to refute Protestant claims that Catholicism was bloody, to criticise the Protestant rhetoric, or to depict Catholic martyrs' blood as revealing the true faith either by the fact of its witness or in connection with miracles.

In the 1520s, as we have discussed, English Protestant writings continued the established medieval heretical and anti-clerical trend of using a rhetoric of bloodthirsty enemies and bloody clerics to portray the Catholic Church as avaricious, cruel, murderous, and antichristian. The leading English Catholic apologist responding to these attacks was Sir Thomas More, a lawyer and humanist scholar, who became a vigorous opponent of the nascent Protestant movement, both in his writings and in his prosecution of heretics as Lord Chancellor (1529-1532). While, as a humanist, More had criticised the abuses present in late medieval Catholicism and called for reform, by the late 1520s he was preoccupied with trying to defend the Church and to persuade his readers that – for all its abuses and shortcomings – the Catholic Church was the true Church.² More was granted a licence, in 1528, by Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall,

² For further discussion of More's reformist humanist writings, see Marshall, *Heretics*, 32-39, 95-6. For further discussion of More's apologia for the Catholic Church, *ibid.*, 127-33, 140-49, 157-59.

permitting him to read heretical books for purposes of refutation, which allowed More to be familiar with much of the English Protestant and anti-clerical polemic and the apologetics of the late 1520s and early 1530s.³ Especially once he became Lord Chancellor, More proceeded fervently against heretics and their writings, trying to reverse the spread of early Protestant beliefs and writings in England, and being involved in the pursuit and examination of suspected and known Protestant apologists, in order to prevent the circulation of Protestant and anti-clerical writings.⁴

More sought to refute allegations that the Catholic Church was blood-guilty and bloodthirsty by arguing that it was in fact the Protestants who fitted this description. This tactic was first employed in his 1525-6 response to the Lutheran John Bugenhagen's apologetic work *Epistola ad Anglos* [epistle to the English]. Here, More claimed that Luther had 'first stirred ... up, and then ... sacrificed' the German peasants, doing 'all this in order to extinguish with the blood of those pitiful wretches the fires of hatred directed against himself'. More's response was ultimately laid aside, however, unpublished.⁵ Similar rhetoric then appeared in his printed apologetics of the late 1520s, such as his 1529 *Supplication of Souls*, in response to Simon Fish's *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*, a text exemplifying the Protestant bloody anti-Catholic and anti-clerical polemic which had reached court circles in early 1529. More refuted Fish's claim that the Catholic clergy were antichristian 'blood suppers drunken in the blood of holy sayntes and marters', and maintained that rather it was the Protestants who have 'fowle bloody handys'.⁶

More's rhetoric was confined, however, to rebutting the Protestant claims that the Catholics were bloody enemies and the Protestants bleeding martyrs; he did not mention martyrs' blood when describing Catholic martyrdoms. Imprisoned in the Tower of London from

³ See Marshall, *Heretics*, 157.

⁴ For further discussion of More's involvement in the campaign against heretical books and his role in the pursuit and examination of heretics, see Marshall, *Heretics*, 135, 141, 154-57, 174.

⁵ Perhaps because the German Catholic apologist Johannes Cochlaeus published his *Epistola*, a lengthy response, in February 1526, before More's could reach the press. Thomas More, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, 103.

⁶ More, *Supplication of Souls*, 143, 167.

April 1534, More was aware that he (along with a handful of others, chiefly Bishop John Fisher) was likely to be martyred for his staunch refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy and his tacit opposition to the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn. During this period he wrote the martyrological work *A Dialogue of Comfort* (1534), set in Hungary, in 1528, as the country faced the threat of Ottoman invasion.⁷ The parallels with the situation of English Catholics loyal to Rome as Henry VIII broke with Rome are obvious. The work records a fictional dialogue between a frightened young man, Vincent, and his spiritually-wise uncle, Anthony. In the *Dialogue*, it is probable that Hungary will fall to the Ottomans and that Vincent and Anthony will suffer, possibly even be martyred, and so Anthony tries to offer Vincent consolation that will help him to endure whatever befalls them with firm Christian faith. The comfort depends upon the principle of trusting and serving God despite enduring trials and temptations (including persecution for one's faith). The work strongly emphasises the importance of imitating and reflecting upon Christ's life and death, in order to be guided and strengthened, and so to prevail against every worldly trial and devilish temptation. More also wrote a number of letters to his family during his imprisonment, which discussed what was happening to him, expressed his love for his family, and – like *A Dialogue* – were concerned with the themes of suffering rather than betraying one's faith, trust in God, and endurance. Although there was no reason why a rhetoric of martyrs' blood could not have fitted well into these discussions, there is no mention of martyrs' blood in any of these works.⁸ Similarly, John Fisher wrote the meditation *A Spirituall Consolation* (1535), for his sister Elizabeth, a nun, while he was imprisoned in the Tower and awaiting martyrdom. The work provides a guide to living a holy life and being well prepared for death; it focuses particularly on Christ's Passion and his love for mankind. The work only refers to martyrs' blood once, although, like More's *Dialogue*, it is filled with references to Christ's

⁷ Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. by Monica Stevens (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979) [First ed. 1951].

⁸ Thomas More, *The Last Letters of Thomas More*, ed. with introd. by Alvaro de Silva (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000).

blood.⁹ For these pre-eminent Catholic apologists and soon-to-be martyrs, martyrs' blood was clearly not of crucial importance in delineating sanctity and martyrdom. Their martyrological works continued the medieval unbloody rhetoric of martyrdom.

While most of More's own writings do not treat the theme of martyrdom, his approaches to apologetics, polemics, and martyrdom heavily influenced subsequent English Catholic writings.¹⁰ This was because of his status as the leading English Catholic anti-Protestant apologist, his fervent suppression of heresy as Lord Chancellor, and the fact that he became one of the two (along with John Fisher) most eminent Reformation Catholic martyrs prior to 1580. Given his great influence over subsequent Catholic constructions of martyrdom, we should establish at the outset how and why More's approach differed from that of Henrician Protestant apologists and polemicists.

The discrepancy between More's approach and that of his Protestant contemporaries and near contemporaries reflects wider differences in their approaches to confessional polemic and in their notions of holiness, obedience, and charity. One basis for the different confessional constructions of martyrdom was a different attitude towards the emotions. As we have seen, depictions of martyrdom in Protestant confessional polemic tended to be vivid and strongly emotive, highlighting the centrality of persecution to Protestant confessional identity. Seeking to inflame anti-Catholic sentiments, Protestant discussions of martyrdom often focused as much on the martyrs' persecutors as the martyrs themselves. Protestant confessional polemic was also preoccupied with the body and bodily appetites, as Protestantism sought to redefine what was holy, natural, or sinful; yet, simultaneously it was uncomfortable with the notion of sanctity

⁹ 'Contrariwise you should consider the love of your spouse the swéet Jesu, how excelent it is, how sure, how fast, how constantly abiding, how many haue much specially regarded it, Martirs innumerable both men and women for his love have shead theyr bloud, and have endured every kind of martirdom were it never so cruell, were it never so terrible.' Fisher, *A Spirituall Consolation*, D8r.

¹⁰ For extended and detailed discussion of More's monumental importance to subsequent English Catholic constructions of martyrdom, see Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom*, 18-52.

being carried and revealed through materiality. Thus, it focused on Catholic bodies and their unnatural appetites, which included a depraved thirst for innocent blood.¹¹

In contrast, Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort* set a different tone, to which Catholic martyrological writings of the next forty years mostly conformed. He scarcely referred to martyrs' blood, and focused more on the martyrs' godly lives than on their wicked enemies.¹² A chief concern of Catholic confessional polemic, beginning with More, was to identify the true and false Churches by identifying the true and false martyrs: scholarship has termed this the 'pseudomartyr' debate.¹³ Following More's precedent, the spotlight in Catholic martyrology of the 1530s-70s fell squarely on the martyrs themselves, who were revealed to be true martyrs because they were holy, educated men, dying for correct doctrine. A rhetoric of bleeding martyrs persecuted by bloodthirsty enemies was inconsequential within this framework: true and false martyrs alike could have bloodthirsty enemies and shed their blood for their beliefs, but false martyrs could not be pious, erudite men, dying for religious truth. This Catholic focus was, as a result, largely non-corporeal: the argument hinged on true martyrs' erudition and adherence to orthodoxy, with martyrs' blood rarely mentioned.

The difference in register between Catholic and Protestant discussions of martyrdom captures the confessions' tendency to treat the emotions differently.¹⁴ Again, the Catholic position is first seen in More's writings. English Catholic martyrologies in the half century after

¹¹ This in turn, identified them with the bloodthirsty, apocalyptic forces of evil prophesied in Revelation.

¹² It is understandable that More was reluctant to attack Henry VIII, who is – at most – allegorised in the *Dialogue of Comfort*. However, there is no reason why More could not have adopted the traditional rhetoric of wicked counsellors to attack (via his loosely veiled allegory) the leading figures who encouraged Henry VIII to break with Rome, to curtail the traditional rights and privileges of the Church, and to imprison More, Fisher, and the defiant Carthusians. More could have focused on presenting these figures as bloody, wicked enemies of the persecuted true believers, mirroring the rhetoric found in Fish, Tyndale, and other Protestant apologists, if he had wanted, but he did not. Thus, we must conclude that his chief interest in the *Dialogue* was in the characteristics and behaviour of godly martyrs themselves, rather than their wicked enemies. The enemies of the *Dialogue* are sketched in broad brushstrokes, unlike Vincent and Anthony whose characters are vividly developed through the dialogue.

¹³ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 18-26. Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 177.

¹⁴ The different confessional perceptions of emotion has only begun to be explored by historians in the last decade, and little work has yet been done on English Reformation martyrology and the emotions. A close examination of rhetorics of martyrs' blood has the potential to contribute to this broader historiographical picture.

More were influenced by humanists' neo-Stoicism, following More's own moderate appreciation of this classical philosophy. The Renaissance revived both Stoicism and anti-Stoicism, and humanists divided in their loyalties.¹⁵ More's close friend Desiderius Erasmus mocked Stoicism in his *Praise of Folly*; but, More himself showed appreciation for Stoicism in his *Utopia*, although he could also be an emotive and emotional writer, as in his *De Tristitia Christi*.¹⁶ It is More's ambivalent appreciation for moderate Stoicism that endured for half a century in the *more* 'reason'-based and erudite discussions of martyrdom in English Catholic apologetics.¹⁷ In contrast, according to Richard Strier, it is 'in the Reformation tradition that the attack on Stoicism ... is freed from ambivalence. We must turn to the Reformers, and especially to Luther, for the most full-throated defenses of passion'.¹⁸

Luther claimed that Catholic constructions of saints created 'senseless blocks, and without all affections' and argued 'the saints of the Papists are like to the Stoics, who imagined such wise men as in the world as were never yet to be found'.¹⁹ Luther hereby recognised that Catholic constructions of sanctity tended to emphasise individuals' wisdom and erudition, and to downplay their emotions and the wider emotional stage on which they performed their sanctity. Calvin echoed Luther's sentiments.²⁰ These confessional differences over the emotions are excellently illustrated by the fact that (prior to the 1580s) English Catholic martyrological polemic and apologetic focused *more* on erudite theological arguments and on constructions of Catholic martyrs as wise and educated men, whereas English Protestant martyrological polemic and apologetic focused *more* on emotive constructions of cruel, bloodthirsty persecutors and

¹⁵ Strier, 'Against the Rule', 23.

¹⁶ Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium* (1511). More, *Utopia* (1516), and *De Tristitia Christi* (1535). On Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, see Strier, 'Against the Rule', 26-28. On More's *Utopia*, see Strier, 'Against the Rule' 29.

¹⁷ However, we must beware reducing this comparison to binary opposites. It is not simply the case that Protestant depictions of martyrdom were emotive and Catholic ones were not. Rather, Protestant depictions of martyrdom were generally *more* emotive and emotional, and emotive rhetoric was a *more* important weapon in the arsenal of Protestant martyrological propaganda.

¹⁸ Strier, 'Against the Rule', 29.

¹⁹ Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians* (1531), in *Martin Luther: Selections from his writings*, ed. by John Dillenberger (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961), 158-59, cited in Strier, 'Against the Rule', 31.

²⁰ Strier, 'Against the Rule', 31-32.

bleeding martyrs. In this respect, More set the trend for English Catholic depictions of martyrdom.

Another basis for the differing confessional constructions of martyrdom was the unique political situation of Catholics. Their loyalty to the pope, a foreign prince, above their national sovereign meant that they faced accusations of treason. Catholic apologetics were, thus, keen to refute such accusations by constructing themselves as loyal subjects in all political matters (while nonetheless recognising their primary obedience to the religious authorities instituted by God). Catholics' respectful treatment of the authorities demonstrated that they were not traitors, but in fact obedient to the authorities in all matters except those of faith. Again, Thomas More set the precedent. In his *Dialogue*, he was reluctant to attack his sovereign Henry VIII, who appears – at most – as a distant allegory (the scarcely-mentioned sultan who is commanding the Ottoman invasion). On the scaffold, More is reported to have stated: 'I die the king's good servant, but God's first.'²¹ Of course, professed loyalty to one's sovereign, even in the face of persecution, was commonplace, and More's behaviour should be viewed within these expectations, but it nonetheless established a fairly consistent Catholic apologetic attempt to refute accusations of treason through self-construction as blameless loyal subjects.

In addition, the stronger Catholic emphasis on charity also led to differing confessional constructions of martyrdom, as is again first evident in More's behaviour and writings. Catholics emphasised charity above all other virtues, and this was highlighted (by Catholic apologists) in contrast to the Protestant primary emphasis on faith. Beginning with More, even Catholic 'persecutors' often ascribed their actions to charity.²²

²¹ R.W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Penguin in association with Jonathan Cape, 1963) [First ed. 1935], 333-334.

²² Needless to say, their constructions of themselves were, too, works of apologetics and propaganda.

Considering that More was accused of being a bloodthirsty persecutor even in his own lifetime, it is notable that in his *Apology* he recorded his remark about John Frith (a young Protestant apologist being prosecuted for openly professing sacramentarian teachings):

I wolde some good frend of hys shold shew hym, that I fere me sore that Cryst wyll kindle a fyre of fagottes for hym, and make hym therin swete the bloude out of hys body here, and strayte from hense send hys soule for euer into the fyre of hell.²³

More depicted himself not as jubilant or even nonchalant at the prospect of the heretic's painful execution (so painful that he will 'swete the bloude out of hys body') and damnation, but rather as deeply troubled and sorrowful ('I fere me sore'). He was thus concerned in his words and writings to defend himself against the notion that he desired Frith's death. As a figurehead of the English Catholic Church's punitive action against heresy, in his role as Lord Chancellor of England, and as a fervent Catholic apologist, he represented himself as embodying the values of a Church which gave the highest place to charity rather than justice (while, of course, valuing both).

We see in the writings of More's contemporary, close friend, and fellow martyr John Fisher the importance accorded to love: Catholic martyrs shed their blood not only as a witness to the true faith but also out of love. While imprisoned in the Tower of London and awaiting martyrdom, Fisher wrote to his sister Elizabeth: 'Martirs innumerable both men and women for his [Christ's] love have shead theyr blood, and have endured every kind of martirdom were it never so cruell, were it never so terrible.'²⁴

Finally, there is one other, striking, difference between More's constructions of martyrdom and that of his Protestant contemporaries, and this difference between the confessional rhetorics would endure. While Henrician Protestant apologetics and polemics

²³ Thomas More, *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, vol. 9 *The Apology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963-1997), cxi.

²⁴ Fisher, *A Spirituall Consolation*, D8^r.

commonly connected contemporary martyrs' blood with the apocalypse, Catholic writers almost never did so. The difference is explained by the fact that most English Protestant writers believed the apocalypse to be imminent, but most English Catholic writers did not. In fact, More's attitude to the apocalypse encapsulates that of sixteenth-century English Catholic writers, when in his *Dialogue* he wrote:

bad as we are, I doubt not at all but that in conclusion, however base Christendom be brought, it shall spring up again, till the time be come very near to the day of judgment, some tokens of which methinketh are not come yet [Again] as I say, methinketh I miss yet in my mind some of those tokens that shall, by the scripture, come a good while before that. And among others, the coming in of the Jews and the dilating of Christendom again before the world come to that strait. So I say that for mine own mind I have little doubt that this ungracious sect of Mahomet [an allegorical reference to Protestantism] shall have a foul fall, and Christendom spring and spread, flower and increase again.'²⁵

The Continental Catholic apologist Ambrosius Catharinus Politus in his *Apologia* had depicted Luther as the Antichrist, but apocalyptic language was never popular in English Reformation Catholic works, and the advent of Protestantism and the martyrdoms of English Catholics were not usually depicted as a sign of the Last Times approaching.²⁶

²⁵ More, *Dialogue*, 189-190.

²⁶ Ambrosius Catharinus Politus, *Apologia pro veritate catholicae et apostolicae fidei ac doctrinae adversus impia ac valde pestifera Martini Lutheri dogmata*, 1520, ed. by Josef Schweizer (Münster in Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1956). For further discussion, see Patrick Preston, 'Catharinus versus Luther, 1521', *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 88- 291 (2003), 364-378.

From the Death of More to the Reign of Edward VI (1536-1552)

In the decades following the Catholic martyrdoms of the 1530s, two very different major Catholic apologetical and martyrological works discussed these events at length. The first was Reginald Pole's *Ad Henricum Octavum Britanniae Regem, pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione* (1536), the second Maurice Chauncy's *Historia Aliquot Nostri Saeculi Martyrum* (1550).²⁷

Pole was a humanist scholar, younger cousin, and former confidante of Henry VIII. As a great-nephew of Edward IV, he was also a possible Plantagenet claimant to the throne. He remained loyal to the papacy and was made a cardinal in 1536. These facts both enabled him to write a work openly reprimanding the king, and also made this work particularly dangerous to the Tudor regime. Indeed, Peter Marshall has described Pole's behaviour as 'the most significant individual act of resistance to Henry's Reformation.'²⁸

De Unitate was a lengthy, open epistle, penned in response to a letter from Henry in 1535 in which Henry had pressed Pole to accept that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon had been invalid and to deny the Pope's authority.²⁹ Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Starkey (formerly Pole's chaplain and now Henry's) wrote to him urging him to agree with the king. Pole also received two apologies for the royal supremacy, in an attempt to persuade him, one by Stephen Gardiner (bishop of Winchester), the other by Richard Sampson (Bishop of Chichester). The executions of More and Fisher stirred Pole into writing the defiant *De Unitate* as his response to the king. In it, he urged Henry to repent, and criticised the break from Rome and the executions of More and Fisher. The manuscript was dispatched to Henry in 1536;

²⁷ Pole's work is commonly referred to as *De Unitate*, and this thesis will use this abbreviated title henceforth.

²⁸ Marshall, *Heretics*, 236.

²⁹ For detailed discussion of *De Unitate*, see Thomas S. Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince & prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-61. For the English translation, see Reginald Pole, *Reginald Pole's Defense of the Unity of the Church*, trans. by Joseph G. Dwyer (Westminster; Maryland: The Newman Press, 1965).

unsurprisingly, it did not persuade the king, and was rejected by leading conformist Catholic-minded English churchmen and scholars like Cuthbert Tunstall (bishop of Durham).³⁰

De Unitate mentions martyrs' blood far more than any other English Catholic work written prior to the 1580s. Pole several times depicts martyrs' blood (like that of More, Fisher, and the Carthusians) as a witness to faith. He goes so far as to say, 'You can always read in their [Fisher's, More's, and the other Henrician Catholic martyrs'] deaths those things that pertain to your dignity and your salvation, as if in a certain book written not with ink but with blood.'³¹ However, his depiction of martyrs' blood witnessing is still set within the Morean humanist construction of the Catholic martyrs as wise and learned men, and this – for Pole – is what gives their blood-witness such authority. Pole depicts Henry VIII as blood-guilty, bloodstained, and in danger of facing God's vengeance for the martyrs' blood unless he repents – as Pole urges him to do. At first glance, therefore, Pole's work may seem similar to the writings of his Protestant contemporaries; but on closer examination, its treatment of the blood-guilty enemy (Henry VIII) is rather different. The work oscillates between his love for Henry and the divine punishment he knows Henry deserves.

When, however, I reflect on your deed, I am completely dissolved in tears and seriously fear for your salvation. On the other hand, when I consider your deed, it seems I should not only not be fearful for you and pray God to avert His punishment from you, but rather that I should beseech God for the glory of His name to bring this punishment as quickly as possible I should cry out to God "O Lord revenge the blood of thy servants, which hath been shed".³²

His solution is to hope that Henry, and all England with him, will repent, and so God will forgive and not punish them. The vehicles of this repentance are the witness of the Henrician Catholic martyrs, prayer, and the miraculous power of God. Pole argues that Henry is now spiritually

³⁰ Joseph G. Dwyer, 'Introduction', in Pole, *Pole's Defense*, xiii-xv, xxiv-xxv.

³¹ Pole, *Pole's Defense*, 255.

³² *Ibid.*, 69.

dead ('the spirit of God has departed from your soul').³³ However, Christ, who at the intercession of Martha and Mary miraculously raised Lazarus from literal death (even though he 'was dead for four days and buried in a sepulchre and who had a bad smell'), can also raise Henry from spiritual death in response to the intercession of the English people: 'will not He raise up your ruler who is dead because of his sins and who smells bad in the nostrils of the Church?'³⁴ Pole implores England and Henry alike to repent, and the English people to 'implore God on behalf of the salvation' of Henry.³⁵ He concludes, on the one hand, by warning Henry:

if you will refuse to listen attentively, the words of the Prophet follow upon you. "Then he that heareth the sound of the trumpet, whosoever he be, and do not look to himself, if the sword come, and cut him off; his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not look after himself. His blood shall be upon him."³⁶

On the other hand, the book finishes with the words: 'And here, at last, relying on the mercy of God through Christ, I shall conclude with the words of the Prophet on your behalf: "Be converted, and do penance for all your iniquities. And iniquity shall not be your ruin."³⁷

The incessant pleas for England and Henry to repent, and the frequent expression of hope in God's mercy, gives the work a different tone from English Protestant writings, despite the shared polemical language which includes imagery of bloodguilt, bloodstaining, and blood-vengeance. As discussed in previous chapters, Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood 'others' confessional opponents, and Protestant writers often delight in the expectation of God's vengeance upon their confessional enemies. Unlike Pole, they very rarely appeal directly to the blood-guilty to repent, nor do they hope fervently that God will have mercy on them. It is debatable whether Pole was genuinely torn between love for Henry and horror at Henry's recent religio-political policies, or whether this is simply a use of the familiar, disingenuous

³³ Ibid., 70.

³⁴ Ibid., 256.

³⁵ Ibid., 256.

³⁶ Ibid., 336.

³⁷ Ibid., 336.

strategy of apparently offering forthright 'loyal counsel' to a ruler in order to express rebellious and disloyal protest; but, the difference between Pole's treatment of bloody enemies and the usual Protestant treatment of bloody enemies is interesting regardless.³⁸ It undoubtedly stemmed partly from Henry's unique position as Pole's king: those on both sides of the confessional divide in this period usually shrank from unqualified denunciation of their sovereign as a bloody enemy.³⁹ However, no other English apologetic work of this period protesting at (or to) a persecuting sovereign expressed a similar level of love for their oppressive ruler, nor such profound concern for their spiritual welfare. It is thus possible that Pole here was also influenced by the Catholic apologetical emphasis on charity.

Imagery of Catholic martyrs' blood witnessing was rare prior to the 1580s, but Pole does employ it in *De Unitate*, carefully positioned within the Catholic neo-Stoic, humanist approach to the pseudomartyr debate established by Thomas More: 'More's martyr was a **humanist** man or woman of **reason** and **learning**, one who died for orthodox religious beliefs and aspired to conform to the martyr criteria set by Christ himself.'⁴⁰ For Pole, the fact that More and Fisher were men of reason and learning was what made their blood witness so persuasive.⁴¹ Indeed, it was Sampson's accusation that More and Fisher were stupid, ignorant, and mad in shedding their blood for Roman Catholicism that particularly riled Pole:

In the opinion of Sampson, both More and Fisher were not only stupid and ignorant but actually out of their minds, since they chose to oppose Sampson's opinion [that Henry, not the Pope, was the head of the English Church] not only by word but by giving their life's blood. ... [Yet] you [Henry VIII] have acknowledged the worth of these men with praise greater than you ever conferred on another in your realm. In my own presence

³⁸ Pole clearly struggled with the ideology of obedience to superiors, finding it essential in theory but difficult in practice. Mayer has described Pole's 'painful acceptance of the necessity of obedience, about which he had to write over and over as much to himself as to his audience'. Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 5.

³⁹ For example, see Foxe's treatment of Mary I in Chapter Three and Allen's treatment of Elizabeth I Chapter Five of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 18-26, 24. Emphasis mine.

⁴¹ See Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 26.

you have named Fisher as the most learned theologian you ever knew. In your own words you have attributed to More practical wisdom so great that you would willingly have sacrificed your kingdom in order to possess similar wisdom.⁴²

The same model of the scholar-martyr confirming his wise faith with his blood again appears in Pole's depiction of the Carthusian martyrs:

Behold the Carthusian Order! And I cannot do this without calling by name upon one whom I knew intimately. His name was Reynolds ... he possessed a cultivated knowledge of the liberal arts derived from their very own sources. For he had an excellent command of the three particular languages in which all the liberal arts are contained. He was the only one of all the English monks who knew these languages. He seemed to lack nothing that would confirm the praise of sanctity and learning for all time ... All that was lacking was for him to give the necessary testimony of truth at that time, together with other heroes of your embassy [the religious men who served as England's embassy to God]. He gave this testimony with his life's blood.⁴³

It is this pervading notion of the scholar-martyr that underpins Pole's depictions of martyrs' blood witnessing: 'You can always read in their [Fisher, More, and the other Catholic martyrs under Henry] deaths those things that pertain to your dignity and your salvation, as if in a certain book written not with ink but with blood'; 'But you, my native land, make sure you remember the words that those holy men poured forth almost with their blood!'⁴⁴ This emphasis (on the Catholic martyrs' sound judgement as what verifies their martyrdom [i.e. witness] as reliable and true) endured. It was doubtless an appealing criterion for sifting out true martyrs from pseudo-martyrs. A number of prominent later Catholic writers (especially Harpsfield and Persons) depicted Protestant martyrs as mostly ignorant and lowly people, who should have heeded the better-educated and socially-superior Catholic figures of authority.

⁴² Pole, *Pole's Defense*, 22-3.

⁴³ Ibid., 253.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 255, 257.

They contrasted these stubborn, foolish, ordinary folk with the Catholic martyrs who were, allegedly, mostly learned and eminent men, thus justified in following their own (better informed) judgement and consciences.⁴⁵

The second major Catholic apologetical work of the English Reformation, and the first proper martyrology of English Reformation Catholic martyrs, was Chauncy's *Historia*. Chauncy was a Carthusian monk, and former member of the London Charterhouse. In 1535 the majority of the Carthusian monks at the London Charterhouse had refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. After lengthy attempts to bribe, persuade, and force them to change their minds, some, including Chauncy, finally capitulated; those who held out were punished with death. On May 4th, John Houghton, the prior, along with two other Carthusian priors (of Beauvale and Axholme) and Richard Reynolds, was hanged, drawn, and quartered for denying the Royal Supremacy. Over the next five years, the other fifteen London Carthusian monks who refused the Oath of Supremacy were executed, or starved to death in gaol. When the monastery was closed in 1537, Chauncy joined a number of other English Carthusians in exile at Bruges, from where he bitterly regretted capitulating to the oath.⁴⁶ In 1550, he published his *Historia*, a martyrological account of the fate of the London Charterhouse, extolling as martyrs those who had refused the Oath of Supremacy, and lamenting his own acceptance of it. It was published shortly after Bale's martyrology of Anne Askew (1546-7), the first of an English Reformation Protestant martyr. Chauncy generally does not parry with the emerging Protestant weapon of bloody martyrology, although he does re-affirm the traditional Catholic belief in martyrs' blood as supernaturally powerful. Chauncy's martyrology was enduringly popular and well regarded. For example, in 1583 a new edition was printed in Spain with the express permission of Philip

⁴⁵ See Thomas S. Freeman, 'The Power of Polemic: Catholic responses to the calendar in Foxe's *Book of martyrs*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61-3 (2010), 475-495.

⁴⁶ 'Religious Houses: House of Carthusian monks', in J. S. Cockburn, H.P.F King and K.G.T. McDonnell (eds), *A History of the County of Middlesex*. Vol. 1, *Physique, Archaeology, Domesday, Ecclesiastical Organization, the Jews, Religious Houses, Education of Working Classes to 1870, Private Education from Sixteenth Century* (London: 1969), accessed at British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol1/pp.159-169> on 1/11/2017, 159-169. See also Marshall, *Heretics*, 222-23.

II.⁴⁷ It was, in essence, a medieval-style martyrology, utilising neither the polemical bloody rhetoric of English Protestant apologetics, nor the humanist, pseudomartyr Catholic apologetic approach which Thomas More had begun.

There are very few references to martyrs' blood in this lengthy work. Even Chauncy's two uses of a pelican metaphor to describe the Charterhouse martyrs does not involve any mention of blood. The only imagery of a bloody persecutor and a bleeding martyr occurs in Chauncy's reflection on early-Church martyrs at the opening of the work.⁴⁸ There are just two other references to blood in connection with martyrdom. The first involves the Prior of the London Charterhouse having one night seen in the air 'a ball of blood of amazing size'; later that night another brother saw it.⁴⁹ This is a miraculous foreshadowing of their martyrdoms. The second describes, among the relics of the Carthusian martyrs (that were secretly obtained and hidden), the bloody hairshirt of the prior.⁵⁰ These references to martyrs' blood in connection to sacred materiality highlight Chauncy's very different perception and use of martyrs' blood compared to the contemporary Protestant martyrologist Bale. In the latter half of the 1540s, Bale had been busily attacking the Catholic theology of martyrs' blood as possessing grace and supernatural powers, and (in his discussion of the cult of Thomas Becket's blood) had claimed that apparent evidence of the supernatural powers of martyrs' blood had now been exposed as no more than a monastic fraud. Chauncy, in contrast, depicted martyrs' blood as still powerful, and whereas Bale affirmed cessationism, Chauncy maintained that astonishing miracles still occurred in the present day.

⁴⁷ Chauncy, Maurice, *Historia aliquot nostri saeculi martyrum cum pia, tum lectu iucunda, numquam antehac typis excusa* (Burgos: 1583) [First edition Mainz: Gulielmus Sittart, 1550].

⁴⁸ Chauncy, *Historia aliquot nostri saeculi martyrum cum pia, tum lectu iucunda, numquam antehac typis excusa* (Mainz: Gulielmus Sittart, 1550), A4^r. He writes that the martyr St Catherine was led to prison by 'bloodthirsty people stabbing her'. Her response to martyrdom was: 'I have for a long time desired to offer my flesh and blood to Christ my spouse.'

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, M2^r-M2^v.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, O4^v.

The Reign of Mary I (1553-1558)

With the mass Protestant martyrdoms under Mary I, martyrdom became even more important to confessional polemic. Its significance to the Protestants' cause is evident, but from the beginning of Mary's reign, Cardinal Pole recognised the importance of martyrdom in apologetics for the restoration of Catholicism in England.⁵¹ Upon Mary's accession, even before he was summoned to England to lead the reintroduction of Catholicism, Pole set to work to extend his *De Unitate* to cover Mary's wondrous accession to the throne and the restoration of Catholicism.⁵² Martyrdom, as we have seen, was a significant topic in the work's appeal for England to return to the Catholic fold. It was also an important topic in Pole's first speech to Parliament (28 November 1554), as he absolved all its members and reconciled the country to Rome: he underlined the role of martyrs in the restoration of Catholicism, arguing that the 'deaths of the Henrician martyrs had been a sign of God's special favour, their bodies a barrier to prevent their countrymen abandoning the church entirely.'⁵³ This reiterated Pole's earlier description in *De Unitate* of the Henrician martyrs' erudite testimony in blood; in his speech to Parliament, he says that neither all the preaching of the early English missionaries nor all the books in the world 'have geven so muche light of truth, and of true catholike doctrine, as God hath wrytten to you and to all the worlde in their blood.'⁵⁴ He also compares the martyrs' blood to Christ's blood, saying that as Christ's death had brought humanity from death to life, 'so the bloud of those his servauntes whom ye giltlesse putte to death, hath been a meane to bring you to this mercie ... that ye might bee such as thei were in faith and constancie, and in participation of Goddes grace.'⁵⁵ This parallel between the role of Christ's blood and martyrs' blood, conferring God's mercy and grace upon people and bringing them to faith, stood within the

⁵¹ On Pole's leading role in the Marian restoration, see Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 33 and *passim*.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁴ Vat Lat 5968, sigs. 309-11, sigs. 352-3, quoted in Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 45. This was perhaps a backswipe at the Protestant emphasis on a book – *sola scriptura* – as the ultimate source of revelation, as well as at the Protestant attempt to present the earliest missionaries to England as autonomous rather than sent by Rome.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

tradition of perceiving martyrs' blood like Christ's blood; it implicitly conflicted with the Protestant position that martyrs' blood was neither like Christ's blood nor an instrument of salvation.

Other Marian Catholic apologetics also took up the topic of martyrdom. One of the first defences of the burnings of Protestants (which began in the summer of 1555) was the anonymous *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise Concerning the Masse, for the Instructyon of the Simple and Unlearned People* (June/July 1555).⁵⁶ Duffy describes it as 'the regime's most remarkable propagandist venture' – a 'powerful and uncompromising defence of the burnings'.⁵⁷ He notes that it reached a larger audience than any other apology for the executions, and was so popular that it went through five editions in six months.⁵⁸ The first three quarters of the pamphlet focus on defending Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist (transubstantiation and veneration); the last quarter shifts its focus to defending the burnings, and to demolishing Protestant claims that those executed were martyrs. Its argument hinges on the notion that Protestant martyrs must be false martyrs because they lack charity (as manifested above all by their rejection of Christ and his true Church); thus, 'the sheddyng of their blood ...profiteth them nothyng'.⁵⁹ It also derides Protestants rejection of medieval and contemporary miracles that (it claims) prove the truth of Catholicism, depicting the Protestant scepticism towards miracles and the attribution of Catholic miracles to the devil as revealing that Protestants are the heirs of the unbelieving Jews of the New Testament, not of Christ and his apostles.⁶⁰

One of the principal Catholic apologists, Miles Huggarde, also addressed the topic of martyrdom in a work widely agreed to be 'the single most effective piece of Marian propaganda', *The Displaying of the Protestantes* (1556).⁶¹ Unusually for a confessional apologist,

⁵⁶ This exists in two editions (a slightly expanded, second edition was printed that same summer): STC 17629 and 17629.5. I cite from the second edition: STC 17629.5.

⁵⁷ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 76, 58.

⁵⁸ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 76.

⁵⁹ Anon, *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise Concerning the Masse, for the Instructyon of the Simple and Unlearned People* (London: 1555), G5^r.

⁶⁰ Ibid., F6^v.

⁶¹ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 76, 77. On Huggarde, see Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 107, 174-178.

he was a hosier and an autodidact rather than a highly educated clergyman or gentleman. In *The Displaying*, he supports the burning of Protestants and attacks the notion that the executed Protestants were martyrs. Although Huggarde discusses the Reformation English Catholic martyrs, mentioning every Catholic individual martyred, he does not use a rhetoric of martyrs' blood to describe Catholic martyrdoms. Instead, his rhetoric of martyrs' blood is confined to discussing the Protestant martyrdoms, and he shows at times a precise awareness of how Protestant martyrs, martyrologists, and apologists are describing martyrs' blood.

Like More in the 1520s, Huggarde derides the Protestants' claim that their martyrs' blood witnesses to the true faith: 'who hath so bewytched you too thynke, that that man whiche sticketh to hys opinion to death, and sealeth the same with his bloude, as you terme it, therefore his opinion is good?'⁶² He also mocks the idea that Christ has sent the Protestant martyrs 'as new Apostles to teach us this new found veritie, and to seale it up with their bloud (as they brag) like as ye holy and very martirs of Christ dyd in tyme past ratifie the Catholike faith'.⁶³ Drawing upon St Paul, he argues that shedding blood in witness of alleged faith is futile without true charity. ⁶⁴ Like *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise*, he attacks the uncharitableness of Protestant martyrs, which marks them out as pseudomartyrs. He criticises the Protestants who call 'the Byshoppes and magistrates ... blodsuckers, and suche lyke blaspemous names'. He depicts this as disrespectful behaviour which stands in contrast to the behaviour of the Biblical Christian martyrs (thus here attacking the Protestants from their own terrain of *sola scriptura*) and to the Christian virtues of 'charitie, pacience, and such lyke'.⁶⁵

Marian Catholic apologetics and polemics did not solely concern (supposed) pseudo-martyrs: Cardinal Pole, perceiving that martyrology was a potent tool of confessional polemic, commissioned Nicholas Harpsfield to write a *Life* (c.1556/7) of Sir Thomas More. In order to draw the necessary materials together, Harpsfield in turn asked William Roper, More's son-in-

⁶² *The Displaying*, E3^v.

⁶³ *Ibid*, G2^v.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, G5^v.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, F2^v.

law, also to write a *Life* (c.1556??) of More.⁶⁶ Neither of these works were printed before Mary died, but they circulated widely in manuscript during Elizabeth's reign.⁶⁷ Roper's *Life* of More has nothing to say about martyrs' blood, while Harpsfield's *Life* mentions martyrs' blood just once: at his trial, Harpsfield's More says, 'Howbeit, it is not for the supremacy so much that ye seek my blood, as for that I would not condescend to the marriage.'⁶⁸ By the time these martyrologies were written, it was over a decade since John Bale had laid down the gauntlet of English Protestant bloody martyrology and confessional polemic, but only rarely did Catholic apologists respond in kind.

Harpsfield's biography of More was intended as a key piece of propaganda to defend the Marian burning of Protestants, and Roper contributed his *Life* fully cognisant that it was meant for this purpose.⁶⁹ Indeed, it was intended to accompany a new edition of More's English works, including his anti-Protestant and martyrological writings.⁷⁰ In *A Dialogue concerning Heresies* and his *Controversies*, More had dismissed Protestant claims to 'martyrdom' by depicting the executed Protestants as pseudo-martyrs, so igniting the pseudomartyr debate that subsequently raged in English confessional propaganda. Moreover, More himself had been involved in the trials and executions of heretics during his time as Lord Chancellor (1529-1532). Thus, in More, the Marian regime had the perfect figure through which to defend its executions of Protestants and to refute claims that those executed for the Protestant faith were martyrs.⁷¹ However, precisely because the Marian martyrology of More was framed within an erudite debate over

⁶⁶ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 179. William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More, Knight* (composed c.1556; first published 1626), in *Lives of Saint Thomas More*, E. E. Reynolds (ed.) (London: Dent, 1963); Nicholas Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight, Sometime Lord High Chancellor of England* (composed 1556/7), in *ibid.* For the strong argument that these works were commissioned by Pole, see Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 177-82, 185.

⁶⁷ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 45.

⁶⁸ Harpsfield, *The Life*, in Roper and Harpsfield, *Lives*, 163.

⁶⁹ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 39-40; Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 179-186. Roper and Harpsfield were enthusiastic participants in the campaign against Protestantism, both of them active in tracking down, examining, and (if they could not be persuaded to recant) sentencing heretics. See Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 92-93, 100, 130-134, 143-45, 179-82.

⁷⁰ *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, Sometime Lorde Chauncellour of England, Wrytten by Him in the Englysh Tonge*, ed. William Rastell (London: John Cawod, John Waly, and Richarde Tottell, 1557).

⁷¹ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 179-181.

what constituted martyrdom versus pseudomartyrdom, a bloody language would probably have been inconsequential.⁷² The debate was a rational one, based on the thought of Augustine and Cyprian, founded on cool-headed assessment of correct doctrine, which allowed one to identify who was outside the Church and thus who could not be witnessing to the true faith (and so must be dying as a pseudomartyr).⁷³ While English Marian Protestant apologists and polemicists constructed martyrdom in more emotive terms, following the reformers' embracing of emotion and passion, English Marian Catholic apologists and polemicists constructed martyrdom in a less emotive manner, chiming with More's earlier appreciation of moderate Stoicism.

These differences between Protestant and Catholic rhetoric capture a bigger picture of different confessional attitudes towards persecutors and confessional opponents. Catholics under Henry VIII and Edward VI (and again under Elizabeth I) faced the accusation that their confessional allegiance made them not merely heretics but also traitors, as they gave their ultimate allegiance to a foreign prince – the Pope – rather than their native monarch. It is within this context that the Catholics' more respectful treatment of the authorities, and *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise's* polemic outburst against Protestant martyrs who insulted and slandered their persecutors, makes sense.⁷⁴ By their respectful treatment of the authorities, Catholics demonstrated that they were not traitors, as alleged, but in fact obedient to their authorities in all matters except those of faith. This model of the true martyr being (as far as possible, without denying their faith) mild, obedient, respectful towards authority was reinforced by the publication of More's prison letters, which held up an image of an 'almost quietist catholic saint' for the English people to venerate and imitate.⁷⁵

Moreover, Catholic apologists placed particular emphasis on the virtue of charity, because it was seen as the virtue that heretics traditionally lacked, and perhaps also in contrast

⁷² Duffy describes Harpsfield's martyrology of More as 'a sophisticated reply to protestant martyrological claims, not in ridicule and contempt, but by holding up the image of a "true" catholic martyr, a paradigm of lay orthodoxy for Marian London.' *Fires of Faith*, 185.

⁷³ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 19.

⁷⁴ *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise*, G6^v, H1^v; Huggarde, *The Displaying*, 43, 47.

⁷⁵ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 180.

to the Protestant primary emphasis on faith. Thus, Catholic martyrs and their martyrologists strove to demonstrate the superior Catholic charity, and presented it as one of the marks by which pseudomartyrs could be distinguished from real martyrs.⁷⁶ For example, *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise* attributed the Protestants openly slandering the Marian religious and secular authorities to a lack of true Christian love, which revealed their lack of true faith.⁷⁷ It repeatedly described the Protestant martyrs having 'small Charitie', for example by spitting at and slandering their persecutors during their execution.⁷⁸

The work provides a strong emphasis on (and explanation of) charity as an essential quality of a true martyr, and argues that it is lacking in all Protestant would-be martyrs. It is one of the main themes which runs through the work, and the one which most closely ties together the pamphlet's discussion of the Eucharist in its first three quarters and its discussion of Protestant pseudomartyrs in its last quarter. It is therefore through this pamphlet that we can best understand an important facet of Catholic Eucharistic theology's influence on Catholic constructions of martyrdom. The pamphlet states that the first thing the Eucharist signifies is 'the union of all the members of the mystycall body of Chryst (that is to saye) the holye Church, unto one head hereof, Christ ... and everye member unto other, in charitie'.⁷⁹ We see here the logic behind Catholic apologists' insistence that all heretics behaved uncharitably: they were not united with their fellow men and women through the mutual bonds of charity which proceeded from Eucharistic unity, but rather had broken away from them. Furthermore, the Catholic faith itself – through the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist – was the one and only true charity ('receavyng one sacramente of the body and bloud of Chryst, we doe ... retayne and holde one

⁷⁶ See, for example, *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise*, G2^r.

⁷⁷ Huggarde, *The Displaying*, C3^r, E7^r-E7^v.

⁷⁸ Huggarde, *The Displaying*, 43, 47. For a different confessional perspective on charity towards persecutors, consider Bale's justification of rudeness towards confessional opponents and tormentors, on the grounds that they were: '[like] dragons, hyders, and other odyble monsters ... [and] Surelye I knowe no kynde of Christen chartye to be shewed to the devyll ... Salomon sayth, there is ... a tyme as wele to hate, as a tyme to love ... With a perfyght hate, lorde (sayth David) have I hated those bloudthurstye enemyes whych were in their presumpcyon agaynst the': *First Examination*, 69-70.

⁷⁹ *A Plaine and Godlye Treatise*, E7^r. This is also repeated, and expanded, further down the page.

fayth and one charitie'), and those who did not hold it must be uncharitable.⁸⁰ Therefore, even if the Protestant martyrs seemed to be behaving charitably, this was impossible, and therefore their behaviour was no more than 'pretended charity'.⁸¹ Indeed, sacramentarian theology, in and of itself, was intrinsically uncharitable:

sacramentaries woulde make the worlde to wene that our sauior Chryst, of his inestimable charitie shewed towarde us in hys death and passion, had lefte unto us in the blessed Sacrament but a bare peace of bakers bread, as a synge of his bodye (whyche in very dede were but a symple and a poore meane memorial of so great charitie).⁸²

Thus, when sacramentarians had imposed their doctrine on England, 'Amitie and frendshyp was fled the realmye'.⁸³ Now that Catholicism had returned, the same lack of charity was to be seen in their martyrs by the discerning (all the Protestant martyrs are, implicitly, assumed to be sacramentarians here), however the pseudomartyrs tried to disguise it. It was apparent in their lives, including in their refusal 'to be busy in good workes of charitable dedes',⁸⁴ and also in their deaths. Some only managed to endure their burnings by imbibing 'strong drinke insteade of yt gostlye wyne of charitie and ye zeal of god'.⁸⁵ Others are exposed to be the devil's martyrs at the stake because, unable to bear the pain with charity as true Christian martyrs would, they reveal 'what greate charitie they have' in 'their mad and franticke raylynge at the stake and fyer against the Popoes holynesse ... all the clergy and all other catholyke people', and continue to 'rayle and revile ... curse and blaspheme untill the last breath.'⁸⁶

This lack of charity marked out heretical pseudomartyrs ('crafty wolves wrapped in shepes skins yt would make themselves martirs') of all ages as followers of the devil rather than truly 'Chrystes shepe', since Christ had said (John 13:35) 'In thys all men shall knowe that ye are

⁸⁰ Ibid., E7^r.

⁸¹ Ibid., F8^r.

⁸² Ibid., B1^r.

⁸³ Ibid., A6^r.

⁸⁴ Ibid., G3^v.

⁸⁵ Ibid., G1^v.

⁸⁶ Ibid., G6^v, H1^v.

my disciples, yf ye have charitie one unto an other.'⁸⁷ Augustine, the most influential Church Father in the West, had already highlighted this in exposing the Donatist martyrs to be false martyrs, because they lacked charity, and Paul had stated that all other good works and qualities were futile 'if I have not charitie' [1 Corinthians 13: 1-8].⁸⁸ Returning to the present alleged martyrdoms, the pamphlet pronounces: 'So they come to ye passion, they come to the sheddyng of their bloud, the come to the burnyng of their bodies, and yet it avayleth or profiteth them nothyng, because charitie lacketh'⁸⁹; 'they are ravening wolfes, and die not of charitie but of pryde and vayne glorie'⁹⁰.

This greater emphasis on charity was seen also in Catholic writers' attitudes towards the fates of their confessional opponents. While Protestant polemicists tended to look forward with eager anticipation to God's vengeance upon their blood-guilty Catholic persecutors, Catholic polemicists were (relatively) more concerned with the repentance of their Protestant enemies. This appears most clearly and frequently in Catholic apologetics post-1580, but is also transparently present in the *De Unitate*, where Pole does not deny that God can and will punish the unrepentant blood-shedder, but instead of gleefully awaiting this, rather hopes that the blood-guilty will repent and so experience God's merciful forgiveness rather than his just punishment.⁹¹

This emphasis on love is captured also in the attitude of famous Catholic figures of authority towards the prosecution of heretics. Let us consider the examples of Bonner and More, two figures John Foxe especially strove to depict as bloodthirsty persecutors in the *Acts and Monuments*. In their own writings, they depict a motive of charity lying behind their actions. As we have seen, even in his own lifetime, when More faced accusations that he was a

⁸⁷ Ibid., G4^v.

⁸⁸ Ibid., G5^r.

⁸⁹ Ibid., G5^r. It is noteworthy that the pamphlet describes even pseudomartyrdoms as 'ye passion' – showing (unconsciously) just how inextricably martyrs' deaths were united with Christ's death in Catholic theology.

⁹⁰ Ibid., F8^v.

⁹¹ Pole, *Pole's Defense*, 64-69, 254-57, 296, 336.

bloodthirsty persecutor, he constructed himself rather as having a charitable concern for Frith's fate if he continued to espouse heretical beliefs. Two decades later, Bishop Bonner maintained that it was out of charity that Protestants were being prosecuted and executed. Bonner wrote in a letter to all the London clergy concerning a man who has allegedly been preaching Protestantism:⁹²

We therfore, the forsaid Edmond, and byshop aboue said, not being able, nor daring passe over in silence, or winke at the forsaide heinouse acte, leaste by oure negligence and slacknes, the bloud of them might be required at our handes at the moste terrible day of judgement, desiring to be certified and enformed, whether the premisses declared unto us be of truthe, and least that anye scabbed shepe, lurking amongst the simple flock of our Lorde, do enfect them with pestiferous heresie, to you therfore, we straitly charge and commaunde [that you take the following steps].⁹³

This theology was based on the Biblical notion of being responsible for someone else's blood if one has not striven to turn them from mortal sin.⁹⁴ From the perspective of this letter, the Catholics who tried, sentenced and executed Protestants were not merely righteous blood-shedders, as one would expect Bonner to claim, but they were actually averting blood-guilt by shedding blood. If there was no whole-hearted attempt to repress the Protestant heresy, those guilty of this negligence and lack of zeal would be guilty of the Protestants' blood on Judgement Day. In executing heretics, the Bishop and his subordinates were thus fulfilling their divinely-ordained role of caring for the rest of their flock, protecting them from spiritual plague and death, acting from pastoral charity rather than pursuing justice for justice's sake.⁹⁵

⁹² This letter is, paradoxically, preserved in the *Acts and Monuments*, which cultivated the image of 'bloody Bonner'.

⁹³ *A&M*, 1563, Book 5, 1212.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Ezekiel 3:18, Ezekiel 3:20, Acts 18:5-6, Acts 20:25-27.

⁹⁵ Indeed, in the Catholic mindset, it was the heretics being burned, not those who sentenced them, who were guilty of a lack of charity. Astonishing as this seems to the modern reader, 'the Catholic position... defined separation from the Church as uncharitable, then used lack of charity to identify false martyrs.' Gregory, *Salvation*, 328.

The Earlier Part of Elizabeth's Reign, 1559-c.1575

Walsham has described the Elizabethan Catholic exiles as having created 'a powerful propaganda machine' by 1564. Between 1559 and 1570, fifty-eight works of English Catholic apologetics were printed in Antwerp and Louvain, defending Roman Catholic theology and attacking the doctrine of the Elizabethan Settlement.⁹⁶ Many of these works included discussions of martyrdom and the English Catholic martyrs, partly in response to Bale's and Foxe's Protestant martyrological polemic. Yet, like previous works of English Catholic apologetics, these Elizabethan Catholic works did not employ a rhetoric of martyrs' blood to attack their confessional opponents. This is exemplified by three seminal works written during the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign: Thomas Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande* (1565); Nicholas Sanders' *De Visibili Monarchia Ecclesiae Libri Octo* (1571); Richard Bristow's *A Briefe Treatise* (1574).

Thomas Stapleton (1535-1598) published numerous apologetic works; his first, and arguably most incisive, was his translation, in 1565, of the Venerable Bede's history of England (*Ecclesiasticae Historiae Gentis Anglorum*). His apologetics are laid bare in his lengthy preface, which depicts Catholicism as England's native religion, and explicitly attacks the two main English Protestant martyrologies: Bale's *Examinations* and the newly-published *Acts and Monuments* by John Foxe. While Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was the apogee of bloody Protestant martyrological polemic, Stapleton did not choose to follow suit in his response; instead, he framed his discussion within the parameters of the pseudomartyr debate. Ironically, the only martyr's blood in Stapleton's *The History of the Church of Englande* is that of the Protestant 'martyr' Latimer, mentioned in Stapleton's critique of Foxe's allegedly hypocritical use of

⁹⁶ Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, 245.

miracles in his *Acts and Monuments*.⁹⁷ It is unsurprising that Stapleton continued the now-established pseudomartyr apologetic strategy, rather than employing the Protestant's own polemic discourse of martyrs' blood. The only alleged martyrs in recent memory were the Protestants burned under Mary: memories of these burnings could be utilised for Catholic apologetic purposes by leading the reader to question what constituted martyrdom. Had the hundreds of men and women chosen to die pointlessly? Were they simply stubborn pseudomartyrs, witnessing to the devilish pride of a false 'Church'? So Stapleton implied.

Over the course of the 1570s, when Catholics began to be executed once again for their faith, they were highly controversial candidates for martyrdom, and were not recognised as martyrs by all (perhaps even most) Catholics. The first wave of potential new Catholic martyrs were those executed in the aftermath of the Rising of the Northern Earls which briefly restored Catholic worship (and castigated the Elizabethan religious settlement) in the religiously conservative regions of Yorkshire and County Durham.⁹⁸ In 1570, Pope Pius V had promulgated a bull (entitled *Regnans in Excelsis*) excommunicating Elizabeth. A wealthy Catholic layman, John Felton, boldly nailed this to the door of the palace of the bishop of London; he was executed for treason.⁹⁹ He was thereby another possible Catholic martyr. John Story, a ferocious persecutor of Protestants under Mary I, kidnapped from exile in the Spanish Netherlands (where he was working for Philip II of Spain) and brought to England to be executed for treason in 1571, was another possible martyr.¹⁰⁰ The priest Thomas Woodhouse, executed for treason at Tyburn in 1573, for sending Cecil a letter defending the papal deposition of Elizabeth, was yet another.¹⁰¹ These 'martyrs' were all politically awkward for loyalist English Catholics, and their 'innocence' was likewise questionable; hence, it is unsurprising that their deaths failed to trigger the flood of martyrological pamphlets and poems that the deaths of the missionary priests of the 1580s

⁹⁷ Stapleton denies that Latimer's prayer that he might give his heart's blood for the Protestant faith was fulfilled in a spectacular wonder at Latimer's burning by Latimer's blood all gathering to his heart and spurting forth. Stapleton states that he was an eyewitness and saw no such thing. Bede, *The History*, 9^v.

⁹⁸ See Marshall, *Heretics*, 487-91.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 493-94.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 494-95, and Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 123.

¹⁰¹ See Marshall, *Heretic*, 510.

would, nor that apologetics did not concentrate on presenting them as unjustly executed innocents (as the later martyrs were described).¹⁰² Catholic discussions of martyrdom thus remained unbloody, and focused around the pseudomartyr debate, in the first half of the 1570s.

The exile Nicholas Sanders' *De Visibili Monarchia Ecclesiae* (1571) was an extremely detailed attack on the theology of the Elizabethan Church and on Protestantism more generally. Sanders' criticism of Protestantism includes an attack on the invalidity of Protestant martyrs and their erroneous and heretical beliefs (i.e. they were no more than pseudo martyrs).¹⁰³ Book eight includes the first account of the sufferings of English Catholics under the Elizabethan regime. The vast majority of references to blood are to Christ's blood, usually in connection with the Eucharist, as Sanders attacks in depth Protestant Eucharistic theology.¹⁰⁴ Martyrs' blood appears only in quotations from medieval or early-Church sources (rather than Sanders' own prose), which mention martyrs' blood in discussion of the early-Church martyrs.¹⁰⁵

Richard Bristow's fairly lengthy *A Briefe Treatise* was a multifaceted apologia for Catholicism, published in 1574. Martyrdom is one of the topics which Bristow treats, and he gives the first complete published list of Reformation English Catholic martyrs. Yet, as in Sanders' *De Visibili*, martyrdom is not described through a rhetoric of blood except when in quotations from Church Fathers; Bristow himself does not employ this rhetoric, focussing instead, in discussing martyrdom, on the questions of which confession had the true martyrs, and how to identify true and false martyrs. He wrote 'no reasonable man wil thinke, those stinking Martyrs of the Heretikes, worthy in any respect to be compared with these most glorious Martyrs of the Catholikes ... ours are Gods Martyrs, and theirs the Divels ...'¹⁰⁶ This was proved, Bristow maintained, by the miracles the English Catholic martyrs had performed, the

¹⁰² They were mentioned only briefly and in unbloody language, by Bristow and Sanders.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Sanders, *De visibili*, 158, 375, 685.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-20, 22, 91, 180, 406, 409, 411, 516, 473, 479, 500, 527, 543, 574, 673, 675, 677, 679, 681, 683, 693, 701-02, 787, 828, 839.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 500, 558, 839.

¹⁰⁶ Bristow, *A Briefe Treatise*, K1^r-K1^v.

correlations between their faith and the faith of the early Church, and their lack of charity in rejecting Christ and his true Church.¹⁰⁷

The domestic and continental religio-political landscapes were rapidly changing, however, during the 1570s, and the foci of English Catholic apologetics were also about to change accordingly. In the latter half of the 1570s, Elizabethan Catholics began to be executed more for their religious beliefs and practices than for their political involvement (though, of course, the two can never be entirely untangled).¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, there was a change of the guard taking place, as described by Marshall:

[Even as one] small band of aged clergymen ... laid down the sword and shield of religious struggle, another group of younger ones prepared to pick them up. In 1573 the first graduates of Allen's Douai seminary were ordained to the priesthood, and in 1574 four of them ... crossed secretly to England A new phase in the story of English Catholicism was under way.¹⁰⁹

These changes would, over course of the next decade, lead to the emergence of a frequent and theologically-rich rhetoric of martyrs' blood in English Catholic apologetics and polemic, as martyrdom became the main focus of English Catholic writings and the primary hope for the reconversion of England.

Conclusion

Between c.1525-c.1575, English Catholic writers were much less likely to talk about martyrs' blood than their English Protestant contemporaries. This striking difference in the rhetoric used

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, K1r-K2r.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, the cases of John Nelson, Thomas Sherwood, and Cuthbert Mayne, in Marshall, *Heretics*, 511, 521.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 511.

to depict martyrdom was founded on, and illuminates, some fundamental divides between the two confessions' worldviews and polemic strategies.

It was based partly on different confessional attitudes to the emotions, as English Catholic writings were often influenced by Stoicism, whereas English Protestant writings were much more emotive and emotionalist, in line with Luther and Calvin's condemnations of Stoicism and endorsement of 'full-throated ... passion'.¹¹⁰ This meant that although both confessions engaged in a pseudomartyr debate, trying to prove each other's martyrs to be false martyrs and their own martyrs to be true martyrs, their approaches to the debate were different. The Protestant approach was much more emotionally evocative. Protestant apologetics was filled with vivid narratives of bloody Catholic clerics, who symbolised the antichristian bloody Catholic Church, and of Protestant martyrs by their blood witnessing to their faith and calling down God's wrath in the impending apocalypse. This trend reached its apogee in Foxe depicting the English Catholic martyrs from Thomas Becket onwards not merely as false martyrs, and so their blood witness as a false blood witness, but as bloodthirsty and blood-guilty murderers of the true martyrs.

In contrast, English Catholic apologetics took an erudite and humanist angle on the pseudomartyr debate, and focused on presenting their martyrs as wise and learned humanist scholars who lived ascetic, morally upright lives, and thus possessed the learning, judgement, and holiness to discern the true Church and to die for their (informed) beliefs. This rhetoric combined well with the English Catholic cultivation of an identity marked by respect for authorities and charitable love for all.

Differences between the confessions' rhetorics of martyrs' blood also highlight their differing attitudes towards the apocalypse and the supernatural. A complete absence of depictions of apocalyptic martyrs' blood suggests important dissimilarities between Catholic and Protestant temporalities. There are few depictions of martyrs' blood as like Christ's blood

¹¹⁰ Strier, 'Against the Rule', 29.

and as miraculous, given that Catholics rarely depict their martyrs' blood; however, where they do appear, there is continuity with medieval Catholic theology of martyrdom and of the supernatural, and they stand in contrast with the Protestant position.

From the occasional, limited references to martyrs' blood in Catholic writings c.1525-c.1575, we can infer some similarities but also some critical differences between Catholic and Protestant constructions of martyrdom and worldviews more generally. Both confessions sought to depict each other as 'bloody'; although this was far more popular in Protestant than Catholic rhetoric. (Thomas More and Miles Huggarde both responded to Protestant claims that Catholicism was bloody by retorting that it was in fact Protestantism that was the bloody faith.) Both Catholic and Protestant writers understood martyrs' blood to have a witnessing power, but whereas Protestant martyrs' blood witnessed both to the true faith and to the impending apocalypse, Catholics martyrs' blood witnessed only to the former. One important difference between the confessional constructions of martyrdom, and possibly their worldviews more generally, is that Catholic writers endorsed a more 'charitable' approach to their enemies, and this influenced the way they wrote about both persecutors and confessional opponents. Another is that Catholics maintained belief in martyrdom as imitating the nature of Christ's sacrificial death, and in relics as grace-filled and connected with the miraculous.

What emerges as most striking, even in the sparse Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood before c.1575, is the degree of difference between the rival confessions' constructions of martyrdom. Over the past two decades, a considerable body of scholarship has postulated that the rival confessions' discussions and conceptions of martyrdom operated in dialogue, and that Protestants and Catholics shared 'the same conception', 'the same ideals', and 'the same ideas' of martyrdom.¹¹¹ However, an examination of the confessions' rhetorics of martyrs' blood suggests that the confessions had substantially different understandings of martyrdom. These differing

¹¹¹ Freeman and Mayer, *Martyrs*, 26-27. The strongest proponent of this approach has been Freeman, beginning with his 2001 review of Gregory's *Salvation* (Freeman, 'Early modern martyrs'), and explicated in greater depth in his introduction to Freeman and Mayer (eds.), *Martyrs*, 1-34. Freeman's position has influenced recent works, such as Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*.

constructions proceeded from seismic differences between their theologies and worldviews, differences which have often been understated due to a recent historiographical trend towards emphasising the similarities between the confessions. This chapter has given us a first glimpse of these confessional divides; as the Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood blossomed from the 1580s, these differences were highlighted. Thus, in the next chapter, we turn our attention to the Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood after c.1575 and to how it encapsulated Catholic confessional identity.

Chapter Five: English Catholicism, c.1575-c.1625.

When England returned to Protestantism under Elizabeth I, in 1559, Catholics began once again to be executed for their faith. The flow of Catholic blood was a mere trickle until the 1580s, whereupon it swelled to a steady stream over the next forty years, as the increasing numbers of Catholic missionary priests in England and the growing harshness of anti-Catholic legislation led to several hundred judicial executions of Catholics. This series of Catholic martyrdoms, never before (or after) so numerous in England, was naturally accompanied by a flood of Catholic martyrological writings, and by discussions of martyrdom in Catholic apologetics and polemic. Whereas, for most of the sixteenth century, Catholic martyrology and apologetics had been largely unbloody, from the 1580s a pervasive rhetoric of martyrs' blood entered Catholic writings. This chapter examines this Elizabethan and Jacobean Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood.

From c. 1581 onwards, English Catholic martyrological writings repeatedly present shedding blood for the faith as a precious opportunity, which should be longed for. For example, William Allen, the chief voice and master of the sixteenth-century English Catholic mission, wrote in *An Apologie* (1581) that '[To] contribute any drop of blood ... far exceedeth al human dignitie and felicitie', and echoed the same sentiments in *A Briefe Historie* (1582), writing of 'the grace and priviledge to yeld any drop of blood'.¹ At times, these texts use a language of 'spending' blood, as if martyrs' blood was a currency that could buy something of inestimable value. The martyr Margaret Clitherow's defiant statement – 'I confess death is fearful, and flesh is frail; yet I mind by God's assistance to spend my blood in this faith, as willingly as I ever put

¹ Allen, *An Apologie*, P2^v. William Allen, *A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of XII. Reverend Priests* (Rheims: de Foigny, 1582), C6^v.

my paps to my children's mouths' – has been repeatedly cited by historiography on women martyrs, which focuses on the language of the final clause, drawing out the connection in sixteenth-century understanding between breastmilk and blood, and thus using this statement to analyse notions of maternity, gender, and martyrdom.² But the language of the penultimate clause is also arresting, and has not yet received historiographical focus. Why does Clitherow not simply 'mind by God's assistance to shed my blood in this faith': what does it mean to spend blood? This is not an isolated strange turn of phrase, since it appears, for instance, in Edmund Campion's *The Great Bragge* (1581), Thomas Alfield's *A True Report* (1582), and Richard Holtby's account of persecution in the north (1593).³ Rather, it is a gateway into understanding the confessionalised language of martyrs' blood in Reformation England.

Spending blood is not a Biblical phrase, nor does it seem to have been common in early-Church texts.⁴ It was also barely used by English Protestant writers. They viewed the phrase with suspicion since they understood it to mean that the martyr has bought entry into heaven by their blood; hence, their portrayals of their own martyrs did not employ this language.⁵ The

² Mush, *A True Report*, 427. For discussions of 'as willingly as I ever put my paps to my children's mouths' see, inter alia: Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 315; Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, gender and religion in late medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 289.

³ '[H]earken to those who would spend the best blood in their bodies for your salvation': Edmund Campion, *The Great Bragge and Challenge of M. Champion a Jesuite* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1581), viii. '[E]very drop of blood which he did spend, hath reapt a joy which never shal have end': Thomas Alfield, *A True Report of the Death & Martyrdome of M. Campion Jesuite and Prieste, & M. Sherwin, & M. Bryan Preistes* (London: Printed by R. Rowlands or Verstegan, 1582), F1^r. When Thomas Trollope was told that his pardon for conveying a priest was not valid unless he agreed to go to a Protestant church, '[h]e answered that if that were the matter he would willingly spend his blood in the cause, rather than he would come there': Richard Holtby, *On Persecution in the North* ['Relations of many executions in Yorkshire and Durham during the years '93, '94, '95.'] (c.1594), in Morris, *The Troubles*, 118-212, 189. At the execution of the priest Ingram, he said while standing on the ladder, '[I] do rejoyce and thank God with all my heart that hath made me worthy to testify my faith therein, by the spending of my blood in this manner': Ibid, 211.

⁴ It is not found in Ignatius' epistle to the Romans, the martyrology of St Polycarp, or Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Romans*, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed by T. E. Page, and W. H. Rouse (London: William Heinemann; New York: Macmillan, 1912-13), vol. 1, 225-239. Church of Smyrna, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, 307-346. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans by Kirsopp Lake and J. E. I. Alton (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁵ See discussion of the anthem to Becket by Bale and Foxe in Chapters Two and Chapter Three above. This suspicion of the notion that martyrs spent their blood to enter heaven, of course, also fitted into wider Protestant suspicions of rhetoric that depicted salvation as the result of human agency and effort, since – for Protestants – salvation was by faith alone and through God's grace alone.

phrase highlights the transactional nature of medieval and early-modern Roman Catholic theology, especially concerning blood (e.g. the satisfaction and substitutionary models of atonement), since two transactions take place when martyrs 'spend blood'.⁶ First, it can be stated (accurately, if rather crudely) that martyrs' blood buys their entry into heaven. Secondly, the phrase implies that there is a cost for sustaining and increasing the Roman Catholic faith, and a martyr can contribute towards paying that cost by shedding their blood; consider, for example, the martyr Edmund Campion's famous statement: 'the expense is reckoned'.⁷ For English Catholics, martyrs' blood played an irreplaceable role in ensuring the success of the English Catholic mission: 'God knowes it is not force nor might ... that must convert the land, It is the blood by martirs shed.'⁸ But how *exactly* could martyrs' blood reconvert England, and why did English Catholics come to favour such rhetoric from the 1580s? What can this rhetoric tell us about Catholic constructions of martyrdom, and about the nature of early-modern English Catholicism?

The Emergence of a Pervasive Rhetoric of Martyrs' Blood

A polemic and apologetic English Catholic rhetoric of martyrs' blood was developing in the later 1570s; however, it was not yet in mainstream apologetic writings, and did not appear in print until 1581. There were a handful of references to martyrs' blood from the later 1570s, in verbal exchanges, letters, diaries, and possibly manuscript eyewitness accounts of martyrs' deaths.

This new discourse seems to have centred around the seminary priests (certainly at Douai, and probably at the newer college at Rome too) who were being trained for and sent on the English

⁶ These models of atonement were developed by Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109) and by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Anselm argued that humanity owes God a debt of honour, and when we do not pay it we sin; by not paying this debt, we transgress against God's honour and justice, and interest grows on the unpaid debt. God's honour and justice must be satisfied; Christ's bloody death was the ransom that repaid this debt to God the Father. Thomas Aquinas developed this model further: whereas Anselm saw the debt as one of honour, Aquinas saw it as one of moral injustice, and argued that Christ's death was a substitutionary atonement.

⁷ Campion, *The Great Bragge*, viii.

⁸ Alfield, *A True Report*, G1^v.

mission, where they faced possible martyrdom. The second diary of the English college at Douai (actually based at Rheims from 1578) has several references to martyrs' blood in the years 1577-79. The first of these entries, in May 1577, refutes rumours that a missionary priest 'D. Vag', who was arrested in England, had betrayed the Catholic faith, asserting that 'through the grace of God he was prepared to prove this faith with his blood.'⁹ An entry of 15 February 1578 likewise depicts martyrdom as shedding of blood, saying of the execution of the priest D. Nelson 'he had fought this madness [English Protestantism] bravely even to the shedding of his blood'.¹⁰ Similarly, a letter from Gregory Martin to Campion of 21 May 1578 spoke of the English martyrdoms as 'blood having recently been shed'.¹¹ Martin was a priest and academic at the English College, and Campion had studied there until he joined the Jesuit Order in 1573; thus Martin's language of martyrs' blood in this letter, together with the scattered references in the second Douai diary, reveal that, among those associated with the English College at Douai during the later 1570s, the English mission and the English martyrdoms were coming to be understood through a theology of martyrs' blood.

The third entry featuring martyrs' blood in the second Douai diary demonstrates that it was not only abroad that English Catholics were beginning to construct their own bloody language of martyrdom. The entry of 12 April 1579 reports the words of an English Catholic being examined by the English Protestant authorities who, in defence of his position, describes the landmark martyrdoms of More and Fisher as unassailable apologetics in blood: 'I have right before the eyes of my mind observed two most excellent and most glorious martyrs, Bishop

⁹ 'per dei gratiam se paratum esse eandem suo sanguine confirmare'. *Collegii Anglo-Duaceni Diarium Secundum*, in *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay: And an appendix of unpublished documents*, ed. by Thomas Francis Knox (London, Oratory of St. Philip Neri; Westmead, Farnborough: Gregg International, 1969), 120. It should be noted, therefore, that the martyrdom of Cuthbert Mayne – the first missionary priest from Douai to be executed – cannot be seen as the trigger for the use of this language of martyrs' blood, since it was already used in the second Douai diary, prior to Mayne's execution on 15 May 1577.

¹⁰ 'et insaniam usque ad effusionem sanguinis fortiter decertasset'. *Collegii Anglo-Duaceni Diarium Secundum*, 133.

¹¹ 'sanguine recenter fuso florentissimam'. Gregory Martin to Edmund Campion, Rome, 21 May 1578, in *Documentorum Ineditorum*, in *The First and Second Diaries*, 316.

John [Fisher] of Rochester and Thomas More, and for this reason now in our hands we have the sharpest of defences, because each attested by the shedding of blood.’¹²

This emergence of a depiction of martyrdom through a language of blood can be glimpsed in several other sources. ‘The arraignment and condemnation of M. John Nelson Priest, who was martyred the iij of February the yere M.D.lxxviii’ was published in William Allen’s *A Briefe Historie* (1582), but as an eyewitness report it probably dates to 1578; it chimes with the Douai diary’s brief description of Nelson depicting his martyrdom as shedding blood. In ‘The arraignment and condemnation’, Nelson says at his execution, ‘I cal on you al this day to witnes, that I dye in the unitie of the Catholique Church, and for that unitie do now most willingly suffer my bloud to be shed.’ The author adds that John Nelson would often say ‘[t]hat the Catholike religion would never be restored in England, until many should sheed their bloud for confession and testimonie of the same.’ The author depicts this as a prophecy, which the reader infers that Nelson was now playing a role in fulfilling, and stresses the power of ‘the acceptable cry of so much holy innocent bloud’.¹³ This language is echoed in ‘The satisfaction of M. James Bosgrave the godly confessor of Christ, concerning his going to the church of the Protestants at his first coming into England’, written between winter 1580 and autumn 1581, although not published until 1583. Bosgrave explicitly compares the blood shed by early-Church martyrs and the blood that he sees English Catholics as now being called to shed: ‘remaine and walke worthily in the vocation religion and faith to which you are called: and that you be ready to shed your blood for the same’.¹⁴

Thus, in the late 1570s, we can glimpse rhetoric of martyrs’ blood being used by those connected with the English College at Douai and by the missionary priests already in England, their words being echoed by English lay Catholics. As in the Protestant precedent, this Catholic

¹² *Collegii Anglo-Duaceni Diarium Secundum*, 152.

¹³ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, D8^v.

¹⁴ ‘Satisfaction of M. James Bosgrave’, in William Allen, *A True Report of the Late Apprehension and Imprisonment of John Nicols Minister at Roan, and His Confession and Answers Made in the Time of His Durance There* (Rheims: John Fogny, 1583), E6^v-E8^v, E7^v.

language of bloody martyrdom could simultaneously both unite a disparate confessional community across geographical divides, and divide those communities within England who were united by geography and social bonds but not by a common confession.

Until 1581, however, this was not a discourse employed in published Catholic confessional polemic. In the summer of 1581, Campion wrote his short, open letter 'To the Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council', which came to be known as Campion's 'Challenge' or 'Brag'. In the letter, Campion appealed to the Privy Council (and, no doubt, his wider readership) to 'hearken to those who would spend the best blood in their bodies for your salvation'. In the same year, another key Catholic figure in the English confessional war published a work inundated with references to martyrs' blood. William Allen's *An Apologie and True Declaration of the Institution and Endeavours of the Two English Colleges*, published concurrently with the English Jesuit mission, was a defence of the work of the English missionary colleges at Douai and Rheims, in the face of increasing suspicions in England that these colleges and their missionary priests had treasonous intentions. Allen protested that the missionary priests and the colleges were loyal to Elizabeth, and simply focused on providing a ministry to English Catholics and a mission to reconvert English people by peaceful means. Eamon Duffy has highlighted this work as a turning point in Allen's writings: 'His early writings had been largely of a doctrinal nature ... but from 1581 we find him writing a series that pay special attention to the English situation and the new legislation that is the context within which his former students will now have to work.'¹⁵ I would argue that Allen's new and prominent language of martyrs' blood in this work, which he henceforth consistently employed in his apologetic writings, is a hallmark of this change in focus and method of apologetics. Allen was the first major Catholic propagandist to use such language; considering his great influence in the English

¹⁵ Eamon Duffy, 'William Cardinal Allen, 1532-1594', *Recusant History*, 22-3, (1995), 265-290, 130. See also Eamon Duffy's more recent work on Allen in, *Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants and the conversion of England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 132-167, especially 156.

Catholic missionary scene, it is possible that the other apologists of the early 1580s subsequently deliberately followed his lead.

Allen's work had set a precedent for bloody English Catholic martyrological writing. *An Apologie* featured martyrs' blood ten times in the 243 pages of the 1581 edition. The three martyrological works of 1582 that responded to the executions of Campion, Sherwin, and Bryant developed the genre further. The English translation of Robert Parsons' *De Persecutione* referred to martyrs' blood twelve times in 188 pages (in the 1582 English edition); Alfield's *A True Report* fifteen times in fifty-one pages (1582), and Allen's *A Brief Historie* twenty-six times in 160 pages (1582).¹⁶ These references were often emotional and emotive, departing from the ambivalent Stoicism of most earlier English Catholic discussion of martyrdom, and shifting instead towards the 'full throated passion' that Protestant writers had already espoused.¹⁷ This was not, of course, a shift towards Protestantism per se, since many Catholic humanists, above all Erasmus, had rejected Stoicism; it was, rather, a shift in tactics and mindset. For example, Allen, in *An Apologie*, described the English mission and the reconversion of England as 'sowen in teares, and watered (if neede require) with bloud'.¹⁸ A poem in Alfield's *A True Report* said of Campion, 'This martyr's blood hath moistened all our hearts'. And Parsons graphically describing the protracted sufferings of the executed Catholic martyrs, stating: 'but they speake allso distinctlie and plainlie after their bowells be digged up, yea and whiles the bouchars fyngars are scratchinge at their verie harts and intrailles. And yet this bloodie sight woorketh no compassion in the harts of oure adversaries.'¹⁹

There is something to be said for Wooding's argument:

¹⁶ Robert Parsons, *De Persecutione epistola: qua explicantur afflictiones, ærumnæ, & calamitates gravissimæ, cruciatus etiam & tormenta, & acerbissima martyria, quæ Catholici nunc Angli, ob fidem patiuntur* (Rouen: 1581).

¹⁷ Strier, 'Against the rule', 29.

¹⁸ Allen, *An Apologie*, O6^v.

¹⁹ Parsons, *An Epistle*, 25.

The humanist nuances of the previous decades were lost as Catholic thought began to turn upon a different axis. By the later part of the century English Catholicism needed martyrs more than scholars, and recusancy was more interested in solidarity than scholarly debate ... [These changes were very evident] by the mid-point of Elizabeth's reign.²⁰

While it is overstated, underestimating the quality and quantity of scholarship produced by the English Catholic colleges and apologists during the latter half of the period (not least the monumental Douai-Rheims English translation of the entire Vulgate), it captures the shift in focus of English Catholic apologetics. Scholarship *was* still important, but martyrdom became *more* so, whereas earlier in the period it had been the reverse. From the 1580s, the perceived power of martyrdom to convert and consecrate was at the heart of hopes for the reconversion of England, and this included, though it was very far from limited to, its emotional power in apologetical writings. The shift towards a frequent rhetoric of martyrs' blood reflected broader shifts in English Catholic mentalities, due – in turn – to changes on the domestic and international scenes.

In England, public suspicion of English Catholics intensified from c.1580. In 1579, Irish rebels led by Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond, joined forces with a small force of Spanish and papal troops who had landed in Ireland, together aiming to overthrow Elizabeth's rule in Ireland and restore a Catholic government. The Elizabethan regime felt threatened by this Hispano-papal invasion of Ireland, which aimed to overthrow Elizabeth on the basis of the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis*. The bull was first issued in 1570: it declared Elizabeth to be a heretic, released her subjects from allegiance to her, and excommunicated those who continued to recognise and obey her rule. However, the bull remained essentially suspended throughout Elizabeth's reign, and therefore Catholics would only be bound to obey it if the pope were to activate it; indeed Pope Gregory XIII officially suspended the bull in 1580, at the Jesuits' request

²⁰ Lucy E. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 12.

and to attempt to lessen persecution of English Catholics.²¹ Nonetheless, the bull was leant upon by Catholic rebels and plotters, and also deepened the suspicions of Elizabeth, her government, and English Protestants as to whether English Catholics were genuinely loyal subjects or secret traitors who intended to overthrow the queen when time was ripe. Many of the Irish nobles and commons alike demonstrated their greater loyalty to the papacy than to Elizabeth by rebelling against her in favour of the invasion. While the Catholic minority in England was more quiescent and loyal to the queen than the Catholic majority in Ireland, the Irish Catholic rebellion raised question marks about the genuine loyalty of Elizabeth's Catholic subjects, even in England. If such an invasion came to England, would the Catholics there likewise rise up? The English Jesuit mission's closest ties were with the papacy and Spain, and there were fears that the mission of 1580 was an attempt to incite similar rebellion in England.²²

Some English Protestants, including Elizabeth's chief minister William Cecil, sought to fuel these fears, in an attempt to undermine Elizabeth's marriage negotiations. From 1579, Elizabeth was contemplating a marriage with the French heir, the Catholic Duke of Anjou. The proposed match attracted such hostility from Protestant preachers and from some of Elizabeth's Protestant councillors, such as Sir Francis Walsingham, that Elizabeth considered appointing four Catholics to her Privy Council in order to help overturn the opposition. The marriage was also widely expected to bring about the decriminalisation of English Catholicism.²³ The hostility that was whipped up against the Jesuit mission of 1580-81 was, therefore, partly propaganda engineered by Elizabeth's Protestant ministers hostile to, and afraid of, the queen making a Catholic marriage.

²¹ The bull was renewed by Pope Sixtus V in 1588, as the Spanish Armada prepared to invade England.

²² See Alexandra Walsham, "'This newe army of Satan': the Jesuit mission and the formation of public opinion in Elizabethan England", in *Moral Panics, the Media, and the Law in Early Modern England*, David Lemmings and Claire Walker (ed.), (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 41-62.

²³ Thomas M. McCoog, 'Constructing Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1582-1602', in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious politics and identity in early modern England*, ed. by Ethan Shagan (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 95-127, 98.

There was a flood of anti-Catholic legislation and propaganda, particularly focused upon the Jesuit mission. A proclamation of 10th January 1581, entitled 'Ordering return of seminarians, arrest of Jesuits', declared that the Jesuits had entered England 'by special direction from the pope' and intended 'not only to corrupt and pervert her good and loving subjects in matter of conscience and religion, but also to draw them from the loyalty and duty of obedience and to provoke them ... to attempt ... the disturbance of the present quiet that ... this realm hath these many years enjoyed.'²⁴ This was followed by an 'Act to Retain the Queen's Majesty's Subjects in Their Due Obedience' (23 Eliz. 1, c. I), which increased recusancy fines and made it high treason to reconcile anyone – or be reconciled – to the Catholic Church.²⁵ The relentless campaign to depict the Jesuits as seditious and dangerous is encapsulated by the fact that when the Catholic priests were paraded to the Tower, only Campion was forced to wear a hat stating 'Edmund Campion Jesuit and traitor.'²⁶ An image had thus been created of the English Jesuits in particular, and – to a lesser degree – of English Catholics more generally, as traitors.²⁷

The English missionary priests, especially the Jesuits (but the seminarians too, such as Alfield who compiled the martyrology of Campion and his fellow martyrs), strove to overturn this image, by presenting the executed Catholics of 1581 not as traitors but as loyal subjects persecuted unjustly and solely for their faith. Here, a rhetoric of innocent bloodshed was an invaluable weapon. It had long been employed in religio-political contexts to imply unfair and malicious treatment: Chapters Two and Three have shown that Protestant martyrologists had already been using it in these contexts for half a century, and similarly it furnished the sole reference to martyrs' blood in the Marian martyrologies of Thomas More.²⁸ Whereas earlier

²⁴ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. by Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1964-69), vol. 2, 483.

²⁵ McCoog, 'Constructing Martyrdom', 99.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ For further discussion of the Black Legend that encompassed the first English Jesuit mission, and of subsequent Protestant English perceptions of Jesuit missionary priests to England, see Walsham, "'This newe army of Satan'".

²⁸ 'Howbeit, it is not for the supremacy so much that ye seek my blood, as for that I would not condescend to the marriage.' Harpsfield, *The Life*, in Roper and Harpsfield, *Lives*, 163.

English Catholic writings had not often wielded the apologetical weapon of emotive rhetoric, English Catholic writers from the 1580s, writing in the midst of an unprecedented deluge of English Catholic persecution, martyrdom, and anti-Catholic propaganda, seized the opportunity it provided to protest innocence and put forward accusations of mistreatment.

This prominent rhetoric of martyrs' blood was of use not only in addressing a changed domestic scene, but also a changed international situation. The French Catholic League had been founded in 1576 and by the start of the 1580s was a powerful, ambitious force in the French Wars of Religion. As Dillon has demonstrated, the English Catholic martyrs were of immense value to the League, and English Catholic writings concerning native martyrs were partially directed towards the French situation. The Catholic League and the English Catholic community could fulfil each other's needs: in essence, the English needed financial aid, and the League needed Catholic martyrs; they were natural allies, as strands in a joint Hispano-papal plan for the re-Catholicisation of Europe. English Catholic martyrology produced by the continental exiles and the missionary priests, from the 1580s onwards, often spoke partially to and for the Catholic League.²⁹ A rhetoric of English Catholic martyrs' blood frequently emerged within this context. The martyrologies, pamphlets and letters produced by the English exiles depicted a vulnerable, heavily persecuted Catholic community in England that sacrificed its blood for the true faith, and was thereby an image of Christ and his Church. These depictions, on the one hand, attracted the sympathy (including financial) of French Catholics. For example, Verstegan's introduction to his *Descriptiones* of 1583-84 speaks to continental Catholics of the 'bloodthirsty laws and cruel edicts [against Catholics in England], aimed at the ruin and destruction not only of their fortunes and possessions, but even of their lives and that not only of the present generation but of future generations also'. He aims to 'arouse your charity, piety and pity, so that you, who are a member with us of the same body of Christ and Church, feel the pain of your

²⁹ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 146-169.

brothers as we groan'.³⁰ Descriptions such as these did not solely speak *to* the French (and, indeed, other continental) Catholics; they also spoke *for* the French Catholic League. As Dillon states, 'the League ... had no such martyrological weapon; this the English supplied.'³¹ Such bloody martyrologies were partly an implicit warning (or even threat) to French Catholics. Emphasising that English Catholics suffered even so far as shedding their blood, and that the English Calvinist hierarchy was relentlessly and disingenuously seeking to spill Catholic blood, provided the religio-political ammunition the Catholic League needed. We see this, for example, from the rapid translation of Parsons' *De Persecutione* (1581) into French, even before its translation into English.³² Its intended audience was clearly continental, and primarily French. Thus, an international, as well as a domestic, perspective, contextualises the emergence from the 1580s of a new style of bloody English Catholic martyrology, with the first Jesuit mission to England (and the increased hardships and martyrdoms it provoked).

In England, as the regime intensified its anti-Catholic policies, and the dominant position of English Protestantism and the subjugated position of English Catholicism became all the more apparent, Catholics came to assume the rhetorical mantle of the sole, bleeding, persecuted flock, using the new situation as a propaganda weapon. English Catholics, now almost synonymous with traitors, painted themselves as misunderstood, innocent subjects, shedding their blood only for their faith. This was an apologetic response to the depictions of them as traitors, executed for treason alone and not their Catholic beliefs. It thus answered the needs of both domestic and international Catholic apologetical propaganda. From the 1580s, this language of martyrs' blood in English Catholic polemic attempted to evoke public sympathy and indignation, at home and abroad, at the execution of the peaceful Catholic citizen, and to function as an

³⁰ Richard Verstegan, *Descriptiones quaedam illius inhumanae et multiplicis persecutionis, quam in Anglia propter fidem sustinent catholicè christiani* (N.p.: 1583-84), cited in Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 148.

³¹ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 146.

³² Parsons, *De Persecutione; Epistre de la persecution*, trans. by Matthieu de Launoy (Paris: 1582); *An Epistle of the Persecution of Catholickes in England Translated out of Frenche into Englishe and Conferred withe the Latyne Copie* (Douai: Fr Parsons' Press, 1582).

apologia for Catholicism, which was depicted, as in earlier Catholic writings, as the religion of loyalty, stability, and charity.

Martyrs' Blood Like Christ's Blood

God knowes it is not force nor might,
 nor warre nor warlike band,
 Nor shield and spear, nor dint or sword,
 that must convert the land,
 It is the blood by martirs shed,
 it is that noble traine,
 That fight with word and not with sword,
 and Christ their capitaine.
 For sooner shall you want the handes
 to shed such guiltles blood,
 Then wise and vertuous still to come
 to do their country good.³³

Scholars have tended to glide over such statements, treating the references to blood as mere metaphors for death and martyrdom, and the power of martyrdom as largely a power to inspire others.³⁴ But, in sacramental Christianity, blood was not merely a metaphor but a potent material substance, and martyrdom's power was not just to inspire but also to expiate and sanctify.

While early-modern Protestants had rejected the notion that martyrs' blood imitated and functioned like Christ's blood, early-modern Catholics had not. English Catholic martyrological texts, from the 1580s onwards, frequently describe martyrs' blood in a similar

³³ Alfield, *A True Report*, G1^v.

³⁴ See, for example, Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, 74.

way to Christ's blood and depict it as having similar powers. In these texts, martyrs' blood is 'holy blood'³⁵, 'sacred blood'³⁶, 'sacred streams' and 'gracious moisture'³⁷. It is also innocent, evoking the atoning innocent blood of Old Testament animal sacrifices and of Christ: 'the new gallows, which is now called among Catholikes the Gibbet of Martyrs, because it was first set up and dedicated in the bloud of an innocent Catholike Confessor'.³⁸ Indeed, Allen almost always pairs 'sacred' with 'innocent' [blood]³⁹, indicating this parallel between martyrs' blood and the expiating blood of Biblical sacrifices (including Christ's). The martyr Robert Southwell in his poem 'Christ's bloody sweat' parallels Christ's blood sacrifice (in his Passion and the Eucharist) with Southwell's desire to sacrifice his own blood in martyrdom.⁴⁰ Whereas for English Protestants, martyrs' blood and Christ's blood were two fundamentally different substances, for early-modern Catholics they were fundamentally similar in nature and function.

For Catholics, martyrs' blood possessed expiatory power: it functioned as a sacrifice, similar to Old Testament sacrifices and to Christ's expiating, sacrificial death; hence, Catholic martyrs' blood called for God's mercy and forgiveness of sins.⁴¹ Allen reproduces and translates (from Latin) a letter Campion wrote to his superior while on the English mission, stating, 'Very many even at this present being restored to the Church, new soldiers give up their names, while the old offer up their blood. By which holy hosts and oblations, God will be pleased: and we shall no question, by him overcome.'⁴² Similarly, Holtby, reporting persecution in the north,

³⁵ Allen, *An Apologie*, F7^v.

³⁶ ?Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 98.

³⁷ Mush, *A True Report*, 363.

³⁸ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, C1^r-C1^v.

³⁹ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, A5^r, C7^v, D2^v, D8^r.

⁴⁰ Robert Southwell, *The Poems of Robert Southwell S. J.*, ed. by James H. McDonald (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 18-19. For further discussion, see Mary Lowe-Evans, 'Christ's bloody sweat', *Explicator*, 54:4 (1996), 199-202.

⁴¹ See Dillon, *Construction of martyrdom*, 137.

⁴² Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, E7^r. Campion's Latin original states: 'Etiam nunc plurimi, restituuntur Ecclesiae, nouitii milites dant nomina: veterani sanguinem profundunt. Hoc sacre cruore, iisque hostiis promerebitur Deus, et sine dubio breui vincemus', sig. E4^v. Campion's Latin is particularly fascinating, as what Allen renders in English as 'oblations', Campion in Latin terms 'cruore', which literally means the blood that flows from a wound. This is undoubtedly within a Eucharistic context, signalled particularly by the word 'hostiis', which means the Eucharistic host (as well as a sacrifice). The very close relationship between martyrdom, blood-sacrifice, and the Eucharistic emerge even more strongly from Campion's word associations in the Latin original than from Allen's translation.

reproduces a letter Anthony Page wrote from prison to his Protestant mother, a few days before his martyrdom:

... the shedding of my blood ... I offer unto Almighty God as a sacrifice, not only for mine own sins, which are most grievous, but ... particularly, in the behalf of your poor soul ... , I desire you, by the bitter passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to accept this my voluntary oblation of my life, and shedding of my blood, as a most forcible vocation and calling of Almighty God ...⁴³

Parsons depicts the martyrs' blood as a sacrifice which has the power to pacify God's wrath, even towards the martyrs' persecutors, and convert the non-Catholics by the grace of God: 'I beseeche God to accept the Innocent bloode of his vertuouse preests, for some part of pacification of his wrathe towards us, and towards oure persecutors, that they having the miste of errour taken from their eyes, may see the truthe of Christs Catholique religion'.⁴⁴ This language is echoed by Allen, who writes of 'the grace and priuledge to yeld any drop of blood for the appeasing of Gods wrath'.⁴⁵ On this matter, the two chief Catholic martyrological propagandists are in accord. This sacrificial language around martyrs' blood is sometimes explicit, for example Alfield's description of martyrs' blood-shedding as a 'sacrifice'.⁴⁶ More commonly, the sacrificial function is not stated explicitly, but evoked in the choice of phraseology, such as: 'offer up their blood'; 'a sweete savour';⁴⁷ 'sacred innocent bloude, poured out'; asking Christ for 'mercie and grace' 'for thy deaths sake, and for this fresh blood of thy MARTYRS'.⁴⁸

Sacrifices, in Judeo-Christian theologies, have a communal rather than individual impact. Thus, this shedding of martyrs' blood was an expiation and sacrifice for the whole community,

⁴³ Holtby, *On Persecution*, 142-143. See Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 84 for a discussion of how the priest-martyrs at the scaffold, through their behaviour, evoked the celebration of the Eucharist.

⁴⁴ Parsons, *An Epistle*, M4^r.

⁴⁵ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, C6^v.

⁴⁶ Alfield, *A True Report*, A4^r. and also (see above) Campions' description of it as a 'cruore' and 'hostiis', translated by Allen as 'oblacions' and 'hosts'.

⁴⁷ Sacrifices are repeatedly described in the Old Testament as having a sweet aroma which pleases God, e.g. Genesis 8:21, Exodus 29:25, Leviticus 1:19

⁴⁸ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, E7^{r-v}, Alfield, *A True Report*, A4^r, Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, D2^r, and C8^r.

as in the above quotation from Parsons' *An Epistle*, where he beseeches God to accept the martyred priests' innocent blood for the community of the English nation (both Catholics and their persecutors).⁴⁹ Very rarely, we do see the power of the sacrifice directed particularly for the benefit of an individual, presumably paralleling the practice of offering Mass(es) (a Eucharistic sacrifice) for particular individual(s); but this is so uncommon as to be remarkable. A case in point is Page's statement (above) that 'the shedding of my blood' is a 'voluntary oblation' 'not only for mine own sins ... but also, and that particularly, in the behalf of your [his mother's] poor soul.'⁵⁰

How could early-modern Catholics have believed that their martyrs' blood shared the nature and function of Christ's blood? From the early Church, Christians had viewed Christ's death as changing the nature of martyrdom, so that martyrdom was a sacrifice which imitated Christ's sacrifice, and martyrs' blood imitated Christ's blood.⁵¹ This was intrinsically linked with the Eucharistic theology of the real presence: it was believed that Christians receive and become part of the body and blood of Christ through consuming his body and blood in the Eucharist, and thus when they are martyred it is the body of Christ which bleeds.⁵² In medieval England, this theology had been encapsulated in the cult of the martyr Thomas Becket's blood, deliberately represented in a manner evocative of the Eucharist, and drunk by medieval Catholics since – like the Eucharist – it was believed to have healing powers.⁵³

The patristic notion of the expiatory and Eucharistic sacrifice of martyrs' blood had been further supported by developments in medieval Catholic theology, which enabled a rich theology of martyrs' blood to be drawn together in early-modern texts. In the medieval West 'a soteriological theory ... [had been] reflected everywhere ... the theory of sacrifice. The wonderful blood of the lamb – shed, sprinkled on the altar, and lifted to God – [was] the

⁴⁹ In Protestantism, martyrs' blood draws God's wrath upon their persecutors; in Catholicism, it pacifies Him and draws His mercy, e.g. Parsons, *An Epistle*, M4^r-M4^v.

⁵⁰ Holtby, *On Persecution*, 142-43.

⁵¹ Leyerle, 'Blood'; Klawiter, 'Living water'.

⁵² Mayes, 'The Lord's Supper', especially 310-13 on the real presence and 321-22 on martyrdom.

⁵³ Koopmans, , "Water Mixed with the Blood of Thomas", especially 537-38, 541-42, 545, 553.

instrument of salvation'.⁵⁴ This ubiquitous notion of salvific sacrificial blood was not limited to Christ's blood alone, but could include the blood of Christians.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in medieval Catholic texts, Christ's sacrifice had always been represented as bloodshed, and envisioned as payment.⁵⁶ From the early Church, and even more so from the medieval period, salvation was a blood-based economy: Christians were united by the blood of Christ which they received in the Eucharist, and they could pay him back with their blood (including other bodily fluids which originated from blood, like tears), and also save other souls; for example, holy weeping could save a thousand souls.⁵⁷

In addition, there had been a strong emphasis in medieval theology on all humanity being subsumed into Christ in his passion and death (and in its echo in each Mass) and offered up to God. It followed logically therefore, in early-modern Catholic constructions of martyrdom, that those who shed their blood for Christ also shed their blood with Christ, participating in his blood-sacrifice. Moreover, medieval writers had stressed the notion of synecdoche (a part representing the whole); thus, again, for our early-modern Catholic writers, it followed from this traditional theology that martyrs could shed their blood to expiate and sanctify not only themselves but the whole community.⁵⁸ That this subsuming of a community into an individual's saving sufferings and death was understood through the lens of blood makes sense particularly when we consider that blood had long been seen as the *sedes animae* – the seat or carrier of the soul or life-force.⁵⁹

The emergence of a strong, late-sixteenth-century theology and rhetoric of martyrdom as expiatory blood sacrifice was bolstered by a renewed emphasis on Calvary as sacrifice, which predisposed priests – in seeing their role as Christomimetic – to understand their martyrdoms

⁵⁴ Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 189-90.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, 141.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵⁸ Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 202.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

as predominantly sacrificial in function.⁶⁰ Dillon explains that, in Elizabethan and Jacobean English Catholic texts, it was ‘an underlying “given” that the priests constructed themselves in imitation of Christ.’⁶¹ A Christomimetic sacrificial theology was emphasised by those training the missionary priests. For example Allen had told the missionary priests that just as they offered the Mass every day as a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, so should they be prepared to offer themselves in martyrdom ‘in a spirituall sacrifice, for the confirmation of your faith, and accomplishment of al your Priestly actions.’ Thus, as Dillon has noted, ‘the sacrificial shedding of blood in expiation for the collective sin of England ... was a recurring motif.’⁶²

Early-modern depictions of expiatory and sacrificial martyrs’ blood, akin to Christ’s blood, drew upon a web of Eucharistic, soteriological, and martyrological theology which had developed through the patristic and medieval periods.⁶³ Most importantly, it was an extension and consequence of Catholic Eucharistic theology. We here see the gulf between early-modern sacramental and sacramentarian Christians, which extended far beyond explicit debates over the nature of the Eucharist. This highlights the need to reconsider the idea that the rival confessions shared the same concept of martyrdom, and also that there was an early-modern cross-confessional conception of martyrdom which stood in opposition to medieval precedent.

The fact that martyrs’ blood functioned like Christ’s blood was a critical reason why Catholic texts called for more missionary priests, more martyrs, and more martyrs’ blood. Catholic writers tended to understand the failure of the Marian restoration of Catholicism, and England’s current return to Protestantism under Elizabeth, as God punishing English Catholics for their sins.⁶⁴ Catholics depicted themselves like Biblical Israel in exile, sent among a heathen

⁶⁰ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 248. This may, in turn, be related to the emergence of a more elevated Counter-Reformation notion of the priesthood, especially given that the later Elizabethan English Catholic clergy were the first to be entirely seminary-trained (in the elite and scholarly environment of the mission’s seminaries).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶³ See Chapter One.

⁶⁴ Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 137.

people because of God's anger at their sins, and suffering persecution and the defilement of their holy places. William Byrd's *Liber Primus Sacrarum Cantionum*, published in 1589, included a poignant Latin setting of Isaiah 64:9-10.⁶⁵ ('Be not very angry, O Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity: behold, see we are all thy people. The city of thy sanctuary is become a desert, Sion, is made a desert, Jerusalem is desolate.'⁶⁶) The question of how the righteous wrath of the Lord could be appeased, and his mercy be brought upon England, was answered by Allen in his *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense of English Catholics*:

[Into] misery our country, to us most dear, being fallen, and having no other human helps to recover it and our prince and peers (excepting this case of heresy, of excellent good nature and clemency), with millions of souls that there do perish, we will not fear nor fail to pray and ask it of God with tears and blood, as we have begun, *donec misereatur nostri*, till He be merciful both to us and to our persecutors.⁶⁷

Throughout Scripture and Christian history, repentance and sacrifice had brought forgiveness and expiation of sins and so God's mercy; Allen suggested the same combination – tears and blood. The blood of the martyrs was a sacrifice with expiatory and salvific powers, and thus was needed to reconvert England.

The English mission was intended to address exactly this need. Allen, as the founder and director of the English Mission, wrote in his *An Apologie* (as he had in his *Defense of English Catholics*) that the English Mission's hope of reconverting England was 'sowen in teares, and

⁶⁵ William Byrd, 'Ne irascaris Domine' and 'Civitas sancti tui', in *Liber primus sacrarum cantionum* (London: Thomas Est, 1589), 20-21.

⁶⁶ *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate. O.T. First published by the English College at Douay. A.D. 1609. The N.T. first published by the English College at Rheims, A.D. 1582* (New York: Benziger, 1899). Accessed at www.biblegateway.com on 01/07/2017. Byrd's setting of the reference to Sion here was possibly a double-entendre for English Catholics, evoking not only Biblical Sion but also Sion monastery, a very wealthy and erudite Brigittine monastery destroyed by Henry VIII, to which the martyr Richard Reynolds (extolled by Pole in *De Unitate*) had belonged. It would have exemplified the desecration and destruction of holy places and the murder of English Catholics.

⁶⁷ William Allen, *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense of English Catholics that Suffer for Their Faith both at Home and Abroad: Against a false, seditious and slanderous libel, entitled: "The execution of justice in England"*, in *The Execution of Justice in England by William Cecil and A True, Sincere and Most Defense of English Catholics by William Allen*, ed. by Robert M. Kingdon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), 77.

[would be] watered (if neede require) with bloud'.⁶⁸ While the primary function of the English mission was to provide priests to minister to English Catholics and perform the sacraments (including the expiatory sacrifice of the Eucharist) for them, it was cognisant of the fact that many of the priests sent into England would be martyred, and the priests were trained (while in seminary) to think of themselves as preparing for martyrdom: indeed, many of them, like Southwell, longed to serve their country through shedding their blood as martyrs.⁶⁹ Allen emphasised in his training of the missionary priests that the body of Christ was the body of the Church, and that therefore 'to contribute any drop of blood, or iote of affliction, to the making up of the full measure of Christes passions for his body, which is the Church, far exceedeth al humane dignitie and felicitie'.⁷⁰ The missionary priests were intended not only to be clerics for the English Catholics, and missionaries to those who had fallen away from the faith, but also Christomimetic blood sacrifices for the salvation of England.⁷¹

This was most strongly emphasised in Mush's martyrology of Margaret Clitherow, which is best understood as an appeal for more English Catholics to be eager to be martyred. Mush begins the text with a lengthy reflection on the Tertullian theme, emphasising how, just as the early Church had survived and grown due to the blood of its martyrs, so now the blood of contemporary Catholic martyrs was needed for English Catholicism to endure and expand.⁷² From the 1580s, missionary priests, Jesuit or not, were increasingly advocating consistent recusancy, and condemning church papistry (attendance at Church of England services, usually to avoid paying the recusancy fines levied upon those who were persistently absent) as a grave sin. Yet, many English Catholics were church papists; and, as the penalties for non-attendance at

⁶⁸ Allen, *An Apologie*, 06^v.

⁶⁹ Southwell, 'Christ's bloody sweat', 18-19.

⁷⁰ Allen, *An Apologie and true declaration*, 114^v. This is discussed in Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 137.

⁷¹ Our picture of the English Catholic seminaries as intending to produce not only clerics and missionaries but also martyrs is further strengthened by Michael Williams' research postulating that manuscript accounts of martyrdom were used as fund-raisers for the English Mission's Continental seminaries: 'William Allen: the sixteenth century Spanish connection', *Recusant History* 22 (1994), 123-40; 'Campion and the English Continental Seminaries', in Thomas McCoog (ed.) *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), 285-300, 295-96.

⁷² Mush, *A True Report*, 362-63.

Church of England services became harsher, church papistry must have become an ever more attractive option. The clash between these different practices within Elizabethan English Catholicism, and the roles martyrology and martyrs' blood could play in speaking to this context, is seen in Mush's martyrology of Clitherow. Lake and Questier have demonstrated that most Catholics in York were church papists, and that Clitherow attracted considerable opprobrium for her blunt and open promotion of recusancy.⁷³ Mush's text, therefore, might stir up zeal in York's rather lukewarm Catholic community. It opens with a discussion of the blood of the martyrs being necessary to nourish the Church and for it to grow new roots, and emphasises the blood of martyrs throughout. Additionally, it promotes recusancy (the harbouring of priests, and fasting), despite the great associated risks, as essential elements for the survival of English Catholicism. The text does not gloss over the risks involved; rather it celebrates the opportunity presented by persecution: the martyr is 'washed in ... [their] sacred blood from all spots of frailty', while 'the lily roots [of the Church] being watered with the fruitful liquor of blood, may keep still and yield new branches hereafter'.⁷⁴ Mush's remedy for the increasingly arduous and perilous life of a church papist is to highlight the possibility of viewing martyrdom positively, as a chance to contribute to the essential 'liquor of blood' which English Catholicism needs, and to be redeemed and sanctified in the process.

Historiography, in its discussion of English Catholic martyrdoms, has largely overlooked *how* martyrs' blood was believed to be the seed of the Church. We have seen that it was believed to be a sacrifice with expiatory powers, imitating and functioning like Christ's blood. It was seen as atoning for the sins of both the English Catholic community and the English nation more widely. This was largely an extension of Catholic Eucharistic theology. The different confessions' Eucharistic beliefs thus produced very different constructions of martyrdom.

⁷³ Lake and Questier, *The Trials*, 49-82.

⁷⁴ Mush, *A True Report*, 362-63.

Martyrs' Blood and Materiality

Martyrs' blood, in Catholic theology, was a material vessel of grace (again, comparable to the Eucharist). The martyr and their body became sanctified through martyrdom, by their shedding of their blood for their faith – baptism in blood. Martyrs' blood was, thus, a holy object, and could transmit grace to people, objects, and places with which it came into contact.

While early-Church and medieval texts had presented the blood of Christ and the blood of the martyrs working in synergy for salvation and sanctification, Reformation Protestant texts presented salvation and sanctification as occurring exclusively through the blood of Christ. This was a dominant theme in English Reformation Protestant martyrologies: for example, Bale wrote in his edition of the *Examinations* of Askew, 'Thus endeth the first examynacyon of Anne Askewe ... now canonysed in the precyouse bloude of the lorde Jesus Christ.' Martyrs' blood had, in Protestant martyrology, become exclusively a force which condemned persecutors; it was no longer efficacious in the sanctification of martyrs themselves.

In contrast, from the 1580s Catholic martyrologies re-affirmed this discourse, most overtly through a language of washing in blood. For example, Alfield describes the 'consciencs' of Campion, Bryant and Sherwin as 'washed ... with their blood', while Mush appeals to the martyred Clitherow to intercede for him (thus highlighting her role as a saint) in his martyrology, on the grounds that 'thou art now washed in thy sacred blood from all spots of frailty.'⁷⁵ That early-modern Catholic apologists and martyrologists were aware of the patristic basis of such language is evident when Allen explains it in his *An Apologie* with references to Cyprian and Augustine.⁷⁶

Interestingly, Gerard seems to present a baptism of tears as an alternative (albeit less desirable and excellent) to the martyr's baptism in blood: 'I ... was left to ... wash with many

⁷⁵ Mush, *A True Report*, 440; Alfield, *A True Report*, D3^v.

⁷⁶ Allen, *An Apologie*, P2^r.

tears a soul which I was not counted fit to wash – once and quickly – with my blood.’⁷⁷ When we consider that, in the early-modern understanding, tears, like all bodily fluids, were a form of blood, we see that Gerard presents one form of washing the soul in blood as substituting for another. Baptism by tears was compared to baptism in blood by a number of early-Church writers. The concept of cleansing sins by weeping was popular in the medieval period, and was sometimes presented through a rhetoric of baptism, although baptism by tears was rarely compared to martyrs’ baptism in their blood.⁷⁸ Even in English Catholic works of the Reformation, it is an uncommon theme, but the proliferation of martyrdoms and the oppression of Catholics, comparable to the situation of the early Church, led to the re-emergence of comparisons between the two, as seen in Gerard, and also in the quotation from Allen above: ‘[Into] misery our country, to us most dear, being fallen, and having no other human helps to recover it ... we will not fear nor fail to pray and ask it of God with tears and blood.’⁷⁹

Just as baptism in blood transformed a sinner into a saint, so the body and material possessions of the martyr became relics – materiality infused with God’s grace. This was especially true of the martyrs’ blood, considering its integral role in martyrdom and sanctification, as Marotti has shown.⁸⁰ Martyrs’ blood relics were particularly associated with the Eucharist, due to the close relationship between martyrs’ blood and Christ’s blood. The executioner of William Davies brought his bloodstained cassock to Catholics in gaol, to sell it to them. The ‘cassock, stained with blood, was kept in a certain part of the kingdom, that priests might with much devotion wear it under their priestly vestments, when they celebrated the Eucharist.’⁸¹ English Catholics were extremely keen to collect and own relics, despite the

⁷⁷ Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 143.

⁷⁸ On sanctifying religious weeping in the medieval period, see Nagy Piroška, ‘Religious Weeping as Ritual in the Medieval West’, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 48-2: *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation* (2004), 119-137.

⁷⁹ Allen, *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense*, 77.

⁸⁰ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 84.

⁸¹ *Acts of English Martyrs*, 142; See also Diego de Yepes’s *Historia particular de la persecucion de Inglaterra* (Madrid: 1599), 666: discussed in Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 66, note 37. The Eucharistic dimension to martyrdom and martyrs’ relics was not confined to martyrs’ blood. Priest-martyrs often kissed the noose before slipping it around their necks, echoing how they had kissed the stole they put around their necks before every Mass (Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 84). And, the year after his execution,

dangers involved. We see both the risk of collecting relics, and the English authorities' considerable attempts to prevent their creation, in *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation* (1586). During the executions of Catholics, spies are stationed to note if any:

endeavour to get of our blood or other relics, for all such they apprehend as traitors ... Moreover, they use singular diligence and wariness in martyring us, that no part of blood, or flesh, or garment, or anything belonging to the martyrs be either unburnt or escape their hands. The sacred blood they conculcate and cast into the fire.⁸²

These grace-filled relics possessed the power of performing miracles. Whereas Protestants avowed that miracles had ceased after the apostolic age, Catholics continued to believe that miracles still occurred. Thus, while Protestant texts usually did not present martyrs' blood as miraculous, Catholic texts demonstrate an enduring belief in the miraculous nature of martyrs' blood. Miracles were sometimes utilised by Catholic writers as testimonies to the truth of Catholicism, especially as Protestant apologists (being cessationists) could offer no counter-miracles of their own.⁸³ But miracles were nonetheless handled with caution by Catholic apologists, partly in the light of Counter-Reformation reservations about alleged miracles (a backlash against the medieval tendency towards naive credulity), and partly because English Catholic martyrological writings were engaged in a polemic war where any mistakes would be eager seized upon by the opposition as a gift.⁸⁴ Therefore, and especially in the face of fierce Reformation criticism of the notion of martyrs' blood having miraculous powers, even passing references to miraculous martyrs' blood in Reformation Catholic writings must be seen as a

just the thumb and forefinger of Fr Robert Sutton's corpse were found to be incorrupt 'so that on these, which had been anointed with holy oil and sanctified by contact with the most holy Body of Christ, a special honour above the other fingers were conferred.' (*Acts of English Martyrs*, 325-6). The thumb of Edmund Campion was likewise valued because of its consecration in ordination, and its special role in performing the Eucharist, and miraculous cures were attributed to it; likewise Fr Edmund Gennings' thumb (Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 88-89).

⁸² ?Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 98.

⁸³ Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, 31-32, and ch. 5. See also Francis Young, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553-1829* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁸⁴ Just as apparent miracles in the 1563 edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* had been exploited by Thomas Stapleton and other English Catholic polemicists.

restatement of traditional Catholic theology and practice in the face of Protestant attempts to redefine the nature and power of martyrs' blood.⁸⁵

Miraculous martyrs' blood occurs in a few texts, and possible – but ambiguous – blood-related miracles occur in several more.⁸⁶ John Gerard's autobiography features one of the few such clear accounts, involving the blood of the seventh-century English martyr, Winefride. Gerard states that where Winefride was decapitated a spring had miraculously burst forth, and blood still covers the stones in the stream almost a thousand years later, and turns the water red on her feast day.⁸⁷ Elizabethan recusant Catholics revered the site and believed miracles occurred there. Gerard relates that Father Oldcorne was suffering from cancer of the mouth, and when he visited the home of Catholics who had one of the blood-sprinkled stones among their collection of relics, 'he went down on his knees and began to lick the stone and hold part of it to his mouth', and his cancer was cured.⁸⁸

Written accounts of early-modern English martyrs' blood being miraculous are not widespread, but some exist. The most notable concern the miracles connected with Father Henry Garnett's blood.⁸⁹ At his execution, a husk of straw stained with his blood 'did leap into

⁸⁵ It should be noted that the cult of the holy blood of martyrs had well-known English precedents, such as Thomas Becket, Arilda and Winefride: see Chapter One above.

⁸⁶ These miracles include: a sensation of the stigmata appearing in the left hand of the martyr Alexander Brian, and blood running out, while he was praying and meditating on Christ's Passion in between sessions of torture (Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, F6^v); and possibly a belief that the Thames paused when Campion's blood dropped in it - 'the river Thames a whole astonied stode, / to count to drops of Campions sacred blood' – if this is not poetic license (Alfield, *A True Report*, F2^r).

⁸⁷ Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 56. For another example of the supernatural power of martyrs' blood over matter, see 'Garnett's straw' in John Gerard, *The Condition of Catholics under James I: Father Gerard's narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, ed. by John Morris (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871), 301-07.

⁸⁸ Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 55-58; see also Gerard, *The Condition*, 283-85. Consuming the holy blood of martyrs, sometimes mixed with water, was an established practice of pilgrims in pre-Reformation England. Most famously, prior to its suppression in 1538, the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury offered pilgrims water mixed with Becket's blood, which was supposed to have miraculous healing powers (see Chapter One). In this episode in Gerard's autobiography, we thus see an example of continuity in theology and practice in the English Catholic community from pre-Reformation to post-Reformation.

⁸⁹ For contextualisation of this case within contemporary English Protestant and Catholic perceptions of relics, see Alexandra Walsham, 'Skeletons in the cupboard: relics after the English Reformation', *Past & Present*, 206 (2010), 121-143, especially 103. For the (likely) influence of the famous case of Garnett's Straw on Protestant mentalities and literature of the period, especially Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, see H.L. Rogers, 'An English Tailor and Father Garnett's Straw', *The Review of English Studies*, 16-61 (1965), 44-49.

the hand of a Catholic who stood by with great desire to get some part of the martyr's blood, but durst not be seen to take it.'⁹⁰ This straw was given to a devout Catholic woman, who observed that after six weeks Garnett's face appeared on the straw, including 'his beard bespotted with bloude, and a bloody circle compassing the necke wher yt was decollated or cutt of'.⁹¹ The bloody straw rapidly became famous, and was taken to 'many of the chieftest Catholics about London', as well as members of the King's Council (Protestants), and Gerard claims that the Council recognised it was a genuine miracle; some of them admired it, but others wished to destroy it as 'they feared the evidence of the miracle would plead against their proceedings and prove him innocent whom they had punished as guilty.'⁹² The Council commissioned Protestant painters to reproduce the image on the straw, but, Gerard reported, none could do it, proving it to be miraculous.⁹³ The bloody straw in the meantime worked healing miracles in some of those who touched it, curing the gentlewoman who owned it of a severe sickness and another 'gentlewoman in great peril of her life by danger of childbirth'.⁹⁴ As well as the bloody straw, another blood-related miracle occurred in connection with Garnett's martyrdom: Garnett being executed for treason, his head was displayed, and 'a visible and apparent circle of red about his head in the form of a crown ... was and is to be seen'.⁹⁵ This martyr's crown, Gerard explains, was God's 'public testimony of the glory which blessed Father Garnett now possesseth'.⁹⁶

Gerard takes pains to explain why such spectacular miracles occurred in connection with Garnett's blood and martyrdom, but not for earlier Catholic martyrs: '... in this case Almighty God did think it more needful in His divine providence to give testimony of His

⁹⁰ Gerard, *The Condition*, 297.

⁹¹ Bod. MS Eng. Th. b. 2, 135^r. My very grateful thanks to Katie McKeogh for bringing this to my attention.

⁹² Gerard, *Condition*, 303. Gerard's description of the fame the miracle generated, while probably exaggerated, captures the widespread cross-confessional interest in London. It gained sufficient renown that it was declaimed in Robert Prickett's Protestant pamphlet *The Jesuits Miracles, or New Papish Wonders. Containing the straw, the crowne, and the wondrous child, with the confutation of them and their follies* (London: 1607), and investigated by Archbishop Richard Bancroft.

⁹³ Gerard, *The Condition*, 304-305. This is also discussed in MS 21, 203, 22^r-23^r (British Library): see Walsham, 'Skeletons in the cupboard', 103, note 33.

⁹⁴ Gerard, *The Condition*, 304.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 305.

servant's innocence than in former times, when the cause itself was so plain, that it could not be contradicted.⁹⁷ Whereas earlier Catholic martyrs had generally been executed more obviously for their faith (sheltering priests or being priests ordained abroad, celebrating or attending Mass, converting people to Catholicism), Garnett had been executed for allegedly conspiring in the Gunpowder Plot, and therefore there was a risk that Catholics might believe him to be guilty, and so not a martyr, but a traitor. Gerard's careful explanation elucidates contemporary mentalities towards and constructions of miracles, including blood-related miracles, connected with the English Catholic martyrdoms. Clearly, such miracles were sufficiently rare that Gerard felt the need to explain why they had taken place for Garnett.

Martyrs' blood was grace-filled, and could radiate this grace to people, objects, and places which came into contact with it, or were nearby. The most obvious and spectacular manifestations of this transmission of grace were miracles, but there were subtler manifestations too, chiefly people converting to Catholicism or their Catholic faith being strengthened. There are several depictions of martyrs' blood conferring or strengthening faith: Monta reports that, 'contact between martyrs' blood and witnesses present at their executions was believed to prompt conversion: Henry Walpole converted after a drop of Campion's blood splashed on him.'⁹⁸ This echoes tales in medieval martyrologies, such as St Christopher's blood healing and converting the king who sentenced him to death when the king rubbed it on his eye, and Longinus, the centurion who pierced Christ with a spear, being healed of blindness by Christ's blood and so converted.⁹⁹ Gerard similarly depicts Garnett's blood as conferring and strengthening faith, although in this case it is not even through direct contact, but rather the grace radiates to those nearby (comparable to the medieval Catholic belief in the salvific sight of the Eucharist) and ultimately throughout England (comparable to the death of Christ, which was

⁹⁷ Ibid., 301.

⁹⁸ Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*, 66. See Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 130, and the poem (probably by Henry Walpole) 'Why do I use paper, pen and ink', which states 'This martyr's blood hath moistened all our hearts.' (Printed in Alfield, *A True reporte*, Fr.).

⁹⁹ de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (1993 ed.), 14.

not merely efficacious for those nearby but for all the world). Gerard says that, despite the increased persecution of Catholics in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, 'the force of the martyr's blood and the merit of his innocent death' strengthened the Catholics' faith and resolve:

yet such was the goodness of God towards us, such the force of His grace obtained by the merits of these holy martyrs, that presently, upon the death of blessed Father Garnett, you might see his innocent blood had warmed all their hearts; you might see in them a new fervour, expecting persecution with a peaceable and cheerful mind; you might see them everywhere begin to prepare themselves neither to resist nor run away, but how to bear the blows of persecution with Christian patience.¹⁰⁰

He also claims that the Jacobean regime sought, after the Gunpowder Plot, to banish rather than execute Catholic priests because they were aware of the power of Catholic martyrs' blood to convert and to consolidate faith: 'indeed, it is true they do not so much seek their deaths as their departure, knowing on the one side, by experience, what force the blood of martyrs is of, both for the confirmation of Catholics and conversion of heretics'.¹⁰¹ And the grace transmitted by Fr Garnett's blood was such that even among those who would not be converted to Catholicism some of them henceforth, astonishingly, had a better opinion of the Jesuits (the Catholic Order most feared and loathed among English Protestants): 'his innocent blood did water the field of Christ in this country, and brought forth a plentiful harvest; yea, it did mollify the hearts of some that were before very hard to believe well of the Society, touching these imposed crimes.'¹⁰²

As well as transferring grace to people, martyrs' blood was also believed to sanctify inanimate matter, such as objects and places. For example, John Mush very clearly presents the blood of martyrs as sanctifying the place where they died.¹⁰³ He depicts Clitherow perceiving

¹⁰⁰ Gerard, *The Condition*, 307-08.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 313.

¹⁰² Ibid. 299.

¹⁰³ As Marotti has noted, 'Clearly, each time an execution of a Catholic priest or layperson occurred, the place of execution was contested ground between Catholicism and Protestantism, between the government and the Catholic minority, and between the religious and the secular.' (*Religious Ideology*, 84).

Knivesmire, where Catholic priests had recently been executed, as so sanctified by their blood as to make it worthy of pilgrimage.¹⁰⁴ He describes her going 'barefoot to the place, and kneeling on her bare knees ever under the gallows',¹⁰⁵ behaviour signalling that she thought Knivesmire, and more particularly the ground beneath the gallows where the martyrs' blood had fallen, an especially holy place, since it has clear parallels with Exodus 3:5, where God says to Moses, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground'. Similarly, Allen writes that Campion 'was hanged on the new galloes, which is now called among catholikes the Gibbet of Martyrs, because it was first set up and dedicated in the bloud of an innocent Catholike Confessor, and afterwards by the mans, and divers Priests and others Martyrdoms, made sacred.' Thus, Allen sees martyrs' blood as having the power to dedicate and sanctify, i.e. to consecrate.¹⁰⁶ This language of dedicating an object in innocent blood would, for the Biblically-literate early-modern reader, have had sacrificial overtones, since it evoked the common Old Testament practice of consecrating things (both objects which are to be used for ritual purposes, such as altars, and those which are unclean, such as leper houses) and people (especially priests) with the innocent blood of sacrificed animals.¹⁰⁷ And, as we have already seen, Catholic texts also present a wider concept of the blood of martyrs re-sanctifying larger areas, including countries; thus, they portray the blood of the Elizabethan Catholic martyrs as essential to re-consecrating England. This is what underlies the statement, in 'Why do I use paper, pen and ink', that 'it is not force nor might / ... that must convert the land, / It is the blood by martirs shed'.¹⁰⁸

Marotti has stressed 'the materialization of spiritual practices in Catholicism' and the continuity, on the one hand, between medieval and early-modern Catholicism, and the contrast, on the other hand, between Catholicism and Protestantism (the latter associating

¹⁰⁴ Mush, *A True Report*, 395.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Allen, *A Briefe Historie*, C2^v.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Exodus 29; Leviticus 4:5-7, 8, 9, 14:14-17, 14:48-53, 16:14, 17; Hebrews 9:11-14, 18-22.

¹⁰⁸ Alfield, G1^r.

‘materialization of spiritual practices’ with ‘idolatry, superstition, and magical trickery’).¹⁰⁹ This is exemplified by Catholic attitudes towards martyrs’ blood. Catholics believed that martyrs’ blood could transmit grace to people, object and places. The martyr’s sanctification through death for their faith had traditionally been seen as ‘baptism in blood’, and early-modern Catholic martyrologies reaffirmed this notion. Martyrs’ blood (e.g. in the form of bloodstained objects) was collected by Catholics as a grace-filled relic, possessing supernatural powers and capable of working healing miracles. Martyrs’ blood, as a vessel of grace, could also be instrumental in people converting to Catholicism or in their Catholic faith being strengthened. Martyrs’ blood sanctified places, both local – like the site of their execution, and wider – like the whole of England.

Bloody Enemies

While both Catholic and Protestant theologies of martyrdom were, of course, retributive to an extent, the Catholic theology of martyrdom was intrinsically less so than its Protestant counterpart. Nonetheless, the French Catholic League, which was aiding the English Catholics and the English Mission, needed emotive Catholic martyrologies for its anti-Calvinist propaganda, and thus a rhetoric of bloody enemies and bleeding martyrs suited its ends. This created a tension between two opposing forces working upon English Catholic depictions of persecutors. The result was a subtle, carefully nuanced rhetoric, which most often portrayed bloody enemies only implicitly, and with an emphasis on the hope that they would convert.

A rhetoric of bloody enemies occurs less frequently in English Catholic texts. While Bale’s and Foxe’s use of this language is incessant, it is rare even in the most polemical Catholic martyrological writings. *A Yorkshire Recusant’s Relation* uses it most frequently, with six references to ‘bloody enemies’ or similar in thirty-seven pages (in Morris’ 1877 edition), while other strongly bloody and polemic works have even fewer usages of such language, for example Mush’s martyrology of Clitherow using it only three times in eighty pages (in Morris’ 1877

¹⁰⁹ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 204.

edition), and Allen's *A true, sincere, and Modest Defense* using it only twice in two-hundred-and-forty-two pages.¹¹⁰ In Protestant texts, the discourse of bloody enemies includes frequent *ad hominem* attacks on those responsible for the persecution. This is uncommon in Catholic martyrological texts. Only exceptionally unjust and/or enthusiastic persecutors are frequently described as bloody. Henry Hastings, the Earl of Huntingdon and President in the North, is the only individual often described in this way, due to his passionate campaign to wipe out Catholicism in the North and his use of the most stringent penalties available against Catholics.¹¹¹ For example, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation* describes him as 'a most bloody and heretical tyrant' with a 'barbarous and bloody mind' and a 'bloody humour'.¹¹² He is the closest figure in Catholic texts to the Protestant 'bloody Bonner': as Father Holtby writes, 'Among all that in our time have borne office in this north country, this Earl of Huntingdon, Lord Henry Hastings, may easily take the upper hand of all, for his bloody and cruel mind against Catholic men and their religion'.¹¹³ Very occasional *ad hominem* attacks on other 'bloody enemies' occur in other texts; for example, where the persecutor is a man of outstandingly cruel reputation, such as Gerard's description of Richard Topcliffe as 'a cruel creature ... [who] thirsted for the blood of Catholics'.¹¹⁴ The rarity of a language of bloody enemies can be explained from social and theology perspectives. First, Catholics were aware that they needed to live peaceably and co-operatively alongside the Protestant majority, for their own security and well-being; secondly, they were more hopeful that the blood of the martyrs would lift the spiritual blindness

¹¹⁰ Mush, *A True Report*: 'their bloody hands', 397; 'bloody enemies', 437; 'malicious bloodsuckers', 438. A ?Mush, *Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*: 'his barbarous and bloody mind', 66; 'his bloody humour', 66; 'these blood-suckers', 71; 'the bloody adversary', 97; 'these furious blood-suckers', 99. Allen, *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense*: 'certain in government (seeking by all direct or indirect drifts the blood of poor Catholics)', 126; 'the civil magistrates' most captious and bloody conceits' 173.

¹¹¹ Sir Henry Hastings, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. David Cannadine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-). Consulted online at <http://globaloup.com/oxforddnb/info/online/>. For further discussion of Hastings, see Claire Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The life of Henry Hastings, Third Earl of Huntingdon, 1563-1595* (London: Macmillan, 1966).

¹¹² ?Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 65-66.

¹¹³ Holtby, *Persecution*, 132.

¹¹⁴ Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 84.

of their Protestant neighbours, including even their persecutors, as mentioned repeatedly across recusant Catholic writings.

This is not, of course, to say that Catholic texts completely eschew descriptions of bloody persecutors, but rather than they appear less frequently, and are handled more cautiously, than in Protestant texts. Catholic martyrologies emphasised the innocence of their martyrs, inferring that they had been killed unjustly; thus, a rhetoric of innocent blood is very common. This served the domestic purpose of refuting the English authorities' insistence that the executed Catholics were traitors, but it also served the French Catholic League by presenting Calvinist authorities as dangerous and unjust in executing innocent Catholics guilty of no crime other than practising their faith. Descriptions of innocent blood most frequently appear amid accusations of injustice, oppression, cruelty, and slander, such as 'for want of just matter, these heretics oppressed this just man with these railing slanders and odious speeches, and shed his innocent blood.'¹¹⁵ They can also sometimes serve to warn English Protestants of the terrible sin that has been committed (shedding innocent blood), the guilt for which lies primarily with the perpetrators but also more widely with the country, and which can arouse God's vengeance: 'O if thou couldst see and consider the time of thy visitation, how the blood of many saints, yea, the blood of thine own daughter, hastened God's vengeance upon thee.'¹¹⁶

Most commonly, however, it is stated that Catholic martyrs' blood cries out, not for God's vengeance, but for God's mercy. For example, Allen states in *An Apologie* that 'bloud voluntarily yelded, crieth forcibly for mercie toward our Countrie.'¹¹⁷ Additionally, it cries out to the living in witness of the true faith, and encourages them also to hope to be martyred, as in the martyrological poem Alfield includes in his compilation: 'His [Campion's] hardle drawes us with him to the crosse, his speeches there provoke us for to dye, his death doth say this life is but a

¹¹⁵ ?Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 92.

¹¹⁶ Mush, *A True Report*, 396.

¹¹⁷ Allen, *An Apologie*, L6^r. He uses similar language in *A Briefe Historie*, as does the anonymous author of the eyewitness account of the martyrdom of Mr John Nelson (which Allen reproduces in *A Briefe Historie*): *A Briefe Historie*, C6^v, D8^r

losse, his martird blood from heaven to us doth crye'.¹¹⁸ Whereas in Protestant texts, the cry of martyrs' blood is almost always for God's vengeance (imitating the blood of Abel), in Catholic texts the cry is multifaceted, simultaneously for mercy and vengeance, and sometimes also functioning as a communication (or testimony) between saints in heaven and believers on earth, rather than simply a communication between the martyrs and God as in Protestant constructions. It is worth highlighting again that we see here how Protestant constructions of martyrs' blood drew primarily upon Old Testament/Covenant notions of innocent bloodshed and upon the apocalyptical martyrs' blood in Revelation, whereas Catholic constructions of martyrs' blood drew primarily upon New Testament/Covenant depictions of Christ's death and blood.¹¹⁹

Catholic texts treat the notion of bloodguilt more hesitantly and cautiously, but feature some depictions of blood-guilty persecutors. For example, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation* describes those who try to sentence priests as 'guilty of innocent blood'.¹²⁰ Again, these depictions are often more nuanced than in Protestant texts. Catholic texts are less vitriolic in their use of this theme, and emphasise more strongly the possibility of cleansing by repentance. Protestant texts, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, emphasise that shedding innocent blood creates blood-guilt, and God's vengeance follows. *The Acts and Monuments* only briefly adds (at the end of the work) that bloodstained persecutors can be cleansed through repentance. In contrast, Catholic texts often emphasise the hope that the martyrs' enemies will be led to repent and perhaps convert. This is arguably due, in part, to the supernatural powers of conversion which are attributed to holy blood in Catholic writings, and also to the fact that Calvinist theology was, by nature, divisive and 'othering', in pitting a consciously godly minority against a reprobate majority who were created deliberately by God to be vessels of

¹¹⁸ Alfield, *A True Report*, F1v.

¹¹⁹ See the more detailed discussion of this Biblical context in Chapter One.

¹²⁰ *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 89.

destruction.¹²¹ Catholic texts also feature many more portrayals of martyrs attempting to protect their persecutors from bloodguilt. *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation* states that Clitherow refused to plead, as she perceived that if she did so 'all the jurors should be guilty of her blood, if by their unlawful verdict she were condemned'. Gerard depicts Mrs Jane Wiseman as copying Clitherow in refusing to plead, 'in order to save the jury staining their consciences with her blood by returning a verdict of guilty'.¹²² Similarly, the priest John Boast at his trial confessed that he was an ordained priest, although there was not clear evidence against him, saying 'I do not mean that any of this inquest shall stand charged or be guilty of my blood. I had rather confess the whole indictment.'¹²³ There is, therefore, more emphasis on forgiveness and mercy in Catholic discourses of bloodguilt, no doubt in conscious imitation of Christ and Stephen (the first martyr) who ask God to forgive their persecutors. There is also more recognition of, and hope for, the possibility that bloody enemies (and even the very worst among them) can transform into members of Christ's Church; for example, the martyr Swithen Wells said to Richard Topcliffe (the leading investigator and torturer of Catholics), 'God pardon you and make you of a Saul a Paul, of a bloody persecutor one of the Catholic Church's children.'¹²⁴ This arguably echoes the confessions' very different perspectives on salvation. Protestantism (and especially Calvinism) believed that people had no free will to co-operate in salvation, but rather God saved those he chose to redeem through irresistible Grace, and left the rest to the damnation they were helplessly bound for, irrespective of how they lived their lives.¹²⁵ Catholicism, in contrast, believed people co-operated with God's grace in the process of salvation, and that God called everyone to salvation; thus, individuals were not separated by God into the saved and damned irrespective of their own efforts, but rather every individual could turn towards salvation or fall away from it at any point in their lifetime.

¹²¹ See Alfield, *A True Report*, E3^v-E4^r, where the author of the poem urges those who are guilty of Campion's, Briant's and Sherwin's blood to repent so that God does not damn them.

¹²² ?Mush, *A Yorkshire Recusant's Relation*, 85-86; Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 64.

¹²³ Holtby, *On Persecution*, 200.

¹²⁴ *Acts of English Martyrs*, 108.

¹²⁵ For further discussion of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, see Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) [First ed. 2013], 27-48, especially 27.

Catholic texts do occasionally depict innocent blood crying out for God's vengeance. Allen depicts Campion's, Bryan's and Sherwin's blood as crying for God's vengeance against their persecutors, and states that shedding innocent blood under a false claim of public justice is 'a thousand times before God more damnable and punishable by his divine power, then if mans life were taken from him by private murder.'¹²⁶ Nonetheless, Allen does not end his text with an overall image of irrevocable divine vengeance descending on the blood-guilty. Speaking on behalf of the Catholic community, he says:

We do from the bottome of our harts forgive, and desire God of his unspeakable mercie to turne away his heavie hand of justice, from the Realme, and from every one, that either procured, or consented to the deaths of these his blessed Saints, or the trouble of his holy Israel, whose blood and death most deare in our Lords sight, I pray CHRIST JESUS they cal not for vengeance but for mercie and grace towards their persectors;

Thus, once again, the emphasis falls on the power of holy blood to bring God's grace to others, including the martyrs' persecutors, and the Protestant 'blood for blood' narrative trajectory (seen especially in Foxe) is usually absent from Catholic writings.

While Catholic texts recognise that innocent blood stains, this is emphasised less in Catholic than in Protestant English Reformation texts; nonetheless, occasionally a similar rhetoric of bloodstained hands, or bloodstained consciences, or bloodstained places appears. Dr Richard Barrett wrote to Alphonsus Agazzari in 1583 that the English Catholic martyrs preferred 'to suffer the cruellest death and to come into those bloodstained hands of the torturer' than to apostasise.¹²⁷ Alfield lamented the anti-Catholic legislation that is 'like to imbue our country and nation with much innocent blood'.¹²⁸ Yet, even in rhetoric of bloodstaining, the Catholic language of martyrs' blood is more optimistic and less vitriolic than the Protestant

¹²⁶ Allen, *A Briefe History*, A6^v.

¹²⁷ '[U]t crudelissimam ipsi mortem potius subire statim maluissent, et in easdem venire sanguinolentas tortoris manus'. Barrett to Agazzari, rector of the English College at Rome (Rheims, May 3rd 1583), in *Appendix of The First and Second Diaries*, 328.

¹²⁸ Alfield, *A True Report*, C4^r.

language of martyrs' blood. For example, Alfield pairs his description of a bloodstained England with a certainty that this nourishing martyrs' blood can benefit the country: 'England looke up, thy soyle is staine with blood, thou hast made martirs many of thine owne, if thou hast grace their deaths will do thee good, the seede will take which in such blood is sowne'.¹²⁹

Even the (textual) space given to bloody persecutors was confessionalised. Protestant accounts devoted far more space to depictions of 'bloody persecutors' and the persecutors' fates.¹³⁰ Catholic texts concentrated heavily on the martyrs and their expiating blood, rarely featuring frequent depictions of 'bloody' enemies. Catholicism thus continued the medieval trend, since medieval martyrologies and hagiographies were primarily intended as mirrors of holiness for readers to imitate, focusing intensely on the holy person, as evidenced by the titles of compilations like the *Speculum sacerdotale*. Medieval Catholic martyrological accounts generally included a lengthy *vita*, depicting the martyrs' holy life, as well as a *passio*, depicting the martyr suffering at the hands of their wicked enemies: although the martyrs' persecutors often did meet unpleasant ends if they did not repent, the primary focus of the work was on the martyr rather than their enemies.¹³¹ Protestant martyrologies broke with this trend, often focusing as much (sometimes even more) on the martyrs' enemies. They often omitted or significantly abbreviated the traditional *vita*, so that the *passio* was the main constituent. Additionally, the traditional medieval cautionary depiction of the unrepentant persecutor's fate was sometimes intensified and given extensive treatment. Catholic martyrologies, in contrast, focused, perhaps even more than their medieval predecessors, on the victims rather than the perpetrators. While Protestant martyrologies primarily attacked the brutal and wicked nature of the Roman Catholic authorities, Catholic martyrologies offered a mirror of holiness and a

¹²⁹ Alfield, *A True Report*, E3v.

¹³⁰ The rhetoric of 'bloody enemies' proliferated in English Protestant writings well before English Protestant depictions of bleeding martyrs appeared. See, for example: Roy & Barlowe, *Rede Me*, 20, 60, 97; Fish, *A Supplicacyon* (1871 ed.), 5-6, 9; Tyndale, *Obedience*, 28, 83, 93-4, 127, 161.

¹³¹ These features can be clearly seen in the martyrological accounts in Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, the anonymous *Speculum Sacerdotale*, and Mirk's *Festial*.

promise that the martyrs' supernatural blood would reconvert England; direct attacks on the character of the Protestant authorities were usually only a secondary concern.

The differences between Protestant and Catholic treatments of the martyrs' persecutors reflect distinctive features of Catholic and Calvinist theologies. First, while Calvinist theology recognised the possibility of conversion and redemption of individuals among confessional opponents, it was nonetheless by nature more oppositional than Catholic theology. Thus, Calvinism's worldview lent itself to narratives of a tiny, beleaguered and bleeding true Church, persecuted by a large, powerful and bloodthirsty false Church, whose reprobate murderous members come to horrific earthly ends in providential anticipation of their fate at the Last Judgement.¹³² In contrast, Catholicism saw salvation as potentially open to every individual, as it understood God to call and will every individual to be saved; their salvation hinged upon their free choice to accept or reject that call. God's grace was nonetheless essential in the salvific process, as Catholicism still viewed human nature as deeply fallen and depraved. In Catholicism, grace frequently operated through the material world, as in the sacraments and in miracle-working people, objects and places. Thus, Catholicism lent itself to narratives of the holy martyrs' blood mediating God's grace to the martyrs' confessional opponents, so they might choose to turn to the true faith.

Secondly, Protestant martyrs' blood primarily imitated the blood of Abel, but Catholic martyrs' blood imitated the blood of Christ. Thus, Protestant martyrs' blood cried out for God's vengeance, and did not function as an expiatory sacrifice nor as a vehicle of grace. In contrast, Catholic martyrs were united with Christ in their martyrdom, and their blood was united with Christ's blood (which they received in the Eucharist in each Mass). The catechism of the Council of Trent states that Christ 'shed His blood for the salvation of all', although – since only some accepted the gift of salvation Christ offered – 'the fruit' of His Passion 'pertains not unto all, but

¹³² On Calvinist theology in execution narratives, see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, papists, and players in post-Reformation England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002), especially 3-53.

to many'.¹³³ Although Christ's innocent blood is not devoid of associations with God's vengeance (the crowd who persuade Pilate to execute Christ say that they are willing for the blood-guilt to be 'on us and on our children' in Matt 27:25), primarily Christ's blood functions for expiation and mercy; even in respect of those people who have invited his bloodguilt upon themselves, Christ says to God the Father 'Father, forgive them' (Luke 23:34). Catholic martyrs' blood functions in the same way. As we have seen, it has the power to call for God's vengeance, but the martyrs themselves and the Catholic martyrologists pray that it calls rather for God's mercy, and see it as an expiatory sacrifice and a vehicle of God's grace.¹³⁴

Martyrs' Blood, the Apocalypse, and Time

The dissimilarity between the confessions' understandings of martyrdom is also evident in their understandings of the temporal meaning of early-modern martyrdoms. This has two elements: first, their apocalyptic beliefs; second, their understanding of the relationship between martyrs' deaths and Christ's death. Whereas Protestant writers tended to perceive martyrs' blood as calling down and witnessing to an impending apocalypse, English Catholic writers tended rather to see martyrs' blood as a force that would reconvert England, but did not usually connect martyrs' blood to the apocalypse. This discrepancy is situated within a wider void

¹³³ The Catechism of the Council of Trent states, in its discussion of the Eucharist ('Explanation of the form used in the Consecration of the wine'): 'For if we look to its value, we must confess that the Redeemer shed His Blood for the salvation of all; but if we look to the fruit of which mankind has received from it, we shall easily find that it pertains not unto all, but to many of the human race... to the elect only did His Passion bring the fruit of salvation.' *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. John A. McHugh and Charles J. Callan (New York: Joseph F. Wagner; London: B. Herder, 1923), 146, accessed at freecatholicbooks.com/books/catechism_of_trent.pdf on 01/02/2018 [First ed. Rome: 1566].

¹³⁴ See, for example, Allen's *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense*, 259-260 'In which cogitation it cometh often to our minds that if anything avert God's ire from our prince and country it is the abundance of holy blood shed these late years and ever sith the first revolt. Which though by justice it might cry rather to God for vengeance (and so it doth in respect of the impenitent, and the clamor thereof shall never be void), yet we trust it sueth for mercy, specially in respect of the infinite number of all estates that never consented to this iniquity. It is the heroical endeavor of a great many zealous priests and worthy gentlemen, that continually offer not only their prayers and other devout and religious offices but themselves in sacrifice for the salvation of their best beloved country... even those things and persons that the adversaries account to be the cause of all their troubles and fears are indeed the only hope of God's mercy, their own pardon, and our country's salvation.'

between English Protestant and Catholic perceptions of time, which amounted to English Catholics and Protestants essentially inhabiting different temporalities.

English Protestant apocalypticism has long been a popular topic, but there has been little work on English Catholic apocalypticism, as the few recent works that do treat this topic have noted.¹³⁵ This may be because scholars have postulated that there was very little English Catholic apocalypticism. They have generally assumed that Catholic discussions of the apocalypse were largely in response to Protestant apocalypticism, and that – unlike Protestants – Catholics did not usually see the events of the Biblical apocalypse unfolding in a literal, historicist manner in their own day.¹³⁶ This consensus has, however, been challenged by Coral Stoakes, in her PhD thesis on English Catholic eschatology (including apocalypticism). This is the only recent full-length study of sixteenth-century English Catholic apocalypticism, thus an important contribution to the field. Stoakes places these apocalyptic and eschatological beliefs within the contexts both of their wider socio-religious landscape and of modern scholarship.

Stoakes very fruitfully draws out the eschatological dimensions to English Catholic writings. However, several key elements of her conclusions are questionable. Arguably, she overstates the balance between Protestant and Catholic apocalyptic worldviews, and over-emphasises the preponderance and significance of Catholic belief that the prophecies in the book of Revelation were being literally fulfilled in present events, and that the end of the world was imminent. In this, she significantly understates the degree to which preoccupations with an imminent apocalypse were a marginal viewpoint in English Catholic apologetics and polemic, but a majority viewpoint in English Protestant apologetics and polemic.¹³⁷ This erroneous

¹³⁵ See *inter alia*: Kenneth Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical eisegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66-67; Coral Stoakes, 'English Catholic Apocalypticism, 1558-1603' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2016), 1-17.

¹³⁶ See, for example, Newport, *Apocalypse*, 66-90; Robert Barnes, 'Eschatology, Apocalypticism, and the Antichrist,' in *T&T Clark Companion to Reformed Theology*, ed. by D. M. Whitford (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 249.

¹³⁷ While Stoakes argues that there was a significant Elizabethan English Catholic perception of the apocalypse as something that was presently unfolding along the timeline provided in Revelation, ultimately she identifies only four writers who probably, at points, took this perspective: Richard Hopkins, Thomas Harding, Richard Bristow (from the 1580s), and Thomas Hide. For Richard Hopkins, see

emphasis stems from several problems with Stoakes' approach. First, she tends at times to conflate apocalypticism with eschatology, thus identifying as apocalyptic passages that are only eschatological.¹³⁸ Secondly, she almost completely overlooks typological and allegorical readings of Revelation and other Biblical apocryphal passages, with rare exceptions.¹³⁹ She tends to assume that when English Catholics referenced Revelation they were seeing themselves in the midst of a historical apocalypse outlined step by step in Revelation; she neglects the possibility that they were using the book allegorically and typologically, just as they used many of the other parts of the Old Testament (such as references to the exiles, Babylon, the Canaanites, the release from Egypt and crossing of the desert, and books like Lamentations). Finally, in a few places, she unfortunately misreads texts.¹⁴⁰ Stoakes is certainly right to

Stoakes, 'English Catholic Eschatology', 31-34, 77-78; for Thomas Harding, *ibid.*, 54-56, 72, 102-104, 132; for Richard Bristow, *ibid.*, 75-77, 111, 113; for Thomas Hide, *ibid.*, 225. It is noticeable that the two figureheads of the English Catholic mission, English Catholic martyrology, and English Catholic apologetics and polemic from the 1580s – William Allen and Robert Parsons – did not have such a perspective on the apocalypse. It is, of course, important to note that there were exceptions to the general rule, *but* the general rule still stands that English Catholic writers, unlike their Protestant contemporaries, did not tend to see the apocalypse as imminent, nor indeed to read the book of Revelation primarily literally.

¹³⁸ E.g., *inter alia*, Stoakes, 'English Catholic Eschatology', 34.

¹³⁹ She notes, in discussing Bristow's translation of 1 John for the Douai-Rheims Bible, that references to the Antichrist could be typological, and function as foreshadowings of the final Antichrist, just as people and events in the Old Testament prefigured Christ. This is an intriguing and very important point, which suggests how English Catholics and Protestants might have used rhetoric of the apocalypse differently, but which also – more widely – captures a central difference between English Catholic and Protestant notions of time. For Protestants, time was more linear, whereas Catholicism had a stronger conception of an 'eternal present' (we shall consider both points below). Unfortunately, Stoakes abandons the notion of the use of imagery from Revelation being typological almost as soon as she has raised it. E.g. her discussion of the anonymous memorandum 'Reflecting on the state of Catholics in England', 'Appendix', in *Calendar of State Papers relating to English Affairs in the Vatican Archives*, volume 2, 1572-1578, ed. J. M. Rigg (London: 1926), 549-569 (Stoakes, 'English Catholic Eschatology', 132-137).

¹⁴⁰ Most importantly, More's *Dialogue of Comfort*. She sees the work (and its reprinting by the Catholic exile John Fuller in 1573) as evidence that 'as early as 1573 the persecutions in England were placed in the timeline of events of the Apocalypse.' She claims that More's *Dialogue* 'placed England during the period of the opening of the seven seals' in Revelation and 'More placed the tribulations Catholics experienced in an apocalyptic time'. (Stoakes, 'English Catholic Eschatology', 202-03.) In this work, More does certainly refer to Revelation (along with many other Biblical books), but we can be confident that these are partly allegorical and typological readings, and partly literal but distant descriptions of what will happen when the apocalypse and the end of the world eventually comes, because – as we have seen – he states explicitly: 'bad as we are, I doubt not at all but that in conclusion, however base Christendom be brought, it shall spring up again, till the time be come very near to the day of judgment, some tokens of which methinketh are not come yet ... [Again] as I say, methinketh I miss yet in my mind some of those tokens that shall, by the scripture, come a good while before that. And among others, the coming in of the Jews and the dilating of Christendom again before the world come to that strait. So I say that for mine own mind I have little doubt that this ungracious sect of Mahomet shall have a foul fall, and Christendom spring and spread, flower and increase again.' More, *Dialogue of Comfort*, 189-190.

highlight that English Catholic writings reference Revelation and other apocalyptic passages of Scripture more often than scholars have previously tended to note. However, I remain unconvinced by her argument that most Elizabethan English Catholics, like their Protestant contemporaries, believed that they were living in the apocalyptic narrative of Revelation, and that the end of the world was imminent. While she reads English Catholic martyrdoms as strongly apocalyptic in flavour, my research suggests precisely the opposite, and is aligned with the traditional stance that '[while] various forms of collective expectancy remained alive in the Roman tradition ... Catholic eschatology remained on the whole less oriented to the historical horizon, more individualised and spiritualised than prevailing Protestant outlooks.'¹⁴¹

Protestant martyrological writings generally depict martyrs' blood calling for and signalling the apocalypse; Catholic martyrological writings, in contrast, mostly understand contemporary persecution as a brief intermission in the golden age of Catholic Christendom, since the blood of Catholic martyrs would expiate and purify the country and convert confessional opponents.¹⁴² Unlike Protestant writings, Catholic writings did not usually associate their martyrs' blood with the apocalypse; the figure of the bloody Antichrist is absent, as are suggestions that blood-guilt will bring down apocalyptic plagues and punishments. Catholic martyrological writings very rarely depict their age as the Last Times.¹⁴³ Rather, they expectantly await a future time when England will be Catholic again, and often see the powerful martyrs' blood as agent of this change.¹⁴⁴ Allen writes confidently that: 'Truth prevaleth in time ... specially the truth of Christ's religion, which riseth when it is oppressed, and flourisheth when it is most impugned' since 'God never suffereth it to cease or fail in any Country: though it stand with travail and blood.' He sees martyrdom as a 'grace' given by God which 'is a joyful sign of mercy' that he 'will not forsake the place nor people', and a sign that God will send 'a calm, or

¹⁴¹ Stoakes, 'English Catholic Eschatology', 195-232. Barnes, 'Eschatology', 249.

¹⁴² See discussions in above sections 'Martyrs' Blood Like Christ's Blood', 'Martyrs' Blood and Materiality', and 'Bloody Enemies'.

¹⁴³ For further discussion, see Seth Turner, 'Revelation 11:1-13: History of Interpretation', unpublished DPhil thesis (University of Oxford, 2005), 163.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example: Allen, *An Apologie*, 112; Parsons, *An Epistle of the Persecution*, M4^v; Alfield, G1^v.

the conversion of the whole'. Allen states unequivocally that the Catholics await this calm (lifting of persecution) or the reconversion of the whole of England, and see present tribulations as a period of God's chastisement for their sins.¹⁴⁵

Examining Protestant and Catholic rhetorics of martyrs' blood thus highlights how different the confessions' apocalyptic beliefs were. These beliefs stemmed from medieval roots. Roland Betancourt argues that by the medieval period there was a different understanding of time in the Eastern as opposed to the Western Churches: 'the Latin Church's future-driven Last Judgement operates on an event-based history that is to come, whereas the Byzantine Church conceives of history as a fulfilment that is in a perpetual present-orientated state of manifestation.'¹⁴⁶ The point is intriguing, but Betancourt overstates his case. Two different notions of time, and especially of apocalyptic time, were present in the medieval West, one more favoured among heretical groups, and one by the orthodox Western Church. Early-modern Protestantism and Catholicism each tended towards a different notion. Medieval Catholicism's understanding of the apocalypse focused 'more on moral issues, ones that speak to the present ... especially the moral dilemma of the individual';¹⁴⁷ in general, 'the medieval [Catholic Church's] consensus [was] that apocalyptic texts are to be read as moral allegories'.¹⁴⁸ In contrast, many medieval heretical groups were already interpreting the apocalypse in a more literal, historical fashion.¹⁴⁹ These were, of course, only general trends, and there were

¹⁴⁵ *An Apologie*, 112. For further discussion of the Catholic belief that the martyrdoms would be followed by England's return to the Catholic fold, see Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 271, 284, 348.

¹⁴⁶ Roland Betancourt, 'Prolepsis and Anticipation: The apocalyptic futurity of the now, East and West', in *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse*, ed. by Michael A. Ryan (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 177-205, 187.

¹⁴⁷ Robert, Boenig, 'The Apocalypse in Medieval England', in, Ryan (ed.) *A Companion* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 297-330, 326-27.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Lond, 'Revising the Revelation: Early modern appropriations of medieval apocalypticism', in Ryan (ed.) *A Companion*, 378-425, 390. Late-medieval Catholicism was, of course, highly diverse, and, thus, while this continuity between the mainstreams of medieval and early-modern Catholicism should be noted, it should not be forgotten that there were some medieval Catholic apocalyptic perspectives that were more orientated towards the future than the present. Moreover, Protestantism did, undoubtedly, evolve from and draw upon medieval orthodoxies as well as heresies. My intention is not to suggest a simplistic, binary equation between Protestantism and medieval heresies / Catholicism and medieval orthodoxies, but rather to point to the overall continuities and discontinuities in trends of emphasis and perception.

¹⁴⁹ See discussion of apocalypticism in English and Continental heretical texts in Chapter One.

significant apocalyptic thinkers and movements within medieval Catholicism, but the very fact that the orthodoxy of these movements was often called into question highlights the broad tendency for historicist understandings of an imminent apocalypse to be more characteristic of medieval heresy than medieval orthodoxy.¹⁵⁰ This calls into question the sharp divide depicted by historians such as Thomas Lond between ‘the medieval consensus’ and ‘Protestant historicising tendencies’.¹⁵¹ These differing medieval schools of thought had their heirs in the early-modern confessionalisation of apocalyptic standpoints. Common medieval heretical perspectives were reflected in a Protestant apocalypse which was historical, precise, and imminent. It had unmistakable historical signposts (including martyrs’ blood-shedding), and could be mapped with reasonable precision onto the medieval and recent past, and even into the future, as in Foxe’s *Eicasm* and in the multitude of complex commentaries, tables and diagrams produced by the Protestant printing presses.¹⁵² Common medieval Catholic perspectives were apparent in an early-modern Catholic apocalypse which was usually both a mysterious, more distant future event and a moral allegory applied to an individual’s present circumstances.

The disconnection between Protestant and Catholic notions of time was wider still, and underlies many of the issues for which believers were martyred and the way their martyrdoms were understood and represented. This should, perhaps, be obvious, considering the frequent Protestant protests in martyrologies, such as the *Examinations of Anne Askew* and the *Acts and Monuments*, that Christ cannot be present in the Eucharist because he is present in heaven, and cannot be in two places at once, or the Protestant belief that all Catholic miracles are false since the age of Christian miracles ceased with the last apostle’s death. Yet, scholars have shown

¹⁵⁰ The reception of the works of Joachim de Fiore is a case in point: see Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

¹⁵¹ Lond, ‘Revising the Revelation’, 390.

¹⁵² Ibid., 407. As Gregory has noted, this Protestant ‘apocalyptic horizon’ stands in striking contrast to the calendar of the Catholic Church. ‘By contrast, it would be difficult to find a less apocalyptic indicator than the liturgical calendar of the *Roman Martyrology* (1584). It duly calculates the movable feasts to beyond the year 4000 – confidence indeed that the gates of hell would not prevail against Christ’s church’ (*Salvation at Stake*, 254).

surprisingly little interest in the differences in confessional perspectives on time. It is thus important to highlight that martyrological narratives were at the heart of a confessional battle over rival ways of living in time and of conceiving of the connection between past, present, and future.

It is from this perspective that we can understand the very different confessional perspectives over whether martyrs' deaths and blood were united with Christ's death and blood, and how this worked within time. This topic has been neglected in early-modern scholarship, but it is sensitively explored in Andrew Redden's introduction to his edition of Antonio de la Calancha's martyrology (1638) of the Spanish priest Diego Ortiz (d.1571) in the neo-Inca state of Vilcabamba (Peru).¹⁵³ Although English Catholic martyrdoms and Latin-American Catholic martyrdoms were perhaps in many other ways very different, they were comparable in that both neatly encapsulate an ancient and widespread Catholic notion of time.¹⁵⁴ Redden discovers in Calancha's account of Ortiz's martyrdom exactly what we have been exploring in English Catholic martyrologies: 'the Passion of Christ continues and can be witnessed in Ortiz's own Passion.'¹⁵⁵ He terms this 'the collapse of time'. This early-modern Catholic theology of time stemmed from Augustine, who in turn drew upon Neoplatonic conceptions of time. In Neoplatonic thought, 'teleological time (chronos)' was contained and penetrated by 'the eternal, divine present (kairos)'.¹⁵⁶ For Augustine, Christ's incarnation was 'the kairic moment' – the 'merger of kairos and chronos.' The incarnation, together with his death and resurrection, 'is the Augustinian redemption of time, when the eternal becomes teleological and when the teleological becomes eternal.'¹⁵⁷ Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection sent out ripples (kairic events) across the surface of time: 'preceding and subsequent events that "anticipate" (prophecy) and "remember" (reflect) that central

¹⁵³ Redden states, 'it is remarkable how little attention it has received.' (*The Collapse*, 2.)

¹⁵⁴ 'In this respect, the martyrdom of Diego Ortiz as represented by Calancha is not exceptional; instead, it is exemplary of a worldview that is prevalent across the global Catholic population until at least the eighteenth century.' (*Ibid.*, 56.)

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

moment.¹⁵⁸ Kairic moments that remembered (reflected) Christ's saving death included the Mass and martyrdom.¹⁵⁹ They did not simply 'remember' in the sense of a commemoration, but, rather, they continued and were united with Christ's Passion: they participated in the kairic time where God, as man, suffered and died to save humanity. Their power to function as an expiatory sacrifice and potent vessel of grace came exactly from their unity with Christ's passion and death.

Catholic martyrological writings displayed a radically different conception of time from Protestant martyrological writings. Unlike Protestants, Catholics did not see their martyrdoms as heralding the end of the world, but rather as potent sacrifices, which would be instrumental in the reconversion of England. The sacrifices of Catholic martyrs (like the sacrifice of the Mass) were kairic moments that reflected and were united with Christ's own salvific sacrifice. As such, the powers of Catholic martyrdoms echoed the power of the death of Christ.

Martyrs' Blood as Witness

Both Catholic and Protestant writers repeatedly portrayed martyrs' blood as bearing witness to, or confirming, the true faith.¹⁶⁰ Just as, in Foxe, the Protestant martyr John Hooper states, 'I have taught the truth with my tongue, and ... my pen ... and ... shortly will confirm the same by God's grace with my blood,'¹⁶¹ Thomas Alfield, speaking of Edmund Campion and his fellow martyrs, depicts 'their last protestation, washed, sealed, and confirmed with their blood'.¹⁶² In examining this rhetoric of martyrs' blood witnessing, we see how contested the meanings of martyrdom and martyrs' blood had become. Rhetoric that had been relatively simple, and employed almost naively, in martyrological writings of the early Reformation, had become more wary and self-

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 61.

¹⁵⁹ On the Mass, see Ibid., 69.

¹⁶⁰ Both here draw upon the Greek etymology of martyr and martyrdom: 'μάρτυς' in the New Testament means a 'witness', while the verb 'μαρτυρέω' means to bear witness/testify/declare/confirm.

¹⁶¹ See also, for example: *A&M* (1583), 549, 634, 1116, 1140, 1143, 1211; *The Lattre Examinacyon of Anne Askewe*, 138.

¹⁶² Alfield, *A True Reporte*, D3v. See also, for example: ibid., F4v; Richard Verstegan, *Le Théâtre des Cruautés de Richard Verstegan (1587)*, ed. by Frank Lestringant (Paris: Editions Chandeigne, 1995), 139; Mush, *A True Report*, 363-64, 395.

conscious, scarred by many decades of confessional debate and scrutiny. In 1525, Luther had boldly claimed that the martyrs' shedding of blood 'certifies' the gospel, revealing 'the right doctrine', since those who hold false doctrines are not martyred.¹⁶³ A century later, the English Reformation had created, as Cummings vividly describes, 'a religion that is slower and more painful in making its mind up, which is hardly able to declare itself to itself, let alone others. The language of religion is now too dense, too marked by previous conflict ...'¹⁶⁴ John Donne's sermon on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul in January 1625 obliquely refers to the Catholic martyrdoms of his own times and ponders the question of who are the true martyrs, witnessing to the true faith, killed by 'bloody executioners', and who merely are the pseudomartyrs.¹⁶⁵

It is to this 'dense' seventeenth-century context that Francisco Suárez speaks when, in Chapter Nineteen of his *Defensio Catholicae Fidei*, he lays out a careful defence of why, despite Protestant claims to the contrary, the martyrs' blood witnesses to the Roman Catholic faith. The famous Spanish Jesuit and intellectual wrote this work in 1613, responding to James I of England's apologia for his recently-introduced Oath of Allegiance. Suárez attacked the Church of England from theological and ecclesiastical angles, and encouraged England's Catholics to rise up against their king, arguing that James I could be legitimately deposed since (in Suárez's view, although this was extremely controversial) political authority is conferred on the sovereign by the people and may thus be withdrawn if they see fit.¹⁶⁶ Suárez devotes the whole of Chapter Nineteen to martyrs' blood bearing witness to and confirming the true faith.¹⁶⁷ He shows a thorough knowledge of James I's apologetics, founded on the witness of martyrs' blood, dissecting them throughout the chapter. Due to the controversies of the martyr versus pseudomartyr debate, both James and Suárez base their argument primarily on the blood of the 'ancient' (early-Church) martyrs, who are indisputably accepted as martyrs by Protestants and

¹⁶³ Luther, *The Burning of Brother Henry*, 267.

¹⁶⁴ Cummings, *The Literary Culture*, 417.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 372-3.

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin Hill and Henrik Lagerlund, *The Philosophy of Francisco Suárez* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

¹⁶⁷

Catholics alike.¹⁶⁸ Suárez argues that the blood of early Christians in fact condemns, rather than supports, the Jacobean Church. 'The Anglican sect is shown to be adorned by the blood of no ancient martyrs but rather to be condemned thereby'.¹⁶⁹ He dismisses the position, espoused by Luther, that martyrs' blood reveals the true faith, instead applying the famous stance of Augustine 'Non enim facit martyrem poena sed causa' to the issue: 'the blood of martyrs, although it gives glory to the true faith, yet does not of itself show it but supposes it'.¹⁷⁰ He argues that, since the early-Church martyrs are accepted by both Protestants and Catholics, whoever's faith mirrors that for which the early-Church martyrs shed their blood must be the true faith.¹⁷¹ Suárez does anticipate the Protestant objection that Roman Catholic doctrine has developed – or changed, as its opponents would contend – from the faith of the early-Church martyrs. He argues that the ancient martyrs confirmed the whole fullness of the Catholic faith, even though 'things which were made plain in a later time were contained virtually in more ancient times'.¹⁷² In Suárez' convoluted logic, the true faith is that which mirrors the beliefs of the early-Church martyrs; yet, the early-Church martyrs do not prove Catholicism true because their beliefs are identical with early-modern Catholic beliefs, but rather they prove early-modern Catholicism true in spite of the differences in belief, because Catholicism recognises its infant self in early-Church theology. The early-Church martyrs were thus true martyrs, and – since the Catholic Church recognised the early Church to be its younger self – the early-Church martyrs' blood of course witnessed to the truth of early-modern Catholicism.

¹⁶⁸ This is an unusual angle for Protestant texts, and likewise for Catholic texts post c.1581, but it demonstrates how the argument from the witness of contemporary martyrs' blood had been so thoroughly used and critiqued by both sides that it had largely lost its efficacy.

¹⁶⁹ Francisco Suárez, *Defense of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith against the Errors of Anglicanism*, trans Peter L. P. Simpson (electronically published, 2011), 128. <Accessed at www.aristotelophile.com/Books/Translations/Suarez%20Defense%20Whole.pdf on 01/02/2018> It is to be noted that the use of 'Anglican' in Simpson's, otherwise helpful and sound, translation is problematic. The term 'Anglican' has resonances that are anachronistic in relation to the Jacobean Church.

¹⁷⁰ Suárez, *Defense*, 129.

¹⁷¹ 'The proof is that the faith of the primitive Church, and which existed at the time of Cyprian, Augustine, and other Fathers, endures the same through legitimate succession in the present Catholic Church, as was also demonstrated; therefore the blood of the martyrs, which gave testimony to the ancient faith of the Church, provides the same for the faith of the present Church.' Suárez, *Defense*, 130.

¹⁷² Suárez, *Defense*, 131.

Thus, for Suárez and other confessional apologists writing in the early-seventeenth century, the witnessing power of martyrs' blood had, necessarily, become circular in logic. The fact that individuals (who identified as martyrs) shed their blood for the faith did not, in the least, suggest that the faith they died for was the true faith: they might well be among the hundreds of pseudomartyrs (false witnesses). Rather, it was solely the fact that an individual believed the true faith that meant that his or her blood witnessed to or confirmed the true faith.¹⁷³ In short, as recent historiography has shown, distinguishing true martyrs and the true faith tied martyrologists and apologists in logical knots.¹⁷⁴ As Ryrie has highlighted, confessional apologetics were forced to fall back upon and extol embracing illogicality as a mark of the true faith (even though extolling illogicality was, in its turn, also a quality both confessions shared!).¹⁷⁵ This is exemplified in both confessions' flaunting of the circular logic of the witnessing power of martyrs' blood.

Rhetoric of martyrs' blood witnessing is important, since it is one of the few constructions of martyrs' blood which both confessions shared (the others being a belief that martyrs' blood stained persecutors with blood-guilt, and that martyrs' blood called for vengeance, though as we have seen, this rhetoric was far from identical across the confessions). However, Catholic and Protestant martyrs' blood did not witness to exactly the same things, since Protestant martyrs' blood witnessed to the true faith and the apocalypse, but Catholic martyrs' blood witnessed only to the former. Even here, the confessions were as different as they were similar.

¹⁷³ E.g. 'we be persecuted for defense of our fathers' faith and the Church's truth. The cause whereof putteth the difference between our martyrdom and the due and worthy punishment of heretics; who, shedding their blood obstinately in testimony in falsehood against the truth of Christ and His holy Spouse and out of the unity of the same, are known malefactors and can be no martyrs but damnable murderers of themselves.' (Allen, *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defense*, 114-115).

¹⁷⁴ Gregory, *Salvation*. Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature*.

¹⁷⁵ Alec Ryrie, lecture on 'Atheism and faith in the age of the Reformation': University College, University of Durham, 7th November 2013. <Accessed at <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research/ils/videos1314/alecryrie> on 26/07/2017>.

Conclusion

We have seen that, from the 1580s, a frequent and theologically-rich rhetoric of martyrs' blood was present in Catholic martyrological writings. Most importantly, it depicted martyrs' blood as united with Christ's blood, and therefore echoing the qualities and functions of Christ's blood, especially in being an expiatory, salvific sacrifice and a powerful vessel of grace. This was not a theological novelty, but a restatement of traditional beliefs which Protestantism had attacked and discarded. From the unity of martyrs' blood with Christ's blood stemmed other key Catholic martyrological beliefs. As a potent vessel of grace, martyrs' blood was able to heal the faithful, harm the impious, strengthen faith, and convert unbelievers; hence, Catholics took great risks to try to collect blood relics and those they obtained were highly prized. As an expiatory and salvific sacrifice, martyrs' blood did not call down the apocalypse, but rather could reconvert England. While it was linked with God's just vengeance, it was linked above all with God's mercy and forgiveness, such that it could reasonably be hoped that even the most 'cruel' persecutors who 'thirsted for the blood of Catholics' might be pardoned by God and transformed from 'a Saul [into] a Paul ... [from] a bloody persecutor [to] one of the Catholic Church's children.'¹⁷⁶ It was one with the blood of the early-Church martyrs, both united with Christ's blood and Passion, and therefore part of an unbroken line of martyrs' blood-witness to the true Church.

Our examination of martyrs' blood also draws out many wider points. First, constructions of martyrdom are heavily confessionalised. There is a common supposition in recent historiography that the rival confessions shared 'the same conception', 'the same ideals', and 'the same ideas' of martyrdom;¹⁷⁷ however, our analysis of constructions of martyrdom through the lens of martyrs' blood has revealed that, in fact, Protestants and Catholics had very different conceptions, ideals, and ideas of martyrdom.

¹⁷⁶ Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 84. *Acts of English Martyrs*, 108.

¹⁷⁷ Freeman and Mayer, *Martyrs*, 26-27.

Secondly, we have seen that in early-modern English Catholic martyrology there were strong continuities with medieval precedent. This undermines the position of some recent scholars that early-modern conceptions of martyrdom stand in significant contrast to medieval conceptions.¹⁷⁸ While scholarship in the field of English Literature has maintained that there were strong continuities between early-modern and medieval English Catholicism, this has not been addressed by much of the recent historiography on early-modern English martyrology. The continuity between medieval and early-modern Catholic constructions of martyrdom mirrors the position of English Catholicism more widely; recusant Catholicism could even be seen as a partial continuation of medievalism within early-modern English culture, in England and in the English diaspora. Shell has argued:

a greater awareness of the Catholic contribution to English culture would result in some important modifications to received ideas of when medievalism ended in the British Isles. Medieval patterns of life, religious and social, were sustained on the Continent by English Catholic religious orders – in some cases to this day – and continued, as far as was practicable, within many Catholic households.¹⁷⁹

This continuity was at least partly self-conscious, as Shell has demonstrated, looking at manuscript culture, imaginative writing, and antiquarianism among English Catholics.¹⁸⁰

Thirdly, our examination of martyrs' blood has shown how close the relationship was between sanctity and the human body in Catholic mentalities. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider that the Christian model of salvation and sanctification of humanity was premised upon God becoming incarnate (literally being 'made flesh'), yet Protestantism largely

¹⁷⁸ 'By the late seventeenth century, the varied conceptions of martyrdom prevalent in late-medieval England had largely been replaced by a single dominant conception of the martyr', Freeman and Mayer, *Martyrs*, 27. '[In] the later half of the sixteenth century Foxe and Harpsfield between them defined and crystallised an idea of martyrdom, largely dormant through the later Middle Ages', *ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁹ Shell, *Catholicism*, 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-12, 169-193. See also Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 3, 203-04, for further discussion of important continuities between medieval and early-modern English Catholicism, which were not present in English Protestantism.

divorced the body from sanctity. For Catholics, however, the human body was the ultimate vessel of sanctity: in Christ's physical incarnation, death and resurrection; in Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist; in the body of the priests who performed the sacraments, and the bishops who laid hands on the priests (ordination) in order to consecrate them to this role; in the bodies of the saints and martyrs, which performed miracles while living and dead, and which imbued materiality which came into contact with their bodies with grace; in the bodies of the martyrs' whose blood sacrifice emulated Christ's in nature and function. Indeed, believer's bodies, through baptism (putting on Christ) and the Eucharist (consuming Christ), became subsumed into the body of Christ, and together formed the body of Christ (the Church, with Christ himself at the head): even while living in their own individual, fallen human bodies, Catholic believers simultaneously saw themselves as participating in a limitless, sanctified divine body. While all of the body was a vessel of sanctity, blood was particularly special and particularly appropriate as a vehicle of grace (as we see in both the theology of Christ's blood and of martyrs' blood), as the seat of the soul and spirit and the carrier of life.

Finally, in comparison to Protestants, Catholics had a distinctive understanding of the relationship between time and sanctity. Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection had redeemed time so that 'the eternal becomes teleological and ... the teleological becomes eternal.'¹⁸¹ These events were echoed in preceding and subsequent 'kairic moments', in which teleological time was again penetrated by 'the eternal, divine present (kairos),'¹⁸² and thus united with the time of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection. This happened in the Mass and the sacraments, and also – as we have seen – in martyrdoms. It raises even the question of whether all sainthood was premised on this triangular convergence of sanctity-embodiment-and time. Sainthood was, after all, associated with 'white martyrdom' (dying to sin and the flesh and living for Christ), so perhaps it was not only 'red martyrs' (those executed for the faith) who

¹⁸¹ Calancha, *The Collapse*, 60.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 58.

were sanctified by kairic unity with Christ, but all saints. This question lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but merits further investigation.

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the rhetoric of martyrs' blood in early-modern English discussions of martyrdom. It has explored five key areas: martyrs' blood as witness; bloody enemies; martyrs' blood and the apocalypse; martyrs' blood and Christ's blood; martyrs' blood and materiality. It has also explored what this rhetoric can tell us, more widely, about early-modern constructions of martyrdom and confessional identities.

Both Protestants and Catholics described martyrs' blood as witnessing, evoking the original meaning of martyr (witness). For both confessions, martyrs' blood witnessed to the true faith. For Protestants, it also witnessed to the impending apocalypse.

Both Protestants and Catholics described the martyrs' persecutors and confessional opponents as 'bloody' (i.e. seeking and/or guilty of shedding the martyrs' blood). This rhetoric was, however, much more common in Protestant texts. This was the first rhetoric of martyrs' blood to be used in English Reformation writings, appearing in many Protestant writings from the 1520s and 30s, and it continued to be very popular, through to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and beyond. Especially in Henrician texts, it was very often combined with apocalypticism, so that we see the Catholic Church, the Catholic clergy, prominent Catholic figures, and Catholic persecutors all described as bloody antichristian enemies. In this, Protestant writers continued the medieval heretical precedent of calling the Catholic Church bloody, often associating it with the bloodthirsty apocalyptic minions of the devil found in Revelation. In Protestant texts of the 1520s and 1530s, imagery of bloody enemies often had not only apocalyptic, but also anti-clerical economic and political resonances, continuing the medieval rhetoric of economic bloodthirst. For example, Simon Fish's description, in *A Supplicacyon*, of the Catholic clergy as 'bloudsuppers' has apocalyptic, economic, and political dimensions (exemplifying the use of a

rhetoric of martyrs' blood as lynchpin of both an individual writer's and their confession's theologies and arguments). As English Protestantism shifted, through the 1520s and early 1530s, from being primarily an anti-clerical (and quasi-heretical) reform movement to becoming primarily a rival Church, the primary focus of the rhetoric of bloody enemies also shifted. Whereas in the 1520s and even early 1530s, Protestant texts primarily used a rhetoric of bloody enemies to attack the Catholic clergy on the grounds of moral corruption, avarice, and political intrigue, by the late 1530s, and even more so from the 1540s, these accusations took second place to a perspective in which Protestantism was presented as the persecuted, bleeding true Church, and Catholicism as the persecuting, bloody false Church.

A rhetoric of bloody enemies was more prevalent in Protestant than Catholic texts. This reveals some significant differences between the rival confessions in England, relating to both their theologies and their place in the political landscape. First, it reflects their theologies of salvation. Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, saw salvation as open only to the small group of individuals whose salvation God had predestined. Due to humanity's fallen state, the human will was utterly in bondage and unable to co-operate in or choose salvation; this operated by God alone selecting certain individuals and imputing Christ's righteousness to them and regenerating them, thus saving and sanctifying them. Those who were not chosen (very likely the majority) were inescapably bound for damnation. Thus, Protestantism, and especially Calvinism with its overt espousal of double predestination, tended towards a mindset where a small group of special individuals saw the majority as depraved 'others' who never would and never could be redeemed. English Protestant martyrologies and discussions of martyrdom generally reflected this perspective, featuring a small group of true martyrs facing enemies who remained unshakably evil and bloodthirsty, no matter how many times they saw the martyrs witness to the true faith, and who – as Foxe made clear – came to unpleasant ends in this world, reflecting their damnation in the next. Protestants did not rule out the possibility that bloody persecutors could become members of the true Church (if they had been elect in disguise, so to speak, all along); but, although theoretically possible (see Calvin's description of St Paul in

Chapter Three), in practice this rarely features in stories of Protestant martyrs and persecutors. The identities of individuals on each side seem immutable, so much so that Bishop Bonner, who had been an evangelical until the 1540s, is presented statically as bloody Bonner, with no developed narrative of his falling away from Protestantism.

In contrast, in Catholic theology, human free will was damaged but not utterly broken. God's grace was essential in the salvatory process, but so was human participation. God called everyone to be saved, and those who accepted that call and co-operated with his grace were saved; those who did not were not. Salvation was a life-long process in Catholicism – at any point in someone's life they could accept or reject salvation. People could fall away who had been in a state of salvation, and people who had been in a state of damnation could turn to God and be saved: people's spiritual state and identity was very mutable. Thus, any bloody persecutor today could choose salvation tomorrow, and any member of the Church today could become a bloody persecutor tomorrow (and indeed recusant Catholicism witnessed some high profile apostasies, such as the missionary priest Thomas Bell who became a Protestant apologist). The theme of conversions of persecutors and confessional enemies is more common in Catholic martyrological writings; for example, tales of imprisoned priests converting their gaolers (and/or the gaoler's family or servants).¹ Catholic writings did label some individuals as bloody enemies, but usually only the most ardent of persecutors, and only Henry Huntingdon is frequently described in this way.

The second theological reason why a rhetoric of bloody enemies is more prominent in Protestant than Catholic texts derives from the apocalyptic dimension. Protestant texts drew heavily on Revelation, the only New Testament book filled with imagery of martyrs' blood, with evil enemies who thirst for the martyrs' blood, and the repaying of 'blood for blood' and their ultimate destruction and damnation. This undoubtedly shaped the Protestant rhetoric of

¹ See, for example: Gerard, *The Autobiography*, 125, 173; William Weston, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. and ed. Philip Caraman (London: Longmans Green, 1955), 117, 123, 127 note 20, 152, 169-72, 177 note 23.

martyrdom, as imagery and language from Revelation filled Protestant texts and discussion of martyrdom. They saw and portrayed martyrdom, and the narratives of martyrdom (both of individual martyrdoms and of the overall progression of history), within this framework. While Protestants saw the apocalypse as imminent and thus focused heavily on Revelation, Catholics usually did not, and their writings reference Revelation very little in comparison with their Protestant contemporaries. Thus, while Protestant writings used Revelation's template of bloodthirsty apocalyptic minions of the devil shedding the martyrs' blood, which called out impatiently to God to be avenged with the end of the world and the Last Judgement, Catholic writings did not, and so bloody enemies had less of a role to play in their martyrological narratives.

Finally, Catholicism's relatively infrequent use of a rhetoric of bloody enemies also related to political circumstances. Throughout the period, non-(Roman-) Catholic regimes tarred (Roman) Catholics with the brush of treason, whereas non-Protestant regimes painted Protestants primarily as heretics rather than traitors. Protestant apologetics in the Henrician period depicted Catholics (especially the clergy) as exploitative heartless traitors, and the notion that Catholics were traitors endured and was reinforced under Elizabeth I and James I. English Catholic apologetics and propaganda responded by cultivating the image of their respect for the authorities and charitable love for all. These qualities would have sat uncomfortably with a frequent rhetoric of bloody enemies. This was particularly true since the enemies that Catholics faced (especially under Elizabeth and James) were mostly secular authorities, including leading noblemen (such as Henry Huntingdon) and the monarch. In contrast, Protestants were usually tried and executed for heresy under clerics, and so did not face the same accusation of treason. Moreover, since those who examined the Protestant martyrs were mostly clerics rather than laymen (and we note that Foxe and his martyrs largely avoided attributing the primary blame for the Marian martyrdoms to Queen Mary, and from calling her 'bloody'), criticising them stood closer to the age-old tradition of anti-clericalism than to

sedition.² Without falling into over-simplification, the general point must be recognised that Catholics had a far greater need to defend themselves against accusations of treason and to make sure that their writings appeared more respectful to authority and not treasonous; avoiding frequently labelling their opponents bloody enemies fitted this objective. Moreover, Catholic apologists also cultivated an identity marked by charitable love for all, and indeed even their execution of heretics was seen as stemming from charity; again a frequent rhetoric of bloody enemies would not have been in line with these apologetical approaches.

The fact that the Protestant rhetoric of martyrs' blood, throughout the long sixteenth century, was apocalyptical in tone, whereas the corresponding Catholic rhetoric was not, highlights the fact that the two confessions were living in different temporalities. For many, perhaps most, Protestant writers, the apocalypse was imminent; indeed, John Foxe believed it was due in 1594, and expected it eagerly. In contrast, Catholic writers rarely thought the apocalypse was at hand. This was partially founded on very different understandings of the function of martyrs' blood. For Protestants, it called for and witnessed to the impending apocalypse. For Catholics, it was an expiatory and sanctifying sacrifice, which called down God's mercy. By the power of this blood sacrifice, at worst, Catholics would – after this difficult season – be able to worship freely again; at best, England would be restored to the Catholic fold.

Protestantism and Catholicism also had very different perceptions of the relationship between martyrs' blood and Christ's blood, although here even within Protestantism there was a significant divide. From the early Church, Christians believed that Christ's death changed the nature of martyrdom, so that it was a sacrifice which imitated Christ's sacrifice, and martyrs' blood imitated Christ's blood.³ This was intrinsically linked with the Eucharistic theology of the real presence: it was believed that Christians receive and become part of the body and blood of Christ through consuming his body and blood in the Eucharist; thus, when they are martyred it

² Although, this is not to say that Protestants did not run the risk of appearing disloyal and seditious in their very polemic attacks on the Catholic clergy, on a few Catholic laymen, and on a religious policy that ultimately stemmed from the crown (however much they avoided focusing on this point).

³ Leyerle, 'Blood is Seed'; Klawiter, 'Living Water'.

is the body of Christ which bleeds.⁴ This theology came under assault in the Reformation, as a consequence of Protestant Eucharistic theologies. While Lutherans and some Henrician Protestants continued to believe in the real presence, sacramentarian Protestants (including Zwinglians, some Henrician Protestants, and Calvinists) did not. For sacramentarians, who rejected the notion of the real presence, and the idea that Christ's sacrifice could be continued or repeated on any later occasion (such as in each Mass, or indeed in each martyr's death), dying martyrs could not be subsumed into Christ's death, and their blood could not possess the expiatory salvific powers of his blood. Sacramentarian Protestant writers thus explicitly condemned the notion that martyrs' blood possessed any salvific value. In sacramentarian texts, therefore, there was a chasm between Christ's blood and all other human blood, including martyrs' blood; they did not have at all the same qualities and functions.

Catholic texts, in contrast, continued with the traditional perspective, seeing their martyrs united with Christ's sacrificial death, through their unity with his body and blood, and even sometimes depicting their martyrs' deaths as a Eucharistic celebration (a commemorative participation in the sacrificed body and blood of Christ, as in the Mass). For Catholics, therefore, the blood of all communing Catholics was like Christ's blood, since – through participation in the Eucharist – Christ's blood flowed through Catholics' veins (united with their own blood), and this was especially true of martyrs' blood which was offered up in sacrifice, as Christ's was and continued to be. There was no clear divide between Christ's blood and the blood of faithful Christians in Catholic thought.

Non-sacramentarian Protestant texts discussing martyrdom seem to have taken a middle ground, in line with their Eucharistic beliefs. They did not hold that their martyrs' bloody deaths were actually salvific, since they saw salvation as dependent on faith alone and on Christ alone, but they did see Christ's blood as flowing through the veins of everyone who drank it in the Eucharist. Robert Barnes, at least, saw martyrdom as something made possible

⁴ Mayes, 'The Lord's Supper', especially 310-13 on the real presence and 321-22 on martyrdom.

only by this deep unity between the believer and Christ's blood through the Eucharist. He echoed the stance of Cyprian, an early-Church Father, that a believer can only be enabled to shed their blood for Christ's name by drinking Christ's blood in the Eucharist. For Barnes, this was a crucial argument for all believers' participation in the Eucharistic cup (reserved for the clergy in Catholicism) as well as the Eucharistic host.

These divides over perceptions of the Eucharist and the believer's body extended to perceptions of materiality and the sacraments more generally. It could be summarised in this way: for medieval Christians, faith 'was ... a matter of matter'.⁵ From the perspective of an early-modern Catholic, salvation *is* worked out in and through matter. From the perspective of an early-modern sacramentarian Protestant, salvation *had been* accomplished in and through matter. All could largely agree on the importance of matter in the earthly life of Christ: God, himself immaterial, had taken on human flesh in the incarnation, and physically suffered, died, and been raised from the dead. For Catholics, it did not stop there: Jesus's life-giving body and blood was physically present in the Eucharist, and therefore in the body and blood of every communing Catholic. The other sacraments were equally material; in every one, God's grace worked through matter to save and sanctify. Beyond the sacraments, God's grace again was often conferred through the material, as with relics, saints' and martyrs' bodies, blessed or holy objects or places, statues and images, and crossing oneself. The process of salvation deeply involved the believer's body, and the material world around them, as well as their immaterial soul.

The essential role materiality played for Catholics in salvation and in transmission of grace is highlighted in the treatment of martyrs' blood in Catholic texts. We could consider a multitude of examples, including perceptions of blood relics such as bloodstained stones and straw as grace-filled and miracle working. The best example, perhaps, is blood's ability to sanctify places, so that they became holy. As we have seen, Mush's wrote in his *Life* of Margaret

⁵ Adaptation of Bynum's statement 'the Christianity of the later Middle Ages was... a matter of matter': Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 265.

Clitherow that 'After the priests had first suffered martyrdom at Knavesmire ... and by their holy blood and death had sanctified their reproachful gallows, she greatly desired often to visit that place, for she called it her pilgrimage.'⁶ Here, not only people's bodies, and parts of their bodies act as vessels of grace, but also the inanimate, material world. In the theology that underlies Mush's statement is a belief that the priests were grace-filled people who died the grace-filled holy deaths of martyrs. Hence, their blood imparted grace to the gallows and the ground around them, and that place remained a vessel of grace, even though their bodies had gone, their blood had disappeared, and criminals had subsequently been executed there. Indeed, it was so grace-filled for Clitherow that it was a place of pilgrimage, 'She went barefoot to the place ... kneeling on her bare knees ever under the gallows', evoking Moses' behaviour in the presence of God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:5). An examination of Catholic constructions of martyrs' blood demonstrates clearly that, for early-modern Catholics, matter vividly contained, conveyed, and displayed God's grace.

For sacramentarian Protestants, in contrast, apart from Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, salvation was almost entirely de-somatized and dematerialized. It was true that the body could indicate one's spiritual state. For example, promiscuity and drunkenness suggested that one was not saved, while sober and chaste living suggested that one might be. Yet these bodily behaviours did not, in themselves, save or damn, as salvation depended entirely on faith (which, if present, would naturally lead to good works and morally upright bodily behaviours), not on works. While grace was conveyed in the sacraments, it worked not *through* the material but *alongside* it. The materiality itself served as a sign, symbol, and remembrance; it was not a literal vessel of grace, as in Catholic thought. Consider, for example, Calvin's emphatic statement: 'We say that it is not the natural body of our Lord Jesus nor his natural blood which is given to us in his Holy Supper. We affirm that it is a spiritual communication, by which in virtue and power he makes us participant of all that we are able to receive of grace in his body

⁶ See Chapter Five.

and blood; or again, to declare better the dignity of this mystery, it is a spiritual communication by which he makes us truly participant of his body and his blood, but wholly spiritually, that is by the bond of his Spirit.⁷ This perspective is also echoed in the minister's words to the communicant, as prescribed in the 1552 Prayer Book: 'Take and eate this, in remembrance that Christ dyed for thee, and feede on him in thy hearte by faythe, with thanksgiving.'⁸ The theology is, again, reflected in the treatment of martyrs' blood.

In sacramentarian texts, not only is martyrs' blood not a vessel of grace, but in the first waves of sacramentarian writings there is very little interest in the martyrs' bodies at all. This resonates with Roper's comment that 'Protestantism in its early years brought not so much a secularization of the world as a desomatization.'⁹ Likewise, Henrician sacramentarian discussions of martyrdom shied away from the marvellous. Their division between the spiritual and the material extended to a reluctance to see the material as confirming or interacting with the spiritual in a way reminiscent of Catholic miracle tales. This worldview was not so popular among ordinary Protestants in the sixteenth century, but it was – from the beginning – more prevalent among the Protestant intellectuals who wrote the foremost apologetical and polemical works. This tension is captured in Bale's reluctant and doubtful recounting of the Dutch merchants' tale of a natural wonder at Askew's martyrdom.

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, however, break the trend, being unashamedly replete with gory depictions of martyrs' bodily sufferings and bleeding during their persecutions and executions, and also containing wonders. One reason for this may be that Foxe's source base was heavily popular – drawing on hundreds, if not thousands, of ordinary people's oral and written recollections of events. His unashamed recounting of gory sufferings and striking wonders is, nonetheless, a departure from earlier sacramentarian discussions of martyrdom, as Foxe emphasises how materiality testifies to eschatological truths. His approach was part of a

⁷ John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, trans. & ed. by J.K.S. Reid (London: SCM, 1954), 44.

⁸ *The First and Second Prayer-Books of King Edward VI* (London: Everyman's Library, 1910).

⁹ Roper, *Oedipus*, 177.

wider, international Protestant trend in the later sixteenth century towards providential wonder tales and books, and – as Walsham has demonstrated – Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was one of the first English examples of this. We could see Foxe as responding to traditional and enduring Catholic beliefs about matter by providing an alternative Protestant model of how God speaks through the material world. Our discussion of the *Acts and Monuments* also suggests that there was less of a disconnect between the material and the sacred in late sacramentarianism than in the first few generations. Insofar as sacramentarianism presented a desacralization of the world, this was more the case in the first half of the sixteenth century than the second.

The Lutheran position stood between the sacramentarian and Catholic positions, representing non-sacramentarian Protestantism. Luther affirmed emphatically that while the Eucharistic bread and wine were not themselves Christ's blood, mingled with them was the physical presence of Christ's body and blood. The issue of the real presence was so important to Luther that he anathematized Zwingli and his followers. In his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), he wrote 'Sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the Pope that there is only blood'.¹⁰ At the same time, Luther agreed with the sacramentarians that the Eucharist was not a repetition or continuation of Christ's saving sacrifice, because – Lutherans believed – Christ had died once to save all. Similarly, with baptism, Luther argued, while the water *qua* water was not in and of itself holy, it had inseparably and physically been joined with God's Word, which made it 'divine water'.¹¹ He heatedly attacked those who looked upon the water used in baptism as 'in no other way than water which is taken from the well'.¹² He clarified: 'it is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water ... Hence also it derives its essence as a Sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught: *Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*. That is, when the Word is joined to the element or natural

¹⁰ Martin Luther, 'Confession Concerning Christ's Supper', trans. by Robert H. Fisher, in *Luther's Works*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), vol. 37: *Word and Sacrament III*, 151-372, 317.

¹¹ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 4, accessed at <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-6-baptism.php> on 27/09/2017.

¹² Luther, *Large Catechism*, 15.

substance, it becomes a Sacrament, that is, a holy and divine matter and sign.’¹³ Lutheranism’s ambivalence towards materiality is clearly revealed in his attitude towards religious matter outside of the two sacraments. Whereas Calvinists were iconoclasts, Lutherans permitted religious images (although not actively encouraging their use) if they were used only as aids to worship and teaching the gospel, and not venerated nor seen as intrinsically holy. Luther disapproved of pilgrimages to holy places and objects, but said that believers should instead venerate Christ’s body and blood present in the Eucharist in their own churches – another material manifestation of the holy. Lutheranism, overall, displayed an ambivalent intermediate position on the relationship between materiality and grace, which stood between Catholicism and sacramentarianism.

This seems to be reflected in the constructions of martyrs’ blood in Lutheran texts, as we have explored in Chapter Two. Martyrs’ bloody deaths are not united with Christ’s sacrificial death, as they believed that Christ had already died once to save all. The martyrs’ deaths are at times, nonetheless, described as a sacrifice; for example, Luther wrote that ‘John and Henry at Brussels’ (the first Lutheran martyrs) were ‘sacrificed to God as a fragrant offering’.¹⁴ Additionally, a physical union between Christ’s blood and martyrs’ blood may have been important in their construction of martyrdom: Robert Barnes emphasised that if believers do not drink Christ’s blood in the Eucharist, they will not be enabled to shed their blood for him in martyrdom. Moreover, while Lutheranism was ambivalent about the contemporary existence of miracles, Luther echoed the miraculous tales about early-Church martyrs (perpetuated in the *Golden Legend* and other medieval hagiographical compilations) who were almost impossible to kill. Luther wrote of Brother Henry’s execution: ‘Then somebody stood with one foot on his chest and tied him by his neck to a rung of the ladder so tightly that his mouth and nose began to bleed. He wanted to strangle him, since he saw that in spite of his many wounds he was

¹³ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 17-18.

¹⁴ Luther, ‘The Burning’, 267.

unable to die.’¹⁵ Whether Luther saw this as a wonder or a miracle, he certainly saw the martyrs’ body as behaving in a very striking and unusual manner in order to testify to Henry’s sanctity. Luther’s narrative also focused in detail on Henry’s physical sufferings during his execution; in Luther’s narrative, Henry’s body is an important testimony in his sufferings for the true faith. It is true that early Protestantism overall involved a partial desacralization of the material world and a more desomatised faith; but, this is less true of early Lutheranism than of early sacramentarianism. While materiality was less integral to Lutheranism than to Catholicism, it was still indispensable to a Lutheran understanding of how God’s grace operates and how the sacred is manifested.

From exploring these five key areas of the English Reformation rhetoric of martyrs’ blood we have also gained fresh insight into wider areas and debates in early-modern studies. We see that the answer to questions such as ‘What was the function of martyrdom?’ and ‘What does a martyr look like?’ are thoroughly confessionalised, leading us to conclude, contrary to recent trend in historiography, that there was in fact no ‘common concept’ of martyrdom. For Protestants, the function of martyrdom was primarily to witness to the true faith and to the impending apocalypse (which it called down). For Catholics, the principal function of martyrdom was to provide salvific, expiatory self-sacrifices, which, echoing Christ’s redeeming self-sacrifice, would appease God’s wrath at the nation’s sin, invoke his mercy, and function as a powerful vessel of grace. The end-goal of martyrdom for Protestants was often the apocalypse. The end-goal of martyrdom for Catholics was often the reconversion of England. Protestant and Catholic martyrs looked similar in one way – the behaviour of both was Christomimetic; yet, in another way they looked very different – the Protestant martyr was a witness *to* Christ, the Catholic martyr was united *with* Christ and a perpetuation of Christ’s salvific blood sacrifice.

We have also highlighted the influence of confessional Eucharistic and sacramental theology over the meanings and functions of martyrdom; an area which has scarcely been

¹⁵ Ibid, 286.

discussed in scholarship on martyrdom, but which, the conclusions of this thesis suggest, very much needs to be. We have also considered, more widely, the impact of confessional Eucharistic and sacramental theologies upon constructions and understandings of the body (including the nature of the relationship between the believer and God – how far could God be physically present in human bodies?) and the material world. We have shown the deep divides in worldview these wrought between the confessions, thereby supporting and extending the scholarship suggesting that Protestantism led to a partial desacralization of the world, even as Catholicism affirmed the central role materiality played in the operation of grace and the manifestation of sanctity.

Furthermore, this thesis suggests a relationship in Reformation thought between the spiritual condition of an individual and their body which scholarship has not yet explicitly highlighted; namely, Protestantism largely rejected the notion that the holiness of an individual was inscribed on their body, but did not do so in relation to evil. We see this not only in witchcraft and demonic possession, but also in Protestant discussions of martyrdom. This is most apparent in the *Acts and Monuments*, where the bodies of the [holy] Protestant martyrs often do not behave or appear differently from the bodies of ‘normal’ people, even at their deaths. However, the bodies of their persecutors, spiritually stained with the martyrs’ blood, are frequently destroyed in outstandingly gruesome and agonising ways in divine retribution for the evil they have done. Furthermore, Foxe’s theology of ‘blood for blood’ depicts persecutors as bleeding to death, visually witnessing to the innocent bloodshed for which they are responsible.

This means that Protestant martyrologies focus more on the bodies of their confessional opponents than on the bodies of those of their own confession. In contrast, Catholicism (with its less retributive theology – another point that merits discussion in its own right), is not so concerned with depictions of persecutors’ evil natures being written on their bodies, but rather with its own martyrs’ holiness being inscribed on their bodies, especially at and after their deaths. Therefore, the Reformation strife over understandings of the body is, at

least in martyrological writings, entirely inscribed on Catholic bodies, regardless of the confessional identity of the martyrological writing. The battle is over whether Catholic bodies are visibly evil or visibly holy. This extends, of course, beyond blood and martyrdom, and beyond the confines of this thesis. A chief element in Reformation confessional polemic, in every form, is the battle over the nature of the stereotypically Catholic body – whether it is evil and deviant, or good and holy – in relation to its appetites for sex, food, drink, its relationship with natural laws and the supernatural, and its performance of gender.

We have also seen that Protestantism and Catholicism had strikingly different perceptions of time, and that these unpinned many other confessional divides. Most obviously, Protestantism tended to see the apocalypse as historical, precise, and imminent - reflected in unmistakable historical signposts (including martyrs' blood-shedding), and which could be mapped out with reasonable precision onto the medieval and recent past, and even into the future, as in Foxe's *Eicasm*i and the multitude of complex commentaries, tables and diagrams produced by the Protestant printing presses. Catholics, in contrast, tended to see the apocalypse as a mysterious, more distant future event, and as a moral allegory applied to an individual's present circumstances. Yet, the disconnection between the confessions' notions of time was far wider than their differing apocalyptic perspectives. It underlies many of the issues for which believers were martyred (e.g. was Christ's sacrificial death present in each Mass?), and the way their martyrdoms were understood and represented (What was the relationship between martyrs' deaths and Christ's death? Could martyrdom have any salvific value? Could martyrs' sanctity and orthodoxy be confirmed by miracles?). The Catholic model was essentially of concentric circles of time, focused around Christ's life and death (the ultimate kairic moment), which sent ripples backwards and forwards throughout time. The Protestant model was a linear trajectory, in which events had clearly either happened, were happening, or would happen, and thus Christ's life and death were past events which believers could imitate but not literally be united with. These models affected their reading of Scripture. Was the key to the meaning of martyrs' blood to be found in the New Testament model of Christ's bloody expiating death, or in

Old Testament ideas that innocent human blood called for God's vengeance? Equally, it affected the meaning of the apocalypticism in the New Testament, especially the respective weight to be placed on the book of Revelation in understanding martyrdom and human history. Perhaps these different notions of time can even be seen in the competing beliefs that ultimate authority rested with Scripture versus with the Church. *Sola scriptura* placed God's ultimate revelation at a fixed point and event in history – the writing and compiling of the canon of Scripture, which was now in the past. In contrast, the belief that the ultimate authority rested in the Church saw God's revelation rippling through time, as the events and teachings of very early Christianity were echoed and refined through the Church's expounding of Scripture, the pronouncements of Church Councils, papal bulls, saints' and martyrs' lives and deaths, visions and miracles, liturgies, and traditions. In short, martyrological narratives were part of a large-scale confessional war over rival ways of living in time and of conceiving the connection between past, present, and future.

Finally, examining early-modern constructions of martyrs' blood also encourages *us* to rethink some of our notions of time, namely our historical periodisation. Both Protestant and Catholic notions of martyrdom had strong continuities with the medieval, and this is so much the case for recusant Catholicism that Shell has argued that it should be seen as a self-conscious continuation of the medieval.¹⁶ This is not to suggest that, overall, the medieval and early-modern periods are not the best of (necessarily imperfect) models, but rather to emphasise that we should not rigidly periodise our constructions of martyrdom (and even of the confessions more widely). We should take a small step back from the tendency to see medieval and early-modern notions of martyrdom as divided into two very discrete and different periods. It is, arguably, more helpful to see a trajectory of different strands (very broadly divided into two, Catholic and anti-Catholic) running from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries, which produced two competing but interconnected understandings of martyrdom.

¹⁶ See Introduction and Chapter Five.

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