Toward a New Biography of John Foxe

Michael F. Graham

John Foxe (1517-87) has been out of style for a long time. Much of this is due to the fact that he has been seen as one of the first of a bad historical pedigree: partisan historians of the Reformation. Since polemical historiography, with its controlling imperative of vindicating one side or the other, has plagued Reformation studies until the fairly recent past (and who is to say we are entirely over the affliction?), few have shown much interest in Foxe, known only for his writing of history. Other contemporary historians of the Reformation, such as John Knox and Theodore Beza, had distinguished careers as theologians, reformers and active controversialists to recommend themselves as well, and have attracted scholarly interest as "movers and shakers," not as historians. But Foxe himself remained in the background, and it was only his history, the *Acts and Monuments*,[1] which made his name a household word in Protestant England until at least the nineteenth century.

Gordon Rupp conveyed the nature of the continuing attraction of *Acts and Monuments* in that period when he wrote:

> The sturdily Protestant homes of Victorian England gave it, along with *Pilgrim's Progress*, its last burst of popularity, and was considered fit reading for Sunday when other books were shut away. Some years ago an old lady gave me three folio volumes of the book, and told me in a letter how she and her brothers used to sit in the study of a Kentish rectory on Sunday afternoons while her father read aloud to them from Foxe, and while her eldest brother, as a special privilege, was allowed to curl up in a corner with a folio volume to himself.[2]

To an age in search of heroes, Foxe's book provided them, just as his book had provided vindication and justification to his sixteenth-century contemporaries. Rosemary O'Day, in her recent study of English Reformation historiography, has written:

> Before Foxe wrote there was no popular history of the Reformation;

> after him, there was no other. Foxe's perspective was so dominant that nineteenth-century historians who disagreed with him had their work cut out to dethrone him. And even today it seems that academic historians are doing little more than crossing the martyrologists t's and dotting his i's.[3]

It is from Foxe that we have the story of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, as he was burned alive at Oxford for heresy in March 1556, putting his right hand–with which he had signed his recantation of the reformed religion–into the fire first.[4] Likewise, the story of Queen Mary, on her deathbed, pining away for her absent husband, Phillip II of Spain, and declaring that she would have Calais written upon her heart, comes from Foxe, who wrote that he was given this information by an eyewitness.[5] A prophetic speech Foxe attributed to Hugh Latimer on the stake has found its way into numerous textbooks–turning to Nicholas Ridley, who was to be incinerated with him, Latimer allegedly said: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out."[6]

Foxe's book was far better known than its author, with the result that modern scholars have provided critical studies of Foxe's writings,[7] his theology and ecclesiology,[8] and the impact of *Acts and Monuments* on the English national self-consciousness,[9] but the only nearly modern biography of Foxe is a short, quaint, and highly partisan account published in 1940 under the auspices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.[10] Thus the man behind the book remains elusive. Is there a need for a new biography? How much do we know about him?

FOXE'S LIFE

Foxe was born in Boston, Lincolnshire, probably in 1517, although perhaps in 1516. His family was of no great stature, but Foxe's father died when his son was very young, and his widow then married Richard Melton, the wealthiest yeoman in Coningsby, Lincolnshire. Foxe was apparently readily accepted by his stepfather, and later wrote affectionately of him.[11] In 1534 Foxe went to Oxford to study at Brasenose College, having attracted the attention of John Hawarden, rector of Coningsby and a fellow of Brasenose. Foxe took his bachelor's degree in 1537, and the following year became a fellow of Magdalen College. While at Magdalen, drinking deeply of humanistic scholarship, Foxe became interested in reformed religion.[12]

The few scholars who have looked closely at Foxe assume that his abrupt resignation from Magdalen in late 1545 was due to his Protestantism, although there may be some room for interpretation on the point.

College regulations stipulated that each fellow take holy orders within a year of taking a Master's Degree, a distinction Foxe attained in 1544. A letter survives in manuscript written by Foxe in 1544 to the master of Magdalen defending himself against the charge that he had repeatedly stayed away from mass and had laughed in church.[13] Foxe maintained that his few absences had been excused, and that he was a young man, prone to laughter. Any Henrician Catholic might have offered such an excuse, but the added declaration that his only offense was careful study of scripture has been taken as an indication of his Protestant leanings. There has been some debate as to whether Protestantism would have been a handicap at Magdalen[14]–perhaps Foxe was trying to gain favor from a superior who would have favored scriptural study–but at any rate, he resigned the following year, due either to his Protestantism or his reluctance to take vows, or both. If he was not yet a confirmed Protestant, he was nevertheless beginning to seek answers *sola scriptura* and was in contact with Hugh Latimer.[15]

After leaving Oxford, Foxe became a tutor in the household of William Lucy, a gentleman who lived near Stratford-upon-Avon, and in 1547 married Agnes Randall. But for some reason, he left the Lucy household, and by late 1547 he and his wife were in London. There, Foxe found employment in one of the leading houses of England; he was hired by the Duchess of Richmond as tutor to three of her brother's children.[16] The duchess was the widow of a bastard son of Henry VIII, and her father, the Duke of Norfolk, was uncle to two of Henry VIII's wives. Norfolk was staunchly Catholic, but he was in prison on treason charges when his daughter hired Foxe. His son, the poetic Earl of Surrey and father to Foxe's three pupils, had been beheaded for treason in January 1547.

The eldest of Foxe's pupils was Thomas Howard, heir to the family dukedom, who was to remain Foxe's primary patron until Howard suffered the same fate as his father in 1572. In addition to the bond forged with his leading pupil, Foxe made another important connection in 1548 when he met the Protestant John Bale, who was also part of the duchess's circle.[17] Bale wrote historical works with a nationalistic bent, such as a morality play featuring King John as Everyman battling the Pope.[18] Edward Haller has stressed the influence of Bale's nationalistic view of history on Foxe's own work. In 1548, Foxe also foreshadowed his future opposition to capital punishment for heretics with his treatise *De Non Plectendis Morte Adulteris*, opposing the execution of convicted adulterers.[19] Biographer J.F. Mozley suggested that Foxe was actively opposing the burning of heretics by 1550, surmising that Foxe himself was the "certain friend" reported in *Acts and Monuments* to have urged John Rogers, then lecturer at St. Paul's and a future victim of the fire himself, to intercede with Cranmer on behalf of the Anabaptist Joan of Kent.[20]

It was at this point in his life that Foxe became a clergyman, an occupation which never brought him high position, but nevertheless was critical to his vocation and tied him into a network of influential divines. In June 1550, Ridley ordained Foxe as a deacon, and in April 1551, Foxe wrote a tract calling for the increased use of excommunication as a means of purging the church, particularly its clergy.[21] The death of Edward VI in 1554 had a particularly strong influence on Foxe; in addition to the religious changes instituted by Queen Mary came the release from prison of the old Duke of Norfolk, who relieved Foxe of his teaching duties. Young Thomas Howard was sent to the household of Stephen Gardiner, conservative bishop of Winchester and one of the arch-villains of Foxe's history.[22]

Foxe remained in England for a short time, but he fled to the continent before the year was out, first to Antwerp, thence to Rotterdam–to visit the birthplace of Erasmus–Frankfurt, and Strasbourg. From Strasbourg in 1554 he published the *Commentarii Rerum In Ecclesia Gestarum*, a short volume detailing the persecutions of the Lollards and their successors up to about 1500.[23] Although the book was tiny compared to Foxe's later tomes, and written in a language comprehensible only to scholars, it shows Foxe already at work on martyrology, and demonstrates that he had already adopted the two overriding themes of his history: that a new era of the persecution of the saints had begun in the fourteenth century, and that it was the Lollards, an English group, that had begun the process of Reformation later taken up by Huss, Luther and Zwingli.

In the autumn of 1554, Foxe and his wife returned to Frankfurt, where a factional dispute was soon to split the congregation of English exiles. John Knox, William Whittingham, and others sought further liturgical reforms than had been undertaken under Edward VI, while Richard Coxe led a group which wanted to hold to the forms of worship prescribed by the 1552 Book of Common Prayer. Foxe considered the unity of the exile community more important than such small doctrinal matters, but when Knox, undermined by his opponents, left for Geneva, Foxe left with others of the "Calvinist" group for Basel.[24]

At Basel, Foxe kept up friendly correspondence with Knox and Heinrich Bullinger, reproaching the former for his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, and it was there that his daughters Christiana and Dorcas were born.[25] Published letters to and from Edmund Grindal, then in exile in Strasbourg, indicate that Foxe was living in poverty, forced for a time to work collating pages of St. John Chrysostom for the printers Froben and Episcopus.[26] The letters also demonstrate an information network in action. Accounts of the Marian persecutions were reaching the continent from England, and Grindal was collecting them for a martyrology he intended to publish in English. He

was passing the information on to Foxe, who was at work on an expanded version of his 1554 *Commentarii*. Conscious of the propaganda value of the accounts, Foxe and Grindal also sought to maintain a party line, as when the latter urged Foxe to edit judiciously the account of John Philpot, who in his deposition hinted at a belief in the Real Presence.[27] Perhaps he had been locked up too long without his books, Grindal suggested.

The death of Mary and accession of Elizabeth in 1558 sent most of the exiles hurrying back to England, but Foxe and his family remained in Basel until 1559, when he published his expanded *Commentarii*, carrying the persecutions through the martyrdom of Cranmer. The book was dedicated to his former pupil Thomas, now Duke of Norfolk, who presently wrote to Foxe urging him to return to England.[28] Foxe spent most of the next ten years living in Norfolk's London house. His sons Samuel and Simeon were born in 1560 and 1568, respectively. Foxe was ordained a priest at St. Paul's in January 1560.[29] Grindal never published his planned English martyrology, and it fell onto Foxe to write the history of the Marian persecutions in the vernacular. But rather than simply translate his 1559 *Commentarii*, Foxe gathered new material, carrying the story forward to the seemingly miraculous succession of Elizabeth, and back to the year 1000. The *magnum opus*, published by the London printer John Daye in 1563 with a dedication to the queen, was twice the length of the 700-page 1559 edition.

Acts and Monuments was published at a critical juncture. Elizabeth had nearly died of smallpox in 1562, and in 1563 Parliament was urging her to marry–her life was the fragile thread by which the fate of Protestant England was hanging. Foxe's book was a grim reminder of things recently passed whose danger still lurked on the horizon. In Haller's words:

> These were not legends of martyrs long ago but reports of known and identifiable persons, some of them chief actors in events everyone had heard of, some of them ordinary folk, in whom anyone might see himself, but all of them engaged in the same conflict with the same still active adversary.[30]

For the illiterate majority, the book included numerous woodcuts, usually of the burnings themselves. As a whole, it became a part of the national legend, and Foxe was rewarded by the queen with a prebend at Salisbury Cathedral.[31] He was also rewarded with a flood of letters from witnesses to the Marian persecutions, and from those who had been victims of persecution themselves, or whose relatives had been victims.[32] The result, naturally, was a new edition of *Acts and Monuments*, a 2,314-page version which carried the ecclesiastical history back to the time of the apostles. This was the edition which was placed in all the churches of

England, alongside the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.[33]

Indeed, for many, *Acts and Monuments* was the Bible carried forward to the present day, and Haller sees it as essential to the development of English national self-consciousness. Carrying the story back to the apostles, Foxe retold the legend from Gildas of Joseph of Arimathea bringing the Gospel to Britain, thus giving England a Christian heritage that stretched beyond the Romish mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury.[34] Based on his own calculations from the Book of Revelations, Foxe concluded that the Emperor Constantine's toleration of Christianity marked the end of the early period of true Christian martyrdom and the beginning of the thousand-year captivity of Satan. By such reckoning, Satan was loosed again in the fourteenth century, and Foxe saw his hand in the persecutions of the Lollards.[35] God had a new chosen people–the Reformed Christians of England, and Elizabeth was their Deborah. In Haller's view, and his case is certainly convincing, Foxe laid the cornerstone of the Elizabethan legend: "Had any monarch ever been so served by a writer with such a sense of what people would delight to hear concerning their ruler?"[36]

Foxe lived on to the eve of the Spanish Armada, dying on 18 April 1587 and was buried at St. Giles Cripplegate in London.[37] In his later years he occasionally gave public sermons, as in 1577 when he preached at the public conversion of a Spanish Jew in Lombard Street.[38] This sermon, which emphasized points of commonality between Judaism and Christianity,[39] was published the following year and dedicated to Sir Francis Walsingham. Foxe's influential friends during that period included Walsingham and Sir William Cecil.[40] He also remained close to the Duke of Norfolk until the latter was executed for his involvement with Mary Stuart and the Ridolfi Plot. A letter survives in which Foxe warned Norfolk against marriage with the Scottish queen, reminding him of the biblical example of Mephiboseth, a grandson of Saul suspected of trying to usurp the throne of Israel while David was in exile from Jerusalem. Interestingly, the letter never mentions Mary's Catholicism, only warning that a marriage between her and Norfolk might be "dangerous to the tranquility of the realm."[41]

FOXE'S VERACITY

Not surprisingly, given the nature of his historical perspective, Foxe came under attack for having distorted the truth. Nicholas Harpsfield, an archdeacon of Canterbury under Mary Tudor who was imprisoned by Elizabeth, writing under the pseudonym of Alan Cope, accused Foxe in 1566 of having portrayed as martyrs numerous persons who were actually executed for theft or treason.[42] Foxe was embarrassed in 1585 over the

case of a man named Grimwood, who is reported in *Acts and Monuments* to have had his bowels fall out–a punishment from God–shortly after perjuring against the Protestant John Cooper of Wattisham, Suffolk.[43] A preacher using this as a cautionary tale against dishonesty was sued for slander by Grimwood, who apparently was alive and well and in the audience when the preacher cited him as an example.[44] Foxe was a popular target for Jesuits, and in 1604, Robert Parsons, S.J., published a volume questioning Foxe's interpretation of the origin of English Christianity, accusing Foxe of exaggerating the cruelty of the Marian bishops, and charging that William Tyndale, one of the heroes of Foxe's history, was a hypocrite.[45]

But the most prolonged and possibly the most venomous attack upon Foxe came two centuries later from a high-church Anglican, S.R. Maitland, librarian of Lambeth Palace, in the 1830s and 1840s. At that time S.R. Cattley was publishing his complete eight-volume set of *Acts and Monuments*, and in a series of articles in the *British Magazine*, a religious publication, Maitland excoriated Cattley and Foxe. "I ask all sober-minded men what good can be expected from reprinting such trash?" he wrote.[46] He accused Cattley of further bastardizing Latin place-names that Foxe had already bastardized beyond recognition.[47] Foxe's mistranslations also came under fire,[48] and the martyrologist was accused by Maitland of having mistaken the identities of the leading participants at the Council of Basel, confusing place-names so as to turn, for instance, a Scottish abbot into a Greek abbot.[49]

As well as exposing numerous factual errors, Maitland found fault with the general tone of Foxe's work. To him, its republication seemed likely to aggravate religious differences. Indeed, Protestant propagandists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had not hesitated to publish new editions of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" (often updated with new "martyrs," such as, in one case, the Protestant fanatic Lord George Gordon) whenever government concessions to Catholicism seemed in the offing.[50] Maitland objected to the impiety of Foxe's humor, and to his attacks on pre-Reformation saints such as Francis of Assisi.[51] "I do think that truth and charity are outraged, and the real working of God in his church is concealed or misrepresented, by presumptuous ignorance and party spleen, when men write as Foxe does of St. Francis."[52] Although Maitland's attacks did not prevent the publication of the Cattley edition, they did shake Foxe's reputation to the degree that even the most recent biography of Foxe (Mozley, 1940) is essentially an *apologia* against Maitland.

Modern historians of the English Reformation, while rejecting Foxe's polemical rhetoric, have accepted Foxe as a source of names, dates and numbers of martyrs. Fr. Phillip Hughes, narrating the Reformation

from a Catholic perspective, has noted that "all the vices of the old hagiography are here" in Foxe.[53] But he then cites *Acts and Monuments* for the bare details of martyrdoms, as does A.G. Dickens, who even quotes dialogue out of Foxe.[54] According to Dickens, "the martyrologist, who was a large-scale compiler rather than a fastidious historian, showed immense industry in amassing documentary information even if his standards of accuracy are not those of modern scholarship." Foxe cited numerous sources, such as bishops' *acta*, which have since disappeared. But Dickens has found that surviving *acta*, where available, generally bear him out.[55] Gina Alexander, in a recent article rehabilitating Edmund Bonner, Marian Bishop of London, from Foxe's portrayal as a sadistic villain of persecution, also acquits Foxe of factual perjury, convicting him only of interpretational zeal.[56] Thus while modern historians may be embarrassed by Foxe's bluster, they dutifully fall in behind him when chopping through the historical jungle of mid-Tudor England.

SOURCES FOR FOXE'S LIFE

It is perhaps natural that most studies of Foxe have concentrated upon *Acts and Monuments* and its effect rather than following the life of its author. *Acts and Monuments* is such a huge source that it simply overwhelms any collection of material on Foxe. It tells a great deal about his outlook and opinions, but little about his life.[57] Thus its value is limited to anyone attempting a biography of John Foxe.

The starting point for anyone seeking details of Foxe's life is a memoir included as a preface to a 1641 edition of *Acts and Monuments*, attributed to one of Foxe's sons. While Maitland questioned its authenticity, J.F. Mozley demonstrated the strong likelihood that it was not spurious, positing Simeon, Foxe's youngest son, as its author.[58] The memoir is extremely laudatory of its subject but, like *Acts and Monuments*, can be accepted for specific facts. A rough draft of it survives in the British Museum's Lansdowne collection.

Numerous other papers and letters of Foxe survive in that collection, as well as in the Harleian collection, and have been used by Mozley and Foxe's earlier biographers. It would appear that Foxe's family loaned much of Foxe's material to John Strype (d. 1737), biographer of Thomas Cranmer and annalist of the English Reformation, who never returned it. After Strype's death the manuscripts were purchased by representatives of the Earl of Oxford (Robert Harley) and the Marquess of Lansdowne. Some of the Foxe manuscripts from the Harleian collection were published by the Camden Society more than 100 years ago in a volume edited by John G. Nichols.[59] These show Foxe at work, receiving and annotating material for *Acts and Monuments*. For example, John Louthe, archdeacon

of Nottingham, wrote to Foxe in 1579, urging him not to be discouraged by the attacks of the "lovanyone luske" Harpsfield, and providing him with new details of some Marian martyrdoms.[60] Foxe's correspondence with Grindal while both were in exile, referred to earlier (see p. 6), was also published in the nineteenth century from the Harleian manuscripts.[61] Various other letters and writings of Foxe, from the Harleian and Lansdowne collections as well as various other sources, appear in the Cattley edition of *Acts and Monuments*.[62]

But given the number and the prominence of those with whom Foxe was in correspondence--Cecil, John Knox, Francis Drake, Bullinger, Norfolk, Walsingham, Peter Martyr, Flacius Illyricus, just to name a few in addition to Latimer and Grindal, cited above--it seems likely that additional letters to and from Foxe exist. Mozley, writing on the eve of World War II, was unable to make use of many continental archives, such as those in Basel, which might have provided additional details of Foxe's exile. The Norfolk family archives in Arundel Castle contain much unpublished material, and the family's repeated brushes with treason in the sixteenth century landed many of their papers in the Public Record Office.[63] None of Foxe's biographers appear to have looked at these documents, but a search might uncover material relating to Foxe's work as tutor to the fourth duke and his siblings, or to his life in the period 1559-72, much of it spent living in Howard family properties in London and Norwich. Even in the unlikely event that none of these other sources provide anything on Foxe, a new biography, conceived outside of the context of sectarian partisanship, is needed.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP ON FOXE

As noted above, Foxe has been studied in the last thirty years by Edward Haller (1963), Viggo Olsen (1973) and the late Warren Wooden (1983). Haller concentrated on the importance of Foxe's history to the English national self-consciousness, Olsen dealt with his theology, and Wooden has sought to rehabilitate him as a leading literary stylist of the Elizabethan era.

The last biography of Foxe was that of J.F. Mozley (1940), and its partisanship makes it seem older than it actually is. Mozley felt that Foxe's reputation was still suffering from Maitland's attacks, and this compelled him to follow closely in the footsteps of Simeon Foxe, characterizing his hero as "sincere, humble, otherworldly, a diligent student, fearless and outspoken, friendly with all men, warmhearted, tolerant above his age, a great champion of the poor and oppressed, incomparably charitable, held in general reverence, [and] accompanied to his funeral by crowds of mourners."[64] The book was published under the auspices of the

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and further reveals its outlook by the constant use of the word "papist" for Roman Catholic. Indeed, Mozley's tone is scarcely removed from that of James Townsend's 1841 *Life and Defence of John Foxe*.[65] Townsend's discursive style led him into making such statements as, "popery will ever unite with infidelity, and infidelity with popery, to destroy spiritual religion; as Herod and Pilate–the nominal Jew and the liberal Gentile–were united to destroy Christ."[66] Townsend did provide the service of publishing many of Foxe's letters from the Harleian manuscripts within his narrative, providing a valuable glimpse of the martyrologist as spiritual advisor, patron of young clergy, and even matchmaker.[67] But Townsend displayed himself a true disciple of Foxe the Anglocentric historian in his discussion of the 1569 bull of Pope Pius V deposing Elizabeth as queen. The pope, according to Townsend, "violently . . . separated himself and his church from their communion with the Anglican Church."[68] Mozley was not quite so uncritical, suggesting that Foxe "will lead us to historic truth, help us plant our feet upon the solid rock. This does not mean that we swallow uncritically everything that he says. . . ."[69] Nevertheless, Mozley was part of the sectarian battle over Foxe dating back to Harpsfield, a battle which any new biography ought to transcend.

TOWARD A NEW BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN FOXE

The governing principle of a new Foxe biography ought to be a scrupulous avoidance of sectarian polemics. Given the size and scope of the work he produced, much of it completed while in exile under far from ideal conditions, Foxe is clearly deserving of great respect from any historian, regardless of religious persuasion. But this respect should not lead to his deification as the divinely inspired prophet of Protestant England, as it did for Townsend, Mozley and even Haller. Conversely, Foxe's numerous errors must not be used as grounds for dismissing him as the deceitful godfather of whiggish historiography, as it did for Maitland. It should surprise no one that Foxe suppressed details which did not fit into his scheme of history; none of his contemporaries would have done any differently.[70] In the sixteenth century, history was still rhetoric, and Foxe was a master of the art. Therein lies his achievement.

With that in mind, a new Foxe biographer might also concentrate on several unresolved questions concerning Foxe. The first probably has no answer, and it is in seeking one that others have made mistakes. Those who have studied Foxe have generally sought to put a label on him, to identify him with either the "Puritan" or the conservative wing of the English church. Hughes called him "a stalwart of the radical group among the Reformers."[71] Townsend praised Foxe throughout his biogra-

phy as an Anglican Episcopalian, although noting that "we may justly regret" his adherence to the "Puritan" camp in the Frankfurt dispute.[72] Townsend clearly had to claim Foxe as a conservative because of his own distaste for Puritanism: "Nonconformity was kindled at Frankfurt; Puritanism at Basel, among a few exiles. They have rent the church of Christ and done infinite harm to pure and vital Christianity."[73] Olsen, on the other hand, ranks him with the Puritan wing of the English church.[74] Haller sees him as a predestinarian Calvinist who believed "that the church was essentially a communion of elect souls possessed by faith in the Word."[75] But Haller undermines his own case when, discussing a sermon Foxe preached at St. Paul's Cross, London, in 1570, he notes Foxe's emphasis on God's offer of salvation to all who reach out and accept the Word.[76]

Foxe did side with Knox and Whittingham at Frankfurt. He offered some resistance to clerical vestments, unpopular with the nascent Puritan movement, after the accession of Elizabeth.[77] Yet it troubled him little to hold a prebend at Salisbury which he never visited, farming out the advowson to a relative of his wife. In 1568 he was held to be contumacious for his non-attendance, but apparently nothing came of the charge.[78] Foxe resigned another prebend at Durham only when he discovered that residence would be required.[79] While he rejected Catholic saints such as Francis of Assisi and Dominic, *Acts and Monuments* was really a catalogue of potential Protestant saints, complete, in the 1563 edition, with a "kalender" of martyrs' days.[80] In the 1570s, he opposed Thomas Cartwright and others who sought a Presbyterian church structure,[81] and, in perhaps the most curious twist of all, he remained a faithful friend and client of the crypto-Catholic Fourth Duke of Norfolk until the latter's execution. Foxe attended his old pupil on the chopping block, where the duke proclaimed his Protestantism.[82] Townsend recognized that Foxe might be held guilty by association and, although Norfolk confessed to having had contact with the papal envoy Ridolfi, argued that the duke was no Catholic or rebel, but was rather ensnared by the beauty of the Scottish queen (whom, by the way, he had never met), "ignorant of the extent to which she had pledged herself both to the Cardinal of Lorraine, and the Pope."[83]

Thus the proper label to put on Foxe is probably no label at all. He was staunchly anti-papal, but historians ransom themselves to their own teleology when they insist on seeing every noteworthy divine of the mid-sixteenth century as a direct ancestor of some seventeenth-century spiritual offspring. Cartwright may well fit a Presbyterian mold,[84] but Foxe was of an earlier generation, more interested in the broad principle of independence from Rome than in intramural doctrinal disputes.

Another unresolved issue concerning Foxe is his financial status.

His admirers have unflinchingly professed his saintly poverty. Mozley wrote that "no one who knew Foxe can remember that he ever showed by speech or action the least longing after honour, riches, applause, or the like,"[85] although he himself reports that Foxe wrote a series of letters in 1564 to John Parkhurst, bishop of Norwich, unsuccessfully seeking another prebend.[86] For Wooden, Foxe "lived all of his adult life on the margin of poverty,"[87] a characterization strongly reminiscent of Rupp's: "throughout his long life Foxe lived on the margin of poverty."[88] Naturally, Townsend did not disagree, and this claim has attained gospel status simply through repetition. The seed of evidence is hard to find, beyond the clear hardship of Foxe's years in exile. We do know that in 1563, as a reward for his service to the queen, he was given a prebend worth forty pounds a year with a vicarage worth sixteen pounds a year, both of which remained in the family after his death.[89] On the day of his execution, Norfolk rewarded Foxe for his faithfulness with a twenty pound annual pension.[90] Assuming all of these were paid, that would leave Foxe with an annual income after 1572 of seventy-six pounds, out of which he would have had to pay a vicar no more than sixteen pounds, and probably significantly less. Sixty to sixty-five pounds a year was no insignificant sum in those years, and these calculations do not take into account any other sources of income, such as the prebend at Durham held for a year, or any profits from books. A close look at the Harleian, Lansdowne and Norfolk family manuscripts might give a good indication of the income opportunities available to an influential propagandist like Foxe, as well as the extent and nature of his generosity.

Another mystery surrounding Foxe, and one which may well be impossible to solve, is the question of why he suddenly quit as tutor to the Lucy family in 1547 and went to London, with a new wife and seemingly no prospects. Then, why did the premier noble family of England hire him as tutor? Neville Williams, who has presumably scoured the Norfolk archives while researching his biography of Foxe's star pupil, grants that "it seems incongruous" that the Duchess of Richmond would have hired such an obscure man–a recent Magdalen dropout–as tutor, but offers no explanation.[91]

One claim which a new biography of Foxe certainly should put to rest is the contention that he was an advocate of religious toleration. John McNeill, who certainly ought to know better, has written that "Foxe deserves recognition as one of the most prominent advocates of religious toleration in his century," and, even further, that this philosophy "seems to link him with eighteenth century advocates of human rights."[92] McNeill bases his claim on the fact that Foxe was an admirer of Marsiglio of Padua, fourteenth-century author of the *Defensor Pacis*, and on a series of letters which Foxe wrote on behalf of two Flemish Anabaptists, condemned to

death in 1575.[93] But Foxe did not urge toleration of the Anabaptists' opinions--he merely opposed burning them at the stake for heresy, as such a punishment "seems to follow more the example of Rome than the custom of the Gospel."[94] Capital punishment, in Foxe's opinion, would not give the heretics a chance to repent and save their souls. Instead, he suggested, "there are banishments, close confinements, there are chains, there are perpetual exiles, there are brandings or even gibbets" which might provide a remedy for religious error.[95] Foxe could not abide slaughter, by burning or otherwise, as the same letter indicates, an opinion which probably placed him among an enlightened minority. But this did not mean that he advocated toleration–he was no Montaigne.

CONCLUSION

Thus it seems clear that a new biography of Foxe could be written and would make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the English Reformation. First, it would remove the most influential propagandist of the movement from the pantheon of hagiography and into the more useful library of biography. Further, it would demonstrate the inchoate, and, to some modern minds, confused state of early Elizabethan Protestant doctrine, forcing readers to accept the notion of an educated and prominent divine who fails to fit into any category, Puritan or otherwise. It would elucidate the importance of letter-writing and patronage in the spread of Protestant ideals throughout Europe in the mid-sixteenth century and investigate the social and economic opportunities which existed for a writer like Foxe.

Perhaps most importantly, a new Foxe biography would explore the development of his scholarship and his opinions and thus shed new light in the providence of what Christopher Haigh has called the "Foxe-Dickens" interpretation–a view consigning English Catholics after 1547 to the reactionary periphery–which still dominates our view of the English Reformation.[96]

ENDNOTES

1. The work's full title is *Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Dayes, Touching Matters of the Church, Wherein are Comprehended and Described the Great Persecutions and Horrible Troubles, That Have Bene Wrought and Practised by the Romishe Prelates, Speciallye in This Realme of England and Scotlande, From the Yeare of Our Lorde a Thousande, Unto the Tyme Nowe Present,* first published in English in 1563, with an expanded edition published 1570, republished, substantially unchanged, in 1576 and 1583. The

best modern edition of *Acts and Monuments* is a 1965 (New York: AMS Press) reprint of the 1843-49 edition (8 volumes) by S.R. Cattley, based broadly on the 1583 edition [hereafter cited as *A&M*, with volume and page number]. Almost as soon as *A&M* was published, it was abridged in various ways, and countless volumes bearing the sobriquet "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" have been coming out ever since, although many bear little relation to the original.

2. Gordon Rupp, *Six Makers of English Religion: 1500-1700* (New York: Harper, 1957), 53.

3. Rosemary O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London: Methuen, 1986), 16.

4. *A&M* 8:90.

5. Ibid. 8:625.

6. Ibid., 7:534.

7. Warren W. Wooden, *John Foxe* (Boston: Twayne, 1983).

8. V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

9. William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: Cape, 1963).

10. J.F. Mozley, *John Foxe and His Book* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1940).

11. Ibid., 12-15.

12. Ibid., 16-18.

13. From Lansdowne MSS, printed in ibid., 22-24.

14. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 21; claims that S.R. Maitland argued that a Protestant would not have found disfavor at Magdalen, although he gives no citation from Maitland.

15. A letter from late 1545 or early 1546, written by Foxe to an old friend from Oxford (ibid., 26), refers to correspondence with Latimer.

16. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 28-29.

17. Wooden, *John Foxe*, 4.

18. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 58-59.

19. Wooden, *John Foxe*, 4.

20. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 35-36; *A&M* 5:699.

21. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 30, 33-34.

22. Ibid., 37-38.

23. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 70-71; John T. McNeil, "John Foxe: Historiographer, Disciplinarian, Tolerationist," *Church History* 43 (1974): 217-18.

24. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 46-47, 50.

25. Ibid., 50, 56-58.

26. The letters are printed in the Parker Society volume edited by William Nicholson, *The Remains of Edmund Grindal, D.D., Successively Bishop of London and Archbishop of York and Canterbury* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1843), 219-38 [hereafter cited as *Remains of Edmund Grindal*]. For Foxe's penury, see Foxius ad Grindalum, 230.

27. Grindalus ad Foxium, 1 August 1556, *Remains of Edmund Grindal*, 221: "Videtur sese nescio quomodo irretire in vocabulis quibusdam non satis approbatis, quod Christus sit realiter in coena, etc."

28. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 61-62.

29. Ibid., 63.

30. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 120.

31. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 67.

32. The Camden Society volume edited by John G. Nichols, *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation Chiefly From the Manuscripts of John Foxe the Martyrologist* (London: Camden Society, 1859), is compiled from Foxe's letters and notes which found their way into the Harleian collection in the eighteenth century. Much of it is made up of letters sent to Foxe and shows what sort of material he had to work with.

33. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 13.

34. Ibid., 150. For John Knox's promotion of Foxe's apocalyptic theory in Scotland, and its reception there, see Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), chap. 1.

35. Foxe explained his periodization of history in the preface of the 1570 edition of "To the True and Faithful Congregation of Christ's Universal Church," printed in *A&M* 1:xx-xxii.

36. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 127.

37. Mozley, *Foxe and His Nation*, 115.

38. Wooden, *John Foxe*, 87.

39. The sermon can be found in Warren Wooden, ed., *The English Sermons of John Foxe* (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1978).

40. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 103.

41. Letter printed in ibid., 82-83.

42. See the defense of Foxe by George Townsend, *Life and Defence of John Foxe*, 1841, published in the Cattley *A&M* 1:206-16.

43. *A&M* 8:630-31.

44. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 193-94. See also Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 174-76, where Townsend attempts to absolve Foxe of error on the Grimwood case.

45. Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 176-79.

46. *British Magazine* 12 (1837): 626-27.

47. *British Magazine* 11 (1836): 622.

48. Ibid., 625.

49. *British Magazine* 12 (1837): 256.

50. Wooden, *John Foxe*, 96-101.

51. *British Magazine* 13 (1838): 19.

52. *British Magazine* 12 (1837): 625-26.

53. Phillip Hughes, *The Reformation In England*, 2 vols. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1963), 2:258.

54. Ibid., 259-66; A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 269-72.

55. Dickens, *English Reformation*, 26.

56. Gina Alexander, "Bonner and the Marian Persecutions," in Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 157-75.

57. The Cattley edition of *A&M*, the most common semi-modern edition of

any completeness, presents problems of its own for anyone attempting the trace the development of Foxe's work. Loosely based on the 1583 edition (the last published in Foxe's lifetime) of *A&M*, it also includes much additional material from the other editions, with no clear delineation of from which edition the material comes. In addition, Cattley modernized much of Foxe's spelling and cleaned up some of his style for the 1840s reading public. Many American libraries, however, possess microfilm copies of the major sixteenth-century editions of *A&M*.

58. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 2-7.
59. Nichols, *Narratives*.
60. Ibid., 18-59.
61. Nicholson, *Remains of Edmund Grindal*, 219-38.
62. *A&M*, vol. 1, appendix to Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 1-55.
63. Neville Williams, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), xii.
64. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 240.
65. Printed in *A&M* 1:1-236.
66. Ibid. 1:12.
67. Ibid. 1:76-81.
68. Ibid. 1:104.
69. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 237.
70. Hughes, *Reformation in England* 2:259.
71. Ibid. 2:256.
72. Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 46.
73. Ibid., 59.
74. Olsen, *Elizabethan Church*, 16.
75. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 105.
76. Ibid., 101.
77. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 66; Wooden, *John Foxe*, 10.
78. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 67-69.
79. Haller, *Elect Nation*, 117.
80. Included in *A&M*, vol. 1, with no pagination.
81. Ibid. 1:105.
82. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 84. Much of the evidence, however, would indicate that the duke was trying to save his neck by his statement. He did, for instance, hire a Catholic tutor for his own children. See Williams, *Thomas Howard*, 256.
83. Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 130.
84. David Little, *Religion, Order and Law* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
85. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 102.
86. Ibid., 72-73.
87. Wooden, *John Foxe*, 4.
88. Rupp, *Makers of English Religion*, 55.
89. Mozley, *Foxe and His Book*, 67.
90. Ibid., 84.
91. Williams, *Thomas Howard*, 25.

92. McNeill, "John Foxe," 221-23.

93. The letters are printed in the Cattley *A&M*, vol. 1, appendix to Townsend, *Life and Defence*, 27-32.

94. Foxe to Queen Elizabeth, ibid., 28: "durum istud ac Romani magis exempli esse, quam evangelicae consuetudinis, videtur. . . ."

95. Ibid., "Sunt ejectiones, inclusiones retrusae, sunt vincula, sunt perpetua exilia, sunt stigmata, aut etiam patibula."

96. See Haigh's introduction to *The English Reformation Revised*, 8.