The Flesh Made Word: Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*

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In a statement at the end of a meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in Llandaff, representatives of both churches said they had reached agreement "on those issues of salvation and justification which gave rise to deep divisions between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century."

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The current "State of Criticism" of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* – according to the last chapter of Warren Wooden's recent book – is not a very healthy state. Nor is it likely to improve, according to Wooden, "until proper scholarly editions of Foxe's works appear." Wooden laments the fact that the only complete edition published in the twentieth century is a reprint of Stephen Cattley's eight volume edition of 1843–49. Nineteenth-century editions, unlike the contemporary edition Wooden is campaigning for, "modernize much of Foxe's text, rearrange portions of it, add supplemental and transitional material without regard to the integrity of the text, and select from the various versions of the five Elizabethan editions without attempting either collation or consistency. . . . The resulting text, complete with notes reflecting the editors' strong Protestant bias, is thus a hodge-podge composite."¹ This assessment reveals many of the paradoxes that arise when contemporary editorial policy confronts texts from a period (I refer to the sixteenth century) that held considerably different attitudes toward individual authorship, textual production and what might be called the "boundaries" of texts. Cattley's editorial transgression is that he does not respect the original text as produced by Foxe; instead, he subtracts, adds, collates and rearranges at will, driven only by his Protestant zeal. My point is perhaps only too obvious by now: Cattley's edition is far closer to the "original" precisely because it exhibits the faults cited by Wooden. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in all its incarnations has always been an

open-ended, unfixed "hodge-podge composite," alternately venerated and consumed by religious and historiographical polemicists who held little regard for its textual "integrity."

In the ensuing pages, I will add my own partisan reading ("polemical" would be too severe, although such a diminution perhaps accurately marks Foxe's current status) to this 400-year interpretive sedimentation. A central premise of my own interpretation is that a critic's or historian's access to any text is always mediated by previous interpretations (including editions) of that text, on the one hand, and by the more broadly construed mediation of cultural and historical differences, on the other. Of course, these two levels are interdependent: the interpretive history of a particular text is always embedded in wider cultural and political formations. The rich and impassioned history of interpretation surrounding the *Acts and Monuments* supports this methodological premise quite readily.²

I

Despite Warren Wooden's almost hagiolatrous attempts at resurrection, the twentieth-century Foxe is an obscure figure, at least by comparison to the assessment of some, but not all, previous centuries. This may be due to the daunting size (and weight) of the eight volume *Acts and Monuments*, or to the lack of a "reliable" edition, as Wooden argues. But while these reasons may indeed present obstacles to contemporary scholarship, the original fact that no one has undertaken an edition in 150 years would seem to point to a broader explanation. Foxe's text is, first and foremost, a religious polemic; subsequently, its popularity has risen and fallen according to the extent of religious fomentation (particularly between Protestants and Catholics) in a given age. New editions are regularly produced through the first half of the seventeenth century, but not again until the Catholic emancipation of the early nineteenth. This explains, perhaps over-simplistically, why the *Acts and Monuments* has never found a receptive American audience, nor more than a small one in England since the nineteenth-century. In fact, twentieth-century scholarship has deliberately sought to distance itself from the previous century's heated religious controversies, resulting in one construction of Foxe as a model of religious toleration, at least by the standards of his own period.³

Nevertheless, vestiges of the earlier religious polemic surrounding the *Acts and Monuments* still exist, although the religious issues are often displaced by apparently academic controversies, such as the historical accuracy of Foxe's accounts. Writing as an historian, J. F. Mozley published *John Foxe and His Book* in 1940 in an attempt to controvert the research of S. R.

Maitland a century earlier.⁴ Although Mozley does not demonstrate any outward partiality to Protestantism – he writes from a position of historical ‘objectivity’ throughout – the publication of his book by the “Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge” suggests the use to which his research was put. Since Mozley’s book, the relatively mild arguments over the *Acts and Monuments* are not between Catholics and Protestants but between those who see Foxe’s motivation as primarily eschatological and spiritual (often displaying their own non-sectarian Christianity), against those who favour a nationalistic impetus in the production and function of the text. Among the former, I include V. Norskov Olsen’s *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (1973), which depends largely on Foxe’s use of Revelations, as well as Helen C. White’s *Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs* (1963), perhaps better understood as a “martyrolatry,” especially in its closing message to the reader: “it is not without relevance to remember how, on another dark and confused scene, a generous spirit, finding himself almost alone against his world, could look beyond the imminent scaffold to that other realm in which he trusted that he and the judges who had just condemned him ‘may yeat hereafter in heaven meerly all meete together, to our everlasting salvacion.’”⁵ Both of these treatments of Foxe maintain, at least obliquely, an essentially religious perspective, and both understandably take issue with William Haller’s reading of the *Acts and Monuments*, in which the eschatological tradition is said to serve the book’s interest in shaping a nationalistic consciousness.⁶ D. M. Loades presents this more fully secularized perspective in *The Oxford Martyrs*, although he clearly possesses a sort of nationalistic admiration for Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, who “died because they were revolutionary leaders whose ideology was temporarily eclipsed.”⁷ These twentieth-century critical disagreements about Foxe’s book are tame by comparison to their forerunners because the participants are not divided along sectarian lines. Such was not at all the case in early Victorian England.

The eighteenth century – “antiquarian rather than polemical,” according to Loades – saw the publication of Strype’s *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, as well as the *Catholic Church History* of Charles Dodd, but not a single edition of the *Acts and Monuments*.⁸ Between 1841 and 1877, however, there were four. Renewed interest in the historiography of the reformation as a polemical activity followed, in part, the sectarian controversies initiated by the Oxford movement of the 1830s and the political issue of Catholic emancipation. Protestant editions of Foxe’s history were met by detractors such as S. R. Maitland, who published a series of magazine articles allegedly proving that Foxe fabricated his sources

and who, in the 1830s, sought to prevent publication of Cattley and Townsend's edition altogether. According to Father Dominic Trenow, Maitland did "so completely succeed in unearthing this Foxe, that though a sedate, studious and learned scholar and clergyman, he has earned for himself the by no means inappropriate, if not dignified, nickname, of 'Foxhunter.'" ⁹ Maitland and other "foxhunters" were specifically addressed by Cattley and Townsend in a part of their introduction entitled, "Answer to Objectors." In this rebuttal, Maitland is accused of "not [being] an impartial critic of Foxe" and of "treat[ing] the author with great injustice."¹⁰ What is striking about these exchanges is that each side repeatedly claims a kind of non-sectarian neutrality for itself while hanging on their opponents the charge of bias. Cattley and Townsend state that their project is merely to produce "simply, a good and handsome *reprint of the work*."¹¹ On the other side, Maitland claims that his own archival research is motivated exclusively by his desire to recover the "true" story of the martyrs. In other words, the nineteenth-century interpretive controversies over the *Acts and Monuments* disguise their sectarian polemic behind a rhetoric of historiographical objectivity. A notable exception is the vitriolic Reverend J. Milner's edition of 1803. Milner states that he "was resolved to contribute his feeble efforts to effect their [those favoring Catholic emancipation] overthrow.... One opportunity, it occurred to him, he should find by publishing a new Edition of Fox's Martyrs."¹²

In 1684, the Stationer's Company issued the last complete edition of the *Acts and Monuments* before the nineteenth century in order to celebrate the ascension of James II. In this Restoration edition, "it was now the conservative and national aspects of Foxe which appealed to those who troubled to read him, rather than the eschatological."¹³ Just the opposite may be said of the Puritan edition of 1641 which followed the loss of Archbishop Laud's control over the pulpits and presses in 1640. One of the charges against Laud, in fact, was that he had prevented the publication of certain "godly" books such as the *Acts and Monuments*.¹⁴ In appropriating Foxe's book and using it against Laud, Puritans conveniently overlooked the fact that the *Acts and Monuments* in its original conception was distinctly supportive of Elizabeth and the Anglican compromise. As Puritan propaganda, the apocalyptic aspects of the book were emphasized to buttress the Puritans' belief in their own divine election. Even James believed that Foxe's book could be used in support of the Anglican cause; his demand for a new edition in 1610 may well have been in response to the tumult surrounding the Gunpowder Plot and to the increasing tide of Puritan opposition to his monarchy. By including an account of the massacre of

French Huguenots in this edition, James could hope to rally his own divided nation against an inveterate English enemy. In the seventeenth century, then, the critical reception and propagandistic use of the *Acts and Monuments* corresponds to the oscillations of the English Church in general. Despite its polemics, Foxe's book was "open" enough to be able to support a variety of ideological enterprises.

The sixteenth-century publications and receptions of Foxe's book, on the other hand, appear to sustain Foxe's original conception in their consistent polemic against the Catholic Church. Certainly Elizabeth's government believed in the importance of promulgating the *Acts and Monuments* (a 1571 decree required members of the clergy to own one), although the often-held belief that it was "enjoynd to be kept in every church" has been persuasively refuted.¹⁵ The five editions in English are more or less evenly spaced over the course of Elizabeth's reign, and each issuance seems to coincide conspicuously with a critical event involving English Protestantism. An edition of 1583 follows the Queen's protracted marriage negotiations with the Catholic Anjou and coincides with England's increasing involvement in the Low Countries; the 1570 edition appears in the same year as the Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth, and one year after the rising of the Catholic northern earls; finally, the 1563 edition succeeds by less than a year the last session of the Council of Trent. In a period of endemic religious volatility, such correspondences are perhaps not difficult to find. At the same time, however, printers were careful to assess their potential market before beginning the expensive and arduous task of setting type; such an outlay must have been massive for a publication as long as the *Acts and Monuments*. For example, Rome's list of prohibited books was eagerly awaited by English printers seeking to anticipate the most salable books in their own country. According to J. W. Martin, during the tenuous early months of Elizabeth's reign, the Marian burnings were considered a "lucrative topic" for new books.¹⁶ Thus, it is probably true that some blend of royal fiat as well as the book's commercial prospects influenced the timing and popularity of these sixteenth-century editions.

The counterattack to Foxe's book began immediately after the publication of the widely disseminated edition of 1563. (Only a short 1559 edition in Latin preceded this one.) Writing under the pseudonym of Alanus Copus, Nicholas Harpsfield – more famous as the first biographer of Thomas More and former Archdeacon of London – published an attack on the historical accuracy of Foxe's accounts and specifically opposed including the Lollards as martyrs.¹⁷ John Christopherson, Bishop of Chichester under Mary, appears to have anticipated the Protestant cult of martyrdom even before

Foxe's early Latin edition; in 1554, his *An exhortation to all menne to take hede and beware of rebellion* attempts to belittle the "false stinking martyrs" persecuted under Mary.¹⁸ By the 1580s, English recusancy centered on a captive Mary Queen of Scots and the promise of a Spanish invasion which would place her on the English throne. In this tense atmosphere, Nicholas Sander sought to influence English attitudes by attacking the *Acts and Monuments* in his *De origine ac progressu schismaticis Anglicani liber* published from Cologne in 1585.¹⁹

From this skeletal history of the publication and reception of Foxe's book, it becomes clear that its textual boundaries have been at least figuratively porous, open to appropriations in different cultural settings for different purposes. Religious polemicists in addition to editors and interpreters have persistently "re-written" the *Acts and Monuments* by defining and imposing its meaning. And in many cases, they have literally re-written the text, most conspicuously in the many versions (they are not truly editions) of Foxe's popularly called *Book of Martyrs*, which have dismembered and appended the original by adding their own stories of martyrdom. For example, an eighteenth-century abridgement deceptively titled *Fox's Original and Complete Book of Martyrs* includes several accounts of the "bloody Irish Massacre . . . the missionaries in China, and the Barbarities exercised in America."²⁰ In 1884, Fox's *Book of Martyrs, or a History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Primitive Protestant Martyrs* distinguishes itself from other versions by recording "the persecution of Asaad Shidiak, a native of Palestine."²¹ Perhaps the most severely abridged versions, finally, are the illustrated, paperbound pamphlets published from 1920 to 1954 by the Protestant Truth Society.²² None of these examples – nor the textual history of Foxe's book in general – appear to have been interested in what Wooden calls the "integrity of the text."

According to Wooden's editorial policy and that of most contemporary editors of literary texts, the integrity of any given text is measured by the extent to which an author's original and final intentions can be ascertained.²³ As Jerome McGann points out, this way of thinking derives from a post-Romantic belief in the autonomy of literary production.²⁴ The seeds of this belief may well have been planted around the close of the sixteenth-century; certainly the case of Jonson reveals an incipiently "modern" conception of authorship. However, when applied to the *Acts and Monuments* – here I refer to those editions Foxe saw through the press – this post-Romantic way of thinking is wholly inadequate. It might be argued that I am unfairly applying criteria used for literary texts to an explicitly historical text. Above and beyond the fact that this distinction is often hard

to draw in the sixteenth century (Sidney's need to delineate history from literature in theory perhaps only underscores this point in practice), Foxe's book even by comparison to other contemporary "histories" is unique in calling attention to its own collective production and to its own status as a social and institutional affair; at times, its breadth appears to embody the society in which it is shaped. Not only does this quality distinguish the *Acts and Monuments* from otherwise similar narratives of the mid-sixteenth century (especially other martyrologies), but it is precisely the reason for the book's enormous success and impact initially, as well as the source of its long history of appropriation.

This thesis begins to explain as positive characteristics those authorial transgressions often ruefully cited by Wooden: "Because Foxe allowed others to translate from his Latin text [the first 1559 edition] major portions of the English editions, the literary critic is often unsure whose actual words he is reading. . . ." ²⁵ While this is certainly true, it is an odd point to dwell upon considering the number of authors who contribute to the various editions Foxe compiled. In the two-volume folio of 1570, for example, my own rough estimate places Foxe's contribution at less than ten percent of what is truly a massive collection of written material. Even those stories Foxe himself penned were most certainly oral narratives composed by witnesses and passed on to Foxe through different channels. With this sense of collectivity in mind, it might be useful to glance at the various authors, genres and texts that comprise the *Acts and Monuments*.

II Protestant *Copia*

Nearly every form of written document known to the Renaissance appears somewhere in Foxe's collection of nearly two million words. ²⁶ Among government records, Foxe includes articles of religion, royal proclamations and injunctions, acts and records of Parliament, judicial sentences and lists of prohibited books. Sermons, records of religious disputations, visitations of clergy, translations of liturgies, countless examinations and interrogations of suspected heretics, recantations, transcriptions of ceremonies and baptisms are included among specifically religious documents. There are also many "personal" letters obviously intended for public viewing, especially among those martyrs from Foxe's own time, public orations and speeches to the Queen, accounts of village arguments and private debates. Foxe has extensively quoted other historians (Eusebius, Bede, William of Malmesbury and Polydore Vergil, to name a few), re-printed large sections

of other books and at times entire pamphlets. Finally, although I have by no means exhausted the list, there are Foxe's own detailed, often lurid descriptions of the scene at the stake, a tiny fraction of the whole but nevertheless the most memorable if not notorious part.

The effect of such an "open" text is to fashion a Protestant community by including a vast number of texts, authors, events and individuals while at the same time discrediting those who are not part of the community. In this way, the *Acts and Monuments* effaces many textual and formal boundaries to construct a larger boundary that serves to identify (and give identity to) the membership of a new state church. This is more or less the conclusion drawn by William Haller in perhaps the best contemporary study of *Acts and Monuments*. Haller points out the ways in which Foxe's book shaped a new Protestant and specifically English "sense of . . . identity as a nation set apart from all others, aware of what they took to be a common past, and intent on what they took to be their appointed place and destiny in the world."²⁷ Haller's method of analysis depends on the often-unquestioned critical assumption that the act of reading texts and of ascertaining textual meaning is always the same process across history. This is not to say that texts have the same meaning for all time; Haller is very attuned to the specifics of early Elizabethan culture, claiming to read the *Acts and Monuments* in "the context of its own time."²⁸ But what Haller and others assume in their efforts to reproduce the influence and effect of a text is that sixteenth-century readers read in the same fashion – receiving and assigning meaning by the same process -- as twentieth-century critics and historians.

It would be impossible to reproduce exactly how Foxe's book was read or interpreted, or what its precise effect might have been. But I would suggest that the book's impact and valorization was as diverse as the literacy levels of its audience. Clergy and well-educated aristocracy may have read the *Acts and Monuments* quite thoroughly, but certainly a larger number read (or heard) only parts of the book, relying on description and perhaps paraphrase to gain a sense of the whole; additionally, a good number could not have read a single word at all. This range exposes the paradox in any reception theory of Elizabethan texts, especially those texts that appear to have been promulgated by certain interests and ideologies: most of the intended readership of a text often could not read nearly as well as those who produced (or circulated) the texts.²⁹ Sixteenth-century texts were received, understood and given their cultural currency in different ways; in other terms, they imparted and were ascribed their meaning in a pluralistic fashion. To underscore the difference between this period and our own, one need but remember that only a generation before the *Acts and Monuments*,

only a small minority could read such an enormously influential text as the Bible. In the following interpretations, I should like to remain attentive to some of the varied ways in which the *Acts and Monuments* may have conveyed and been assigned meaning among what was surely a multiform audience.

The shape and structure of the *Acts and Monuments* may have allowed it to possess an iconic value or meaning for some of its audience. In this context, I apply the term "iconic" to the importance attached to the palpable presence of the text – as a material artifact rather than a signifying medium – by those who may or may not have scoured its written contents.³⁰ As I suggest briefly above, the most striking structural aspect of the *Acts and Monuments* is its vast inclusion of texts, authors, documents, Protestant champions and Catholic reprobates – in short, a textual re-creation of the world past, present and (eschatologically) future. This remarkable inclusivity was perhaps motivated by a desire to amass a virtual library of stories, beliefs and history in a single two-volume set. In this way, Foxe's prototype may have been the Bible itself. On a more figurative level, however, the "idea" of Foxe's massive collection presents some interesting implications. From such a perspective, I suggest that the textual inclusivity of Foxe's book – in fact, all of its formal and structural components – is an attempt to reproduce textually a vision of the English Protestant state church. In other words, Foxe has drawn upon such a variety of 'genres' in order to represent all aspects of his own culture. At the same time, this inclusivity – which must depend on extensive repetition – seems motivated by a fear of leaving any "open spaces" which could be filled by contestatory material; when an oppositional position is presented, it is only for the purpose of being discredited. By the sheer vastness of what it collects, the *Acts and Monuments* seeks to reprint itself on the collective and individual consciences of its audience. Reciprocally (for we cannot really depend on knowing Foxe's intentions), a significant reason for the book's cultural adoption and influence in shaping this national church derives from the extent to which such a broad audience accepted and internalized the text. My reading differs from Haller's not so much in terms of the cultural impact of the text but in how that impact was effectuated. That the *Acts and Monuments* should possess an iconic value suggests a different mode of adoption by the new regime and its subjects.

Similarly, we can begin to understand the *Acts and Monuments* as a textual body that reproduces the emerging corporate body of Protestant England. Following this metaphorical equivalence, the vast circulatory system of texts in the *Acts and Monuments* itself creates and reinforces the circulation of

texts and ideas so vital to the early stages of Protestantism across Europe. Before Elizabeth's reign – especially after the exodus under Mary – Protestant strongholds were few and far between, a situation that required extensive travel and circulation of texts to keep the incipient movement alive. Foxe's original 1559 Latin edition and the first English edition of 1563 were compiled, in fact, while Foxe and other prominent exiles were living in Strasbourg. Strasbourg became a kind of nerve centre for Protestantism from which Foxe diligently collected every report, story, and document available, a mode of production reproduced in the dialogical nature of the first edition and of succeeding editions. In this way, the *Acts and Monuments* seeks to produce and reproduce an extensive Protestant network by profusely reprinting letters, conversations, examinations and orally transmitted narratives. This dialogical structure serves to incorporate readers and hearers of the book as members of an extensive Protestant community; or, in other words, the dialogism inside the book appears to extend beyond the textual boundaries to include the larger number of those who came in contact with the book.

These remarks refer mostly to those events and writings that were roughly contemporaneous with the 1563 edition and the enlarged 1570 edition, both critical texts in forging the English Protestant "community" I refer to above. Nearly all of Foxe's audience would have been familiar through other sources with the events and personalities of the previous reign; by allotting one-third of the entire text to Mary's reign alone, the *Acts and Monuments* is able to include a large number of known prototypes for this community. Among these Marian martyrs, the presentation of John Bradford's story exemplifies the text's creation of an extensive "dialogue" among those inside the community and against those outside. Foxe begins this narrative with a brief biography of Bradford's life and accomplishments, covering about six pages in the eight-volume edition reprinted from the nineteenth century. Next, Bradford is brought before the Lord Chancellor for a "communication" investigating his opinions on the Eucharist and on the authority of the Pope, two central issues in determining heresy. Eleven more dialogues covering forty pages of text between Bradford and various other Catholic officials – the Archbishop of York, the Dean of Westminster and two Spanish friars, among others – are transcribed in which the accused cleverly defends points of scripture against his persistent interlocutors. A third section of the Bradford narrative, about a page long, relates his death at the stake. Finally, almost ninety pages are taken up by Bradford's personal letters (fifty-one are printed) to friends, "Brethren," Cambridge

University, various towns, his brother, Nicholas Ridley, Cranmer and many others.³¹

The most striking feature of this presentation is the sheer volume of (allegedly) reprinted letters, which includes over two-thirds of the entire Bradford story. The epistolary form serves the function of presenting a network of religious sympathy connected by the written word – a medium already appropriated as distinctly Protestant. Additionally, the fact that the letters are addressed to living people not otherwise part of the story extends the Protestant community forged by this network beyond the boundaries of the text; the *Acts and Monuments* thus becomes a massive directory for some and proof of Protestant amplitude for others. In both cases, the effect or reception of the text would not necessarily be produced by reading its contents; in fact, the “contents” of the letters, examinations and conversations are more or less the same in each martyr’s story. Knowledge of just a few letters, or of someone who knew someone addressed by a letter, may have produced a sense of inclusion in the Protestant community; as an icon or symbol of this inclusion, the *Acts and Monuments* shaped and solidified both individual and collective identities.

In many ways, then, the *Acts and Monuments* appropriates and attempts to surpass an older, Catholic tradition of written *copia*. Moreover, Foxe’s prodigious collation makes its case in part by the scope and literal weight of the material he collects: the book persuades by overwhelming its audience with what he calls the “full and complete story.” A smaller example of this form of appropriation may be found in Foxe’s “Kalender,” a year-long list of martyr’s days re-shaped from books of saint’s days such as the *Golden Legend*. Unlike his Catholic precedents, Foxe has occupied every day of the year with at least one martyr, some with as many as five. Not only has Foxe filled every space left open by earlier, Catholic calendars, but he has multiplied considerably the number of Protestant “saints” as well. More often than not, according to Helen White, the day of death does not conform to the day of commemoration in *The Kalendar*, suggesting that Foxe’s primary interest is precisely in filling all spaces with his *copia* of martyrology rather than paying tribute to a few individuals.³² Protestant *copia* persuades by leaving little space for an alternative.

A final observation on the volume and prolixity of the *Acts and Monuments* concerns the unavoidable repetitiveness within and among its various “genres.” The examinations of the martyrs by Catholic authorities, for example, revolve around only a few central arguments repeated several times in the same examination, and repeated countless times in the long course of Foxe’s many transcriptions. Additionally, the same issues appear

in the letters written by the martyrs, as well as in Foxe's own narrations. With a few notable exceptions, even the scenes at the stake soon begin to resemble one another almost indistinguishably. The *Acts and Monuments* cannot have been read or heard as a linear narrative progressively imparting new information or events; the outcome of these stories was probably already known through other sources, and certainly known to anyone who had read at least one of Foxe's accounts before. Thus, it is not so much what happens or what is said, but how often it is repeated. Other martyrologies, which may have competed with Foxe's for the newly developing "market," may be distinguished from his largely by their brevity. Thomas Brice's "A compendious Register in metre" (1559) seeks popular success and royal patronage (nearly all of its stanzas end, "We wished for our Elizabeth"), but was never re-printed. Brice covers the duration of Mary's reign and is overtly nationalistic, but his poem is really only a list of martyrs without elaboration.³³ The same may be said for Robert Crowley's *Epitome of Chronicles* (1559), prompting one historian to observe: "Both Brice and Crowley went immediately to press with the information then available and their books include few details, whereas Foxe prints or otherwise uses official documents about the martyrs in scores of cases, and occasionally mentions this practice explicitly."³⁴

Warren Wooden explains this stylistic and structuring practice as follows: "Foxe identified the key themes of the Reformation and hammered them home through the repetition of illustration after illustration until the most dull-witted reader could not fail to absorb the pivotal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism along with the central props for Protestant belief."³⁵ In this passage, Wooden assumes that an audience that requires repetition is necessarily deficient, as if they were not able to "get it" the first time. Instead, I suggest that the use of repetition in sixteenth-century texts such as the *Acts and Monuments* operates not simply to inform the illiterate. In a later section of this essay, I will explore repetition as an aspect of the text's investment in perceiving history as cyclic rather than linear. For the moment, it is important to note that repetition enables Foxe to heap his stories and documents on top of each other in an effort to amass an entire Protestant "state" of texts in his book, from royal proclamations to village conversations. Just as each open space of "Kalendar" must be occupied by the name of a Protestant exemplar in order to expel, replace and "keep out" Catholic saints, the *Acts and Monuments* fills its pages and the minds of its audience with Protestant *copia*.

III

"The Witness of Times, the Light of Verity, the life of Memory"³⁶

The art of memory, according to Frances Yates, declines in the sixteenth century from a position of central importance to a relatively obscure practice sustained mostly by hermetic philosophers such as Giordano Bruno. Yates believes that the printed book largely supplanted the need for artificial memory, presumably because so much more information could now be stored readily in texts as opposed to the fallible mind.³⁷ Since memory systems had been largely dependent on mental images (following the classical precedents of Cicero, Quintilian and the *Ad Herennium*), another reason for their decline is perhaps the broadly construed impact of Reformation iconoclasm; the new, Ramist method, for example, replaces images with abstract, dialectical analysis and thus "provided a kind of inner iconoclasm, corresponding to the outer iconoclasm."³⁸ And yet, the need for memory as a way of imprinting lasting ideas and images upon individual consciences can rarely have been more valuable than in a text such as the *Acts and Monuments*. The text's construction of powerful verbal images in many ways serves this purpose. By repeating images and ideas in writing, Foxe avoids the charge of idolatry and yet still accomplishes one of the functions of the book: to impress indelibly upon his audience those beliefs and events central to forging an English, Protestant collective and individual identity.

In his dedicatory epistle to Queen Elizabeth from the 1563 edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe offers an explanation of the Catholic opposition to his project: "these Catholic Phormiones think now to dash out all good books, and, amongst others also, these Monuments of Martyrs: which godly martyrs as they could not abide being alive, so neither can they now suffer their memories to live after their death . . ."³⁹ Catholics sought to destroy copies of the *Acts and Monuments* because they feared its success in "writing" (or re-writing) the "memories" of the book's audience; at the same time, Foxe recognizes this as precisely the effect of his book. In this passage to Elizabeth, the Catholic position appears to have already granted to the *Acts and Monuments* the capacity to alter textually the contents of human memory, and thus, of course, the past. This concession can only be possible once the printing press allows the written word to be reproduced at a dramatically higher rate, consequently promoting the kind of repetitiveness I have described above. In this way, Foxe displaces memory based on images with a memory system based on textual duplication and repetition. In fact,

Foxe believes that printing was a gift from God so "that tongues are known, knowledge groweth, judgement increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen, the doctors be read, stories be opened, times compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected..." (III, 720). With the enlistment of God, Foxe "naturalizes" his medium of representation as if to suggest that his newly "written" memory and past are not representations at all.⁴⁰ And of course, this will be exactly the "mythology" of his history according to Protestantism: Foxe has not constructed a past but only revealed the "true" one.

For these reasons, Foxe is pre-eminently concerned to establish the historical accuracy of his narrative. The *Acts and Monuments* is consequently packed with overt claims and less overt strategies designed to legitimate Foxe's account of the distant past (including early church history), as well as his transcriptions of recent events describing the Marian martyrs; by these practices, the text persuades while claiming only to reveal. As in so many Renaissance texts that engage in a similar practice, Foxe's own ideological offering is presented as if it were the revelations of God, merely "discovered" by the mortal author: "Yea, what have you [the Catholic Church] ever done so in secret and in corners, but the Lord hath found it out, and brought it to light."⁴¹ According to Foxe, the "true" church of God has remained invisible since the days of the apostles, and God has only recently decided – in part through the medium of the *Acts and Monuments* – to make it "so visible again that every worldly eye may perceive it."⁴² This is only one example of the self-legitimizing circularity found in all apocalyptic writings, including the Bible: texts legitimate history just as history legitimates texts.

This explains the apparently paradoxical fact that, even though God is revealing "true" history in the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe nevertheless goes to great lengths to assert the "objective" accuracy of his account:

You must consider . . . if you will be a controller in story-matters, it is not enough for you to bring a railing spirit, or a mind disposed to carp and cavil where any matter may be picked: diligence is required, and great searching out of books and authors, not only of our time, but of all ages. And especially where matters are touched pertaining to the Church, it is not sufficient to see what 'Fabian' or 'Hall' saith; but the records must be sought, the registers must be turned over, letters also and ancient instruments ought to be perused, and authors with the same compared: finally, the writers amongst themselves one to be conferred with another; and so with judgement matters are to be weighed; with diligence to be

laboured; and with simplicity, pure from all addition and partiality, to be uttered. (III,376-77)

That Foxe could claim to be “pure from all addition and partiality” and yet still believe he is essentially speaking for God seems strikingly contradictory to a twentieth-century, secular perspective where religions are understood as competing ideologies. However, such a perspective is only just emerging in the middle of the sixteenth century; for early Protestants such as Foxe, it must be remembered, there are only two religions (and any deviations are fit into one or the other): the true one and the false. This dualism is the basis for apocalyptic thinking, and it pervades the *Acts and Monuments* just as it did the work of John Bale, one of Foxe’s important precedents.⁴³ Foxe does not think in pluralistic terms; in fact, he strongly disputes charges that there is controversy within the Protestant camp. What may appear contradictory from a secular perspective is perhaps a result of the unique historical moment in which Foxe wrote: for the first time, “God’s revelations” needed to be argued on the basis of historiographical impartiality.

The quotation cited above reveals Foxe’s belief that the historian must rely on original sources and documents. In fourteen separate points, each carefully based on sources from Eusebius to Luther, for example, Foxe argues that the Donation of Constantine – critical to Protestants because it provided the basis for the authority of the Pope – “agreeth not with the truth of history” (I, 301-303). In another controversial point of history, Foxe cites several documents to prove that Christianity was brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea rather than by Augustine, thus freeing England from any ancient derivation from Rome (I, 305-309). When earlier historians present accounts agreeable to Foxe, he reprints their texts without editorial additions, relying on the fact that they are chronologically closer to the events they describe for legitimation. On the other hand, Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall need to be corrected: “For the confirmation whereof, to the intent the mind also of the wrangling caviller may be satisfied, and to stop the mouth of the adversary, which I see in all places ready to bark. I have, therefore, of purpose annexed withal my ground and foundation, taken out of the archives and registers of the Archbishop of Canterbury: whereby may appear the manifest error both of Polydore, and of Edward Hall . . .” (III, 342). These examples only partially represent what is a determined and constant effort at historical accuracy based on documentation and source material.

This method explains in another fashion the reason for the remarkably vast number of documents contained in the *Acts and Monuments*. For if “truth” can be measured by documentation, then resolving the “truth” of the Protestant church need not go any further than Foxe’s book. In other words, the inclusivity of the *Acts and Monuments* may be understood as an attempt to write a history and to amass all those documents and sources upon which that history is based. This provides another version of circular legitimation: Foxe’s version of history rests on the documents he collects just as those very documents “prove” the “truth” of his historical narrative.

Another form of accuracy important to Foxe is in his descriptions of the martyr’s scene at the stake. Exiled in Strasbourg, Foxe could hardly have witnessed these events, and yet he reports in careful detail facial expressions, the responses of the crowd and the martyr’s final words; at times, we even learn what various participants were thinking. By a variety of narrative strategies, Foxe seeks to collapse the inevitable mediation between the event and its textual depiction in the *Acts and Monuments*. This desire to reproduce the original event imitates the larger design of Foxe’s history, which is, in part, to reproduce the original purity of the apostolic church before its corruption by Rome. A similar impulse occupies many Protestant, vernacular translations of the Bible in which the claim is to circumvent the Latin translation by producing “transparent” translations of the original Hebrew and Greek. Likewise, the printing of cumbersome polyglot Bibles (featuring Hebrew and Greek alongside the vernacular) appears to avoid the mediation of translation by making the ancient languages visually “equivalent” to the vernacular on each page. In all of these cases, the impetus is the belief that whatever is chronologically closest to the time of Christ must be superior. Reproductions of the Word, the apostolic church and, in the case of the scene at the stake, the crucifixion, consequently possess a great investment in understanding their representations as unmediated reproductions. In the case of the Word, language is understood as plain and open rather than allegorical; as for Foxe’s depictions of martyrdom, the strategy is that his own text fully reproduces the event.

And yet, the insistence that Foxe’s narrative has indeed accomplished this unmediated reproduction suggests that perhaps Foxe is less convinced than he would have his audience believe. Similarly, Protestant translations of the Bible claim to have revealed the original Word for all to read and understand easily, yet at the same time they attach reams of supplementary material informing readers as to what it meant. The martyrs themselves seem to have been aware of the importance of this form of accuracy since many of them – if we are to believe Foxe – wrote detailed accounts of their

own persecutions up to the final moment. In order to legitimate his "accurate" depiction of that moment, Foxe often adds comments such as "To the text of the story we have neither added nor diminished, but, as we have received it copied it out..." (III, 249). Elsewhere, Foxe describes the means by which the story came to him, but only to emphasize that he has faithfully reproduced the original: "I received this story by the faithful relation both in the French and English, of them which were there present witnesses and lookers upon; but also have hereto annexed the true supplication of the said inhabitants of Guernsey..." (VIII, 230). Following this account, Foxe writes an eight-page addendum entitled, "A Defence of This Guernsey Story Against Master Harding," apparently a contemporary detractor (VIII, 233-241). These examples represent only a few of the similarly motivated narrative strategies by which Foxe seeks to represent his own writing as transparent and thus "true" to the events he describes.

The question of historical accuracy has surrounded the *Acts and Monuments* since its inception; opponents from the sixteenth century to Maitland in the nineteenth have seized upon apparent discrepancies in Foxe's documentation in order to condemn his book. It is generally agreed by less partisan historiographers, beginning with Mozeley in 1940, that Foxe is unusually (by Renaissance standards) reliable in citing and reproducing his sources.⁴⁴ True or not, it is at least certain that Foxe deeply wanted his book to be perceived as objectively accurate in order to buttress his claim to having written the "true" history of Christianity. "What!" say they, 'where was this church of yours before these fifty years?,' the Catholic opposition demanded, an opposition fully aware that their greatest strength was centuries of visible tradition and history (I, 9). Foxe's response to this question was to write and collect a "new" history so overwhelming in size, scope and documented sources that it could claim to provide historical legitimacy for a church only fifty years old.

IV

The Eternal Return

Foxe also responded to the question "Where was this church of yours before these fifty years?" by asserting that "our church was, when this church of theirs was not yet hatched out of the shell, nor did yet ever see any light" (I, 9). Rather than conceding that the Protestant church was only a recent development and thus without the legitimacy of historical precedent, Foxe laid claim to the primitive church – by his count the first 600 years – as an origin to which the English Reformation was merely returning. "In witness

whereof we have the old acts and histories of ancient time," argues Foxe, "to give testimony with us, wherein we have institution of this our present reformed church, are not the beginning of any new church of our own, but the renewing of the old ancient church of Christ" (I, 9). The *Acts and Monuments* allows its audience to "witness" the "testimony" of the primitive church in order to provide "institution" for the sixteenth-century Anglican church. At the same time, readers are asked to "witness" through Foxe's textual re-enactment the martyrs scene at the stake, another "testimony" to the "truth" of English Protestantism. In this way, the broad historical narrative of the *Acts and Monuments* and the accounts of individual martyrdom may be said to serve a similar function: sixteenth-century Protestants could "imitate their [the martyrs'] death (as much as we may) with like constancy, or their lives at the least with like innocency,"⁴⁵ just as the English church should imitate the purity and innocence (before Rome's corruption) of the primitive church.

By representing itself as a return to an earlier state rather than as an unprecedented transformation, the English church at this young stage of Elizabeth's reign could hope to avoid the destabilizing effects of the Reformation that the German states, for example, had experienced; certainly this vision of history reinforces many "conservative" aspects of the Elizabethan Compromise. Additionally, one can sense in this formulation the convergence of English Protestantism and the general humanistic tendency to make sense of the present by discovering classical precedents. In Foxe's account, the principle of "history-as-return" dominates his narration and may have served additionally as a cognitive principle for those martyrs who so willingly imitate Christ, the original martyr, at the stake. "In summe," writes Foxe, "to geve thee one generall rule for all, this thou shalt observe, the higher thou goest upwarde to the Apostles time, the purer thou shalt finde the church: the lower thou does descend, ever the more dross and dregges thou shalt preceyve in the bottome, and especialle within these laste 500 yeares, accordinge to the trew sayinge of Tertullian: *quod primum, id rectum est*, that which is the first, is right etc."⁴⁶ Foxe conceives of diachrony in vertical terms: the earliest period is "higher" and "purer" while the most recent is understood as the "bottome." This is a conception of history in which diachrony is understood as a continuing fall from God, or at least from the time of Christ, God's temporal incarnation on earth: the further one is from the "Apostle's time," the "lower thou does descend." In the opposite direction, the reverse of sequential time is presented as an ascension, a return to an originally pure state. Both the

historical narrative of the *Acts and Monuments* and the individual act of martyrdom are governed by this conception of a return; reproduction and imitation of a higher, antecedent figure (Christ) or historical period (the apostolic church) is perceived as the means of this return.

The political importance of this conception of history can hardly be overestimated in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, for it touched upon every critical issue surrounding the legitimacy of the Anglican church and the authority of its secular governor. In a series of heated exchanges between John Jewel and the Catholics John Rastell and Dr. Cole (Marian Dean of St. Paul's) among others, the debate went on through the first half of the sixties and became known as the "Great Controversy."⁴⁷ Jewel's famous "Apology of the Church of England" was the central document of this controversy. Printed in Latin in 1563, one year before the first English edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, the "Apology" may well have been the source of Foxe's emphasis on imitating and reproducing the primitive church. "We are come," wrote Jewel, "as near as we possibly could, to the church of the apostles and of the old Catholic bishops and fathers; which church we know hath hitherunto been sound and perfite, and, as Tertullian termeth it, a pure virgin, spotted as yet with no idolatry, nor with any foul or shameful fault."⁴⁸ As Catholic disputants pointed out, the Anglican position appeared to sustain a contradiction by claiming the tradition of the primitive church as an historical precedent for the idea of a church hierarchy, on the one hand, and insisting on the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, on the other. Rastell argued specifically that the 600 year end of the primitive church was arbitrarily chosen; the Anglicans rejected all tradition and custom since that date, yet embraced the legitimation of tradition that preceded it. This provided a kind of solution to the vexing charge that there was no basis in scripture for the authority of clergy, and even less for a secular leader of the church such as Elizabeth. In fact, this was the Anglican argument for some of the most powerful attacks made against Rome. The value of promoting the primitive church was that it could be used to legitimate "state religion" (Elizabeth is often compared to Constantine), to claim an early tradition while disavowing Catholic tradition, and still to assert exclusive access to the pure, original Word.

The idea of "history-as-return" also allowed for a conceptual model of circularity in which the "truth" of present events was dependent on the historical events of the apostles, and vice-versa. A martyr's death, for example, could only be understood in its relation to Christ's original martyrdom; at the same time, the meaning of Christ's suffering was revealed to those who witnessed the martyr's suffering, or who read about it in the

Acts and Monuments. This kind of self-legitimizing circularity is frequently a part of an apocalyptic tradition in which biblical prophecy and history are entwined in a relationship of mutual fulfillment. According to Foxe, "the book of Revelation... as it containeth a propheticall history of the church, so likewise it requireth by histories to be opened."⁴⁹ In more secular matters, biblical prophecy explaining Mary's sterility and the poor harvests during her reign, the preservation and accession of Elizabeth, as well as for nearly every event and epoch since the time of the apostles, were easily found and triumphantly acclaimed in the pages of the *Acts and Monuments*.⁵⁰ Perhaps the success of Foxe's book was partially due to the fact that his massive text contains both history and revelation, both recent events and their ancient precedents, thus affording an opportunity in the same narration to realize the fulfillment of what had earlier been prophesied. By engaging circularity as a dominant structure, and history as a return to the original, the *Acts and Monuments* itself uses circularity as a persuasive device: its ideology is hidden behind a veil of historical inevitability.

V

**"Give me your body and I will give you meaning,
I will make you a name and a word in my discourse."⁵¹**

One can find another version of self-validating circularity in the descriptions of the scenes at the stake, and it is with this aspect of the *Acts and Monuments* that I will conclude this essay. The elements in this circular formulation are *belief*, by which I mean the broad Protestant and nationalistic ideology that the text promotes and serves, and *action*, understood as the act of dying at the stake. In a phrase, this formulation operates as follows: belief generates action, and action generates belief. The new faith was given visible, corporeal corroboration by every martyr who went to the stake; at the same time, those who died were buttressed and authenticated by Protestant doctrine. Besides its historical narrative, the *Acts and Monuments* includes textualizations of beliefs and of actions. The examinations, letters and doctrinal disputes – although they are actions in another sense – articulate repetitiously Protestant belief; and the descriptions of burning at the stake constitute the most profound form of human action within that belief system. In its collation, printing and dissemination, the *Acts and Monuments* is the catalytic force behind this mutually validating circularity between what I have termed 'action' and 'belief.'

This explains the text's increasing "momentum" as it swelled from a fairly obscure Latin edition of 732 pages in 1559 to the massive double folio

edition of 1570. In fact, the earliest "version" of the work would have to be Foxe's brief history of the Lollards (1554) or the reports of Marian persecution collected by Edmund Grindal beginning in 1553.⁵² John Bale was probably responsible for initiating the Protestant fascination with martyrs in his accounts of the martyrdoms of Anne Askew and Sir John Oldcastle printed under Edward, both of which became sources of Foxe's accounts.⁵³ Once the impact of the martyr's stories as a way of shaping an English Protestant "identity" was realized, the Marian burnings were evidently perceived as a very popular subject. Other martyrologies, as I have briefly noted above, include Thomas Brice's "A compedious Register in metre" (1559), which points out exuberantly that the martyrs, having ascended into heaven, "are now clothed in white garments of innocency, with crowns of consolation, and palms of victory in [their] hands, following the Lamb wherever He goeth!"⁵⁴ The *Acts and Monuments* of 1563 overwhelms all of these earlier models and is itself overwhelmed by Foxe's exhaustive collection of 1570. Nor does this pattern of textual generation end with those editions produced by Foxe; indeed, as Ernst B. Gilman has written, "the longer the text grows through its successive editions, the greater the number of faithful who are heaped on the faggots – as if, with his materials being constantly consumed, Foxe had constantly to add new fuel to his narrative fire."⁵⁵ Gilman's comment implicitly suggests that written accounts of martyrdom may have engendered further martyrdoms in the act of recording them. In other words, once a rhetoric of martyrdom became widely known, these stories became "conduct books" on how Protestants should live and die. Virtually every argument against the Papacy could be found, as well as a number of nearly identical final performances at the stake. The burnings had ended by the time the *Acts and Monuments* was printed, but this engendering may very well have operated for nineteenth-century martyrs who knew Foxe's book well. In the sixteenth century, it seems likely that the earliest printed accounts of the Marian burnings – perhaps not yet collected – would have been circulated and thus become prototypical for those who followed. From Foxe's accounts, at least, it appears as if each of the martyrs from St. Stephen to the present had read the same conduct book and followed it closely: the gestures, expressions and last words at the stake are strikingly familiar and repetitive of one another. While there are exceptions – notably in the story of the woman who gave birth at the stake – this sameness is probably the result of previous models and of Foxe's desire to collapse differences in his accounts; that is, to make the scenes at the stake *appear* to be repetitions of the same. This repetition serves the function of connecting the present to the original: in

this case the original martyrdom of Christ, described along with the primitive church at the outset of the *Acts and Monuments*. Just as the governing structure of history may be thought of as a circular return in which the Anglican church reproduces the primitive church, the Marian martyrs “ascend” back in history by imitating the earliest martyrdoms. This “ascension” was thus conceived as a return to “purity” (recalling quotations from Foxe and Jewel above) on an individual as well as collective level: the deaths of the martyrs validated the existence of the church, and the existence of the church gave meaning and structure to the deaths of the martyrs.

For these reasons the final moment – the moment of “ascension” – is of great importance to Foxe and, in a different way, to Catholic authorities. For at that moment, either side could find supporting evidence for that particular meaning which they had already assigned to the scene at the stake. Catholic authorities possessed only the visible power to manipulate and punish the body; their design, presumably, was that this manipulation would be enough to deter heresy in others. So resolutely did Catholics insist on their control over the heretical body that several Protestants who had died previously were exhumed and publicly burned (VII: 258, 283). But, as Stephen Greenblatt has remarked, “it is preeminently when his body is subjected to torment that the obstinate heretic is most suffused with the conviction that his soul is inviolable.”⁵⁶ Without control over the visible operations performed on their own bodies, the martyrs seized their invisible and thus inviolable souls as the basis for a symbolics of power. In this fashion, Protestants could wrest from their Catholic tormentors the ability to direct the meaning of the execution in order to enlist the moment of death as supreme evidence of the “truth” of their beliefs.

And yet, nothing that remains invisible can perform this kind of ideological function; consequently, the martyrs require some visible gesture in the final moments that would assure the audience that their souls had indeed transcended corporeal punishment. Whether or not these gestures were actually performed cannot be ascertained, but we can be sure that Foxe articulated them very assiduously in the *Acts and Monuments*. In his historical narrative Foxe has claimed to “make visible” the formerly invisible “true church”; now, in his accounts of the final moment, the “truth” of the martyr’s soul is visibly apparent in Foxe’s textualizations. Rawlins White, for example, is quoted as announcing at the stake: “I feel a great fighting between the flesh and the spirit, and the flesh would very fain have his swinge; and therefore I pray you, when you see me any thing tempted, hold your finger up to me, and I trust I shall remember myself” (VII, 32). In this struggle between “the flesh and the spirit,” White re-enacts the

difference between Catholic and Protestant attempts to define and impose meaning on the event: knowing he will die, White (or Foxe) equates his "flesh" with Catholic oppression, and his ability to "remember himself" with the Protestant cause.

The unique function of language – both written and spoken – in Protestant self-representation thus becomes apparent in the scene at the stake and in Foxe's textualizations of these events. In a phrase, language could be both visible and invisible, both equated to the soul and capable of dissemination among the Protestant community at the same time. A glance at the final moments of Christopher Wade, as reported by Foxe, may assist in elaborating this important point:

Then the reeds being set about him, Wade pulled them, and embraced them in his arms, always with his hands making a hole against his face, that his voice might be heard, which they perceiving that were his tormentors, always cast faggots at the same hole, which, notwithstanding, he still, as he could, put off, his face being hurt with the end of a faggot cast thereat. Then fire being put unto him, he cried unto God often, 'Lord Jesus! receive my soul;' without any token or sign of impatiency in the fire, till at length, after the fire was once thoroughly kindled, he was heard by no man to speak. . . . (VII, 320–21)

Wade literally appropriates the means of his own execution (the "reeds") in order to fashion a mouthpiece for his speech. By continuing to speak to the crowd and to exhort them with his anti-Catholic rhetoric (which Foxe records) while he is burning, the Word appears to compete with the corporeal power of the Catholics. Wade's speech becomes a visible (or audible) sign that his soul has triumphed over his body, thus assuring a symbolic victory for his own cause. The Word is invisible inasmuch as it is equated with the soul, yet "visible" as it persuades the crowd and shapes the meaning of the event. Catholic authorities, in the sequence above, attempt to silence Wade by stuffing his mouthpiece with faggots, relying on the very means of *their* power. If they successfully silence Wade, it will be understood as a victory of physical coercion over verbal persuasion.

Inevitably, Wade and every other martyr will be silenced at the stake, their Word finally put out. Unable to let this conclusion remain, Foxe concludes his account of Wade with the following postscript: "This sign did God show upon him, whereby his very enemies might perceive, that God had, according to his prayer, showed such a token upon him, even to their shame [and] confusion. And this was the order of this godly martyr's execution: this was his end; whereby God seemed to confound and *strike*

with the spirit of dumbness the friar, that locust which was risen up to have spoken against him" (VII, 321; my emphasis). The friar is silenced as the Word (and Wade's soul) ascends or returns to its origin. The final, visible victory of the Word is precisely in the *Acts and Monuments* itself; Wade may have been silenced, but his speech is perpetuated and disseminated in Foxe's textualization.⁵⁷

So often in Foxe's accounts, the martyrs die with a book in their hands, reading their last words from the Bible. And Foxe repeatedly places the martyr's letters sequentially after his description of their executions in his narrative. Both gestures suggest a transformation from physical body into text, motivated by, as Michel deCerteau writes, "the obscure desire to exchange one's flesh for a glorious body, to be written, even if it means dying, and to be transformed into a recognized word."⁵⁸ Just as the dominant strategy of Protestantism in general is to return to the Word, the Protestant martyr is transformed from his own corporeality into the *logos* made immortal by texts such as the *Acts and Monuments*.

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- 1 Warren Wooden, *John Foxe* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), p. 111.
- 2 For accounts of the textual history of the *Acts and Monuments*, see the following: Wooden, *John Foxe*, pp. 93–104; William Haller, *The Elect Nation: The Meaning and Relevance of Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), passim; D. M. Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs* (New York: Stein and Day, 1970), pp. 20–36.
- 3 V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1973), pp. 197–219. Certainly there are some obscure exceptions to this observation, including Bruce L. Shelley, *The Cross and the Flame: Chapters in the History of Martyrdom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967).
- 4 J. F. Mozeley, *John Foxe and His Book* (1940; reprint ed., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1970).
- 5 Helen C. White, *Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 1963), p. 322.
- 6 See Haller, *The Elect Nation*.
- 7 Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs*, p. 36.
- 8 John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1824). "Charles Dodd" is apparently a pseudonym for Hugh Tootel, *The Church History of England* (London, 1732).
- 9 Quoted in Wooden, *John Foxe*, p. 109.
- 10 George Townsend, "Answers to Objectors," Preface to John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments*, ed. Stephen R. Cattley, 8 vols. (1837–1841; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press Inc, 1965), p. 167. Cattley based his text on the 1583 edition, but included parts of other editions as well. References to the main body of the *Acts and Monuments* will be from this edition and incorporated into the text.

- 11 Townsend, "Answers to Objectors," p. 168 (his emphasis).
- 12 Quoted in Wooden, *John Foxe*, p. 100.
- 13 Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs*, p. 269.
- 14 Leslie M. Oliver, "The Seventh Edition of John Foxe's Acts and Monuments," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 37 (1943), pp. 243-60. See also Haller, *The Elect Nation*, pp. 227-28.
- 15 Although Strype wrote that the text was required to be "enjoined to be set up... in all parish churches," there is no extant document to that effect, although there are requirements for the Bible, *Book of Common Prayer*, and the homilies. A liberal estimate of the likely number of copies for all of the Elizabethan editions suggests that only half the parish churches - and this does not include those who owned private copies - could have kept a copy; see Leslie M. Oliver, "The Seventh Edition," pp. 245-48.
- 16 J. W. Martin, "A Sidelight on Foxe's Account of the Marian Martyrs," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 58 (1985), 249.
- 17 Harpsfield's *Dialogi Sex* (Antwerp: 1566) is noted in Haller, *The Elect Nation*, p. 166.
- 18 Quoted in Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs*, p. 31.
- 19 Noted in Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs*, p. 31.
- 20 See Wooden, *John Foxe*, pp. 97-98.
- 21 *Foxe's Book of Martyrs, or A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Primitive Protestant Martyrs* (New York: R. Worthington, 1884).
- 22 These publications are discussed in Wooden, *John Foxe*, p. 104.
- 23 According to the MLA's Center for Scholarly Editions, "it is frequently true that an author's completed manuscript, or - when the manuscript does not survive - the earliest printed edition based on it, reflects the author's intentions more fully than later editions or transcripts, in which printers' or copyists' corruptions are likely to have multiplied; in such cases, an editor producing a critical text would choose the early copy-text and emend it to correct erroneous readings..." quoted in Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1983), p. 7.
- 24 McGann, *A Critique*, passim.
- 25 Wooden, *John Foxe*, p. 110.
- 26 This is the estimation of Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1986), p. 46.
- 27 Haller, *The Elect Nation*, p. 249.
- 28 Haller, *The Elect Nation*, p. 9.
- 29 This is my own inference based on the picture of literacy presented in David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1980).
- 30 The book would seem to have this status when it is held, for example, by martyrs at the stake. See the discussion of the martyr James Bainham in Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1980), pp. 74-87, 92-110.
- 31 This distribution is based on the edition of Stephen R. Cattley cited above, VII, 143-286. Bradford's story is considerably longer than most, but the sequence and distribution represents most of Foxe's accounts.
- 32 Foxe's "Kalendar" is reprinted in Cattley, ed., vol. I, n. pag. Foxe's desire to fill every date produces some obscure entries, such as "Thre dyed in pryson in Cicester," (29

- October). For a brief discussion of the "Kalendar," see Helen C. White, *Tudor Books*, pp. 136-37.
- 33 Thomas Brice, *A compedious Register in metre* (1559), in A. F. Pollard, ed., *Tudor Tracts, 1532-1588* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1964), pp. 269-85.
 - 34 J. W. Martin, "A Sidelight," p. 249.
 - 35 Wooden, Preface to *John Foxe*, n. pag.
 - 36 John Foxe, "To the True and Faithful Congregation of Christ's Universal Church" Preface to *The Acts and Monuments* (1563 ed.), in Cattley, ed., p. xix.
 - 37 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1966), p. 127, passim.
 - 38 See Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 234-35, and Walter Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1958).
 - 39 John Foxe, "To the Right Virtuous, Most Excellent, and Noble Princess, Queen Elizabeth," dedication of *The Acts and Monuments* (1563 ed.), in Cattley, ed., p. vii.
 - 40 By this practice, Foxe may be said to utilize a post-printing-press version of classical mnemonic systems in which his representation is more accurately presented as if it were a reproduction. According to Richard Terdiman, memory-as-reproduction "tends toward defeat of the transformative effects of social time," consistent with Foxe's general effort to present the English church not as new and different but as a return to something prior. See Richard Terdiman, "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France Since the Revolution," *Diacritics* 15 (1985), p. 29.
 - 41 John Foxe, "To the Persecutors of God's Turth, Commonly Called Papists," Preface to *The Acts and Monuments* (1563 ed.), in Cattley, ed., p. xiii.
 - 42 John Foxe, "To the True and Faithful," p. xix.
 - 43 Foxe's model appears to have been John Bale's *The image of bothe churches* (1550). For a discussion of Bale and his influence on Foxe, see Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1978), and Haller, *The Elect Nation*, p. 63.
 - 44 See F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1967), pp. 103-04, and John King, *English Reformation Literature: the Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ., 1982), p. 437.
 - 45 John Foxe, "The Utility of This Story," Preface to *The Acts and Monuments* (1563 ed.), in Cattley, ed., p. xxvii.
 - 46 Quoted in White, *Tudor Books*, pp. 170-71.
 - 47 For discussions of this controversy, see: A. C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose, 1559-1582* (London, 1950), pp. 60-66, and Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, pp. 105-14.
 - 48 John Jewel, "An Apology of Answer in Defence of the Church of England," in *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury*, Parker Soc., ed. John Ayre (Cambridge: The Univ. Press, 1849), p. 100.
 - 49 John Foxe, "To All the Professed Friends and Followers of the Pope's Proceedings," Preface to *The Acts and Monuments* (1570 ed.) in Cattley, ed., p. xxx.
 - 50 This is the presiding argument of Haller, *The Elect Nation*.
 - 51 This is Michel de Certeau's paraphrase of one who would "find in a discourse the means of transforming themselves into a unit of meaning, into an identity." See his richly suggestive chapter, "The Scriptural Economy," in *The Practices of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1984); the quotation is found on page 149.

- 52 Foxe's Latin history of the Lollards was published from Strasburg in 1554 under the title *Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum*.
- 53 John Bale's *First Examinaycon of Anne Askew* (1548), *Lattre Examinaycon of Anne Askew* (1547) and *A Briebe Chronicle Concerning John Oldcastle* (1548) provided the basis for Foxe's accounts of these martyrs.
- 54 Brice, "A compedious Register in metre," p. 261.
- 55 Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry*, p. 46.
- 56 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 80.
- 57 The penultimate line of Foxe's narrative on the martyrdom of Rawlins White reads: "the chief cause of his trouble, was his opinion touching the sacrament of the altar" (VII, 33). The martyr's statements on the issue of the Eucharist was a touchstone of Catholic examinations. The Anglican position was that Christ's body held only a symbolic presence rather than an actual one, an opposition that is reproduced in the struggle between flesh and spirit at the stake.
- 58 deCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 149.