

Jamin Todd Eben

The Martyr as Model

Protestant Piety in the Acts and Monuments
of John Foxe



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When martyrdom in the Christian tradition is discussed, it is nearly always the Ancient Church in its clash with imperial Rome that occupies the horizon. Yet the Protestant tradition had a distinct martyrology that derived from the early decades of the Reformation. And central to this tradition of martyrdom was John Foxe and his hagiographical memoirs of these martyrs. Despite the popularity of Foxe's book, it has been largely forgotten by modern scholarship of this era. Dr Eben's expert recovery of Foxe's historical vision and the aims of his work thus make his book vital for understanding early Protestantism.

Dr Michael A G Azad Haykin, Professor of church history, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

This work is a sterling piece of research and writing that presents significant, thorough research on a key document in the Reformation that remains in use by Christians in many parts of the world to this day. It is impossible to treat such an important historical text without engaging the contemporary scholarly discussion, and Eben demonstrates a detailed command of the several aspects of interpretation of *The Acts and Monuments* in the last century. Particularly prominent is the argument that Foxe intended to promote the cause of English patriotism or nationalism, and Eben's counter-argument, that Foxe is concerned about the true church more than the English nation is sound and convincing. Eben demonstrates with solid arguments that Foxe intended above all to cultivate his understanding of the pious Christian life and to support a reform of the teaching and practice of the Church of England. Eben's theological analysis of elements of the thought of Luther, Patrick Hamilton, and others that shaped Foxe's thinking aids the reader in capturing the significance and method of Foxe's anti-Roman polemic as it is set in his view of the eschatological or apocalyptic conflict between the true church and the false church that began in the Garden of Eden. Eben also shows how serious Foxe was in his attempt to cultivate a life of self-sacrifice in believers, who rely on Christ alone and find in him their haven and rest. Eben's analysis of the printing history offers a solid basis for the history of the work's reception, a monumental task in itself. His assessment of Foxe's political connections before and after exile also aids the reader in gaining a full perception of how such a book functioned in the life of society in the sixteenth century. In sum, Eben has crafted a convincing argument that John Foxe's foremost concern and goal in composing his Book of Martyrs was the cultivation of pious belief and obedience in the lives of believers. This study will appeal to church historians, secular historians, theologians, clergy, and interested laity.

Dr Robert Kolb, Professor of Systematic Theology emeritus, Concordia Seminary.

Too often modern scholars fail to appreciate that early modern Protestants were reformers, not revolutionaries. Rather than starting *de novo*, they sought to find within their late medieval religious inheritance a core of truths that would at once lead them back to a lost ancient authenticity and forward to its repristination in their own day. Jamin Eben has shown how such was also the case for John Foxe and his extremely influential Elizabethan martyrology. Current scholarship on Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* tends to focus on either the book's sources or its effects, the former to better judge Foxe's historical reliability and the community of contributors from which it emerged, the latter to examine better the book's role as useful propaganda for the government's religious settlement and to help understand the emergence of English nationalism. However useful those wider studies maybe, Eben's *The martyr as model: protestant piety in the Acts and Monuments of John Foxe* serves as a clarion call not to neglect to examine as well what Foxe himself intended for his *magnum opus*. Eben traces how Foxe combined medieval tradition, classical humanism and biblical teaching to create exemplars of attainable Protestant practice. In his hands, the most popular devotional genre of medieval piety, the lives of saints, was reshaped by reformed doctrine and a humanist concern to use accurate sources for ethical instruction. Consequently, the saintly milieu was no longer the extraordinary and celibate but the routine domesticity of married life. The work of the Spirit was not signs and wonders but the gift of endurance in loving God and neighbor. Finally, and most importantly, the lives of Foxe's saints teach that the key to godliness was nothing other than reading the Bible for oneself and applying it to daily living. Eben convincingly argues that throughout his four editions, Foxe never lost sight of his central aim to use *Acts and Monuments* to foster a distinctly Protestant piety in the hearts and minds of the English people.

The Rt Rev. Dr Ashley Null, Chair, Wittenberg Center for Reformation Studies, Wittenberg, Germany.

In this treatment of the devotional and pietistic thrust of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, a lacuna in studies of early-modern martyrology, Jamin Eben shows how the composition of Foxe's work was primarily motivated by the desire to promote vibrant piety in England—a fact that has too often been obscured by debates about source criticism and the effects of Foxe's work on the national consciousness of England. Not only is this work a rich historical resource, but it also provides a roadmap for personal piety in the context of life and death from the perspective of a martyrologist who wrote at the dawn of the Puritan movement. It is no wonder, then, that the Puritans were so heavily influenced by Foxe, for he (like other Marian exiles) exemplified the kind of

Word-based piety that soon came to define Puritanism. Eben ably demonstrates that the devotional quality of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"—which Christians around the world so deeply appreciate about the work—was in fact the purpose of the author-compiler, who was motivated to spark further reformation, renewal, and revival in England during a time when the direction of the established church, particularly in terms of its doctrine, piety, and spirituality, was increasingly uncertain in the aftermath of the Elizabethan Settlement.

Dr Joel R. Beeke, chancellor of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and a pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregation, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

*For Andrew and Irene Eben and Victor and Marcella Schlottman, who have
already joined the saints before the throne.*

Contents

Foreword 15

Acknowledgements 19

Chapter 1

The Martyr as Model in John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs 21

1. Discovering Piety in *Acts and Monuments* 25

2. History of Research, Publications, and Interpretation 27

2.1 Sixteenth-Century Publications and Interpretation 27

2.2 Seventeenth-Century Publications and Interpretation 29

2.3 Eighteenth-Century Publications and Interpretation 30

2.4 Nineteenth-Century Publications and Interpretation 31

2.5 The Maitland-Mozley Debate 32

2.6 Modern Directions in Scholarship 35

2.7 Questions of Accuracy in Accounts of Martyrdom 41

Chapter 2

“A Life Bearing Continually True and Solid Fruits”: Protestant Piety in
the Life and Theology of John Foxe 61

1. Foxe’s Life 62

2. Early Life: 1517–1533 63

3. Education and Conversion: 1533–1545 64

4. Young Reformer: London 1545–1553 72

5. Reformer in Exile: 1553–1559 79

6. Literary Celebrity, Reformer, and Physician of Souls: 1559–1577 93

7. The Oxford Controversy: 1577–1580 102

8. Final Years: 1581–1587 107

9. Conclusion 107

Chapter 3

“Most Mild and Constant Martyrs”: Martyrology and the Promotion of
Piety 109

1. Christian Martyrdom as an Ideological Category 110

2. The Conception of Martyrdom in the Early Church 111

2.1 Martyrdom as Imitative Discipleship 113

2.2 The Development of Martyrdom as a Devotional Genre 118

3. Martyrology after Constantine	119
3.1 Socio-Political Aspects of the Martyr Cult	122
3.2 From Martyrs to Saints	124
4. Development from Martyrology to Hagiography	125
4.1 The Cult of the Saints in Medieval Piety	127
4.2 The Golden Legend	131
5. Martyrs in the Late Middle Ages and the Proto-Reformation	133
5.1 The Concept of “The Good Death” in Early Modern Piety	136
6. Conclusion	144

Chapter 4

“The Utility of this History”: The Structure of *Acts and Monuments* and the Promotion of Piety

1. The Promotion of Piety as the Motivation to Publish	148
1.1 The <i>Commentarii Rerum</i>	148
1.2 The <i>Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum</i>	149
1.3 The 1563 Edition	150
1.4 The 1570 Edition	151
1.5 The 1576 Edition	153
1.6 The 1583 Edition	153
2. The Decision to Publish in English	156
3. Apocalyptic: The Impulse to Reform	161
3.1 The Presuppositions of Apocalypticism	166
3.2 The Apocalyptic Appeal	169
4. Martyrs: Models of Reform	172
4.1 Calendrical Martyrs	174
4.2 Iconic Martyrs	176
4.3 Monumental Martyrs	178
4.4 Literary Martyrs	180
5. Conclusion	182

Chapter 5

“Such Spiritual Exercises of Piety”: The Theology of Piety in the Book of Martyrs

1. Primitive or Pure: The “Problem” of Pre-Protestant Martyrs	186
2. The Concept of the Two Churches and Its Application to Piety	190
3. The Nature of True Piety	191
3.1 Spiritual versus Fleshly Piety	192
3.2 Grace-Driven versus Law-Driven Piety	193
3.3 Love-Driven versus Hate-Driven Piety	195

3.4	Spiritual versus Ceremonial Piety	198
3.5	Final Thoughts	206
4.	The Spirit as the Heart of True Piety	206
4.1	The Spirit and the Martyr	207
5.	The Martyr, the Spirit, and the Cosmic Battle	208
5.1	The Martyr as a Model of Christian Living	211
5.2	The Spirit, the Word, and the Truth	213
6.	Conclusion: The Martyrs as a Bridge	217

Chapter 6

“Examples of Great Profit”: The Practice of Piety in the Book of Martyrs		219
1.	The Martyr Pattern	219
1.1	The Martyr Pattern in the Life of John Rogers	221
2.	Piety in Martyrs’ Lives: Birth, Marriage, and Child Rearing	224
3.	Piety in Martyrs’ Lives: Ministry, Community, and Conversion	229
4.	Piety in Martyrs’ Trials: Education and Exposition	236
5.	Piety in Martyrs’ Sufferings and Death: Endurance and Proclamation	247
6.	Conclusion	255

Chapter 7

“Such Examples of Life, Faith, and Doctrine”: Conclusion		257
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Bibliography	261
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Index	281
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Foreword

John Foxe (1517–87) used to be well-known among English-speaking Protestants. Neither his life nor his exploits—although he lived in a remarkably tumultuous age—led to his notoriety. Foxe gained fame, rather, as the author of *Actes and Monuments of These Latter Perilous Days Touching on the Matters of the Church*. Indeed, Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs”—as the *Acts and Monuments* was often termed—was likely the second-most popular book among English sixteenth-century non-Catholics, only lagging behind the Geneva Bible (1560) in reception and use. Foxe’s dramatic retelling of the stories of Christian martyrs, complete with primary source material to back it up, from the early days of the church up to his own day’s suffering of Protestant martyrs under the reign of Queen Mary Tudor, “Bloody Mary” (r. 1553–58), gripped the collective attention of a nation coming to terms with what it meant to be Protestant after centuries of allegiance to Rome.

Although Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” used to be household reading, its merits have been questioned in more recent times. Some have discounted it as hagiography, unworthy of serious attention by the standards of modern historiography. Others have argued that Foxe had to have exercised heavy-handed editorial liberties to make the subjects of his martyr stories so consistent in their actions, attitudes, and words; therefore, they claim the “Book of Martyrs” is unworthy of serious attention. Still others argue that beneath the dramatic words of the martyrology lies Foxe the political rabble-rouser trying to attack the rule of Queen Mary and later that of her half-sister Elizabeth (r. 1558–1603). Or maybe Foxe’s main goal included especially ecclesiastical reform. Based on these disparate “real” agendas for Foxe’s work, many researchers pay attention to *Acts and Monuments* only to see better than Foxe himself did where his true intentions resided. And for some reason, many contemporary Christian readers and historians pay little attention to this once exceedingly popular work. That neglect should be rectified by the work before you now.

Jamin Eben does yeoman’s work in covering multiple steps to help contemporary readers see the true heart behind Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. The most important, in my opinion, involves Eben’s approach to the task of reading historical documents in their context and attempting to do so responsibly while also displaying sympathy toward the persons and documents under scrutiny. Here, as Eben himself notes, he intentionally follows the insights provided by Quentin Skinner who asserts that to responsibly understand an historical text, an interpreter must grasp both “what they were intended to mean, and how this

meaning was intended to be taken.”¹ The author’s original intention serves as the goal of responsible interpretation. Eben accomplishes this goal admirably.

Whereas others have foisted other intentions upon Foxe, Eben lets the words of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* themselves determine his interpretation of the book. Eben’s thesis stands in stark contrast to most modern explanations. He argues elegantly and persuasively that the correct interpretation—indeed, the one that Foxe himself and his community would have agreed was right—must take into account Foxe’s theological orientation and his pastoral goal in composing the numerous editions of *Acts and Monuments*. As Eben avers, Foxe wrote and edited from a distinctly Protestant orientation for the good of the ongoing reformation of the church in England during his lifetime. Eben argues, “Foxe was seeking to make a deliberate contribution to an established tradition of devotional literature with the goal of promoting further reformation, both personal and public, and to provide the martyrs as models of godly piety to this end.” The promotion of “Protestant piety” stands as the ultimate goal of Foxe’s monumental work. “Protestant” and “piety” serve as the foundations of Foxe’s labor.

In order to prove this, Eben covers a great deal of necessary, and fascinating, ground. In successive chapters, he situates the lay of the land in Foxian studies; he demonstrates from an overview of Foxe’s life his experience of and interest in promoting Protestant piety; he argues that Foxe and his contemporaries had expectations about the scope and purpose of martyrologies from such popular productions as *The Golden Legend* and various works describing the practice of dying well (the *Ars Moriendi*); he contends that Foxe followed Augustine and Protestant theologians in locating “two churches,” the true one marked both by right doctrine and by Spirit-filled piety which the Protestant martyrs had but which Catholic spirituality lacked; and he offers several instances of martyrs in *Acts and Monuments* who embodied this Protestant ideal, especially with its emphasis on knowing and basing one’s life and death on Scripture.

The work before you, then, stands as a model of careful scholarship. Eben knows the orientation and nuances of modern Foxian studies and admirably summarizes its contours for readers. Much can be gleaned about contemporary hermeneutics by examining Eben’s early chapters. More than that, though, Eben’s work should cultivate the same Protestant spirit in contemporary readers that Foxe hoped to engender in his friends. If one pays attention to the follow-

1 Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 48.

ing book, one might just be spurred on to be willing to live and suffer for the truth of God revealed in Scripture.

Shawn D. Wright
Professor of Church History
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Acknowledgements

In his final preface to *Acts and Monuments*, John Foxe writes, “If by reading profane stories we are made the better in our livings . . . , how much more meet for us to accept and embrace the lives and doing of the most constant martyrs . . . which may serve as to garnish the life . . . to instruct the mind in all kinds of godliness.”² In the execution of this project, I have been blessed to have my life so instructed by these mild and constant martyrs, and for that I am grateful.

There are many people who have aided me in my research. The Wittenberg Center for Reformation Studies has been very supportive of my scholarship and opened many doors to aid in this project. To Dr Ashley Null, thank you for your advocacy and insight. To Dr Andreas Stegmann, thank you for your invaluable tutelage in early modern paleography, and many thoughtful insights into reformation studies. Dr Robert Kolb went far above and beyond the duty of an external reader, reading repeated drafts and providing profound insights that greatly enriched this project. Dr Mark Rankin and Dr Thomas Freeman both graciously provided insights from their own research of Foxe.

I am profoundly thankful for my committee for their help with this project. Thank you to Dr Michael A. G. Haykin who first introduced me to the history of spirituality, which ultimately inspired me to pursue my doctorate in this area. Thank you for your instruction and mentorship through both the MDiv and PhD. To Dr Gregg Allison who has always exhibited a pious approach to theology which inspired and encouraged me. Thank you for your enthusiasm for this project when it was still in its embryonic state which encouraged me to stay the course. To Dr Shawn Wright, thank you for supervising this work and for your encouragement and instruction throughout. Your careful and detailed feedback greatly improved both my scholarship and writing.

Special thanks are due to Jesse Erickson, Ben Cornish, Rick Cornish, who endured the reading of early drafts to help me refine the work; to Dr Torey Teer, who provided editorial services; and to Dr Stephen and Mrs. Karen Wellum, who provided loads of good, friendly advice to Kristen and me on navigating the personal, emotional, and spiritual travails of completing a dissertation. To the staff, board, and supporters of Teaching Truth International, thank you for supporting and encouraging my scholarly ministry. Thanks to the many pastors

2 John Foxe, “A Declaration Concerning the Utility and Profit of This History,” in *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO*, 1563 ed. (Sheffield: Digital Humanities Institute, 2011), 15, <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe>.

through the years who helped me cultivate my own piety, especially Richard Christian, who has invested so much in my spiritual life. Many thanks are also due to my parents, who first introduced me to the gospel and have always encouraged my scholarly and ministerial work.

To my lovely wife, Kristen, without your constant support, love, and encouragement, I could never have finished this work. Thank you. Finally, most of all, thanks are due to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to whom all honor and affection is due.

Jamin Todd Eben
Jeffersonville, Indiana
December 2024

Chapter 1

The Martyr as Model in John Foxe's Book of Martyrs

John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments of These Latter Perilous Days Touching on the Matters of the Church* is without doubt one of the most influential books of the English Reformation. Under its more colloquial name, "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," there is hardly a student of English literature or history who has not encountered this book or its influence. Scholars of early modern England widely acknowledge that it was so broadly read and embraced as to attain the status of a "quasi-biblical text,"¹ achieving an "influence second only to that of the English Bible."²

Ironically however, the book's massive success has served to obscure its original intent. As Foxe's history gained wide acclaim, it began to be adapted for use in political and polemical purposes.³ Foxe's book, once released from his pen, would be used to condemn and vindicate all manner of individuals and movements, some of which, Foxe had never even encountered. Within the space of a century, the book would be used to both defend and overthrow the Crown, forge national identity, villainize foreign armies, and prophesy popish plots. Unsurprisingly then, much of the scholarship on the book has been interested in the effects of the book rather than its intent. A great deal of scholarship has focused on the reception history of the book. At the same time, while many scholars have looked at the effects of the book, others have looked to its sources. Since the work of S. R. Maitland in 1837, much of Foxian scholarship has turned to text critical issues within *Acts and Monuments*, exploring the wealth

1 Damian Nussbaum, "Laudian Foxe-Hunting? William Laud and the Status of John Foxe in the 1630s," in *The Church Retrospective: Papers Read at the 1995 Summer Meeting and the 1996 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1997), 329.

2 Leonard J. Trinterud, ed., *Elizabethan Puritanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 41. The book's influence upon popular piety can clearly be seen in its adaptation into pocket folios, pulpit editions, and even folk songs. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 90.

3 Glyn Parry, "Elect Church or Elect Nation? The Reception of the Acts and Monuments," in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. David M. Loades, John Foxe Colloquium (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999), 170.

of sources behind the text and variously criticizing or defending Foxe's accuracy and motives in using them.⁴

In the wake of all this, however, there has been comparatively less focus on Foxe's own intentions for the work.⁵ In fact, the abundance of scholarship searching for meaning behind and before the text of Foxe's book has in some cases served to obscure the work itself. Foxe and his work have been described as propagandist, nationalist, royalist, or any number of other monikers. These do not adequately describe, and some even distort, the true context and intent of Foxe and his work.⁶ Striking by their absence are modern scholarly assessments of Foxe's work in light of what he held most dear: his theology and piety. That is the goal of this work.

I will argue that to be rightly understood, *Acts and Monuments* needs to be considered in light of its theological background and pastoral goals. With *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe was seeking to make a deliberate contribution to an established tradition of devotional literature with the goal of promoting further reformation, both personal and public, and to provide the martyrs as models of godly piety to this end. This is not a typical modern approach to Foxe or *Acts and Monuments*.

Foxe himself specifically identifies the promotion of Protestant piety as a primary purpose of the work. Comparing his work to the popular works of Greek mythology, he states, "How much more then is it meet for us to accept and em-

4 Maitland's project was self-consciously deconstructive, accusing Foxe of widespread and deliberate inaccuracy. Foxe's seminal defender was J.F. Mozley, who in the eyes of many scholars defended Foxe's approach but also opened significant avenues of scholarship into the questions of Foxe's sources and the redactional history of TAM. See Samuel Roffey Maitland, *A Review of Fox the Martyrologist's History of the Waldenses* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1837); J.F. Mozley, *John Foxe and His Book* (New York: Macmillan, 1940); Donald T. Williams, "John Foxe," in *Historians of the Christian Tradition: Their Methodology and Influence on Western Thought*, ed. Michael Bauman and Martin I. Klauber (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 117–38; C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944); Thomas S. Freeman, "Texts, Lies, and Microfilm: Reading and Misreading Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs,'" *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 1 (1999): 23–46.

5 Mark Breitenberg gives an excellent summary of how much of scholarship has come to be dominated by these two major polls; see Mark Breitenberg, "The Flesh Made Word: Foxe's Acts and Monuments," *Renaissance and Reformation* 25, no. 4 (1989): 381–407.

6 Foxe biographer V. Norskov Olsen decries this tendency when he writes, "Foxe's life and work have many facets; he was Foxe the Historiographer, the Martyrologist, the Humanist, the Erasmian, the Puritan, the Anglican, the Elizabethan Eusebius, the Gospeler, the ecclesiologist, the Erastian, the precursor of Elizabethan nationalism, the Lutheran, and so on. If any of these are enlarged at the expense of the others, or if any single one is considered without reference to the rest, then the true picture of him is distorted." V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 29.

brace the lives and doings, not of rough warriors, but of most mild and constant Martyrs, which may serve, not so much to delight the ear, as to garnish the life, to frame it with examples of great profit, and to instruct the mind in all kind of Christian godliness.”⁷ The purpose of “instructing the mind in all kind of Christian godliness” accords well with Foxe’s own life and vocation. From his conversion on, Foxe was a passionate reformer. Furthermore, he was not indifferent to the Reformation conflicts over spirituality. Under Henry VIII’s reign, he rejected holy orders out of a desire for reform. When he was finally ordained, he refused the surplice and avoided promotion into any office that would require the wearing of vestments for the remainder of his ministry.⁸ Under Edward VI, he stood with Nicholas Ridley and John Ponet as one of the chief proponents of discipline as an essential mark of the church.⁹ Under Mary I, he fled to the continent, where he quickly allied himself with the continental reformers. In Frankfurt, he met and allied himself with John Knox, and on Knox’s departure, he became a key leader in arguing for the further reformation of the worship services there.¹⁰ When he returned to England after Mary’s death, this reforming impulse remained. Under Elizabeth I, he published his own edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, arguing for further reform of the service and the removal of Roman Catholic elements from worship.¹¹ Far from being a political mover, Foxe devoted a great deal of his time to ministry. His theological affinities would remain as well; till his death, he kept a significant correspondence with several continental reformers, even expressing a desire to return to Switzerland.¹² John McNeill goes so far as to state that Foxe “must be classed with

7 John Foxe, “A Declaration Concerning the Utility and Profit of This History,” in *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO*, 1563 ed. (Sheffield: Digital Humanities Institute, 2011), 15–16, <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe>. Note: In quotations of early modern sources I have retained archaic and obsolete vocabulary. I have modernized the spelling and expanded contractions and abbreviations. Words appearing in square brackets represent editorial insertions, not in the original text, that have been added to aid in comprehension. I have left the original punctuation intact, except in rare instances where it is misleading. I have substituted modern text for printers’ symbols that are no longer in use. In rare cases, I have updated a word when its usage is so obsolete as to be misleading. Words that are clear but antiquated I have noted and defined in the footnotes. All definitions and substitutions have been made on the basis of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2024, <https://www.oed.com/>.

8 Trinterud, *Elizabethan Puritanism*, 43.

9 John T. McNeill, “John Foxe: Historiographer, Disciplinarian, Tolerationist,” *Church History* 43, no. 2 (1974): 220.

10 McNeill, “John Foxe,” 218.

11 John Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, ed. Paul L. Maier and R. C. Linnenkugel (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016), 17.

12 McNeill, “John Foxe,” 220.

them [Ridley, and Ponet] among the founders of Puritanism.”¹³ It is, therefore, without doubt that Foxe gave much of his life to the promotion of Protestant piety.

Nevertheless, the issue of Foxe's piety is often glossed over in modern studies of *Acts and Monuments*. The two most recent significant studies of *Acts and Monuments* are typical in this regard. Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman devote two chapters to Foxe's printing career but scant few pages to Foxe's life outside his printing and no particular attention to his religious convictions.¹⁴ John King gives no attention to the biography of Foxe at all.¹⁵ It would seem that as the sources and compilation of the book have taken the forefront of modern scholarship, study of the man himself has faded significantly. However, greater awareness of Foxe's sources and community should only serve to strengthen the argument for piety as a profound motivation for the work. The men most closely associated with shaping the text—men like Edmund Grindal, John Bale, John Day, and many others who will be explored later—were all convictional Protestants, deeply interested in the reformation of personal Christian practice. As the book grew in popularity in its later printings, friends and family of other Protestant sufferers sent in their own letters and stories that followed the same typical models, adding to this compendium of Protestant spirituality. As he received them, Foxe added them to future editions, often editing them to fit the developing Protestant ideal.

Furthermore, Foxe and his community were profoundly inspired by a covenantal view of history: a belief that history had proven that England had a special place in God's plan and with this a responsibility to respond with personal reformation or face the consequences. This belief motivated Foxe, and his community, to use the book to promote just such a personal reformation. It is no surprise that Foxe sees the book as “for the use of Christ's church, utility of your realm, and the glory of his holy name.”¹⁶ In Foxe's eschatological understanding, the success of England depended upon its devotional faithfulness: the “use of Christ's church” and the “utility of your realm” were inextricably intertwined.

Additionally, the book's genre is not insignificant to this thesis. Foxe was self-consciously stepping into a long tradition of martyrology designed to inspire

13 McNeill, “John Foxe,” 220.

14 Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 33–101.

15 John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

16 John Foxe, “To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty,” in *TAMO* (1563 ed.), 8.

godly living. Martyrologies were already an established genre of literature with “broad commemorative, ethical, and ideological purposes . . . overwhelmingly rhetorical in their nature.”¹⁷ Seeking to unseat the most popular devotional literature of the day, the saints’ stories that he saw as false and spurious,¹⁸ Foxe sought to construct a new heroic model of piety.¹⁹ And there is good evidence that the book was received devotionally. Food particles and candle wax in the troughs of existing copies indicate that some readers would sit for extended periods of time meditating upon the stories and images.²⁰ The woodcuts took on particular interest, displayed in homes and discussed in local taverns.²¹ The stories from and allusions to Foxe were used extensively as illustrations and commonplaces in sermons.²² Foxe’s book, whatever its other components, was profoundly a book of Protestant piety.

1. Discovering Piety in *Acts and Monuments*

This discussion of lay piety during the English Reformation is one fraught with difficulty. It cannot be denied that the Reformation ushered in massive changes in religious practice. Before the Reformation, parishioners believed that salvation came through good works such as charity, donations to saints, and participation in church efforts. As the reformers promoted a changed understanding of salvation, changed understandings of piety necessarily followed. Foxe specifically used *Acts and Monuments* to argue against the Roman Catholic understanding of piety centered sacred ceremonies and spaces, and for a protestant definition of piety; namely, any action that flowed from the power of the Spirit to love of God and neighbor. The stories and documents in *Acts and Monu-*

17 Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, Gender, Theory, and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 26.

18 John Foxe, “*Ad Doctum Lectorem*,” trans. John Wade, in *TAMO* (1563 ed.), 9.

19 John Foxe, “*Ad Dominum Jesum Christum*,” trans. John Wade, in *TAMO* (1563 ed.), 1.

20 I am indebted to Mark Rankin, who revealed this insight in a private conversation. His study of several early print editions of TAM held at the Ohio State University revealed bits of bread, cheese, and candle wax in the gutters of the books, particularly on those pages containing woodcuts. He concluded this was evidence of the book’s being studied, discussed, and meditated on in taverns and private settings with food and drink present.

21 Ruth Sampson Luborsky, “The Illustrations: Their Pattern and Plan,” in Loades, *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, 67; Margret Aston and Elizabeth Ingram, “The Iconography of the Acts and Monuments,” in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. D. M. Loades, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1997), 66–70.

22 John Frederick Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars, 1640–1648* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 173.

ments are specifically selected and edited by Foxe to put this change in definition on display.

How to track these changes in the larger culture, however, is a topic of significant debate.²³ The works of revisionists such as J.J. Scarisbrick have argued that the reformation of lay piety in England was late and reluctant, dating true reformation among the laity to well within the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603).²⁴ Key to this argument is the paucity of textual evidence of evangelical spirituality among the lower classes, leaving the argument to be decided largely on the evidence of lay donations to, and participation in, church efforts.²⁵ I argue, however, that *Acts and Monuments* may be brought to bear obliquely as a resource for discovering lay piety in the English Reformation. As research increasingly shows, *Acts and Monuments* was not merely the work of one man but a compendium of sources motivated, shaped, and contributed to by a broad Protestant community. Therefore, *Acts and Monuments* provides a window into the piety of that community. I am not arguing that Foxe's martyrs are statistically representative of all Christians in sixteenth-century England. The debate will still rage on regarding the "unlettered" public whose voices are truly lost to history. Nevertheless, the martyrs do provide a window into the Protestant community. The martyrs were not extremists but exemplars; the piety they exhibited represented the piety Protestantism was ideally meant to produce. Their beliefs and values were not aberrant; had they been so, their community would not have strongly encouraged them to persevere, as they so clearly did.²⁶ Rather, the martyrs were an expression of a community's ideal, an ideal that would capture the cultural imagination as the book's impact suggests. This "community of the book" included those among both the lower and the upper classes, dating back as far as the Henrician Reformation (1521–1547) and as far forward as the pub-

23 Clair Schen gives a helpful summary of the debate over which historical sources should be used in assessing lay piety. Claire S. Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London, 1500–1620*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 1–21.

24 John Joseph Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). These revisionist works place the true Reformation among the laity late in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603).

25 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, 1st ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

26 Protestants extensively exchanged prison letters, encouraging one another to persevere to the end. See Thomas S. Freeman, "The Rise of Prison Literature," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 133–46.

lication of Foxe's last edition (1583).²⁷ Thus, this project's reading of *Acts and Monuments* sheds light on voices not regularly considered in this debate and opens the door for further research in that direction.

2. History of Research, Publications, and Interpretation

Because *Acts and Monuments* is a highly polemical work, deeply intertwined with English politics and national identity, its publication history, its reception history, and the history of its scholarship are inextricable. The publication history of *Acts and Monuments* could form a book-length treatment of its own, seeing as *Acts and Monuments* has gone through more than one hundred English language editions, including adaptations, abridgments, expansions, and transformations into songs, mnemonics, and short story pamphlets.²⁸ Even so, the publication history must be at least cursorily examined to understand the book's reception, as its publication was motivated by contemporary events from its inception.

2.1 Sixteenth-Century Publications and Interpretation

Begun while Foxe was in exile during the reign of Mary Tudor, the work that would become *Acts and Monuments* was originally intended as a memorial of sorts for the Lollards. Once Elizabeth took the throne and Foxe returned to England, Foxe's research was quickly adapted, at least partially, to promote the new and beleaguered Elizabethan government.²⁹ This, of course, makes its publication and reception inherently political, though not to the exclusion of religious motivations. Foxe and his associates saw Elizabeth's reign as an essential part of God's plan to save England and thus saw supporting the Queen as a profoundly theological act. Unsurprisingly, then, upon *Acts and Monuments's* publication, it was swiftly given the explicit support of the government, with a decree requir-

27 While the Henrician Reformation began formally in 1533 with the passing of the Statute in Restraint of Appeals, it had its roots in the Protestant book trade and the Cambridge Protestant movement dating back to the early 1520s. J. D. Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors: 1485–1558*, Oxford History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 343.

28 Warren W. Wooden, *John Foxe*, Twayne's English Authors Series (Boston: Twayne, 1983), 93.

29 Evenden and Freeman trace the book's political connections through the career of William Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary of state, who arranged funding for much of the project. Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 32, 66–67, 112.