Title: Obedience, Resistance, and Legible Martyrdoms: Narratives of Persecution in Reformation England
Author: Annie Morphew
Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Deane
School: University of Minnesota Morris

In July 1540, six Englishmen were executed at Smithfield. Robert Barnes (a disciple of Martin Luther), William Jerome and Thomas Garret were burnt for heresy as Thomas Abel, Richard Fetherstone (the personal chaplain of the former Queen Catherine and tutor to the future Mary I), and Edward Powell were simultaneously hung, drawn, and quartered for treason. These two groups of men cherished very different religious opinions: Barnes, Jerome, and Garret were all committed evangelicals whereas Abel, Fetherstone, and Powell were Roman Catholic priests. However, in July 1540 they shared one vital similarity—they had all failed to conform to the religious and political terms of Henry VIII's England, suffered religious persecution as a result, and paid with their lives. The evangelicals "suffered because their vision of a godly Reformation extended farther and faster than that of the king," while the Catholics died traitors' deaths "for upholding the primacy of the pope and the validity of [Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon]."[1] According to historian Helen Parish, the fates of these men indicate the "necessity of conformity to the mind of the king" in Reformation England.[2]

Parish's argument is emblematic of a dominant strain in the historiography of the English Reformation. In 1534, the Act of Supremacy established Henry VIII as Supreme Head on Earth of the Church in England, definitively separating the English church from the institutional and spiritual fold of the Roman Catholic Church and launching the religious, social, and political transformations known collectively as the English Reformation. Given the state-sponsored nature of official English reform, many historians have characterized the English Reformation as religious reform imposed on the populace from above. However, while the importance of the political state to the English Reformation cannot and should not be ignored, approaching the English Reformation as English kings and queens moving about their subjects like pawns on a spiritual chessboard is reductive. If the English had been as biddable as this model implies, significant numbers would not have accepted death rather than compromise their religious beliefs during the period. Stories of religious persecution, therefore, provide a new perspective of the religious and political tensions of the English Reformation. Despite the assumption that Catholics and Protestants would have different responses to the changes and dangers of this period, writers from both religious groups shared a common strategy of reframing traditional definitions of obedience in order to insist upon the unjustness of their persecution.

Even though Tudor and Stuart monarchs did play a crucial role in determining and enforcing religious and political policies that the role of the monarch as Supreme Head on Earth of the Church in England necessarily intertwined, both Catholic and Protestant polemicists and victims of persecution also played decisive roles as arbiters of their own places within the complex matrix of English religious and political affiliation. Defining their relationship to legitimate sources of authority was a key strategy of both Catholics and Protestants. Of course, the English reformers and their Catholic contemporaries do not have a monopoly on the experience of negotiating with political authority. For example, Protestants in Germany, Switzerland, and France also engaged in claiming and defining more or less advantageous relationships to political powers and, in some cases, even developing their own structures of political authority. What makes the English Reformation unique is the interplay of volatile

dynastic policy driven by particularly forceful personalities and coalescing confessional groups. The strains imposed by this context on both Catholics and Protestants are particularly evident in persecution narratives. Narratives of persecution, and critiques of them, reveal the high stakes and unique contours of the English Reformation landscape. Central to these narratives are a quest for legitimacy and legibility as true martyrs and victims of religious persecution. The success or failure of a narrative depends on the text's depiction of the persecuted as obedient subjects of legitimate political authority and orderly participants in English society; at the same time, however, authors redefine the locus of legitimate authority and provide subtle commentary on Reformation policy.

The most conspicuous narratives of persecution from the English Reformation are Catholic and Protestant tales of martyrdom. According to literary scholar Alice Dailey, "martyrdom is not a death but a story that gets told about a death" and "martyrdom is created through the interplay between blood and narrative."[3] In other words, there are two key ingredients in the construction of a martyr's death: the death event itself and a narrative that replays and interprets the event. In the Christian context, martyrs die, usually horribly, for the true Christian faith following a Christological model of sacrifice and suffering. In the early modern period, the pattern of martyrdom was inflexible. In order to be understood as a martyr by their contemporaries, "the victims must be persecuted for their faith; they must openly confess that faith and readily defend it against the adversary, who represents heretical belief; they must die in defense of the faith and cannot appear to will their own deaths; in their manner of death, they must exhibit constancy and piety."[4] An early modern martyr, regardless of confessional affiliation, had to follow this paradigm in order to be unambiguously understood as a true martyr dying for right doctrine. Catholic and Protestant polemicists in Reformation England jostled over the bones of martyrs to their causes in attempts to both legitimately memorialize their martyrs and reveal their opponents' fallen as pseudo-martyrs. In this competitive context, the ability to compose a recognizable martyr narrative was imperative and examination of the narratives produced demonstrates the tensions in English society capable of disrupting the narrative and robbing a victim of martyr status.

In England, where the Royal Supremacy threatened to conflate religious and spiritual crime, potential martyrs were often in danger of being read by their contemporaries as traitors and enemies of the state. Two facets proved central to composing a legitimate, recognizable story of martyrdom free of the taint of treason. First, the martyr had to clearly be a victim of explicitly religious, rather than political, persecution. Secondly, the would-be martyr had to demonstrate obedience to a legitimate source of authority in order to belie claims of danger to English society. In this quest, Protestant and Catholic martyrologists faced radically different challenges. Protestant victims of English Reformation policy tended to be tried as heretics and, as a result, Protestant martyrologists were more easily able to fit martyr narratives into recognizable models. Catholics, on the other hand, walked a much finer line, trapped between royal and papal policies that forced them to attempt to maintain mutually exclusive allegiances to both monarch and Pope. Catholic martyrologists had to strike the perfect balance between steadfast adherence to Catholic doctrine and personal allegiance to English authority. For many Catholic narratives, however, this balancing act proved untenable.

Protestant martyrologists, on the other hand, had the benefit of early inscription into a model of temporal obedience. Early evangelical thought in England was influenced by the work of William Tyndale, most famous for translating the Bible into English. Faced with accusations that Protestants wished to overthrow the English monarchy, Tyndale responded with *The*

Obedience of a Christian Man (1528). Tyndale drew on the writings of Paul to demonstrate that reading the Bible encouraged Christians to respect authority. Paul had said, "There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." Tyndale extrapolated that "God therefore hath given laws unto all nations and in all lands hath put kings, governors, and rulers in his own stead, to rule the world through them."[5] In other words, temporal authorities were put in place by God and thus drew their power from the divine. Just as Christians obey God's law, therefore, they should also obey the King's law. Tyndale further argues that Christians who read the gospels know that no "inferior person" may "avenge himself upon the superior or violently resist him for whatsoever wrong it be. If he do he is condemned in the deed doing: inasmuch as he taketh upon him that which belongeth to God only which saith vengeance is mine."[6] By setting up a model of Christian submissiveness to the social order, Tyndale encodes gospel-based Christianity with an innate, if passive aggressive, respect for social hierarchies.

While gospel-reading, Protestant Christians respect the King's laws and the social hierarchy, Tyndale argues that Catholicism does not inculcate the same values. According to Tyndale, the Catholic clergy have "withdrawn themselves from all obedience to princes… and have conspired against all commonwealths and have made them a several [separate] kingdom, wherein it is lawful unpunished to work all abomination."[7] Tyndale further criticizes the political careers of high-ranking clergy, declaring that "the most part and chief rulers of the councils are of them: But of their council is no man."[8] In effect, Tyndale claims that Catholic clergy are untrustworthy because they only have loyalty to the church hierarchy, "a several kingdom" made by themselves, even as they serve in the councils of temporal rulers like double agents. According to Tyndale, Protestants have been taught obedience and submission to earthly as well as divine power by reading the gospels while Catholics are separate entities who really feel no allegiance to the English monarchy. Among the fans of *The Obedience of a Christian Man* was Henry VIII himself, who infamously declared "This is a book for me and all kings to read."[9]

While Tyndale himself ultimately defied Henry VIII's will with *The Practice of the Prelates* (1530), in which he declared Henry's planned divorce from Catherine of Aragon unscriptural, Tyndale's definition of separate but reinforcing spheres of divine and temporal authority and his example of placing scripture above the royal will in practice provided later Protestants with a flexible model of obedience to employ in martyrology. John Foxe's extensive Protestant martyrology the *Actes and Monuments* (better known as *The Book of Martyrs*) utilized the multivalent possibilities of Tyndale's work in order to construct the deaths of the victims of Mary I's persecutions as powerful, legible martyrdoms. Good examples of Foxe's typical strategies include his account of the October 1555 burnings of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley and the November 1558 interrogation of Alice Driver.

Hugh Latimer, the former Bishop of Worcester, and Nicholas Ridley, the former Bishop of London, had been pillars of the radical Protestant reforms during Edward VI's reign (1547-1553). Unsurprisingly, they were charged with and convicted of heresy following the Marian return to Rome. In Foxe's narrative, Latimer and Ridley's behavior strictly adheres to the model of early modern martyrdom. They are both convicted in an explicitly religious heresy trial; Ridley refuses the Catholic Doctor Marshall's request that he recant, declaring instead that "so long as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth;"[10] and both endure death stoically. Furthermore, the narrative subtly but firmly establishes them as obedient English subjects despite the fact that their persecutor is Queen Mary. For instance, before the fire is lit, Ridley prays "I beseech thee, Lord God, take mercy upon this realm of

England, and deliver the same from all her enemies."[11] Foxe also claims that the spectators at the burning remembered with pain Latimer and Ridley's "preferments in time past, the places of honors that they sometime occupied in this commonwealth, [and] the favor they were in with their princes."[12] In other words, Foxe bypasses the uncomfortable fact that the contemporary, legally crowned Queen of England supported the heresy trials that condemned Ridley and Latimer by shifting Ridley's allegiance to "the realm of England" rather than the queen and by shifting the attention of his readers to the good service both men gave their monarchs in the past.

Foxe's account of Alice Driver's interrogation plays with the concepts of Christian obedience and legitimate authority even more explicitly. Driver, a farmer's wife from Suffolk and the literate daughter of farmers, upheld her Protestant denial of transubstantiation and, as a result, was burned alive on November 4, 1558 in Ipswich. Like Latimer and Ridley, Driver neatly fits the early modern model of martyrdom; she is accused of religious heresy, vociferously defends her beliefs against learned doctors of the Catholic Church, and ends "[her] life with earnest zeal, nothing fearing to speak [her] conscience, when [she was] commanded to the contrary."[13] However, unlike the account of Latimer and Ridley, Driver resituates the locus of legitimate authority, delegitimizing the political authority of Mary I and religious authority of the examiners and instead declaring her obedience to scriptural authority in the lack of any legitimate political authority. For example, during her examination Driver's ears were cut off for "likening Queen Mary in her persecution to Jezebel."[14] By comparing Mary to the idolatrous queen of biblical fame who killed Hebrew prophets, she removes Mary from a legitimate political and divine relationship with the Christian God whilst associating the Marian Protestants with the unjustly persecuted and chosen of God. Driver also demonstrates contempt for Catholic claims to authority. When a priest demands that she answer the interrogator's question, Driver looks "upon him austerely" and says, "Why, priest, I come not to talk with thee, but I come to talk with thy master."[15] Reportedly, under Driver's austere gaze, "the priest put up his nose in his cap and spake never a word more."[16] Within the narrative, Driver's refusal to answer the priest's questions robs him of authority and voice since he remains silent for the rest of the account. When Driver does answer questions, she continually references scripture and even berates her interrogator for not having a copy of the Bible on hand, saying "you sit here to judge according to the law, and how can you give true judgment, and have not the book of law with you?"[17] In other words, the only law Driver will recognize is scriptural authority. The narrative of Driver's martyrdom draws on the political categories enumerated by Tyndale in his work (temporal, divine, and scriptural) in order to craft a more radical definition of Protestant obedience. In the absence of a legitimate temporal authority sanctioned by the Christian divine, Protestants may profess their obedience to scripture in order to reinscribe resistance to unjust authority as obedience to truly lawful authority.

Of course, as political scientist Valerie Rosoux argues, "the time factor is…often a determining element that explains the conversion of a victim—or even a traitor—to a martyr."[18] Foxe and the Protestant Marian martyrs had excellent timing. Mary I was the only English monarch in the Reformation period to discard the title of Supreme Head on Earth of the Church in England, instead returning to the Roman Catholic Church and reviving three former acts against heresy from 1382, 1401, and 1414 to combat Protestantism. These political arrangements meant that the Marian Protestants were able to more easily avoid the treason charges that muddied Catholic claims to martyrdom under Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and James I. While it was not impossible to attain a legible martyr's crown despite suffering a traitor's death as Thomas

More did, More's example of unflinching obedience to both Catholic doctrine and Henry VIII personally proved unrepeatable for later Catholic victims of persecution.

On July 6, 1535, Sir Thomas More, the former Lord Chancellor and a famous diplomat, philosopher, and counselor to Henry VIII, was executed for treason for refusing to swear an oath recognizing the Act of Succession (1534), which declared Catherine of Aragon's daughter Mary illegitimate and Anne Boleyn's as yet unborn child Henry VIII's only legitimate heir, as well as Henry's position as Supreme Head on Earth of the Church in England. Although More technically died a traitor's death, a cult celebrating More as a martyr and saint began developing "almost immediately after his execution."[19] Candace Lines argues that key to the interpretation of More's death as a martyrdom is the possible interpretive connection between More's 1535 execution and Thomas Becket's 1170 murder. Lines points out that the date of More's execution is the eve of the Feast of the Translation of Saint Thomas of Canterbury.[20] More himself acknowledged the significance of the date, claiming that "it were a day very meet, and convenient for me."[21] Furthermore, his son-in-law and biographer William Roper claimed that July 6 was the date More "himself most desired" to go "out of this world, to God."[22] According to Lines, this "coincidence of dates and names (Thomas, Henry) encouraged sympathizers to see More's death as a repetition of Becket's, as did similarities in circumstance" and "similarities of cause."[23] Lines further argues that "the martyrdoms of Becket and More in particular," are "contested territory, in which the religious and political often coincide."[24] According to Lines, the coincidence of religious and political factors in the martyrdoms of Becket and More created a peculiar tradition of martyrdom in England that legitimized Catholic resistance to the state via martyrdom.

While both religious and political forces are undoubtedly potent factors in the creation and interpretation of martyrdom, Lines' construction of a Becket-More tradition of English martyrdom glosses over the difficulty later English Catholics had in translating executions for treason into legible martyrdoms. While interesting parallels of dates, names, and circumstance do exist between Becket's and More's martyrdoms, the successful and nearly immediate translation of More's treason execution into a legible martyrdom has more to do with the successful positioning of More as a devoted and obedient English subject than with similarities to Becket's example of righteous defiance. Despite their resemblance to Becket's resistance to the English crown, the interpretation of later Catholic deaths in Elizabethan and Stuart England were not generally understood as martyrdoms. One reason is their inability to mimic More's complex script of simultaneous conscientious dissent and obedience to the legitimate authority of the state and to the monarch personally.

Throughout More's interrogations, he insisted that he could not swear the oath legitimizing the Act of Succession and the King's supremacy because doing so would go against his conscience. In insisting the primacy of his conscience, More walked a fine line negotiating the dictates of "the council of one realm" and the "general council of Christendom."[25] His response to the competing demands of allegiance to King and Pope was a rhetoric of personal conscience. For instance, when asked to swear to the Act of Succession by the Lord Chancellor Thomas Cromwell, More "said that as for that point, I would be content [to swear], so that I might see my oath in that point so framed in such a manner as might stand with my conscience."[26] In other words, during his interrogations More did not display total opposition to the requests of the King's officials. On the contrary, he expressed willingness, albeit conditional willingness, to agree to at least a part of the King's policy; he even entertained acknowledging Henry's control of the English church, if he could do so in accordance with his own conscience.

More's hypothetical concession did not appease his interrogators. During his second interrogation, Cromwell insisted that Henry VIII required More to plainly declare his opinion on the Act of Succession and Oath of Supremacy. More countered Cromwell's demands by insisting "that in good faith I had well trusted the King's Highness would never have commanded any such question to be demanded of me, considering that I ever from the beginning well and truly from time to time declared my mind unto his Highness…both by mouth and by writing."[27] In other words, More discredited Cromwell's power to demand a straight answer from him because More had already told Henry VIII personally his exact opinions. This tactic also highlighted More's personal relationship with the King.

Professions of obedience to Henry VIII recur throughout More's prison writings. For example, in a May 1535 letter to his daughter Margaret written in the Tower of London, More disavowed any intention to "dispute the King's titles nor Pope's" and declared himself "the King's true and faithful subject."[28] Representations of More's submission and obedience are central to his conceptual legibility as a martyr rather than as a traitor. More's personal protestations of obedience and dedication to Henry VIII were echoed by his son-in-law William Roper in his biography *The Life of Sir Thomas More*. At the beginning of the biography, Roper claims that "all his travails and pains, without thought of earthly commodity either to himself or any of his, were only for the service of God, his King, and the commonwealth wholly bestowed and employed."[29] Thus, from the outset, Roper's hagiographical biography establishes More as a selflessly obedient subject of both God and Henry VIII.

The portrayal continues throughout the narrative. For example, Roper claims that during one of Margaret More Roper's visits to her father in prison, after "he had questioned a while with his daughter about his wife and children…he asked her how Queen Anne did. 'Never better,' quoth she. 'Never better, Meg,' quoth he, 'alas, alas, it pitieth me to remember into what misery (poor soul) she will shortly come."[30] According to Roper's report, More's concern for the health and well-being of the royal family is nearly on par with his concern for his own. Furthermore, More's prescient concern for the health of Anne Boleyn, who would be executed nearly a year later in May 1536, establishes both his otherworldly saintliness and improbable loyalty to the monarchy considering the fact that without Anne Boleyn, More would not be facing imprisonment and execution.

Roper further emphasizes More's personal obedience to Henry VIII by reporting another conversation between More and Sir Thomas Pope on the eve of More's execution. According to Roper, More claimed he was "bound unto His Grace, that I shall be so shortly rid …of the miseries of his wretched life, and therefore will I not fail to pray earnestly for His Grace, both here and in the other world also."[31] In other words, in Roper's account, More basically thanks Henry VIII for executing him and speeding him on his way to heaven and a martyr's crown. Furthermore, when Pope informs More that Henry VIII does not want More to speak at the scaffold, More thanks Pope for giving him "warning of the King's pleasure, for otherwise I might have offended his Majesty against my will," and claims that "I had indeed purposed at that time to have spoken somewhat, but of no matter of offense to His Grace; nevertheless whatsoever I intended, I am ready to conform myself obediently to his commandment."[32] In other words, although Pope's request on behalf of the King implies fear of More's last words, More is portrayed as never having any intention of speaking against the King and even being willing to forego the non-offensive speech he had planned in order to demonstrate his forbearance.

Roper further emphasizes More's reputation as a loyal and obedient subject by recounting the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's reaction to More's execution. According to Roper, Charles V tells the English ambassador that "we understand that the King your master hath put his faithful servant, and grave counselor to death."[33] Charles V further claims that "if I had been master of such a servant…I would rather have lost the best city of my dominions, than such a worthy counselor."[34] Charles V's alleged appreciation of More's loyalty and ability further ensconces More as a model servant and Henry VIII's execution of such a servant as incomprehensible.

While over a hundred Catholic victims of Reformation policy would be recognized as martyrs by the Catholic Church, none achieved the widespread recognition as a martyr that More received. Unfortunately for later Catholic victims of English Reformation policy, their deaths were easily depicted as treason executions rather than religious martyrdoms. Just as Marian Protestants had benefited from good historical timing, Elizabethan Catholics suffered from it. Following the Elizabethan Settlement in 1558, an uneasy compromise was struck between Protestants and Catholics. Failure to attend Church of England communion services at least three times a year was criminalized as recusancy. In the 1560s "outright recusancy…was at first rare."[35] However, in 1570, after a 1569 rebellion of Catholic nobles in northern England was crushed, Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth I. The papal bull of excommunication deprived Elizabeth of "her pretended Title to the Kingdom [of England], and to all Dominion, Dignity, and Privilege whatsoever."[36] Furthermore, all the "Nobility, Subjects, and People of the said Kingdom [of England], and all others, which have in any sort sworn unto her, [are] to be for ever absolved from any such Oath, and all manner of Duty, of Dominion, Allegiance, and Obedience…those which shall do the contrary, We do innodate with the like Sentence of Anathema."[37] The sentence of excommunication meant that Elizabeth's Catholic subjects were now under a spiritual mandate to forswear their allegiance and obedience to her or otherwise theoretically face expulsion from the Catholic Church as well. The bull resulted in serious reprisals for recusancy and the understanding of Catholic priests as traitors in English law. After Elizabeth's excommunication, a crackdown on Catholics could successfully be cast as political not religious persecution by the state since upholding the Pope's authority meant political disloyalty to England and the monarch.

Political loyalty and obedience were not the only points of contention in these narratives of persecution. Both Catholic and Protestant writers betray vested interests in consolidating their confessions' claims to social and moral order while discrediting confessional enemies as morally degenerate and socially dangerous. In this context, gender, particularly manifestations of deviant female sexuality or female disobedience, became a popular tool for tearing open opponents' narratives and suggesting the inherent disorderliness and social deviance of their confession. Both narratives of persecution and critiques of them reveal the fault lines that the very possibility of disorderly conduct opened in narratives of persecution.

For example, in *The Book of Martyrs* John Foxe relates the tale of Catherine Parr, the sixth queen of Henry VIII, and her escape from persecution as a heretic during the last years of Henry VIII's reign. Catherine Parr was a zealous convert to the reformed faith possessing intelligence, beauty, the influential —albeit dangerous— position of Queen of England, and the risky habit of debating religion with her husband. According to Foxe, "so enjoyed she the king's favor" that there was "a great likelihood of the setting at large of the Gospel within this realm at that time."[38] However, Parr's efforts at proselytization were sabotaged by the "malicious practice of certain enemies professed against the truth, which at that time also were very great… bitter[ly]

alienating the king's mind from religion, and almost to the extreme ruin of the queen and certain others with her, if God had not miraculously succored her in that distress."[39] In Foxe's narrative, the ringleaders of the enemies of the godly queen were the Catholic Bishop of Winchester Stephen Gardiner and the Lord Chancellor Thomas Wriothesley. When the King, who "misliked to be contended withal in any kind of argument,"[40] complained that Parr too often lectured him about religion, Gardiner seized the opportunity to imply that Parr was a heretic and, with the King's consent, initiated an investigation into the opinions of the Queen and her ladies. After questioning and racking several heretics suspected of intimacy with the Queen or her circle, Gardiner and Wriothesley's men searched the apartments of the Queen's three favorite ladies for banned heretical books. According to Foxe, "so closely the matter was conveyed" that Parr, although "compassed about with enemies and persecutors, perceived nothing of…what was working against her and what traps were laid for her."[41] After amassing enough evidence to indict Parr, her sister, and her two other favorite ladies for heresy, the indictment against Parr, already signed by the King, slipped out of the pocket of one of the privy counselors. It was picked up by one of Parr's supporters who immediately showed the Queen. According to Foxe, the discovery of the charges against Parr was the result of God's direct intervention on behalf of "his poor handmaiden in rescuing her from the pit of ruin whereunto she was ready to fall unawares."[42] Thanks to God's personal providential interference, in Foxe's narrative Parr is forewarned and able to save herself by reconciling with her husband.

After the discovery of the indictment, Parr requested an audience with Henry in which she abjured any interest in lecturing the King on matters of religion. In the dialogue provided by Foxe, Parr repeatedly insists on her womanly weakness and obedience to king and husband. She obsequiously insists that Henry has completely mistaken her intentions, insisting that she believes "it very unseemly and preposterous for the woman to take upon her the office of an instructor or teacher to her lord and husband, but rather to learn and to be taught by him" and that she relies on "your majesty's wisdom, as my only anchor, supreme head, and governor here in earth, next under God."[43] Furthermore, she claims that she only instigated any sort of religious debate in order that "your majesty might with less grief pass over this painful time of your infirmity, being [at]tentive to our talk" and "also that I, hearing your majesty's learned discourse, might receive to myself some profit thereof."[44] In other words, Parr defends herself by highlighting her dependence on her husband for guidance and support in matters of religion as both her "lord and husband" and "supreme head" of the church. She also attempts to recast her engagement in religious debate within a more acceptable domestic context; she only does so to distract Henry from the pain caused by the large ulcers that were consuming his legs and sapping his strength and in order to learn right doctrine from her husband. Henry accepts Parr's story, asking "And is it even so, sweetheart, and tended your arguments to no worse end? Then perfect friends we are now again."[45] Thus, in Foxe's narrative, the Protestant Parr is delivered from her persecution by her show of spousal and religious obedience to her husband and king and the royal couple returns to an orderly domesticity.

Faced with the historical fact that Henry VIII authorized a heresy investigation against his own wife, Foxe carefully constructs the narrative of Parr's persecution and deliverance in order to emphasize both the obedience of the Protestant Parr and by extension her co-religionists to the King and the King's enduring affection for Parr. For example, Foxe insists that from the initial conversation between Gardiner and the King about the Queen's alleged heresy, Henry only "pretended to be fully resolved not to spare" the Queen's life.[46] Foxe even claims that Henry's real intention with the heresy proceedings was to assess the lengths of Gardiner's

treachery and that "to prove the bishop's malice, how far it would presume, like a wise politic prince, was contented, dissemblingly, to give his consent and to allow of every circumstance, knowing notwithstanding in the end what he would do."[47] In other words, Henry never has any intention of executing his Protestant queen and is only playing Gardiner. These rhetorical moves successfully keep the Protestant narrative within a legitimate tradition of religious rather than political persecution—Parr is persecuted by the machinations of evil counselors for her religious beliefs but remains loyal to her husband and sovereign, keeping her free of the taint of treason. However, these same moves create tension within the narrative. For instance, Foxe's insistence that Henry never lost affection for his wife or really intended to execute her interferes with the implicit claim of a persecution narrative that the persecuted is in grave danger.

This tension within the text provides the fissure that allowed Robert Parsons, an English Jesuit, to discredit Foxe's narrative and paint the Protestant women Foxe admires as inherently dangerous to English law and order. Written nearly forty years later, Parsons' *A Treatise Concerning the Three Conversions of England* (1603) included a dedication to the newly crowned James I alongside an indictment of the historical accuracy of the *Book of Martyrs*. In the preface to the 1603 edition, Parsons "expressed a wish that the new king would become a 'second Constantine…for that good Constantine was of a different religion when he entered, yet of singular hope to become such as afterward he did.'"[48] Parsons' interesting comparison of the Protestant James I to the pagan Constantine expresses Parsons' far-fetched hope that, just as Constantine converted to Christianity, James would be willing to convert to Catholicism and return England and Scotland to the Church of Rome. Given this hope, Parsons is particularly concerned with painting Catholics as orderly, English subjects and compromising the image of the obedient and loyal Protestant composed by Protestant polemicists and martyrologists.

Amongst the many persecuted and martyred Protestants immortalized in the *Book of Martyrs* attacked by Parsons in his *Treatise* is Catherine Parr. Undercutting Foxe's claim that Henry VIII had no concrete intention to kill his loyal queen, Parsons forthrightly claims that the King did indeed mean to kill her in the summer of 1546. He just died before the case against her could be prosecuted. Parsons begins dismantling Foxe's claims to Protestant obedience and orderly domesticity exemplified by the reconciliation of the King and Queen by addressing a gaping hole in Foxe's narrative of Parr's persecution and deliverance—the role played by Anne Askew. While Foxe told Askew's story in a separate section of the *Book of Martyrs*, Parsons points out the close relationship between the proceedings against Askew and Parr and uses Askew's checkered marital past in order to undermine her own virtue, the virtue of Queen Catherine, and the virtue of Protestants in general.

Askew, who was burned at Smithfield on July 16, 1546 for refusing to acknowledge the doctrine of transubstantiation, had been included amongst Foxe's martyrs since the 1563 edition of the *Book of Martyrs*. However, Foxe's narrative focused on the events of Askew's examination, trial, and execution and did not include any biographical information about Askew.[49] In his *Treatise*, Parsons lambasted Foxe for these omissions and drew attention to the fact that Askew had "left the company of her husband John Kyme, a gentleman of Lincolnshire," in order to "follow the liberty of the new gospel, going up and down at her pleasure, to make new gospellers and proselytes of her religion."[50] In his critique of Foxe's inclusion of Askew as a worthy martyr, Parsons relentlessly draws attention to her status as a young woman choosing to live apart from her husband and draws specific connections between her disorderly and dangerous lifestyle and Protestantism. According to Parsons, Askew "was a coy dame, and of very evil fame for wantonness, in that she left the company of her husband…to gad up and down

the country a gospelling and gossiping where she might, and ought not."[51] Interestingly, in these passages, Parsons associates "gospelling" with the derogative female activity of "gossiping" and paints a picture of a woman free to travel "where she might, and ought not" due to the "liberty of the gospel." Parsons evokes this powerful imagery to paint a picture of Protestant womanhood vastly divergent from the obedient domesticity exhibited by Catherine Parr in Foxe's narrative. The Protestant womanhood engendered by Askew is unrestricted, disorderly, and dangerous. Askew is particularly dangerous because she uses her freedom to "corrupt diverse people but especially women with whom she had conversed."[52] This reading portrays Askew as almost a social contagion, particularly capable of corrupting other women.

Both Protestants and Catholics understood that the behavior of women rendered the developing Protestant position open to attack. For example, during the Marian period, issues of obedience to husband and God functioned as points of conscientious doubt for both Protestant women and their male spiritual counselors. Protestant women with Catholic, or at least conforming Catholic, husbands were faced with not only a political government but a domestic government that insisted they attend Mass. However, according to Thomas Freeman, "a conflation in Protestant thought between idolatry (spiritual infidelity) and adultery (carnal infidelity) framed attendance at Mass as a form of betrayal that would have carried a special onus for a woman in a society where every woman's vocation was to be a faithful and obedient wife."[53] However, wives also had a duty to obey their husbands. The conflicting demands of godliness and appropriate gender roles troubled both Marian Protestant women and the leading English Protestant thinkers of the day. Ultimately, when a female confidante complained of the competing demands of God and her husband concerning Mass, John Hooper counseled her to "remain with her husband in every contingency (including verbal abuse) short of her husband denouncing her to the authorities," and, if that worst case scenario should occur, she should either "remain with her spouse and endure martyrdom" or flee.[54] In the case of flight, "she was to live a blameless and chaste life, praying unceasingly for a change in the laws or her husband's heart that would permit her to return to her spousal duties."[55] In this case, Hooper's concern for the female recipient of his advice was tempered by his awareness that Catholic polemicists were ready to jump on such cases of "disobedient wives" to undermine the Protestant position.[56]

While establishing the members of their respective confessional groups as orderly, obedient, and loyal was an evident concern of both Catholic and Protestant writers, this positioning was not the only purpose persecution narratives served. They also could potentially function as lines in a dialogue between ruler and ruled. Due to the fundamental importance of state policy in both forwarding and curtailing Protestant reform in England, the English Reformation has traditionally been categorized as a typical "magisterial" reformation meaning that it is principally understood as religious reform imposed from above by the state rather than as the result of a sort of early modern grassroots movement. Indeed, the Tudor monarchs and their governments drafted and instituted policy. However, their subjects were not passive recipients of state religion. Through persecution narratives, subjects interacted with state policies and worked to define their position in a changing religious and political world. In this context, persecution narratives served the important function of conversing with and questioning religious policy.

After Elizabeth's ascension to the throne in November 1558, Englishmen and women spanning the confessional spectrum were presented with new religious policies. The response of Protestants to Elizabeth's reign via the medium of persecution narratives illustrates the capacity of these narratives to question Reformation policy as well as increasingly divergent Protestant

identities in England; while some Protestants strategically hailed Elizabeth's ascension as the triumphal end to the Marian persecutions, others continued to conceptualize themselves as a persecuted minority under the thumb of a queen compromising with papists and refusing to pursue a true and complete reformation of the English church. John Foxe dedicated his 1563 edition of *The Book of Martyrs* to Elizabeth I. Foxe also included an account of the "Miraculous Preservation of the Lady Elizabeth" detailing Elizabeth's own persecution during the reign of her sister Mary I.[57] This material serves a charged religious and political purpose because these texts simultaneously insinuate Elizabeth into a narrative tradition of Protestant persecution and exhort her to be a good Protestant monarch.

The format of the "Miraculous Preservation of the Lady Elizabeth" follows the format of the earlier miraculous preservations of Elizabeth's stepmother Catherine Parr during the reign of Henry VIII and Catherine Willoughby the Dowager Duchess of Suffolk under Mary I, thus situating Elizabeth within a certain strand of the Protestant persecution narrative in *The Book of Martyrs*. Like Elizabeth, neither Parr nor Willoughby suffers martyrdom for her faith though their skirts are singed by the fires of Smithfield in their close escapes. However, Elizabeth's inclusion in this narrative tradition sits awkwardly. Foxe's account details the March 1554-April 1555 imprisonment of Elizabeth for suspected treasonous involvement in Wyatt's Rebellion. While Mary may have personally doubted Elizabeth's religious convictions, Elizabeth pragmatically practiced Catholicism during her sister's reign and was never formally accused of heresy. Still, Foxe cites Elizabeth's experiences as an example of Marian persecution and uses tropes associated with martyrdom to describe Elizabeth during her imprisonment. For example, Foxe depicts Mary I's councilors, led by the infamous Bishop of Winchester Stephen Gardiner, participating in "examinations and rackings of poor men…to find out that knife that should cut her throat" and "gaping…to see the day wherein they might wash their goodly white rochets in her innocent blood."[58] Styling evidence of treason as the "knife that should cut her throat" and spill her "innocent blood" composes the image of Elizabeth as an innocent lamb awaiting slaughter—powerfully evoking and cloaking Elizabeth in Christological overtones central to narratives of martyrdom in which the Christian martyr imitates the death of Christ. Furthermore, in Foxe's account of Elizabeth being ferried between prisons, Foxe quotes the princess as saying "Yonder I see certain of my men. Go to them and say these words from me: '*tanquam ovis*.'"[59] *Tanquam ovis* ("like a sheep") references Isaiah 53:7 "Like a sheep to the slaughter"—a passage that was commonly interpreted as a prophecy of Christ's Crucifixion.[60]

In his dedication to Elizabeth I, Foxe also draws implicit parallels between Elizabeth I and the Emperor Constantine and himself and the early Christian martyrologist Bishop Eusebius. In the text, Foxe feigns doubt at which role "rather to commend and extol: the good Emperor, or the godly Bishop": Emperor Constantine deserves praise for his "rare and singular affection in favoring and furthering the Lord's church" and Eusebius deserves it for preserving "the goods and ornaments of the church…not in donates and patrimonies, but in the blood, acts, and life of martyrs."[61] Eusebius' martyrology preserved the stories of those martyred under the "persecuting Emperors" and "cruel consuls" who preceded Constantine.[62] However, "at length the Lord sent this mild Constantine to cease blood, to stay persecution, to refresh his people."[63] According to Foxe, like Eusebius before him, his martyrology ends when "God's pitiful grace sent us your Majesty to quench firebrands, to assuage rage, to relieve innocents. What a multitude of godly martyrs were slain before the time of the said Constantine… And likewise what a number also before your grace's happy reign were murdered, in this present history here following is comprehended."[64] By hailing Elizabeth as the new Constantine sent to reign over church and

state, Foxe's historical model of persecution inscribes Elizabeth's role as establishing and protecting the true Church of Christ that both the Marian and early Christian martyrs died for. He subtly reminds her via the dedication that this is her role and by her inclusion in *The Book of Martyrs* he insinuates that she is inherently cut from the same cloth as the Protestant martyrs of the English Reformation.

On the other hand, the letters of Catherine Willoughby, another subject of miraculous preservation in *The Book of Martyrs*, criticize the religious policy of Elizabeth I. Writing to Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's Lord Chancellor, and his wife Mildred in 1559, Willoughby claims that in the Anglican service "the very Gospel there read is unprofitable or rather an occasion of falling to the multitude which, hearing it and not understanding it, taketh it rather for some holy charm than any other thing."[65] In other words, in Willoughby's estimation the Anglican service upheld by Elizabeth's government is no better than a Catholic mass because the word of God is not preached or understood properly and is merely yet another "holy charm" or relic worshipped in the mistaken late-medieval Catholic way. Willoughby levels her criticism at Elizabeth herself indirectly by praising how "the last queen, with her notable stoutness" followed the Mass she believed to be correct "wherein she deserved immortal praise seeing she was so persuaded that it was good."[66] In other words, even though Willoughby herself fled persecution at the hands of Mary I, a devoted Catholic who authorized the persecution of Willoughby and her co-religionists is more desirous of praise than the lackluster Protestant Elizabeth I.[67]

Both Willoughby's letter and Foxe's inclusion of Elizabeth I in the English Protestant martyrological tradition provide interesting examples of how writing the experience of persecution during the English Reformation was an exercise in which participants were aware of the role of political authority but not necessarily subservient to it. Willoughby and Foxe's textual responses to Tudor policy belie the image of the Reformation as governmental reforms that the populace gradually more or less conformed to. Instead, they demonstrate critical interaction with the political and religious mandates of the period. Combined with the more traditional tales of Protestant and Catholic martyrdom and the gendered polemics of Foxe, Parsons, and other writers, these texts illustrate the similar strategies used by English Catholics and Protestants to be arbiters of their own place in the unique contours of the English Reformation world. The narratives of persecution discussed here are merely a sample of the many different texts expressing the experience and meaning of religious persecution during the English Reformation. However, they do illustrate the complex intersections of policy, rhetoric, and faith characteristic of the period as well as the rhetorical methods utilized by English writers to legitimize their beliefs in a shifting political context by striking a crucial balance between obedience to lawful authority, conformity to the social order, and resistance to unjust persecution.

End Notes:

[1] Helen Parish, "England," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (New York: Routledge, 2002), 226.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Alice Dailey, *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 2.
[4] Ibid, 100.
[5] William Tyndale, "From *The Obedience of a Christian Man*," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 57.
[6] Ibid., 58.
[7] Ibid., 59.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 57.
[10] John Foxe, "The Burning of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 282.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 284.
[13] John Foxe, "The Examination and Execution of Alice Driver and Alexander Gouch," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 291.
[14] Ibid., 286.
[15] Ibid., 287.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 290.
[18] Valerie Rosoux, "The Politics of Martyrdom," in *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*, ed. Rona M. Fields (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2004), 101.
[19] Candace Lines, "'Secret Violence': Becket, More, and the Scripting of Martyrdom," *Religion and Literature* 32, no. 2 (2000): 16.
[20] Ibid., 11.
[21] William Roper, "From *The Life of Sir Thomas More*," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 265.
[22] Ibid., 266.
[23] Lines, "'Secret Violence'," 11.
[24] Ibid., 12.
[25] Thomas More, "More's Account of His First Interrogation, 17 April 1534," in *A Thomas More Sourcebook*, ed. Gerard Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 315.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Thomas More, "More's Final Interrogation, 3 June 1535," in *A Thomas More Sourcebook*, ed. Gerard Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), 349.
[29] Roper, "From *The Life of Sir Thomas More*," 260.
[30] Ibid., 262.
[31] Ibid., 265.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 266.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Margo Todd, "England after 1558," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (New York: Routledge, 2002), 369.
[36] Thomas Barlow, *Brutum Fulmen: Or, the Bull of Pius V. Concerning the Damnation, Excommunication, and Deposition of Q. Elizabeth* (London: 1681), quoted in Alice Dailey, *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 254.
[37] Ibid.

[38] John Foxe, "The Deliverance of Catherine Parr from Court Intrigue," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 366.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 368.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 370.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 367.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Michael L. Carrafiello, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism: 1580-1610* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1998), 72.
[49] Thomas S. Freeman and Sarah Elizabeth Wall, "Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2001): 1180.
[50] Robert Parsons, "From *A Treatise of the Three Conversions of England*," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 315.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 314.
[53] Thomas Freeman, "'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women': The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs," *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 13.
[54] Ibid., 14.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 16.
[57] John Foxe, "Dedication to Queen Elizabeth I," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 345, 350.
[58] John Foxe, "The Miraculous Preservation of the Lady Elizabeth," in *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John N. King (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 353.
[59] Ibid., 358.
[60] Ibid., 350.
[61] Foxe, "Dedication to Queen Elizabeth I," 347.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 348.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Catherine Willoughby, "To William and Mildred Cecil, March, 4, 1559," quoted in Paul F. M. Zahl, *Five Women of the English Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 115.
[66] Ibid.