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Author(s): MATTHEW NEUFELD

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# *The Politics of Anglican Martyrdom: Letters to John Walker, 1704–1705*

by MATTHEW NEUFELD

University of Warwick

E-mail: [m.neufeld@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:m.neufeld@warwick.ac.uk)

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*This article explores the political significance of past Christian suffering at the dawn of the Augustan era through an analysis of correspondence containing accounts of hardships endured by conforming clergymen during the English civil wars and Interregnum. The politics of martyrdom to be derived from letters to John Walker was grounded on the correspondents' conviction that their epistles conveyed accounts of sequestered clergymen and their families who had suffered for their profession of Christian truth. The persecutions that loyal clergy had endured during the 1640s and 1650s were signs that the Church by law established, both then and now, was the true English Church. Furthermore, as documentary witnesses to oral testimonies which identified the genuine sufferers for Christian truth within recent memory, the epistles themselves aspired to be martyrological relics.*

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In 1704 the rector of Kilmington in Somerset, a Mr Hill, received a letter from Richard Clark of nearby Penselwood which contained what Clark called 'a true narrative of two eminent persons whose sufferings ought not I thinke to be raked up in the Ashes of Oblivion'. Clark related what three elderly informants had told him concerning the mistreatments endured by Thomas Caffin and Richard Fitzherbert during the 1640s and 1650s. Caffin, the rector of Fovant and vicar of Meare, had been 'barbarously abused' by 'Oliverian soldiers' while being expelled from his house. One of them had 'kicked him on the privy members' and then compelled the clergyman to ride a horse to prison; Caffin apparently soon afterwards died from grief. Fitzherbert, the archdeacon of Dorset, was several times plundered by Parliamentary soldiers. On one memorable occasion the troops were led by Fitzherbert's brother-in-law, Colonel Fay, who had declared his

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hope that their action would serve 'to make [Fitzherbert] an example to deter the rest of his brethren the Cavalliers'.<sup>1</sup>

Sometime after receiving Clark's letter, Hill forwarded it to John Walker of Exeter, a fellow clergyman who was collecting epistles with similar accounts.<sup>2</sup> This correspondence, today held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, has been used previously by religious and social historians interested in the experience of clerical families and wives during the civil wars.<sup>3</sup> Working within the framework of intellectual history, Burke Griggs has argued that the letters clashed with Walker's neo-Baconian agenda of composing an empirical account of Puritan persecutions.<sup>4</sup> Walker's correspondence has not, however, been studied as a mode of representing the civil war past, nor have the contemporary political and religious implications of the letters and their accounts of suffering been analysed.<sup>5</sup>

Early modern martyrs, martyrologists and martyrologies are generally understood by historians and literary scholars to have played vital roles in the formation of post-Reformation confessional and political identities.<sup>6</sup> Ordinary Christians' steadfastness unto death for the sake of the truth, and books compiled to memorialise their devotion, such as John Foxe's *Acts and monuments*, strengthened believers' commitment to their community's

<sup>1</sup> This material is drawn from Clark's letter to Hill (no date), whose Christian name is not recorded, now part of the Walker papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS J Walker c[entury]. 1, fos 139, 188.

<sup>2</sup> The Long Parliament's various campaigns against clergymen regarded as delinquents are outlined by I. M. Green in 'The persecution of "scandalous" and "malignant" parish clergy during the English civil war', *EHR* xciv (1979), 507–31. Judith Maltby argues that efforts during the civil wars and Interregnum to suppress the Book of Common Prayer, the ritual calendar and episcopal oversight were crucial factors for fostering late seventeenth-century conforming Christian identity: 'Suffering and surviving: the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the formation of "Anglicanism", 1642–1660', in Christopher Durston and Judith D. Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England*, Manchester 2006, 158–80.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Laurence, "'This sad and deplorable condition': an attempt towards recovering an account of the sufferings of northern clergy families in the 1640s and 1650s", in Diana Wood (ed.), *Life and thought in the northern Church, c. 1000–c. 1700: essays in honour of Claire Cross*, Woodbridge 1999, 465–88, and "'Begging pardon for all mistakes or errors in this writing I being a woman and doing it myself": family narratives in some eighteenth-century letters', in James Daybell (ed.), *Early modern women's letter-writing, 1450–1700*, London 2001, 194–206.

<sup>4</sup> Burke Griggs, 'Remembering the Puritan past: John Walker and Anglican memories of the English civil war', in M. C. McClendon, J. P. Ward, and M. MacDonald (eds), *Protestant identities: religion, society, and self-fashioning in post-Reformation England*, Stanford 1999, 158–91.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, Chicago 2004, 136–7; Jörn Rüsen, *History: narration, interpretation, orientation*, Oxford 2005, 2–4, 10–12. See the plea from Paulina Kewes for students of early modern British historical writing to include religious historiography in their analysis in 'History and its uses: introduction', *Huntington Library Quarterly* lxxvii (2005), 10–11.

<sup>6</sup> Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at stake: Christian martyrdom in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, MA 1999. For a review of several recent works focused on the English context see G. Glickman, 'Early modern England: persecution, martyrdom and Toleration?', *HJ* li (2008), 251–67.

doctrines and to confessionalising states, including the Protestant Elizabethan regime.<sup>7</sup> Among Elizabeth's Roman Catholic subjects, stories of the executions of missionary Jesuits evidently served quietist and devotional ends when circulated domestically, but rather more strident calls for military intervention when aimed at continental audiences.<sup>8</sup> A key moment in the politicisation of Protestant martyrdom in Britain arguably occurred during and immediately after the civil wars: an act as ostensibly political as the execution of the king for treason was simultaneously figured by Charles I and his supporters as a religious sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> The increasing willingness among conforming and non-conforming English Protestants to recognise as martyrs individuals who died in the service of a political cause during the nation's troubled times,<sup>10</sup> and to broaden their understanding of Christian suffering to encompass imprisonment, non-lethal pain and loss of property, as well as death, essentially erased, Thomas Freeman argues, the boundary between religious and political martyrdom.<sup>11</sup> By 1700 almost anybody who died or experienced discomfort for her or his religious or political beliefs could be construed as a martyr.

This article explores an early eighteenth-century instance in which the deprivations and sequestrations of clergy before 1660 were interpreted as essentially religious events – instances of Christian suffering – with contemporary political significance. It is based on the first two hundred letters containing narratives of sequestered clergy and their families that were collected by or written to John Walker in 1704 or 1705.<sup>12</sup> Rector of St Mary Major in Exeter since 1698, Walker had resolved by the spring of 1704 to 'advance an account of the numbers and sufferings of the loyal clergy'.<sup>13</sup> He determined to collect detailed local knowledge from grassroots informants about the

<sup>7</sup> For an introduction to Foxean scholarship see the essays in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, Aldershot 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Dillon, *The construction of martyrdom in the English Catholic community*, Aldershot 2002, 77, 83–4; cf. Thomas M. McCoog, 'Constructing martyrdom in the English Catholic community, 1582–1602', in Ethan H. Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant nation': religious politics and identity in early modern England*, Manchester 2005, 95–127.

<sup>9</sup> *Eikōn basilikē, the portraiture of his sacred majesty in his solitudes and sufferings*, London 1649 (Wing R. 18840); Andrew Lacey, '"Charles the First, and Christ the Second": the creation of a political martyr', in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and martyrdom in England, c. 1400–1700*, Woodbridge 2007, 203–20.

<sup>10</sup> James Heath, *A new book of loyal English martyrs*, London 1665 (Wing H.1336); David Lloyd, *Memoirs of the lives, actions, sufferings and deaths of those noble, revered, and excellent personages that suffered ... in our late intestine wars*, London 1668 (Wing L.2642).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Freeman, 'Imitatio Christi with a vengeance: the politicisation of martyrdom in early-modern England', in Freeman and Mayer, *Martyrs and martyrdom*, 63–5.

<sup>12</sup> On this genre more generally see Gary Schneider, *The culture of epistolarity: vernacular letters and letter writing in early modern England, 1500–1700*, Newark, NJ 2005.

<sup>13</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 46; Alexander Du Toit, 'Walker, John (bap. 1674, d. 1747)', *ODNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28496>, accessed 11 Feb. 2009].

persecutions of Anglican clergymen through a method also employed by contemporary natural historians and antiquaries, that of circulating printed *Queries*.<sup>14</sup> The questionnaires, like other data-collection surveys in which general questions were followed by a desire for particulars, reflect Walker's 'systematising mind at work', seeking to bring order and precision to his potential correspondents' observations and research.<sup>15</sup> The *Queries* also evince Walker's trust in his correspondents' ability to convey accurate information, whether gathered from their own observations or from informants, although he did remind them 'to send nothing but what you have good grounds to believe is true'.<sup>16</sup> The *Queries* prompted most of the letters that Walker subsequently received, amounting to nearly five folio volumes in total; while the first hundred letters – the first century – came from across the country those of the second century were largely from Walker's native county of Devon.<sup>17</sup>

Walker's correspondence can be seen as a particular species of knowledge about the recent troubled past; one that was martyrological both in content and in form.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Walker's correspondents conveyed stories of Anglican suffering within a Reformation martyrological framework – that a martyr was a Christian who suffered for adherence to the true faith – to reaffirm the established Church's pre-eminent position in the more competitive religious arena created by the Toleration Act of 1689.<sup>19</sup> In ways not unlike earlier ecclesiastical historians, including Foxe and Peter Heylyn, Walker's correspondents strove to convey Christian truth through narrations of what had really happened to the clergy at the hands of the so-called godly during their brief period of political dominance.<sup>20</sup> The epistolary

<sup>14</sup> The contemporary use of circulated queries to gain geographic and antiquarian knowledge is explored in C. Withers, 'Reporting, mapping, trusting: making geographical knowledge in the late seventeenth-century', *Isis* xc (1999), 511–15, and Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: the discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain*, London 2004, 12–13, 51–2. On Foxe's use of queries see Freeman, 'Concepts of martyrdom', 29 n. 136.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley: an eighteenth-century antiquary*, New York 1985, 23; Edward Lhuyd, *Parochial queries in order to a geographical dictionary, a natural history, etc. of Wales*, London 1697 (Wing L.1947).

<sup>16</sup> MS.J Walker c. 2, fo. 326. On the background to topographical queries see Charles W. J. Withers, 'Geography, natural history and the eighteenth-century enlightenment: putting the world in place', *History Workshop Journal* xxxix (1995), 136–63.

<sup>17</sup> G. B. Tatham, *Dr John Walker and The sufferings of the clergy*, Cambridge 1911, 86–7.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Woolf, *The social circulation of the past: English historical culture, 1500–1730*, Oxford 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Freeman, 'Introduction: over their dead bodies: concepts of martyrdom in late-medieval and early-modern England', in Mayer and Freeman, *Martyrs and martyrdom*, 20–7.

<sup>20</sup> On Heylyn as a historian see Anthony Milton, *Laudian and royalist polemic in seventeenth-century England: the career and writings of Peter Heylyn*, Manchester 2007, and J. A. I. Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken: the Church of England and its enemies, 1660–1730*, Cambridge 1992, 64–77.

martyrologies which men such as Richard Clark posted to Walker were intended ultimately to create a particular reading public, one whose members were committed to the social circulation of knowledge about the true martyrs of the previous century.<sup>21</sup> Such knowledge could be employed more broadly to re-enforce the High Churchmen's conviction that Anglicanism represented England's authentic catholic and reformed Christian communion, the one from which the nation's spiritual bearings ought to derive. The truth about the civil war past, to which the letters witnessed, while bearing clear political implications, was like the cause of the clergy's suffering in being fundamentally religious.

Before exploring the nature and import of Walker's correspondence it is helpful to recapitulate briefly the context that occasioned it. The letters were written and circulated as interventions into public debates about the nature of Protestant Nonconformity in relation to the established Church, and the place of both religious communities within the post-Revolution polity. The abandonment of efforts to comprehend moderate Dissenters – Presbyterians and Congregationalists – within the national Church after 1689 in favour of toleration had hardened the boundaries between what were increasingly seen as separate Protestant denominations.<sup>22</sup> While 'Low Church' Anglicans and Dissenters might be able to co-operate in programmes of moral reform, both groups were also beginning to compete for adherents.<sup>23</sup> The early eighteenth-century spiritual descendants of Restoration-era hierarchalists,<sup>24</sup> the 'High Church' defenders of episcopal authority, and of the particular reformed catholicity of England's national Church, were chagrined at the expansion of Dissent during the 1690s, as well as at brazen anticlerical and anti-orthodox opinions circulating in print following the lapse of the Licensing Act.<sup>25</sup> The accession in 1702 of Queen Anne, a firm defender of the Church's interest, was understandably heralded as a kind of second Restoration by its

<sup>21</sup> The idea of 'publics' as self-organised discursive domains, often acting in competition with 'counterpublics', seems better suited to the realities of early modern communicative practices than a singular public sphere: Michael Warner, *Publics and counterpublics*, New York 2002, 67–124.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs: the Entring book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691*, i, Woodbridge 2007, 243–5; John Coffey, *Persecution and toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689*, Harlow 2000, 198–206.

<sup>23</sup> Goldie, *Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 208; William Gibson, *The Church of England, 1688–1832: unity and accord*, London 2001; John Spurr, *The post-Reformation: religion, politics and society in Britain, 1603–1714*, Harlow 2006, 193–234.

<sup>24</sup> Goldie, *Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: revolution, religion and war*, Oxford 1999, 171–80. For clerical fears about Nonconformists see Donald A. Spaeth, *The Church in an age of danger: parsons and parishioners, 1660–1740*, Cambridge 2000, 10–19.

supporters.<sup>26</sup> Also heartening for High Churchmen was the resumption, after more than a decade of repeated prorogations, of regular sittings of the Convocation of Canterbury.<sup>27</sup> The concerns of the Church's supporters were also increasingly prominent in parliament; for example, between 1702 and 1705 three bills were introduced to outlaw the practice of 'occasional conformity' by which moderate Dissenters took Anglican communion once a year, largely as an expedient to meet the religious tests for political office.<sup>28</sup>

Such was the political and religious context in which Edmund Calamy published in 1702 the abridged memoirs of Restoration Nonconformity's chief advocate, Richard Baxter's *Reliquiae Baxterianae*.<sup>29</sup> The ninth chapter of the work famously listed the names and travails of ministers ejected from their livings on 'Black Bartholomew Day' in 1662 because they could not conform to the requirements of the Act of Uniformity.<sup>30</sup> Among Calamy's reasons for including the ninth chapter in his abridgement was in order to appropriate for the ejected Nonconformist clergymen the honour of having witnessed to the truth of their faith by being persecuted.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the hardships endured by Dissenting clergy demonstrated that they had been genuine martyrs, suffering members of Christ's true Church, and were indeed truly Protestant Christians.<sup>32</sup> A number of concerned conforming clergy and church supporters decided to respond to Calamy's martyrological

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Lawrence Hyde, earl of Rochester, 'The dedication', in *The history of the rebellion and civil wars in England begun in the year 1641 ... written by the right honourable Edward earl of Clarendon ... volume the third*, Oxford 1704, sig. Biv, and Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 268.

<sup>27</sup> On the politics of religion at the beginning of Anne's reign see Geoffrey Holmes, *British politics in the age of Anne*, London 1987; J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution principles: the politics of party, 1689–1720*, Cambridge 1990; and Julian Hoppit, *A land of liberty? England, 1689–1727*, Oxford 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Holmes, *British politics*, 97–103; Hoppit, *Land of liberty*, 231; Goldie, *Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 197.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Baxter *An abridgment of Mr. Baxter's history of his life and times: with an account of many others ... by Edmund Calamy*, London 1702.

<sup>30</sup> David L. Wykes, '"To let the memory of these men dye is injurious to posterity": Edmund Calamy's *Account* of the ejected ministers', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church retrospective* (Studies in Church History xxxiii, 1997), 383–7; David J. Appleby, *Black Bartholomew's day: preaching, polemic and Restoration non-conformity*, Manchester 2007.

<sup>31</sup> On Calamy's ambition to foster an enduring religious identity for Dissenters through stories of ejected ministers see John Seed, 'History and narrative: religious dissent and the politics of memory in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of British Studies* xlv (2005), 46–63.

<sup>32</sup> I was reminded of this important point by Stephen Taylor. Thomas S. Freeman argues that Foxe's conception of a martyr as one who suffers and dies for the truth became dominant among early modern English Protestants and Catholics: 'Concepts of martyrdom', 20–7, 31. For a literary interpretation of martyrological writings see Susannah Monta, *Martyrdom and literature in early modern England*, Cambridge 2005.

vindication of Nonconformity in kind; the first to publish was Prebendary Thomas Long of Exeter.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently Dr Charles Goodall sponsored a notice in the *London Gazette* in March 1704 announcing his intention to compose an 'account of the Clergy of the Church of England who suffered ... in Defence of the Religion, Laws and Liberties of their Country, and for loyalty for their Martyr'd Sovereign'.<sup>34</sup> By then Goodall was aware (and none too pleased) that an acquaintance of Long's, John Walker, had taken up the task of composing a book in answer to Calamy. It appears, however, that the enormous scale of preparatory work required for the history, coupled with his declining health, led Goodall to cease his research in the summer and to turn over his materials to the Devon clergyman.<sup>35</sup>

News of Goodall's design for a book on the sufferings of the loyal clergy sparked a sharp reply from one of Dissent's strongest advocates, Daniel Defoe. In an 'Advertisement' to his *A new test of the Church of England's loyalty* (1704) Defoe claimed that the project was yet another attempt by churchmen to use aspects of the civil war past to widen the breaches between England's Protestants. Defoe encouraged the editors of 'this worthy Collection' to publish it 'with all convenient Speed', the Dissenters having a reply ready to it in an extant manuscript which listed those many families 'ruin'd and undone' by the persecutions of the 'High-Church Party'.<sup>36</sup> In the end, however, it took Walker the better part of a decade to complete the book, in part because he was reliant upon correspondence from local informants for accounts of sequestered clergy.<sup>37</sup> It is to their efforts to recover the truth about and bear witness to Christian suffering during the late troubled times to which this article turns.<sup>38</sup>

## II

The letters that Walker received were the product of both personal and social remembering. A handful of Walker's early correspondents, primarily the

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Long, *A rebuke to Mr Edmund Calamy*, Exeter 1704. Long's living had been sequestered in 1652.

<sup>34</sup> Tatham, *Walker*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A new test of the Church of England's honesty*, London 1704, 25. He added that he hoped that the book would not omit 'a true List of how many of their Clergy were turn'd out for Sodomy, Incest, Adultery, Drunkenness, Blasphemy, and other scandalous Crimes'.

<sup>37</sup> John Walker, *An attempt towards recovering an account of the numbers and suffering of the clergy of the Church of England ... scholars, etc., who were sequester'd, harrass'd, etc., in the late times of the Grand Rebellion, etc.*, London 1714.

<sup>38</sup> On the need to take note of the practices surrounding remembering and writing about the past see Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our pasts: the social construction of oral history*, Cambridge 1992, 3ff.



children of clergy, noted that their accounts were derived at least in part from their own memories of the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>39</sup> For example, William Satterly wrote that 'I (being a child in those times) can give you but a slender account of his [father's] usages from my own memory.'<sup>40</sup> A letter with an account derived from personal experience might also come from a minister's larger kinship network. John James, the godson of an ejected clergyman, claimed that he could still remember 'the virulent Presbyterian' who had done his godfather wrong. One man even wrote that he still recalled meeting a sequestered minister 'about the year 1643'.<sup>41</sup> The information in these letters was perhaps the closest Walker would get to the lived experience of the sufferers.

Most of the approximately thirty correspondents who identified themselves as direct descendants of a sequestered clergyman indicated that their knowledge was based primarily on the retrospective testimony of sufferers.<sup>42</sup> For example, two daughters of clergymen, Elizabeth Trosse and Elizabeth Bentham, wrote lengthy reports based upon such first-hand testimony.<sup>43</sup> Trosse's three-page letter was, she declared, 'the best account I could [get] of my father's troubles', being based upon 'the best recollection I can make of what I have heard my father and mother say concerning those matters'.<sup>44</sup> While female correspondents tended to focus their narratives on the hardships experienced by a minister's wife and children, in contrast to male letter-writers who were more concerned to relate the clergymen's loss of status and honour, both men and women wanted to convey stories that proved that their spiritual forbears had suffered for their faith.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, since accounts of the travails of faithful women could be expected to

<sup>39</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fos 108, 204; c. 2, fos 217, 231, 244. These correspondents thus drew their information directly from an aggregate fund of lived experience, or what Avishai Margalit calls 'common memory': *The ethics of memory*, Cambridge, MA 2002, 51.

<sup>40</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 245.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fos 333, 204.

<sup>42</sup> Thirty correspondents claimed to be the son, daughter, nephew or grandson of a sufferer; a further eight were probably sons of clergy on account of their names but did not explicitly state it within the letter, for example, ibid. fo. 190.

<sup>43</sup> I was able to identify four female composers from the first 200 letters sent to Walker. A number of anonymous letters which include stories of violence against women, or the defiance of a minister's wife toward her persecutors, may well have been written by women, such as c. 1, fo. 264. On early modern female correspondents generally see James Daybell, *Women letter-writers in Tudor England*, Oxford 2006.

<sup>44</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 340.

<sup>45</sup> Laurence, 'Sad and deplorable condition', and 'Begging pardon', 201. This lends support to Daniel Woolf's point that the family was at the centre of female understandings of the past, either as a subject itself or as a lens through which to make sense of broader events: 'A feminine past? gender, genre, and historical knowledge in England, 1500–1800', *American Historical Review* cii (1997), 655.

excite the reader's pity, it is not surprising that men also included instances of female suffering in their letters.<sup>46</sup>

Writing in May 1705, Stamford Wallace noted that 'at this distance of tyme, the memories of those great men which that wicked crew turned out, is almost forgot'.<sup>47</sup> The majority of Walker's early correspondents were too young to remember the wars and did not have access to first-hand testimony, and so were dependent upon local social memory for information about their predecessors' hardships. The grandson of a sufferer, Hugh Chase, declared that what he wrote about his ancestor was only 'what I best know myself, and am informed by his friends and near relations now living'. For several correspondents the descendants of the clergy served as their informants. A daughter of Samuel Ware 'now living in Ashcomb' gave Elias Carter an account of her father's suffering and death.<sup>48</sup> Much second-hand testimony also came from elderly members of a parish. A rector from the diocese of Leicester, Peter Phelips, sent Walker 'an account of the violences done to one of my predecessors, given by the parishioners to me, some of which are yet living'. George Child's information came from 'some ancient persons now living who remember what was then done'.<sup>49</sup> Walker's enterprise was thus one more occasion in early modern England for turning the memories of elderly women and men into written records.<sup>50</sup>

Walker's correspondents recognised that the authenticity and authority of his projected history of suffering clergy was crucially connected to the credibility of their accounts, and of the testimonies upon which they were largely based. This is evident from their efforts to demonstrate to him that their informants and their testimonies were reliable. In a number of letters the writers related certifying details about their informants and how their knowledge had been acquired. For example, Thomas Gipps concluded his epistle with the declaration that 'the Account I here give you I rec'd from Robert Barlow husbandman aged 72; from Elizabeth Meadowcraft aged 76; and from Elizabeth Kay of Cobbs aged about 80 years'.<sup>51</sup> Particularly thorough in identifying his oral sources was the Suffolk minister Isaac Raye, who identified his witness, Edward Elliston, gave his age and had Elliston put his signature on the document to certify its contents.<sup>52</sup> The deductive work of John Evans was truly remarkable, and unique. He claimed to have travelled to two nearby parishes to interview the 'two men living that can speak to this

<sup>46</sup> For example, John Gilbert from Warwickshire claimed that his predecessor's wife, refusing to leave her home, had her hands torn as she hung on to the parsonage door: MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 15v. I owe the point about exciting pity to Sylvia Brown.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 211v.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. c. 2, fos 367, 233.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fos 161, 265.

<sup>50</sup> For a similar phenomenon prompted by disputes over ancient customary rights see Adam Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England, 1500–1700*, Oxford 2000, 259–97, and Andy Wood, *The politics of social conflict: the peak country, 1520–1770*, Cambridge 1999, 138, 150–62.

<sup>51</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 244.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 228; c. 2, fo. 97.

barbarity of their own knowledge'. He averred that he had 'examined them apart about the matter of fact, and tho' they knew nothing of me or my Design yet they both agreed in their testimony'.<sup>53</sup> Evan's letter was itself a mini-empirical history.

Efforts to certify the testimony of informants by conveying their ages and occupations, getting them to put their hands to the letter or an accompanying certificate, suggests that the correspondents regarded their oral sources' personal experience and reputation as fundamental to the veracity of their testimony. In other words, trustworthy knowledge about the sufferers was dependent upon establishing the informants' mnemonic competence and local repute or 'social credit'.<sup>54</sup> This certifying approach to testimony about the past was sometimes also applied by letter-writers to their own narratives of what they had heard. Particularly conscientious was Edward Voyer, who included on his letter a signed attestation from Francis Hutchinson, declaring that 'Mr Voyer of Okley is now an Antient clergyman of great learning and sobriety and I rec[ommen]d the above letter from him'.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Mr Ford assured Walker that the information contained in his letter was 'what I have heard and I believe you may depend upon the truth of what I have written'.<sup>56</sup> The goal of these crediting strategies – to hand over the truth about who had suffered, what they had undergone, and why – clearly spurred Walker's correspondents to sift through their informants' reports and record only trustworthy reports. It appears, therefore, that for Walker's correspondents credible testimony was something that, once accessible in print to a reading public, would both inform future readers of the truth about the civil war past and confirm the argument against Calamy's pseudo-martyrology.<sup>57</sup>

Walker's project thus stimulated the transformation of memories about the troubled past, acquired personally, from the mouths of sufferers, or from the testimonies of those who had heard about those times, into written records.<sup>58</sup> The letters were (and are) material representations of antecedent oral testimonies: paper and ink witnesses to prior acts of witnessing about

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 213.

<sup>54</sup> Different arguments concerning the relative importance for making trustworthy knowledge of expertise versus reputation in late seventeenth-century regimes are offered by Steven Shapin, *The social history of truth: civility and science in seventeenth-century England*, Chicago 1994, and Barbara Shapiro, *A culture of the fact: England, 1550–1720*, Ithaca 2000.

<sup>55</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 297.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. fo. 329.

<sup>57</sup> R. W. Serjeantson charts the shift in the status accorded to testimony in seventeenth-century natural philosophy, from rhetorical confirmation to truthful information, in 'Testimony and proof in early-modern England', *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* xxx (1999), 195–236.

<sup>58</sup> For a modern exploration of similar phenomena see Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and orality: studies in the technology of communication*, Oxford 1988, 110–38.

past Christian suffering.<sup>59</sup> If something bears witness to an antecedent other – an image, a religious truth, a testimony about a past event – it is, at least etymologically, a kind of martyr.<sup>60</sup> This is particularly true for Walker's correspondence: in form and in content the letters were epistolary witnesses to testimonies about Anglican martyrs.<sup>61</sup> This view of the letters is consistent with the contemporary notion that down through the centuries the Church's truth was handed over via personal testimonies.<sup>62</sup> So the act of narrating the suffering of the faithful sequestered clergymen turned informants and letter-writers into minor ecclesiastical historians, or at least martyrologists. For this reason the characteristic properties and implications of these epistolary martyrologies are significant.

### III

The stories and the language that Walker's correspondents used in their letters aimed to show that the mid seventeenth-century troubles had witnessed the latest persecution experienced by Christ's faithful servants in England. Testifying in letters, and eventually in a printed history, that the loyal clergy, and their spouses, were genuine Christian martyrs not only undermined the martyrological agenda of Calamy's *Abridgement*, but could also lend support to contemporary legislative efforts to restrain the public profile of Dissent.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, reminding the nation of Anglican martyrs from the 1640s and 1650s, as Walker's book would do largely by using the stories supplied by his correspondents, would support the continuing claim of the established Church to be the truest and best Christian denomination in England.

After the civil wars moderate Nonconformists and Quakers believed that suffering death was not a requisite characteristic of martyrdom; a diminution of property, honour, the loss of one's clerical living, or individual liberty, or

<sup>59</sup> This is arguably a characteristic of many documents from the early modern period which have survived into the present, perhaps most notably court records: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the archives: pardon tales and their tellers in sixteenth-century France*, Oxford 1987; Christine Churches, "'The most unconvincing testimony': the genesis and historical usefulness of the country depositions in chancery", *Seventeenth Century* xi (1996), 209–27.

<sup>60</sup> The documentary basis of much historical scholarship, Paul Ricoeur noted, 'starts from testimony': *Memory, history, forgetting*, 147.

<sup>61</sup> As Hobbes noted in *Leviathan* (III.xlii.272), 'Nor is it the Death of the Witsnesse, but the Testimony itself that makes the Martyr: for the word signifieth nothing else, but the man that beareth Witsnesse.'

<sup>62</sup> John Spurr, "'A special kindness for dead bishops': the Church, history, and testimony in seventeenth-century Protestantism", *Huntington Library Quarterly* lxviii (2005), 313–35.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Astell, *An impartial enquiry into the causes of rebellion and civil war in this kingdom: in an examination of Dr. Kennett's sermon, Jan. 31. 1703/4; and vindication of the Royal Martyr*, London 1704, 32–3, 58.

having to endure pain, for the sake of the faith were regarded as sufficient evidence of the sufferer's following in footsteps of Christ on the road to his cross.<sup>64</sup> Walker's correspondents evinced a similar ecumenical approach to the kinds of travails that ought to count as signs of martyrdom. John Northleigh, grandson of a sufferer, and a sometime Tory propagandist, wrote that Walker's planned book concerning 'our Persecuted Clergy', would demonstrate to the public that during the late troubled times the Church had undergone 'a primitive Test of the most Antient and Christian' Churches.<sup>65</sup> Numerous other letter-writers included accounts of the physical abuse and humiliation that their spiritual ancestors underwent for the sake of fidelity to the Church. Michael Dolling had suffered months after the 'barbarous and disgraceful treatment' he received from Parliamentary soldiers, who had forced the cleric to ride with them to prison 'on a bare bon'd lean hard trotting horse of theirs without saddle'.<sup>66</sup> N. Gwynn reported that soldiers belonging to Colonel Massey's regiment had burst in upon John Feneby while the minister was administering the sacrament of baptism. Gwynn claimed that Feneby was then summarily stripped 'of all his clothes, but a pair of drawers', and then led out of the church through the cold and wet outside.<sup>67</sup> A number of letters also contained accounts of clergy being imprisoned. Giles Satterly learned from his father and another sufferer about the particularly awful conditions that they had endured in Exeter prison, surrounded by human filth: unlike the Apostles Paul and Silas, these men were forbidden from singing Psalms.<sup>68</sup> Like the New Testament Apostles Satterly's protagonists were Christians forced to endure the most wretched and base confinements on account of their faith.

Walker's correspondents also wrote about clergymen and their families who were reduced to severe poverty and hardship as a result of plundering or sequestration. According to John Burrough, Parliamentary troopers plundered the goods of James Burnard, and then sold them before his face.<sup>69</sup> After officials from the Commonwealth regime seized the profits from Samuel

<sup>64</sup> Freeman, 'Concepts of martyrdom', 27–8.

<sup>65</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 356. Northleigh had composed a pamphlet during the Exclusion crisis in which he compared the Protestant Association sponsored by the earl of Shaftesbury to the Solemn League and Covenant: *The parallel: or, The new specious association an old rebellious covenant*, London 1682 (Wing N. 1301). See Andrew M. Coleby, 'Northleigh, John (1656/7–1705)', *ODNB* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20331>, accessed 11 Mar. 2008].

<sup>66</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 367.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 123. Similarly, the horse troop sent by General Sir Thomas Fairfax in the depths of December to collect Richard Ven for questioning was 'so severe in executing their orders that they took him as they found him, not permitting him to put on warmer clothes, and carried him away with them in a wet and cold day, it being two days before Christmas' (c. 2, fo. 333).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. c. 2, fo. 245.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. fo. 311. Several other letter-writers noted the theft of books, such as John Tindall, who related that 'the Plymouth Soldiers' took from the Henry Smith's 'all their goods and his books' (fo. 278). When Samuel Seaward's house was plundered 'his study of Books, which was

Ware's two livings, he 'became very poor' and maintained his family with only the 'small contributions' from sympathetic neighbours.<sup>70</sup> The rector of Chilcombe in Worcestershire wrote that his sequestered predecessor, John Hagar, had subsequently moved to London to seek employment, but was reduced to such straits that upon seeing 'a peece of bread, or cheese, in the ground, He dropt his glove upon it, ^took it up^ and ate it with a good appetite'.<sup>71</sup>

In his *Acts and monuments* John Foxe highlighted the cruelty of Catholic persecutors by recounting their sometimes harsh treatment of godly women, so it is not surprising to find similar stories in the letters.<sup>72</sup> Particularly chilling was an account submitted by an anonymous correspondent about the conduct of an intruder named Woodward. When the incumbent's wife, Mrs Thomas Smith, resisted her family's ejection from their home by clinging tightly to a bedpost, Woodward ordered a group of soldiers to remove her by force, which they refused to do. Then, according to the letter, Woodward, 'more cruel and merciless then they', went to her and 'having a new pair of shoes on kickt her upon the belly with great violence, that it gave her a rupture'. Within a year the woman was dead, most people attributing her demise to Woodward's cruelty.<sup>73</sup> Letters written by women or dependent on female informants tended to emphasise the suffering that ejected ministers' wives endured during pregnancy or soon after parturition.<sup>74</sup> Frances King recalled that in the act of searching her mother's pockets for clandestine correspondence, a Parliamentary sequestrator had 'soe frightened my mother, that itt caused a miscarriage of a child, and much indangered her life'.<sup>75</sup> An anonymous correspondent from Warwickshire related how a group of soldiers seeking quarter entered the parsonage of one Dr Temple; they proceeded into 'Mrs Temple's Chamber, who having lately miscarry'd they pull'd the bed cloths of her in that condition, [and] they carry'd her forth (being just recovered out of a swoone) in a chair'.<sup>76</sup> As in the accounts of

very valuable, and all his manuscripts were violently taken from him, and never restored, which the good man often and deeply lamented, as a thing that went near him' (c. 1, fo. 172).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. c. 2, fo. 223.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 211.

<sup>72</sup> On Foxe's representation of women see Ellen Macek, 'The emergence of a feminine spirituality in the *Book of martyrs*', *Sixteenth Century Journal* xix (1988), 62–80; Thomas Freeman, '"The good ministrie of godlye and vertuous women": the Elizabethan martyrologists and the female supporters of the Marian martyrs', *Journal of British Studies* xlix (2000), 8–33; and Megan L. Hickerson, *Making women martyrs in Tudor England*, Basingstoke 2005.

<sup>73</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 326.

<sup>74</sup> This element of female correspondence is discussed in greater depth by Ann Laurence in 'Sad and deplorable condition', 465–88.

<sup>75</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. fo. 283. J. Gilbert also related this incident, albeit with some greater contextual detail. Gilbert had heard stories of Temple's suffering, particularly one concerning 'his Wife one of a Good Family', who soon after giving birth during the winter was taken out of her bed one night 'and cast upon the ground, by which she lost the use of one foot to her dying day' (c. 2, fo. 15).

abused clerics, the stories of their mistreated wives demonstrated their continuity with earlier Christian female martyrs, and pointed out the wickedness of Dissenters' spiritual and biological ancestors.

Although most accounts of female suffering portrayed clergymen's wives as innocent and helpless victims of Parliamentary tyranny, at least one recounted an instance of rhetorical resistance. An anonymous letter writer from Rutland included an anecdote concerning one woman who had engaged in a verbal sparring match with plundering soldiers. The third time the rector of Glaston's goods were seized by sequestrators, they had

entered into their Inventory the pot hanging over the fire, upon which the good Gentlewoman asked them whether they intended to enter the beef and the pudding boyling in it for the childrens dinner. They sayd no, for they intended to eat that when their business was over. Then she sayd Pray Gentlemen be pleas'd to enter my Children amongst the rest of the goods. No sayd they, we intend to leave them to you in lieu of your fifths.<sup>77</sup>

In this account the woman's sarcasm served to unmask the depths of her persecutors' cruelty and barbarity, particularly toward the weakest members of the household, her children. Although she was suffering only for her husband's loyalty and fidelity to the Church and its supreme governor, and was powerless before the enemies of government and religion, she had been able to match wits with and speak the truth to her mighty oppressors.<sup>78</sup> This is not to imply that female agency ought to be seen only in stories of resistance.<sup>79</sup> That many correspondents wanted to witness to the importance of women's work for maintaining their household was evident from their stories of the tremendous efforts that clergymen's wives made to support their families after losing their homes and livings.<sup>80</sup> To narrate and to encourage the remembrance of women who had endured terrible hardships for the sake of their faith was sufficient proof of female agency, for while Parliament and its allies had overthrown (temporarily) the monarchy and Episcopal Church, they had not overcome God's truth or his truly faithful handmaidens.

Only a handful of correspondents related stories of ministers who made the ultimate witness to the Gospel by yielding up their lives. In a letter from Samuel (father of John) Wesley of Epworth, Walker learned that the rector of Chedzoy in Somerset died after he was run through with a sword during a tussle with the gaoler of Wells over a letter to the minister's wife.<sup>81</sup> According

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 264. The 'fifths' were 20% of the annual value of the benefice which Parliament ordered should be paid to the ejected incumbent's family by his replacement.

<sup>78</sup> The ability of godly women, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to confute their popish persecutors is another prominent theme in Foxe; see, for example, his account of Anne Askew in the 1570 edition of *Acts and monuments* (RSTC 11223), 1413–20.

<sup>79</sup> This is one argument within a particular strand of early modern women's historiography. See, for example, Ulinka Rublack, *The crimes of women in early modern Germany*, Oxford 1999.

<sup>80</sup> Laurence, 'Sad and deplorable condition'.

<sup>81</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 3.

to Thomas Rowell his predecessor, Dr Franklin, lost his life while trying to escape from a safe house beset by soldiers. Franklin attempted to vault himself 'over the Garden poles on the backside of the House, [but] hung himself upon a pole which ran into his groin, of which he soon after died'.<sup>82</sup> Despite the graphic nature of this anecdote, the details of the individual's suffering was less important than the fact that it occurred because of his or her fidelity to the Church.

Unsurprisingly, the collective testimony of Walker's early correspondents was that sequestered clergy were martyrs for Christian truth reposed within the established episcopally-governed Church and defended by its spiritual governor, the king.<sup>83</sup> The rector of Great and Little Leak, Nottinghamshire, Edward Bigland, had endured sequestration and imprisonment 'only for his loyalty to the King, and firm adherence to the Church'.<sup>84</sup> Similarly Abraham Spenser of St Michael's in Herefordshire was turned out of his vicarage 'for the vertues' of loyalty to the king and constancy to the Church.<sup>85</sup> Notable proof of a clergyman's fidelity to the Church was his refusal to take Parliament's Solemn League and Covenant, which had pledged the extirpation of 'Church government by archbishops, bishops ... and all other ecclesiastical offices depending on that hierarchy'.<sup>86</sup> John Pynsent was 'turn'd out by authority of Parliament for not taking the Covenant'.<sup>87</sup> The father of Thomas Tylot of Suffolk was labelled a malignant and endured ejection and a spell in prison during 1643 for his refusal to take the Covenant.<sup>88</sup> The Solemn League and Covenant was thus a symbol for these correspondents of the Long Parliament's attack on the ancient and apostolic office of bishops, the legitimacy and authority of which the faithful clergy upheld before the world through their sufferings.

Letter-writers sought to accent their protagonists' admirable qualities and virtues to prove further that they had been persecuted solely for their adherence to the Church's doctrine. Correspondents characterised the subject of their narratives with what can be called the rhetoric of decency and fidelity; the clergyman's moral uprightness was epitomised by phrases such as 'loyal and learned', 'pious and exemplary', 'very generous and good

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. fo. 225.

<sup>83</sup> On the Church's complex relationship with the Restoration monarchy see John Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', in Lionel K. Glassey (ed.), *The reigns of Charles II and James VII & II*, Basingstoke 1997, 90–124. On debates over the meaning and implications of the doctrine of the royal supremacy see Jacqueline Rose, 'Royal ecclesiastical supremacy and the Restoration Church', *Historical Research* lxxx (2007), 324–45.

<sup>84</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 88.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. fos 388, 329.

<sup>86</sup> 'A solemn league and covenant for reformation and defence of religion', in J. P. Kenyon (ed.), *The Stuart constitution, 1603–1688*, Cambridge 1966, 264.

<sup>87</sup> MS J Walker c. 2, fo. 335.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 303.



natured' and 'of a good life and conversation'.<sup>89</sup> The sufferings of Henry Wilson, for example, prompted Edward Bradford to reflect that his predecessor was serious, sober and orthodox, as exemplified by his devout and reverent reading of the Church's prayers and homilies.<sup>90</sup> The vicar of Cransford in Suffolk was remembered as a good man and decent preacher 'but above all for his liberal charity to the poor'.<sup>91</sup> The injustice of these men's suffering was indirectly conveyed in stories that unmasked the charges brought by their persecutors. Although Thomas Archbold of Haverhill in Worcester was a staunch defender of the bishops and the king, an anonymous letter-writer reported that the real 'occasion of the complaint' against him was in fact 'a design formed by some of his Parishioners to enclose part of the common fields which he did oppose'.<sup>92</sup> Another anonymous correspondent graphically emphasised his or her outrage at the 'chief Article' alleged against Lionel Playters, the rector of Uggheshall in Suffolk; it was 'that he did use to eat custard after a Scandalous manner and **for this** he was put out of his living'.<sup>93</sup> These accounts (literally) underscored the hypocrisy of the persecutors, and showed that their 'godliness' had been only a cloak for ambition and self-interest.<sup>94</sup> That this was still true of the Puritans' Nonconformist descendants was evident in their circumventing the religious tests for public office using the practice of occasional conformity.<sup>95</sup>

#### IV

Although best known as a martyrology, Foxe's *Acts and monuments* was primarily an apocalyptic reading of ecclesiastical history, recounting the centuries-long struggle between the true and false Churches led by Christ and AntiChrist respectively.<sup>96</sup> Apocalyptic understandings of contemporary history remained potent well into the late seventeenth century, and were an

<sup>89</sup> Robert Hanbury's description of Mr Simson Paige of Huntingdonshire: *ibid.* fo. 177; Joseph Wood on Mr Joseph Stock of Yorkshire, fo. 216; an anonymous author on Dr Whittington of Warwickshire, fo. 283; Ezra Pierce on Mr Henry Owen of Somerset, fo. 295; John Paine on Dr Robert Warren of Suffolk, fo. 309; Richard Paulett on Dr John Crofts of Suffolk, fo. 307.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* c. 2, fo. 296.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* c. 1, fo. 397.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* fo. 184.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* fo. 271 (underscoring and bold in the original).

<sup>94</sup> This was, of course, a charge with a long pedigree. Restoration examples included John Davies (attrib.), *The civil warres of Great Britain and Ireland*, London 1661 (Wing D. 393), sig. A5, and William Dugdale, *A short view of the late troubles in England; briefly setting forth, their rise, growth, and tragical conclusion*, London 1681 (Wing D. 2492A), 378–84.

<sup>95</sup> For an analysis of the contested representations of Dissent in the early eighteenth century see Mark Knights, 'Occasional conformity and the representation of dissent: hypocrisy, sincerity, moderation and zeal', in Stephen Taylor and David L. Wykes (eds), *Parliament and dissent*, Edinburgh 2005, 42–57.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the civil war*, Toronto 1978.

important interpretative framework for many of Walker's correspondents.<sup>97</sup> While stories about Puritan cruelty towards loyal clergy, their spiritual and civil usurpations of legitimately ordained and installed ministers, and the religious anarchy of the troubled times reinforced the general Anglican argument that non-resistance to authority and obedience to the hierarchy were public signs of Christian holiness,<sup>98</sup> such accounts also reinforced the correspondents' particular contention that the suffering clergy were true martyrs, that the established Church was the true English Church, and that their oppressors and their early eighteenth-century descendants were, or at least at times acted like, agents of AntiChrist.

A number of letters recounted the violence and disorder fostered by the Church's opponents during their hypocritical quest for further reformation of religion. For example, Philip Phelips wrote that Mikepher Alphery (*sic*) was confronted by 'a file of Musketers' one Sunday while he was preaching. The soldiers 'came and pulled him out of his pulpit, turn'd him out of the church, and went to the parsonage house and threw out his wife and children with his goods'.<sup>99</sup> Notable for its realistic attention to details of time and personal names, and for its carnivalesque elements, was Richard Paulett's account underwritten by the seventy-three-year-old Francis Cryset of Melford, Sussex. Cryset had testified that around St Bartholomew's Day 1641 he witnessed a group of 'Presbyterians' plunder the minister's five horses and many household goods. In addition to taking his property, the Presbyterians disgraced the incumbent by barging in on him during worship, calling him a 'false prophet', forcibly removing him from the pulpit, and dragging him back to his house while 'one of the said party beat a frying pan before him in derision, saying This is your saints bell'.<sup>100</sup> Stories which recalled the saints' insouciant and sacrilegious disruptions of holy offices were clearly intended to give the lie to their self-designation as respectable Christian subjects, and, when Walker's history was published, to show the public that Nonconformists, Calamy's book notwithstanding, were the real persecutors of true religion.

The unChristian quality of the Puritan persecutors was emphasised by the thirty-two correspondents who conveyed stories about the intruding ministers. Into the place of Thomas Haywood at Radeby in Huntingdonshire was put a man remembered by the ancient people of the parish as having 'always a huge pitcher of ale by in the chimney corner', and for leaving divine service to answer nature's call 'when the psalm was a singing'.<sup>101</sup> There was nothing memorable about Peter Saxton from Leeds, save for his 'Ignorance, scurrility, and stirring the people up to Rebellion'.<sup>102</sup> Anecdotes

<sup>97</sup> Warren Johnston, 'The Anglican apocalypse in Restoration England', this JOURNAL IV (2004), 467–501.

<sup>98</sup> N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s*, Oxford 2002, 109–19.

<sup>99</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 161.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. fo. 309.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. fo. 255.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. fos 181, 235.

about poorly-qualified and uncouth intruders could bolster the argument that episcopal ordination and oversight were necessary to maintain a truly godly ministry across the land.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, these stories reinforced the importance, for both the correspondents and the protagonists of their letters, of legitimacy for protecting and preserving the Church's ministry.<sup>104</sup> Since the Reformation the Church and its confession had been part of the legal fabric of the state; 'by law established' was a defining formula of Anglican Christianity. The Church's ministers were men who had been lawfully ordained, and legitimately come into their livings, understood to be forms of property.<sup>105</sup> The connection between legitimacy and genuinely Christian doctrine and worship, Walker's correspondents would almost certainly all have agreed, had been reinforced by the Act of Uniformity in 1662.<sup>106</sup> The men who had intruded into the clergy's livings during the civil wars and Interregnum were agents of illegitimate authorities, put into positions of spiritual care thanks only to the power of Parliament and its army.<sup>107</sup> Once installed, such men had been free, according to the letter-writers, to broadcast illegitimate and hence false versions of the Gospel to shepherdless flocks.

The spiritual illegitimacy of intruding ministers was exemplified through anecdotes which conveyed their ridiculous and dangerous doctrines. The people at Hitcham, Suffolk, reportedly remembered Myles Burkett offering up a prayer the Sunday following the execution of Charles I, in which he asked 'Almighty God if he had not smelt a sweet savour of blood'.<sup>108</sup> According to Richard Paulett, during a sermon in which the theatrical Mr Legate 'feared some would be disgusted' by one of his arguments, he declared that 'if this be not true I will cutt my Bible in pieces'; Legate proceeded to pull out a knife, and began to hack and slash 'as though he meant what he said'.<sup>109</sup> A former Parliamentary army chaplain, Thomas Larkham, was remembered 'by all' the people of Tavistock as 'a sower of discord and hatred', who claimed that, like Christ himself, he had come 'not to bring peace but the sword'.<sup>110</sup> Clearly some intruders were remembered, or at least were represented by correspondents, as having dipped more than just their toes into the waters of blasphemy.

<sup>103</sup> This argument also could be traced back to the origins of the troubles: David Cressy, *England on edge: crisis and revolution, 1640–1642*, Cambridge 2006, 217, 261.

<sup>104</sup> On contemporary notions of legitimacy see Michael J. Braddick, *State formation in early modern England, c. 1550–1700*, Cambridge 2000, 71.

<sup>105</sup> Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 236–45. The title of church livings, particularly vicarages and curates, however, tended to belong to lay or ecclesiastical patrons, such as local gentry, an archbishop, a corporation or university college.

<sup>106</sup> N. L. Jones, *Faith by statute: parliament and the settlement of religion, 1559*, London 1982; Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford 2003, 117–31, 357–63; Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', 97–104.

<sup>107</sup> I owe these points to J. R. Jones.

<sup>108</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 244.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. fo. 307.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. c. 2, fo. 294.

Letters that included examples of the rampant religious irregularity that the godly had permitted to flourish during the troubles further emphasised the spiritual chaos which had engulfed the nation when there were no bishops and no king. Although Edward Bynes, the Independent intruding minister set up in Upton Pyne, was remembered as personally upright, the letter-writer nevertheless claimed that 'the great neglect of the sacrament of the L[ord's] S[upper] in his time was very scandalous'.<sup>111</sup> Particularly lengthy and devastating in his critique of the state of religion during the Cromwellian Protectorate was Robert Browber. He denounced the 'mighty flood and terrible torrent' of heterodox theologies and schisms that had captured and ruined the souls of thousands, while at the same time loyal and orthodox ministers were forbidden to administer the sacraments, to preach or even work as chaplains or schoolmasters. Under Cromwell covert emissaries of the papacy, historically linked with AntiChrist, had attacked the previously established episcopal Protestant Church with impunity:

thousands of Romish emissaries, Jesuits, Franciscans, popish priests, friars of all sorts under visors of Independents, Anabaptists, Ranters, Quakers, free-willers, soldiers, artificers had free liberty and protection to preach, teach, declare and baptise ... and to meet together and to do what they list in publick and private meetings without the least check and control.<sup>112</sup>

Evidently it was Bowber's conviction, very probably widely shared among Walker's early correspondents, that the spiritual and political chaos unleashed by Parliament's revolt and the rule of the so-called saints had very nearly blotted out the Gospel in England. By the providence of God, however, legitimate government in Church and State had been restored in 1660.<sup>113</sup>

Generally, Walker's correspondents appear to have believed that God had allowed Anglican clergy to be persecuted not to purify or to chastise them but ultimately to vindicate the truth of their confession and discipline.<sup>114</sup> Of the letters which directly or obliquely evoke divine oversight (just over two score), the majority related accounts of God's general providence in upholding and provisioning sequestered clergy during their travails – for example, through the charity of neighbours – and then restoring them to their livings after the

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. fo. 316.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. fo. 231v.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fos 270, 276. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England*, Oxford 1999, and Keeble, *England in the 1660s*, 32.

<sup>114</sup> Glickman, 'Persecution', 260; Patrick Collinson, 'Truth, lies, and fiction in sixteenth-century Protestant historiography', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds), *The historical imagination in early modern Britain: history, rhetoric, and fiction, 1500–1800*, Cambridge 1997, 56–8.

king's return.<sup>115</sup> The 'one extraordinary Instance' of God's goodness shown to Dr John Neile during his time of suffering was a very timely receipt of cash conveyed by Dr Henry Hammond on behalf of 'several well disposed persons'. After 'King Charles the second came in' Dr Neile was restored to his preferments, ending his career as dean of Ripon.<sup>116</sup> By contrast, only a handful of correspondents conveyed accounts of a particular providence of divine retribution, a feature of Christian martyrological writing going back to Lactantius.<sup>117</sup> For Abraham Mills of Sandwich the most memorable aspect of Benjamin Harrison's ejection from his living was that on the afternoon of the very day when soldiers had pulled him from the pulpit an accident involving gunpowder at the barracks had killed 'the man that first laid his hands upon him'.<sup>118</sup> There is very little of the miraculous within the correspondence; one correspondent's father, who had narrowly escaped being shot in the head by a Parliamentary trooper while riding along the road, chose to commemorate what he perceived was a 'great Deliverance' with an annual feast for his neighbours and the poor.<sup>119</sup> But John Riland's personal preservation was ultimately recapitulated in the miraculous turn of events in 1660; this particular clergyman, standing for the Church as a whole, had suffered briefly at the hands of anti-Christian enemies of true religion, but both had been vindicated at the time of God's own choosing.<sup>120</sup> By relating the truth about the sufferings of the clergy, Walker's correspondents were commemorating truly heroic English saints and reiterating God's providence in recent history.

## V

The narratives of clerical suffering that made their way to John Walker in letters may be understood to resemble the fragments of testimony and tradition that the early Christian evangelists knit together to form the New Testament Gospels; from many short stories emerged larger histories that

<sup>115</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fos 66, 124, 235, 246, 263, 270, 276, 307, 387; c. 2, fos 40, 217, 221, 252, 259, 263, 270, 283, 299, 281, 316, 329, 333.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. c. 1, fo. 40v.

<sup>117</sup> I owe the reference to Lactantius to Daniel Woolf.

<sup>118</sup> MS Walker c. 1, fo. 387.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. fo. 124. Riland's thanksgiving feast has obvious parallels with the memorial aspects of holy communion. The importance of county feasts and feast sermons as rituals of social affirmation and politicisation in Restoration England is analysed in Newton Key, 'The political culture and political rhetoric of county feasts and feast sermons, 1654–1714', *Journal of British Studies* xxxiii (1994), 223–56.

<sup>120</sup> On the willingness within English Protestant culture to read historical events as revelations of the divine will see Ronald J. VanderMolen, 'Providence as revelation: Puritan and Anglican modifications of John Calvin's doctrine of providence', *Church History* xlvii (1978), 27–47. I owe this reference to Gary Rivett.

witnessed to the truths of the faith.<sup>121</sup> Taking the sample correspondence as a whole it is possible to see emerging a Eusebian metanarrative of oppression and divine deliverance. Like Israel in Egypt and in Babylon, and the early Church under Diocletian, during the 1640s and 1650s God's English people had been enslaved by worshippers of false gods, yet thankfully God had shown mercy to the nation.<sup>122</sup> At the happy Restoration of King Charles II the people and their true Church crossed back into the promised land of freedom. The 1662 Act of Uniformity had simply instantiated what God had shown to be his good will for English Christians. No doubt many of Walker's correspondents hoped that a similar salvific moment was at hand with the accession of a 'Church of England queen' in 1702, a Tory-dominated parliament and ministry, and a vibrant and vigorous convocation.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, at least one letter-writer, James Owen, reminded Walker that some clergymen had felt the slave-master's lash on account of their faith before 1640. In those days 'the violence of Bishop Laud and other bishops of that time was so great, that many ministers, who could not comply with all the impositions were forced to leave the land and become exiles'. Owen also declared that among the regular clergy during those years there had been 'many of them notoriously debauched (as they are now) and lamentably ignorant'.<sup>124</sup> His was the only epistle among Walker's early correspondence to suggest that there had been at least a measure of truth in the Long Parliament's initial criticisms of the Laudian movement, and that a similar reformation of the clergy was needed in the present.<sup>125</sup> The rest of Walker's correspondents were understandably unwilling to countenance, let alone relate, stories of ceremonial excesses or delinquent ministers, since such tales could be used not only to justify historically Parliament's campaigns against malignant clergy, but might also give fodder to contemporary critics of sacerdotal authority, besmirched with the label of 'priestcraft'.<sup>126</sup>

The stories conveyed within letters are therefore significant not only for their authors' attempts to witness to Anglican martyrs but also for their ignoring or forgetting complicating or unsettling aspects about the 1640s and

<sup>121</sup> For the process whereby oral traditions about Jesus became the written Gospels see E. P. Sanders, *Studying the synoptic Gospels*, Philadelphia 1989, and J. C. O'Neill, 'Lost written records of Jesus' words and deeds behind our records', *JTS* xlii (1991), 483–504.

<sup>122</sup> This imagery had Interregnum precedents in the poetry of Christopher Harvey: Maltby, 'Formation of "Anglicanism"', 169–70. I thank the anonymous reader for the reminder about Eusebius.

<sup>123</sup> G. V. Bennett, *The Tory crisis in Church and State, 1688–1730: the career of Francis Atterbury, bishop of Rochester*, Oxford 1975, 63–70.

<sup>124</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 9.

<sup>125</sup> John Morrill, 'The attack on the Church of England in the Long Parliament, 1640–1642', in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (eds), *History, society and the Churches: essays in honour of Owen Chadwick*, Cambridge 1985, 105–24.

<sup>126</sup> Justin Champion, *Republican learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696–1722*, Manchester 2003, 12–14.

1650s, such as the moral failings of some pre civil-war clergymen, the episodic nature of sequestrations, the relative religious peace achieved under the Protectorate, the hostility between Presbyterians, Independents and separatist sects and, in some quarters, the persistence of episcopal ordinations.<sup>127</sup> As in all representations of the past, what is left out and forgotten can be as important as what is included and remembered. None the less, it is unlikely that Walker's correspondents would have believed that charges of omission, elision or over-simplification brought against their stories, even if proved correct, would diminish the truth of their narratives. The correspondents' collective ambition was to bear witness to the true Christian sufferers of the previous century, not to tell the whole truth about the Church's experience in the late wars. Thus it was from a deep concern to uphold the Church's witness to the nation in the present that letter-writers were constrained to limit the scope of their narratives only to those men (and their families) whom they believed to be genuine Anglican sufferers.<sup>128</sup> If such an approach seems unsatisfactory to modern historians, it is perhaps appropriate for them to remember that there can be no history or commemoration without at least some measure of oblivion.<sup>129</sup>

For Robert Browber, as for most of Walker's early correspondents, the civil wars and Interregnum years had witnessed an attack, led by the spiritual and biological ancestors of contemporary Dissenters, on Christian faith reposed in the clergy of the established Church.<sup>130</sup> The patient suffering endured by faithful clergy was, according to John Northleigh, 'a passiveness rather to be gloried in with the cross than ridiculed and reproached by some of those very Persecutors of late yet living and their numerous and flourishing offspring'.<sup>131</sup> The true martyrs of the seventeenth century had been men, and their families, who were often forced violently from their livings by religious hypocrites for fidelity to the legally established Christian Church. Because Dissenters were believed not to have altered their fundamental principles since the civil wars, had not submitted to the legitimate authority of the Church's spiritual governors – the bishops – and continued to ignore the Act of Uniformity, they still represented a danger to Christian faith. One further proof of this threat was supplied in the present by occasional conformity, which allowed Dissenters to exercise public offices from which one day

<sup>127</sup> Claire Cross, 'The Church in England, 1646–1660', in G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: the quest for settlement, 1646–1660*, London 1972, 104ff; Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 101–15.

<sup>128</sup> A similar process has been detected among eleventh-century chroniclers by Patrick Geary in *Phantoms of remembrance: memory and oblivion at the end of the first millennium*, Princeton 1994.

<sup>129</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life', in *Untimely meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge 1983, 62.

<sup>130</sup> For the sense among Anglicans and Tories that Dissenters, and to a lesser extent Whigs, were latter-day Roundheads see Hoppit, *Land of liberty*, 2, and Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 66–8.

<sup>131</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 356.

they might again mount an attack upon the Church as had the Long Parliament.<sup>132</sup> Of even greater concern to a few of Walker's correspondents was the fact that many within the Church refused to acknowledge the threat posed by Dissenters to the faith; Northleigh, for example, railed against 'our low Churchmen and moderate statesmen' who soothed the sensibilities of contemporary Dissenters by calling the late rebellion 'A civill war'.<sup>133</sup> The present times demanded that the legitimate clergy stand as firm to the true faith against its enemies as had their faithful suffering brethren during the Dissenters' 'day of their wrath and of their power of Darkness'.<sup>134</sup> Thus, the martyrologies conveyed within Walker's correspondence were not only intended to refute Calamy's vindication of Restoration Nonconformists by proving that the true martyrs of the previous century were Christians loyal to the established Church, but also to rouse lukewarm Anglicans at the beginning of Anne's reign to greater faithfulness towards, and stronger support for, the true faith for which so many had been recently persecuted and even died, including the queen's paternal grandfather.<sup>135</sup>

It is highly probable that the figure of King Charles the Martyr loomed large in the minds of Walker's correspondents.<sup>136</sup> The recent attacks in print upon Charles's character and judgement, and denials of his martyrdom, would not have been perceived by the letter-writers as simply political vindications of the Long or Rump Parliaments, or of Nonconformists, or the Revolution Settlement, or even of the current war against France, but fundamentally as attacks on the established Church as a true Church.<sup>137</sup> While earlier conforming clergymen had not all whole-heartedly embraced a vindication of the Church based on the royal supremacy, the attitude of Walker's correspondents to the sufferings of the clergy would suggest an enthusiastic support for the authenticity of Charles's martyrdom.<sup>138</sup> For, if King Charles had not died as a martyr then the Church for which he shed his blood was not truly Christian.<sup>139</sup> If the confession of the Church, which included its form of government, was untrue then its rights to command the

<sup>132</sup> Knights, 'Occasional conformity,' 42–57.

<sup>133</sup> The reference to 'a civill war' suggests that Northleigh had White Kennett particularly in mind.

<sup>134</sup> MS J Walker c. 1, fo. 356.

<sup>135</sup> I thank J. R. Jones for reminding me of this point.

<sup>136</sup> Andrew Lacey, *The cult of King Charles the martyr*, Woodbridge 2003.

<sup>137</sup> One strident attack on the royal martyr tradition was found in John Toland's *King Charles I. no such saint, martyr, or good Protestant as commonly reputed*, London 1698 (Wing J. 7). On the broader aims of Toland's political theology see Justin Champion, "'Religion's safe, with priestcraft is the war'": Augustan anticlericalism and the legacy of the English revolution, 1660–1720', *European Legacy* v (2000), 547–61.

<sup>138</sup> Maltby, 'Formation of "Anglicanism"', 173.

<sup>139</sup> The truth of its confession was at the core of the Church's defence of religious uniformity before 1689, and of restricting the public profile of Dissenters after the Toleration Act: Mark Goldie, 'The theory of religious intolerance in Restoration England', in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious*



attention of the nation in spiritual matters, its position as the primary inculcator of public morality, and dispenser of the sacraments necessary for salvation were in jeopardy, or at least might appear to be.<sup>140</sup>

Letters which testified that the suffering clergy were genuine martyrs for the truth faith were thus religious vindications of the central place of the established episcopal Church in English public life; it, and not Dissenting congregations, was an authentic repository of catholic and reformed Christianity. Like Restoration-era controversialists debating the implications of the royal supremacy, Walker's correspondents narrated their stories of Anglican suffering within a Reformation paradigm: a martyr was a Christian who was persecuted for the sake of the true faith.<sup>141</sup> Debates about the identity of the true martyrs from the recent past were, like concerns about priestly power, fundamentally about which faith community ought to define the nation's spiritual and moral centre.<sup>142</sup> For Walker's correspondents the Church's position and power within the polity were not, as its harshest critics argued, based upon deceit or priestcraft, but rather upon the truth of its proclamation, to which the loyal clergy, and Charles I, had witnessed not that long ago with their blood. The particular politics of martyrdom to be derived from Walker's correspondence was thus grounded in religious perceptions of the meaning of the mid-century troubles, and the persecution of the true Church during those difficult but ultimately heroic years. Letter-writers believed that the nation ought to remember the true travails of the seventeenth-century's real martyrs – the loyal Anglican clergy – and the religious convictions to which their sufferings had witnessed, and in light of that memory continue to affirm and support the dominant position and central role of the legally-established Church and its spiritual governors.<sup>143</sup> It was thus not only to refute Calamy's Nonconformist martyrology, but also to rationalise and reassert the Augustan Anglican Church's national monopoly of spiritual and cultural oversight, that Walker's early correspondents rescued the sufferings of the clergy from Oblivion's dustbin.<sup>144</sup>

*Revolution and religion in England*, Oxford 1991, 350–59; Spaeth, *Church in danger*, 16–19; Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 171–93.

<sup>140</sup> Andrew Starkie likewise argues that divisions in the Church in the early eighteenth century concerned perceptions of its fundamental nature, that is, whether it was a repository of apostolic truth or a providentially and progressively changing institution: 'Contested histories of the English Church: Gilbert Burnet and Jeremy Collier', *Huntington Library Quarterly* lxxiii (2005), 335–43.

<sup>141</sup> Rose, 'Royal ecclesiastical supremacy'; Freeman, 'Concepts of martyrdom'.

<sup>142</sup> Champion, 'Religion's safe', 553.

<sup>143</sup> On the increasing recourse to the public as the umpire of questions of national import see Mark Knights, *Representation and misrepresentation in late Stuart Britain: partisanship and political culture*, Oxford 2004, 94–99.

<sup>144</sup> On the Church's position after 1689 as a kind of monopoly within the English 'confessional state' see J. C. D. Clark, *English society, 1660–1832*, 2nd edn, Cambridge 2000, 31, 40.