

## Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet kingship in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments

By Matthew Phillpott

In the fourth edition (1583) of the *Actes and Monuments* John Foxe rejected the notion that he was writing a martyrology for, he argued, 'I profess no such title to wryte of Martyrs: but in generall to wryte of rites and Monuments passed in the church and realme of England'.<sup>1</sup> The distinction is important as it confirms that for Foxe the historiographical merits of the work were paramount in his construction of the text. What, then, did he mean by 'rites and monuments'? Part of the answer, of course, lies in the Eusebian model of ecclesiastical history that was of great influence to Foxe and other ecclesiastical historians active during the latter half of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> For Eusebius, the 'rites and monuments' (*monumenta votaue*) were essentially the commemoration of past deeds made in the name of God.<sup>3</sup> The Christian martyrs of the early church offered historians of the sixteenth century a comparison to the sufferings and martyrdoms of reformers of their own time. It also offered them an authenticating framework in which to propose their reformist revision of the past. Yet Foxe did not always refrain from including acts and monuments that were essentially part of a secular past. The lineation of Anglo-Saxon kingship succession in Books Two and Three and the Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet succession largely contained in Book Four appear to deviate somewhat from the Eusebian model. In that sense, as Daniel Woolf has helpfully suggested, Foxe's work should be treated as a 'compendium of interlinked genres and narratives'.<sup>4</sup> If, as this suggests, Foxe's intention was not to write only of martyrs nor confine himself entirely to the Eusebian model then our examination of his work must reflect these

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<sup>1</sup> John Foxe. *Acts and Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), [online]. (hriOnline, Sheffield, version 1.1). Available from: <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/>. [Accessed: August 2009], Book 6, p. 702. From this point on I will abbreviate reference to the online edition of the *Acts and Monuments* as *A&M*, 1583, bk. 6, p. 702. All references to 'block commentaries' in this article refer to the commentaries prepared for this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Most significantly the German ecclesiastical history produced by Mathias Flacius Illyricus and others, commonly entitled the Magdeburg Centuries. The Eusebian model was a key methodological and constructional foundation for writing Church histories during the Middle Ages and was revived during the reformation as a means of authenticating the historical basis of the reformed church through the use of a traditional literary genre. Gretchen E. Minton, "'The same cause and like quarrel': Eusebius, John Foxe, and the evolution of ecclesiastical history", *Church History*, 71:4 (2002), 715-42; Michael S. Pucci, 'Reforming Roman emperors: John Foxe's characterization of Constantine in Acts and Monuments', in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, 1999), 29-51; and Thomas S. Freeman, "*Great Searching Out of bookes and Autours*": *John Foxe as an Ecclesiastical Historian*, unpublished PhD (Rutgers University, 1995) discusses Foxe's reliance upon this model but it has been left to the John Foxe Project to recognise the lens of the Magdeburg Centuries with which Foxe often viewed that model. See Block commentaries 1-16 and Matthew J. Phillpott, Rectifying the 'ignorance of history': John Foxe and the Collaborative Reformation of England's Past, unpublished PhD (University of Sheffield, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Paul L. Maier (ed. & trans.), *Eusebius – The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Michigan, 1998). As in Eusebius, ch. 7, discussing the 'daily duty' that we owe as Christians to 'honour the true soldiers of God': 'Haec nos, inquit, quotidie factitamus qui veras pietatis milites ut Dei amicos honorantes, ad monumenta votaue ipsis facimus tanquam viris sanctis quorum intercessione ad Deum non parum juuari profitemur'.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel R. Woolf, 'The Rhetoric of Martyrdom: Generic Contradictions and Narrative strategy in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments', in Thomas F. Mayer and Daniel Woolf (eds), *The Rhetorics of Life Writing in Early Modern Europe: From Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV* (Michigan, 1995), pp. 243-82.

distinctions. In this preface, we shall do just that, by exploring the role that Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet kingship held as an integral element of Foxe's historical argument.

## 1. Origins

The 'political context', as we would now call it, was important to emphasise the engagement of the English monarchy in the maintenance of right religion. Although Foxe wrote within the context of the whole Christian empire, his focus was upon the English story and in particular upon his people's birthright to a religion independent of Rome. That story traditionally began with the ancient Britons but for Foxe that discourse had been tainted by uncertain evidence and unreliable myths.<sup>5</sup> Foxe was too good a historian not to be led, to some degree by his sources; and he was too sophisticated a polemicist not to recognise when the evidence was weak and capable of being picked apart by his critics. Foxe therefore re-orientated his argument to where his sources were more stable. Rather than become stuck in a quagmire about British origin myths Foxe briefly reiterated the evidence as it stood (block 34), noting that it was hard to distinguish fact from fable, then moved on to a lengthy and relatively new account of their Anglo-Saxon successors (blocks 35-49). Foxe could at the very least claim that Christianity had arrived in England before the Saxon invasions even if the evidence hinted at continued superstitions and paganism. Nonetheless, as late-comers to the Christian faith the Anglo-Saxons held a 'peculiar and difficult position in Foxe's narrative'.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, they had come with tainted baggage bringing the beginnings of the papal imperium with them. However, on the other Foxe recognised that 'in comparison to tymes that followed, all this might seme some thing sufferable and honest'.<sup>7</sup>

It was upon the complex narrative of English Christian origins that Foxe partially rested his conception of English kingship. It was one intermittently engaged in sustaining an ambiguous English witness to the true faith against a fast-growing papal imperium. The matter of religion generally formed the basis for Foxe's perception of what amounted to good or bad governance. In this regard monarchical responsibility figured heavily in Foxe's apocalyptic prefiguring of human history. Yet, Foxe's conception of kingship was not exclusively historical or entirely related to ecclesiastical matters. The recent past and present also shaped his narrative and informed his interpretations. Thus when Foxe inserted a lengthy diatribe about the dangers of rebellion during his narrative on Henry III he did so with the threat of Mary Queen of Scots in mind.<sup>8</sup> Similarly when Foxe presented a detailed account of Richard II's death and the failure of his line he defended his digression as a means to 'satisfie the reader inquisitiue of suche stories, & also to forwarne other princes to beware the lyke daungers'.<sup>9</sup> Foxe's history was, in part, a series of warnings, lessons

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<sup>5</sup> The medieval story of British origins largely derived from William of Malmesbury had been cast into doubt by the Italian historian Polydore Vergil in the 1520s-1530s. See May McKisack, *Mediaeval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1971), ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Scott Robinson, 'John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons', in Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds), *John Foxe and his World* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 54-72.

<sup>7</sup> A&M, 1563, bk. 1, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Block commentaries 84-87 for more details.

<sup>9</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 5, p. 613. See Block commentary 134.

and reminders to contemporary nobility and royalty of the danger to royal succession, English liberties and religious freedom.

To compile such a narrative Foxe was able to rely on a much richer source base than he had prior to the Norman Conquest of 1066. Foxe therefore had some difficult choices to make about what to include, and why to include it. So, when he introduced Edward III into his narrative, he excused himself from providing a 'gesta'. Other chronicles had done that and it was 'not pertinent to our ecclesiasticall historye'. Yet he could not avoid 'compendiously abridging them out of diuers and sundrye autors together compacted'.<sup>10</sup> Foxe made similar statements throughout his narrative. At the beginning of Book Three, Foxe had directed his readers to the fifteenth-century history of Robert Fabyan for a more detailed account of each monarch's reign. Again, for the death of Richard II, Foxe stated that it 'is sufficiently contained in Robert Fabian, and in the kings recordes, in the chronicle of S. Albans, and in other histories at large' then proceeded to summarise the story from those sources.<sup>11</sup> Foxe's inclination to synthesis could rarely turn down the challenge to make a list, to organise and structure historical information. He rarely did so, however, without an overriding purpose in mind.

## 2. Ideological and practical frameworks

In the first edition (1563) of the *Acts and Monuments* Foxe barely touched upon English kingship before the reign of King John. John was important for two reasons. First, early reformist polemicists had already begun to rehabilitate the king as a proto-protestant providing a well-established tradition for Foxe to delve into. Second, John's excommunication and the subsequent enthrallment of England into Papal hands (as Foxe saw it) was an essential transitional moment that revealed the workings of Satan and antichrist in the world. Foxe adopted the prophetic and apocalyptic schema first devised in an English context by John Bale (*The Image of Bothe Churches*). In the second edition (1570) of the *Acts and Monuments* Foxe greatly enhanced, expanded and revised his original account. What had been a one Book prologue of Christian history from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries became a four Book ecclesiastical history designed to parallel and compliment the contemporary portion of his work focused upon the reformation. It was at this juncture that Foxe brought in the Norman Conquest and its succession of Anglo-Norman kings as a running theme that expressed an English focus for the apocalyptic framing of the Christian past.

In the second edition Foxe began his account of the Anglo-Norman monarchy with the assertion that the Norman Conquest corresponded to the beginning of the 'misordered raigne of Antichrist'.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe highlighted various moments of transition based upon his reading of the prophecies laid out in the Book of Revelation. The Resurrection of Christ was the first such moment, followed approximately 300 years later by the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons by

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<sup>10</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 475.

<sup>11</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 5, p. 612.

<sup>12</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 222.

Augustine (via an order from Pope Gregory I) pinpointed another transition – again approximately 300 years after the Roman conversion. For Foxe, the pontificate of Gregory I and his successor Boniface III marked the moment when the Antichrist was first unleashed upon the world and ransacked the papacy with corruption and superstition. Foxe declared this a transition not only because it fitted neatly into his apocalyptic schema, but because Boniface III was the first Bishop of Rome to declare himself universal Bishop. Similarly, the activities of Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII from 1073 to 1085), linked the Norman Conquest of England to the declaration of papal supremacy over princes (in particular over the Holy Roman Emperor).

Foxe understood these prophetic junctures in terms of the continual recurrence of the persecution of the faithful. Every aspect of his narrative was compiled with that in mind and, Foxe would have us believe, it formed the framework for the separation of the work into twelve Books. Each of the first five Books announced as its title that it would cover a 300 year period that, through Foxe's calculations, represented the period of time between each apocalyptic transition. The remaining books covered the final 300 years that brought the text to the present day. Only when reading these books does it become clear that as a framework Foxe failed to achieve such a perfect synthesis and that in fact a more mundane framework for each Book often took priority. This framework was more secular, focused upon the division of the past, through the use of sub-headings, by English regal succession. Thus the story of Hildebrand (Gregory VII) formed an interlude, albeit essential to the wider story, within the narrative of William the Conqueror. The controversy of Emperor Frederick II was nestled within the confines of Henry III's turbulent reign. Book Six neatly framed itself by the reigns of Henry VI to Henry VII, whilst Books Seven and Eight focused entirely on the reign of Henry VIII, Book Nine on Edward VI, and Books Ten to Twelve on Mary I. The apocalyptic framework therefore, was largely constrained to an ideological interrogation of the sources and an occasional reference or diatribe within the text. It was not quite the organising construct that Foxe would have us believe. In short, it was by these means that Foxe endorsed his lengthy telling of the Norman invasion within the confines of ecclesiastical history.

### **3. The Anglo-Norman Conquest**

The Anglo-Norman Conquest was not just one more secular conquest, another successful invasion by a foreign power. It was the means by which the English church and people became inextricably bound up to a Roman Catholic subversion. Even within Foxe's apocalyptic schema it was accorded global significance. Foxe was explicit with his claim that the English, given a choice in the matter, would have rejected Norman rule. They had 'not so much by assent, as for feare, & neccessite' gave their allegiance to William.<sup>13</sup> In return the new king ruled 'with great seueritie & crueltie, toward the Englishme(n)' and by force 'chaunged the whole state of the goueraunce of this co(m)mon weale: & ordeyned new laws at his owne pleasure,

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<sup>13</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 222.

profitable to him selfe, but greuous and hurtfull to the people'.<sup>14</sup> England had been occupied by a foreign invader and the old establishment were removed from their lands so that the Conqueror's own baronage could be 'planted & aduanced' in their place.

The apocalyptic overtures of the Norman Conquest is the more interesting because of the way it implicitly draws a parallel in the minds of the attentive Elizabethan reader to the transitional moments of the earlier English reformation. Protestant literature had already attempted to explain the untimely death of Edward VI and the subsequent Marian reaction as God's punishment to England's ruling classes for their failure to convert the people to what they believed to be the true faith.<sup>15</sup> Through a theory first propagated by the twelfth-century historian Henry of Huntingdon, Foxe explained that England had suffered 'five plagues'; the first through Julius Caesar's Romans, the second by the Scots and Picts, the third by the Anglo-Saxons, the fourth by the Danes and the fifth by the Normans. Prior to each one of these invasions Foxe noted a similar lapse of responsibility in the ruling classes.<sup>16</sup> Borrowing the conceptual framework and language of a twelfth-century historian Foxe was able to illustrate the reiterated nature of the 'warnings' that God had providentially planted in the past.

There is a further educative edge to Foxe's narration of the Norman Conquest. Foxe believed that the Norman invasion was only possible because of the failure of Edward the Confessor to provide an heir.<sup>17</sup> From accounts by Polydore Vergil, Robert Fabyan, John Brompton, and Henry of Huntingdon, Foxe added that Edward 'made promise to hym [Duke William], that if he dyed without issue, the sayd William should succeed hym in the kyngdome of England'.<sup>18</sup> Equally problematic for Edward's successor, Harold Godwinson, was the fact that he had himself agreed to marry William's daughter – an agreement he subsequently reneged on.<sup>19</sup> Foxe took the opportunity for some explicit historical pedagogy, recommending his readers to 'note & learne' the implicit 'warning' that the Anglo-Saxon succession crisis afforded contemporaries:

First to consider & learne the rieghteous retribution and  
wrath of God from heaue(n) vpon all iniquitie &  
vnrightuous dealing of men. Seco(n)dly we may therby  
note, what it is for princes to leaue no issue or sure

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> See Jonathan Wright, 'Marian exiles and the legitimacy of flight from persecution', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52:2 (2001), pp. 220-43.

<sup>16</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 222.

<sup>17</sup> Foxe noted that Edward did marry Editha, daughter of Earl Godwin, but that he failed to 'bed' her. *A&M*, 1570, bk. 3, p. 217.

<sup>18</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 3, p. 217. Compare this account to Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia* (1555 version), A hypertext critical edition, edited and translated by Dana F. Sutton (California, 2005), <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/> [Accessed: June 2008], p. 295, John Brompton's chronicle in Roegr Twysden (ed.), *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores X* (London, 1652), pp. 945-7, Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, edited and translated by Diana E. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), bk. 6 ch. 25 and Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France in two parts; by Robert Fayban named by himself the Concordance of Histories*, edited by Henry Ellis (London, 1811) bk. 6 ch. 212.

<sup>19</sup> The account of Harold Godwinson reneging upon the agreement with Duke William can be found in *A&M*, 1570, bk. 3, pp. 218-9. William's daughter had died and Harold therefore felt that he could discharge himself from that obligation.

successio(n) behind them. Thirdly, what daungers often do  
chance to realms by forein marriage with other princes.<sup>20</sup>

No contemporary needed any reminder of what princes, or rather princesses, Foxe had in mind: Mary Tudor's regrettable marriage to Philip II of Spain and then her half-sister Elizabeth's even more regrettable (and dangerous) refusal to commit to marriage vibrated through Foxe's recital of the Norman Conquest. That event, similar to the present day circumstances, had paved the way for a tyrant to acquire the throne.

Foxe had a clear notion of tyranny and it is reflected in his encapsulation of the Conqueror's reign. He abolished 'the lawes of King Edward' and imposed a foreign law system in its place. He dealt with the English severely, burning the north – '[William] destroyed the land from Yorke to Durham, so that ix. years after, the province lay waste & unmanured'. He impoverished the people to the extent that they were forced to survive on 'rattes, and dogges, and other vermyne'.<sup>21</sup> In passing, Foxe noted the excessive imperium implicit in the Domesday Survey, and the destruction of churches and towns to make way for the New Forest (for William's own pleasure). The king's tyranny was even reflected in the manner of his death, the result of his own cruelty and tenacity. For Foxe, as for his contemporaries, a tyranny could be judged through the rejection of both natural and divine law. William's trampling over the laws and customs of the English and his bringing over of a more invasive papal imperium earned him that place in Foxe's history.

Yet, for all the starkness of this conclusion, Foxe managed to retain a good deal of the methods and tone of a careful and deliberate historian, weighing his sources against each other and attempting to reflect their tone and content. Foxe compiled the account from well known sources such as the chronicles of Robert Fabyan, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Ranulf Higden. He also borrowed evidence from lesser-known sources such as the fourteenth-century chronicle attributed to John Brompton. Foxe compiled his argument based on a solid scholarly grounding, and although written with a strong bias this was well-informed and fitted neatly into his concept of five plagues and upon his greater prophetic framework. However, two elements of this Conquest narrative continue to pose problems both as a matter of source identification as well as for the purposes of their inclusion in Foxe's account. They are referred to in the block commentaries at the relevant point in this edition but they raise more general issues as well. Near the end of his account Foxe included a cryptic remark about an unused source that he claimed to have received too late for inclusion.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly this book described, in Foxe's allusion to it, the Battle of Hastings in greater detail. It did not concern anything that one might regard as explicitly ecclesiastical. Foxe never returned in any later edition of his book to revise his narrative in the light of this new source and we have not succeeded in identifying the source to which he was referring. What is fascinating here, however, is how Foxe, at least in his preparation of the 1570 edition, had at least considered its inclusion: a

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<sup>20</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 222.

<sup>22</sup> See Block commentary 52. Foxe wrote 'much moer might haue bene written of that matter [the Battle of Hastings] if the boke had come sooner to my hands whiche afterward I saw'. See *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 236.

telling sign no doubt, of the gathering significance of the antiquarian concerns in and among Matthew Parker's circle, and of their impact upon Foxe himself.<sup>23</sup>

The second item comes directly thereafter: a list of Norman Barons who had accompanied William in his invasion of England.<sup>24</sup> As discussed in the block commentary its origins are uncertain, none of Foxe's known sources included a list which matches the one Foxe printed.<sup>25</sup> A link to Bale's researches is therefore our best possibility. Its inclusion in the *Acts and Monuments* was certainly not ecclesiastical. Foxe furnishes us with no clue as to why he had decided to incorporate this information. It might well be, as the block commentary suggests, that it was a calling-card for leading members of the English aristocracy interested in extracting important evidence about their family's aristocratic lineage and longevity. An invitation perhaps for them to purchase, own and hopefully read this book as a further means of conversion. There are various signs throughout the book that Foxe sought to record genealogical details of interest in order to sustain the interest of the Elizabethan gentry. In which case, then, its inclusion may well owe as much to the commercial logic of Foxe's printer John Day as to his own authorial judgments about what was and was not appropriate to his narrative. Perhaps too, Foxe gave in to his 'magpie' instincts, identified by Elizabeth Evenden and others, a consistent over-exuberance in the gathering and sorting of material evidence.<sup>26</sup> Then again, we might surmise that Foxe saw this list as saying something about the stability of a political class, even one that had originally justified itself on the dubious base of conquest rather than legitimacy. Foxe was all too aware that the survival of the protestant church would depend on them as well.

#### 4. Successors of the Conquest

Foxe's accounts of William's successors, William Rufus, Henry I and Stephen I, continued to explore the theme of the secular and ecclesiastical overlordship of the English people through the combined might of the papacy and a foreign Norman occupation. For these reigns Foxe largely focused on the disputes of archbishops and new laws proclaimed by the papacy, limiting his assessments of their secular achievements to passing comments. As with the Anglo-Saxon period, however, Foxe's historical presentation seeks to complicate any simple stereotype.

From the start of his account of the reign of William Rufus (William II), Foxe provides a more considered and fair assessment than many other historians before him.<sup>27</sup> His first story relates how Rufus released from prison various English Lords who had been put into custody by his father, thereby depicting him as the 'English' choice because he warred with his elder brother, Robert Courtsey, a Norman who

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<sup>23</sup> Phillpott, *Rectifying the 'ignorance of history'*, (University of Sheffield, 2009), especially chapter 3..

<sup>24</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 236.

<sup>25</sup> See Block commentary 52.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas S. Freeman and Elizabeth Evenden, 'John Foxe, John Day and the Printing of the "Book of Martyrs"', in Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (eds), *Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London, 2002), pp. 23-54.

<sup>27</sup> This has been noted by Edmund King in his research for Block commentary 53.

elicited a rebellion of the Norman Bishops in England against the king. In that story, only Archbishop Lanfranc and Wolstan, Bishop of Worcester (and Englishman by birth) sided with William. Foxe praises Wolstan 'who for his virtue and consta(n)cie was so well liked and fauoured of the citezins: that...he stoutly maintained the cite of Worcester against the siege of their enemies'.<sup>28</sup> William Rufus is similarly described as acting well in these events, with Foxe stating that he 'sent to hym [Robert Courtney] fayre and gentle wordes'.<sup>29</sup> In short, he offered his brother a fair deal for them both. It did not take long, however, for Foxe to balance this with the negative evidence about William Rufus' heavy taxation and unfair selling of benefices. The king was therefore 'ill liked' by the Norman Lords and 'hated of all Englishmen'.<sup>30</sup> As evidence Foxe depicted the king as a greedy 'ravener' of 'church goodes' through the example of the Lincoln bishopric, which was emptied and not fulfilled until the incumbent 'plesed him with a grete summe of money'.<sup>31</sup>

Foxe's more even-handed account of Rufus' reign is conceived partly because he held England apart from Normandy and because he did not hold the Norman baronage in high regard. However Foxe also noted that William 'favoured not much (th)e see of Rome, because of their impudent & vnsatiabie exactions, which they required: neither would he suffer any of his subiects to go to Rome'. Citing both Latin and English sources, Foxe sought to document how the Pope did not have 'power and autoritie of him'.<sup>32</sup> Here was the prologue to Foxe's description of the contention between William Rufus, Anselm and the election of a new Pope. The king was 'iustly displeased' when his archbishop of Canterbury (Anselm) sided with Urban as papal candidate rather than the king's preference of Gilbert. In the words of William Rufus, Foxe wrote:

that no person should appeale to the pope without the kings licence. He that breaketh (th)e customes of the realme, violuteth the power and corwne of (th)e kingdome. He that violeteth and taketh away my crowne, is a traitour and enemy against me.<sup>33</sup>

Foxe treated the resulting debate over authority between Anselm and William Rufus as a prologue to the greater controversy between Henry II and Thomas Becket, and to the subject close to his heart: the need for good governance in state and church. Such subject-matter inevitably acted as a historical running commentary on the more contemporary issues which this debate paralleled, notably the royal supremacy issue raised under Henry VIII in the 1530s and which had been far from resolved by the Elizabethan 'Settlement' of 1559.

Following the coronation of Henry I, the controversy between king and archbishop intensified. Foxe favoured the third Anglo-Norman king partly because of his

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<sup>28</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 237.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 238.

<sup>32</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 239. Taken from Matthew Paris, but probably not his *Chronica Majora*, which Foxe did not have access to when he wrote this account for the 1563 edition (see *A&M*, 1563, bk. 1, p. 30).

<sup>33</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 239.



resistance towards the ‘vsurped power of (th)e bishop of Rome’ and his sustained opposition to his archbishop. Foxe readily conceded that Henry I was learned, knowledgeable in both the arts and sciences. He approved of his reduction of taxation, his legal reforms, and the restraint of his court, where the king ‘greatly abhorred excesses of meates and drinkes’.<sup>34</sup> Foxe also recounted that, like his predecessor, Henry defended his right to invest bishops. However, on the subject of clerical marriage ‘Anselme the stout champion of poperye and superstition, after this victory gotten vpon the king, for the which he so longe fought: with ioy and triumphe sayleth into England, hauing all his popishe requestes obtayned’.<sup>35</sup>

Foxe’s final assessment of Henry’s reign leads into a somewhat perfunctory account of King Stephen’s reign. Foxe recounted how Henry’s daughter, Matilda, was promised the crown after his death and of how William, Archbishop of Canterbury (with the support of many nobles) dissolved their oath after Henry’s death and instead invested Stephen (the king’s nephew) as their new king.<sup>36</sup> Stephen is dismissed by Foxe as untrustworthy, violent and bloodthirsty, especially for his role in the unjust treatment of Empress Matilda. As further example of Stephen’s brutality, Foxe told a story of how Stephen put a rope around the neck of the Bishop of Salisbury and forced him to give up his castle, which he subsequently razed to the ground.<sup>37</sup> In one respect alone, was Foxe prepared to concede that there was something positive to be said for Stephen’s reign. The king had successfully defended the crown’s right to nominate to spiritual livings.<sup>38</sup> The reign of Stephen I held very little interest for Foxe so he therefore passed over it with speed. As noted in the block commentary the narrative ‘amounts to little more than a series of jottings’.<sup>39</sup> At this point in the narrative it feels as if Foxe is hurrying towards a point in time that held more interest to his ecclesiastical mandate: the supposed martyrdom of Thomas Becket during the reign of Henry II.

Before we move onto that account there is something to be said about Foxe’s sources for this period.<sup>40</sup> His depiction of these eleventh-century English monarchs appears to have been based upon a selection of medieval chronicles and upon later chronicle replicas such as the sixteenth-century published edition of Robert Fabyan’s London Chronicle (*The New Chronicles of England and France*), the historical catalogues of English and European writers by John Bale and Matthias Flacius Illyricus; and Polydore Vergil’s *Historia Anglica* (written during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII). As the block commentaries reveal, it is almost impossible to distinguish which source Foxe is following for his depiction of these monarchs unless he himself tells us; and Foxe’s references are as much evidence for his truth claims towards his audience as they are a reliable guide to what he actually used as a source.<sup>41</sup> The detailed comparison that has been undertaken of Foxe’s texts compared to these

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<sup>34</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 246.

<sup>35</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 250.

<sup>36</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 256.

<sup>37</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 257. Foxe also recounted how Stephen did a similar thing to the Bishop of Lincoln.

<sup>38</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 259.

<sup>39</sup> Block commentary 55.

<sup>40</sup> Block commentaries 50 to 55 have plenty to say about Foxe’s sources.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, “‘St Peter Did not Do Thus’: Papal History in the Acts and Monuments’, in *Acts and Monuments [...] The Variorum Edition* [online] (hriOnline, Sheffield, 2004), <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/> [Accessed: June 2009].

various accounts suggests that he often chose to interweave them. In addition, there is evidence that Foxe occasionally dipped into two anonymous fourteenth-century chronicles – one attributed to John Brompton and the other entitled the *Eulogium*. More often, Foxe is known to have taken information from the *Annales* written by Roger of Hoveden, the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* by William of Malmesbury, the *Historia Anglorum* of Henry of Huntingdon, and the *Polychronicon* by Ranulf Higden.<sup>42</sup>

Foxe had no doubt wanted to depict Norman over-lordship as paralleling the rise of the Papal Antichrist in Rome. The invasion and usurpation of the throne by Duke William unseated the English nobility and clergy and provided an opportunity for the Pope to expand his authority. Yet the Anglo-Norman monarchy was not vilified. Foxe recognised that the Normans maintained a significant authority in church affairs and attempted to limit papal encroachment upon it in a way that their successors failed to do.<sup>43</sup> He criticised them when they tampered with established English laws and customs but found occasion to comment favourably too when they were seen to protect the interests of the realm.

## 5. The Plantagenet monarchy

For Foxe, the twelfth to the fourteenth century was the time when the papal antichrist had become firmly entrenched in Christian affairs. Beginning with the controversy between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket, Foxe led his readers through a lengthy tour of the Plantagenet kings, carefully crafting each monarch as a stepping stone toward the enthrallment of England by the antichrist. In short, Foxe argued that the papacy, infected by the antichrist's power, had become absorbed in worldly affairs. Beginning with Pope Gregory VII the Roman church increasingly came to variance with secular monarchs; first with the Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and then, as time passed, with the kings of France and England. The story of the Plantagenet kings was therefore inseparable from the narrative of how papal imperium became an obstacle to good governance. Through it, Foxe could prove that the rupture from Rome in the 1530s and the Royal Supremacy in the English Church were historically necessary and justifiable ways of restoring England's secular and ecclesiastical authority back to what had been its pristine state.

### I. Henri II

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<sup>42</sup> It is not possible to work through all the evidence for this here. As an illustrative example, however, we can see that the early portion of the narrative on Henry I was a mixture of material extracted from various English chronicles including *Chronica Majistri Rogeri de Houedene* (Roger Hoveden), edited by William Stubbs (4 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1868-71), vol. 1, p. 157; *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporibus*, edited by F. S. Haydon (3 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1863), vol. 3, pp. 56-7; Fabyan, bk. 7 ch. 226; Huntingdon, bk. 7 ch. 24 and Matthew of Westminster, *Flores Historiarum*, edited by Henry R. Luard (3 vols, Rolls Series, London, 1890), vol. 2, p. 35.

<sup>43</sup> For instance in the latter part of the twelfth century the English monarchy had conceded the right to make appeals to Rome without royal licence. See Franklin le Van Baumer, *The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship* (New York, 1966), pp. 15-16.

The account of Henry II is split between the early part of his reign and the latter part, which followed from the drawn out discourse on Thomas Becket.<sup>44</sup> Foxe began and ended with praise for the first Plantagenet king. Foxe introduced him as the securer of a more powerful English kingdom which drew in territories from Scotland, Ireland and Wales to Normandy, Gascony ('Gasoin') and Chinon. Through his wife, Eleanor, Henry also obtained parts of Spain. 'None of his progenitors' Foxe mused 'had so many countries vnder his dominion'.<sup>45</sup> Foxe then ended the account with a short list of events occurring during the king's reign and a lengthy eulogy of the king taken from various sources. The first, and longest, is worth citing here in full:

He was of meane stature, eloque(n)t & learned, ma(n)ly and bold in chiuallrye. Fearefull of the mutabilitye and chaunce of warre, more lamenting (th)e death of his souldiours dead, the(n) louing them aliue: none more curteous and liberall for the obtaining hys purpose: in peace and tranquility none more rougher: stubborne against the stubborne: sometimes mercyfull to those whom he had vanquished: straight to his household seruaents, but liberal to strau(n)gers: publicly of publike things liberall; sparring of hys owne: whom once he tooke a displeasure against, hardly or neuer would he receyue agayne to fauour: somewhat lauas of hys tounge, a wylling breaker of his promise, a louer of hys ease, but an oppressor of his nobility: a seuerer reuenger & furtherer of iustice: variable of word, & crafty in hys talke: an ope(n) adulterer: a nourisher of discord amongst hys children.<sup>46</sup>

So Foxe sought to rehabilitate the king's character and reputation from the vilification that he had received for his treatment of Thomas Becket. Foxe claimed that 'papists' called him an 'adversary of the fayth, the maule and beetle of the church'.<sup>47</sup> Foxe's defence of Henry II refuted these claims in no uncertain terms and sought to justify his support through evidence that many foreign princes sought his advice and arbitration.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Foxe claimed that despite Henry's many wars he never over-taxed the English people.

Foxe's treatment of the Becket affair is fascinating and frustrating in equal measure. It tells us less about Foxe's conception of church-state relations or his rehabilitation of Henry II than one would expect. Instead the reader is given a diatribe about false martyrdom and the history of Becket himself. Foxe limits himself to some telling comments on how the papacy had no authority over the king, that Henry II expected to be obeyed and that an archbishop did not have the right to challenge him. When it

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<sup>44</sup> Taken almost entirely from the *Quadrilogus*, alternatively called *Vita et processus S. Thomae a Becket super libertate ecclesiastica* (Paris, 1495) now published as *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, edited by James C. Robertson (4 vols., London, 1879).

<sup>45</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 299.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 293.

came to the king's penance for the archbishop's murder, Foxe's conclusion is that the king was put into a position where he had little choice but to submit himself.<sup>49</sup>

The role of Henry II in Foxe's narrative is therefore marginalised because Foxe had such an important ecclesiastical topic to promote. The account is almost entirely lifted from his first edition (1563), which itself was almost entirely lifted from the hagiographical text, the *Quadrilogus*.<sup>50</sup> For secular elements of Henry II's reign Foxe added material derived from John Brompton, Roger of Hoveden, and Ranulf Higden but these result in little more than an itemised list of other events during his reign from which little of interest can be ascertained. As far as Foxe's conception of martyrdom is concerned this is a vital and important element of the *Acts and Monuments* and its lengthy inclusion in the 1563 edition (it was by far the longest section in Foxe's pre-fifteenth century account) is evidence of its importance to Foxe's overarching arguments. However, as a source of information for Foxe's concept of kingship it is unexpectedly disappointing.

## ***II. Richard I***

With King Richard, Foxe did not need to refashion the traditional historical image of a heroic military leader. The kingly and heroic qualities readily apparent in his sources formed the backbone of his narrative and needed very little in the way of reworking. Although Richard's reign is hardly analysed in detail beyond his famous role in the Third Crusade, Foxe's account certainly drew on contemporary perceptions of good kingship through the legend of Richard the Lionheart, fearless in battle, moderate in negotiations, and fair in judgement.

Unfortunately the project's block commentaries are incomplete for this section of the text.<sup>51</sup> This prefatory essay therefore, provides some of the detail that can be amplified in any future edition of this work. Particularly interesting in this passage is block 63 where Foxe tackles the massacre of the Jews in England in 1189. This raises the important issue, not considered elsewhere in this edition, of John Foxe's relations with the Jews. According to an interesting article by Sharon Achinstein, Foxe generally viewed the Jews as a social or political threat.<sup>52</sup> In this instance, the inclusion of the story about the disobedience and insubordination of the Jews during Richard's coronation illustrated the political danger of the Jews themselves and not the failure of the king. In the *Acts and Monuments* in general, the Jewish story further reveals Foxe's concern to the point of obsession with civil obedience and good governance, not to mention his implicit fears about religious difference and issues of religious and cultural identity that were never far below the surface of his rhetoric about antichrist.

In the subsequent discussion of the Third Crusade contained in blocks 64 to 66 of the text, King Richard, we are told, embarked to the holy land as an act of absolution for

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<sup>49</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 290.

<sup>50</sup> Otherwise known as *Vita et processus S. Thomae a Becket super libertate ecclesiastica* (Paris, 1495). The *Quadrilogus* is a hagiographical text consisting of four lives (*vitae*) of Thomas Becket

<sup>51</sup> .Block commentaries 63-67 are not included in this edition.

<sup>52</sup> See Sharon Achinstein, 'John Foxe and the Jews', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54:1 (2002), pp. 86-120.

his earlier rebellion against his father.<sup>53</sup> Remarkable at this point is the degree to which Foxe was prepared to appropriate the idea of crusade itself into his narrative, clearly sympathetic to and aware of the affinities between it and martyrdom. Foxe divided his narrative into the preparations for the Third Crusade, the story of the crusade itself, and the subsequent capture and ransom of the king. This provides an appropriate backdrop to a lengthy excursus into the bitter controversies at home beginning with the controversies in Canterbury, Foxe taking his material here wholesale from Gervase of Canterbury (block 64). This is then followed by another quite detailed analysis (block 66) of the conspiracy of the king's regent, William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely and the king's brother, John (Richard's future successor). Foxe apparently enjoyed weaving into his narrative how Longchamp bribed his way to become Legate so that he might then act as 'both kyng and priest in the realme'.<sup>54</sup>

Thereafter, Foxe returned to the Third Crusade, concentrating this time on the fraught English/French relationship. The latter provided something of a backdrop to the image of the virtuous King Richard, fighting for Christendom, but struggling because of the actions and traitorous nature of his French allies. Upon his return to England, Foxe paused to note the royal pardon, 'gentlylly' forgiving the transgressions of his brother John, in order to cement in the reader's mind the image of a true Christian king: noble, brave, even-handed and wise. That said, Foxe was more inclined to present Richard as a Hercules than a saint, a hero with human weaknesses to overcome. For instance, it fell to a French archbishop to shame Richard into recognising his three bastard daughters.<sup>55</sup> Foxe also noted how it was Richard's greed in seeking treasure that led to his untimely death (Foxe also carefully noting that Richard repented of his avarice prior to his death). The ideal of kingship that Foxe promotes in this part of the work would be echoed elsewhere (in particular during the reign of Edward I). It was not one that Foxe often had the opportunity to explore, in part due to the lack of available candidates amongst the English monarchies but also because Foxe was now arriving to the point in his prophetic and apocalyptic schema in which the papal antichrist would entirely overthrow English liberties, freedoms, and religious piety.

### *III. John*

Once Foxe had adopted an interpretation of God's apocalyptic and prophetic trajectory for the world whose chronology took into account the period of persecutions of the early church, the reign of Richard's brother John became something of a key to unlocking a decisive moment in the unleashing of the forces of antichrist. Foxe's narrative of John is perhaps the most substantial political and personal reassessment that he was to attempt. The block commentary on this crucial narrative (block 67) provides an extensive analysis of the sources and significance of this passage. The papal interdiction and excommunication of King John were interpreted by Foxe not as the personal failings of a flawed monarch but as the inevitable first-fruits of the unchained power of antichrist in the papacy. For Foxe, it was therefore hardly surprising that the authority of John's successor Henry III would be compromised by papal interference. The repeated rebellion of Barons during the

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<sup>53</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, pp. 302-21.

<sup>54</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 316.

<sup>55</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 318.

reigns of John and Henry is, at several points in the narrative, explained as the natural result of papal interference in English affairs. Foxe readily interpreted the repeated intrusion in the nation's affairs by meddling papal legates as the cause of much misery and poverty because of the 'insatiable avarice and greediness of the Romans'.<sup>56</sup>

Foxe's narrative of King John has also received detailed examination by Thomas S. Freeman.<sup>57</sup> Freeman surmises that this part of the text was very probably an account of the reign prepared by John Bale for his long-projected continuation of his *Acts of the English Votaries* (originally published in two parts in 1551 and ending with the reign of Richard I). It is very probable that, when Bale realised that his final illness would prevent his completing the work, he sent the account of King John to Foxe, who readily incorporated it into the first book of the *Acts and Monuments*. Bale died in 1563, the same year that the first edition was published. The tell-tale signs of irregular pagination and the awkward transition to the next section of text help to confirm that this account was a late addition to the work.

Bale himself, of course, was developing the revisionist direction indicated by earlier supporters of Henry VIII's break from Rome. During the 1530s the question of the lawfulness of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon drove the king's various protagonists as well as early evangelical protestants to search for evidence to support an independent English church. So, when William Tyndale published his *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, he readily challenged the traditional depiction of John as a wicked tyrant.<sup>58</sup> Tyndale sought to assert papal abuse and intolerance as the root-cause of the baronial conflicts and church disputes. A year later, Simon Fish expanded upon this revision in his anticlerical tract *A supplicacyon for the beggers*, which was further elaborated upon in 1534 by Richard Barnes in his *A supplicacion vnto the most gracyous prynce H. the viij*. The final Henrician attempt at redefining King John was produced by John Bale sometime around 1538. By then, Bale had taken the revisionist stance a stage further by refashioning John as a proto-martyr for the reformist cause. Unlike the polemics of Tyndale, Fish and Barnes, Bale adopted John as the hero for a polemical history play in support of the newly formed Church in England.<sup>59</sup>

These revisions largely centred on the theme of supremacy, that fundamental aspect of the political struggles of the decade of the 1530s. King John was no longer the tyrant who deserved the rebellion of his subjects, the interdiction of his realm and his personal excommunication. Instead Henrician polemicists reinterpreted the evidence in the light of the parallel with Henry VIII. Whereas Henry succeeded in brushing off

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<sup>56</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 339.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, 'John Bale's "Book of Martyrs"?: The Account of King John in Acts and Monuments', *Reformation*, 3 (1998), pp. 175-223.

<sup>58</sup> William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (Antwerp, 1528).

<sup>59</sup> The play has now been printed in Peter Happé, *The Complete Plays of John Bale* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1985). Raymond-Jean Frontain, "'David in his most Hevynes": Bale's King Johan and the Politicization of the Penitential David Tradition', *Cathiers Elisabethains*, 62 (2002), pp. 1-10 emphasises the importance of Bale making a comparison of John's character to the Biblical David, versus the 'papal' Goliath. This association drew on medieval tradition in which David was seen as the Biblical model of the divinely anointed king. Bale used this characterisation to reveal papal oppression and injustice. Bale again returned to his play on *King Johan* in the early 1560s making various revisions based on his increased knowledge of history. For details see Carole Levin, 'A Good Prince: King John and Early Tudor Propaganda', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 11:4 (1980), pp. 23-32.

the papal yoke, John had failed, and that failure had resulted in the subsequent servitude of England, 'made tributary to the pope and the Romishe church'.

#### *IV. Henry III*

Foxe's approach to the reign of John's successor was directed by the consequences of this failure. 'It is incredible' Foxe mused 'how the insatiable avarice and greediness of the Romains did oppresse and wring the commons and all estates and degrees of the realm, especially beneficed me(n) & such as had any thing of the church'.<sup>60</sup> Here, as in much of the narrative at this point (blocks 68-70), Foxe followed the lead set by Matthew Paris in his greater chronicle (the *Chronica Majora*). Its colourful depiction of the papacy provided Foxe with contemporary ammunition with which to demonstrate the brutal treatment of England under papal rule. Foxe accordingly adopted an altogether more confident and strident tone. He opened with an exclamation that 'duryng all this kynges tyme [Henry III], the Realme was neuer lightly without some of the Popes liegers withal violence exacting and extorting continuall prouisions contributions, and summes of money...to the miserable empouurerishing both of the Clergie, & temporalitie'.<sup>61</sup> This statement paved the way for Foxe to elaborate upon the narrative of Legate Otto as well as various other agents of the papacy.<sup>62</sup>

The Scottish affair during negotiations for the Treaty of York in 1237 provided a particularly good case-study of how Foxe took material from Matthew Paris and gently elaborated it to his own advantage. In the *Chronica Majora*, Matthew described how Otto had made a request to the King of Scotland, Alexander III to examine ecclesiastical affairs in the country. Alexander refused and warned that 'ungovernable, wild men dwell there, who thirst after human blood, and whom I myself cannot tame, and if they were to attack you, I should be unable to restrain them'.<sup>63</sup> Foxe reproduced this entire account with few changes until he came to the point where Otto, fearing for his own wellbeing, retracted his request. Foxe then provides an insinuating gloss that has no source in Matthew Paris: 'after the Cardinal heard the king speak these words, he pluckt in his hornes, and durst proceed no further'.<sup>64</sup>

When Foxe came to recount the latter part of the reign of Henry III, characterised by the baronial rebellions under Simon de Montfort, Sixth Earl of Leicester (1208-1265), Foxe made his most explicit break from the Eusebian model of ecclesiastical history (blocks 84-87). All this passage, introduced for the first time in the 1570 edition, evidently served a more immediate political and polemical purpose. The fear of a rebellion fomented in the name of and around the newly-exiled Mary Queen of Scots was uppermost in the public mind. Foxe, noting many lessons to be learned from

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<sup>60</sup> *A&M*, 1563, bk. 1, p. 113 and 1570, bk. 4, p. 339.

<sup>61</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, pp. 365-6.

<sup>62</sup> See Phillpott, *Rectifying the 'ignorance of history'*, (University of Sheffield, 2009), especially chapter 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Matthaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, edited by Henry R. Luard (7 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1872-83), vol. 3, pp. 413-4 translated from J.A. Giles, *Matthew Paris' English History from the year 1235 to 1273* (3 vols., London, 1889), pp. 69-70.

<sup>64</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 356.

Henry III's baronial conflict and perhaps prompted by Matthew Parker's concern to use history as a defence against rebellious incitement, delineated in some detail the secular events of this period. The baronial conflict covers about ten folio pages of the 1570 edition, Foxe carefully summarising a substantial amount of detail about the various military conflicts, councils and failed agreements.<sup>65</sup> Most of this material came from a handful of sources; Nicholas Trivet's *Annales sex regum Angliæ*; the *Flores Historiarum* attributed to Matthew of Westminster; and the chronicle of Walter of Guisborough. The latter of these was of particular importance for the accounts of the Battles of Lewes, Evesham and Kenilworth Castle.<sup>66</sup> All this was a means of providing 'much fruitful example, both for princes and subiectes to behold and looke upo(n), to see what mischiefe and inconuenience groweth in co(m)mon weales, where studie of mutuall concored lacketh'.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, Foxe by no means ignored ecclesiastical issues. He used the baronial conflicts to provide yet another illustration of how papal interference lay at the root cause of England's troubles. Henry III's marriage with Eleanor, daughter of the Count of Provence is blamed for 'opening the doors' to foreigners, especially papal legates, whilst the Pope is accused of abusing his power of absolution by making the Oxford agreement null and void.<sup>68</sup> Yet his central concern was to document the way that the nobility and higher clergy could become the unwitting dupes of others. He had already held them responsible for the five early invasions by Romans, Picts, Saxons, Vikings, and Normans. King John, too, had failed in his fight against the Roman antichrist because his barons had rebelled against him. Now John's son was faced with a similar problem. Foxe perhaps had in mind the 'notables' of his own time, especially their role during Mary's parliament. Elsewhere in the *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe made a powerfully argued case for their assuming their responsibilities against the queen's persecution. He also attacked the conservative members of the Elizabethan aristocracy who had been inclined to rebel against the queen in 1569. The roles of monarchical responsibility on the one side and obedience on the other, runs throughout the *Acts and Monuments* as a key concept of good governance.

There is another theme concerning governance that is particularly important for us to address at this point. Most recent histories of the reigns of King John and Henry III will, undeniably, focus to some extent on Magna Carta and its reproductions. Yet Foxe barely touches upon these important documents. How should we explain Foxe's relative neglect of 'Magna Carta'? There are only three points in the narrative where Foxe deals with it. The first – during the account of King John – could almost be

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<sup>65</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, pp. 418-427.

<sup>66</sup> Compare the account of the battle of Lewes in *A&M*, 1570, pp. 423-4 with WG, pp. 191-4; the battle of Evesham in *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 425 with WG, pp. 198-202; and the siege of Kenilworth Castle in *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, pp. 426-7 with *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough previously edited as the Chronicle of Walter of Hemingford or Hemingburgh*, edited by Henry Rothwell (London, 1957), pp. 202-4.

<sup>67</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 418. Part of Matthew Parker's propaganda campaign was involved in the danger of rebellion see Vivienne Sanders, 'The Household of Archbishop Parker and the Influencing of Public Opinion', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 34 (1983), pp. 534-547.

<sup>68</sup> *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 418 and *A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 414 respectively.



missed, so little does it feature in his account.<sup>69</sup> In a second tangential reference during the reign of Henry III, Foxe mentions it again, this time according it the name of 'Magna Carta'. Here again, however, it is little more than as an aside to a discussion of papal extortion and interference in England. This reference was derived directly out of the *Chronica Majora*. A third and final reference occurs in the year 1224, which was when 'Magna Carta' and the 'Carta Foresta' were reconfirmed. This time, these two charters became something more like the central focus for the discussion. Foxe draws here not as was usually the case in this section of the text from Matthew Paris, but from the alternative chronicle of Walter of Guisborough.<sup>70</sup>

The emphasis accorded to the 1224 reissue and confirmation of the charter was in accordance with what Elizabethan scholars generally knew of the text and its history. Ralph Turner has shown that both scholars and the general populace knew and appreciated the significance of Magna Carta.<sup>71</sup> Indeed its contents were known through popular printed editions published throughout the century. However these printed editions were of the revised issue and not those of 1215.<sup>72</sup> The earlier origins of the charter during John's reign were not widely appreciated. Tudor men of business found comparatively little use for the constitutional claims that their early Stuart successors would invest into it. Turner may well be correct to suggest that 'Magna Carta' was not the kind of continuity with the past that Foxe wanted to foster. If anything, its attempt to limit royal prerogative power threatened to hinder the thread of Foxe's narrative that emphasised the educative role of the monarchy. In bringing about liberation from papal tyranny the necessity for a loyal nobility to support the charters in the name of right religion and good governance became a burden to a revised notion of the past and the present.

### ***V. Edward I, Edward II and Edward III***

Foxe's narrative of the later thirteenth century was unsupported by any one source of the quality of the chronicles of Robert Fabyan, William of Malmesbury and Matthew Paris that had served him so well for the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth centuries. At this point, too, this edition has yet to complete its detailed examination of Foxe's handling of his underlying sources (blocks 90-93 and 96 are not yet included). In general terms, it is clear that Foxe relied on a plurality of contemporary manuscripts though exactly how he chose to select and discriminate between his

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<sup>69</sup> In the account of King John (*A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 325) the Magna Carta is more alluded to than providing an outright statement of its initialisation in John's reign whilst Foxe clearly states in the reign of Henry III that it was conceived at this time (*A&M*, 1570, bk. 4, p. 418).

<sup>70</sup> J. C. Holt, 'The St Albans Chroniclers and Magna Carta', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5:14 (1964), pp. 67-88 discusses the relationship and similarities between Matthew Paris and Walter of Guisborough's skewed understanding of Magna Carta and its history.

<sup>71</sup> Ralph V. Turner, *Magna Carta through the Ages* (Edinburgh, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> The original charter was first issued in 1215, and then reissued in 1216 and 1217. There was however, little knowledge of this association with King John during the 1560s. See Turner, *Magna Carta*, p. 140. Matthew Parker's gathering of the editions of the *Chronica Majora* was of great importance in reconstructing the true origins of the charter. In 1576 further researches by Richard Tottell, perhaps influenced by the publication of Parker's 1571 edition of the *Chronica Majora*, resulted in the publication of the *Antiqua Statuta* (London, 1576). An edition of the 1225 Charter had also been published by Thomas Marsh just months before and had quickly sold out. These were the first new editions since Thomas Petit's edition in 1542. See H. J. Byrom, 'Richard Tottell – his Life and Work', *The Library*, 8:2 (1927), pp. 199-232.

sources has yet to be delineated. He had five important primary sources providing him with parallel accounts of the reign: the *Historia Anglicana (Historia Brevis)* by Thomas Walsingham; the anonymous *Chronicon Angliæ*; the *De gestis mirabilibus Regis Edwardi tertii* by Robert Avesbury; an untitled chronicle by Walter of Guisborough; and the *Annales* by Nicholas Trivet. These five manuscripts formed the basis for Foxe's account through to the end of the Plantagenets. In particular Foxe extracted from them a mosaic of evidence about Edward I's war with Scotland (block 91), the quarrel between Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII (block 92), the reign of Edward II and the Piers Gaveston affair (block 97) and the early phase of the Hundred Years' War in the reign of Edward III (blocks 104-5). Foxe then filleted into this narrative other accompanying narrative elements, drawing on leads which he had probably discovered in the source catalogues of Bale and Flacius.

There was an implied comparison in Foxe's mind between all the Plantagenet kings and their individual achievements. Edward I's reign provided him with an opportunity to remind his readers of the image of the warrior-king, a loyal and obedient son, enjoying God's providential protection and able to protect the realm from the ravages of the antichrist. The scene had been elaborately set in the preceding narrative of Henry III's reign, where Prince Edward was depicted as the courageous warrior, fighting on behalf of the king in the Baronial wars against Simon de Montfort, and then against the Turks in Asia. He had been a 'louing and naturall child to his father'.<sup>73</sup> When he had heard of the death of his son and his father Edward 'wept and lamented much more for his father' because 'the losse of hys childe was but light, for children might after encrease and be multiplied, but the losse of his parent was greater, whiche could not be recoured'.<sup>74</sup>

Foxe passed rapidly over Edward's wars in Wales and Scotland, only pausing to declare the provocative involvement of Pope Boniface VIII (block 90). The Pope had sided with the Scots on the claim to be 'calming' tensions. Foxe approved of Edward's opposition to this intervention in British affairs, 'litle trusting' of 'the popes false vnstable affection toward him'.<sup>75</sup> Of course he could not turn back the clock altogether and Foxe acknowledged that his efforts would be limited, for 'the church of Rome which before tyme was subject to kynges and princes, began fyrst to take heade aboue, and against kynges and rulers, and so haue kept it euer since'.<sup>76</sup> It was Edward I's creation of a political nation in his negotiations with Parliament, often lengthy and contentious, that impressed Foxe most directly. It is not too difficult to surmise that he saw plenty of parallels with his own day. Here was a ruler, 'gentle and wyse' and 'constant' in keeping his promises, engaging with Parliament in a way that, as Foxe would have understood it, epitomised the idea of a mixed government of king and Parliament working together under the natural laws of the kingdom.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 430 taken from Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, edited by Henry T. Riley (2 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1863-64), pp. 8-9. Foxe appears to have muddled his sources in this section of his work, claiming instead that he had used the chronicle written by Robert Avesbury. However, the text is definitely from Walsingham.

<sup>74</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 430.

<sup>75</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 434.

<sup>76</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 445.

<sup>77</sup> Franklin le Van Baumer, *The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship* (New York, 1966), pp. 120-191.

Foxe's praise for Edward I is a stark contrast to his depiction of Edward's son, Edward II. Foxe's opening description suggests his awareness of a dangerous paradox, a king who was 'personable in body and outward shape' but of 'euill disposition much deformed'.<sup>78</sup> These opening lines on the second of the three Edwards' characterise his depiction of the reign with its various disturbances, especially those concerning the favourites Piers Gaveston and the powerful de Spenser family (blocks 97-98). These have not yet been furnished with detailed block commentaries in the edition but the overall purpose of the section in Foxe's narrative is clear; the misrule that occurs in a realm is a result of misrule within the personality of its ruler.

The account of Edward III is, on the other hand, one of praise, 'a prince of much and a great temperance. In feates of armes very experte, and no lesse fortunate & lucky in all his wars, as his father was infortunate before hym. In liberalitie also and clemenci worthey commended, briefly in al princely virtues famous and excellent'.<sup>79</sup> Foxe's narrative here picks up at once on the subjugation of Scotland (despite papal interference) and the campaign to conquer France (blocks 101-2; 105) as the background for understanding changes in the English ecclesiastical polity and its relationship with Rome. That theme would provide the background to the Lollard movement in the subsequent Book Five. In that book Foxe's emphasis moved away from the papal antichrist and onto martyrdom and persecution. The role of kingship shifted as well. Evidence from the Parliament Rolls is brought to bare as evidence that Edward III had increased his control over the clergy and attempted to limit papal jurisdiction in England (block 115; 117). In the fourth edition (1583) Foxe added evidence from the Tower records that Edward and his parliament had made these changes as papal authority had placed most of the English church's revenues into the hands of foreigners (block 121). However, the focus of the narrative in Book Five is not upon these matters. Foxe is more interested at this point in his narrative on John Wyclif and the emerging lollards which provided a prologue and beginning to the English, and indeed continental, reformation.

## Conclusions

Foxe's views of the Plantagenet kings were conditioned by sixteenth-century conceptions of monarchy, the debates about resistance to established authority that had developed among the Marian exiles and the doctrine of royal supremacy that underlay the Elizabethan ecclesiastical settlement. As with the Anglo-Saxon period, Foxe used the Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet regnal succession as a convenient tool for periodisation and periodic reflection upon the nature of kingship and the moral issues related to rulership. It provided a local English periodisation for the broader apocalyptic meta-narrative in which first the Norman Conquest, and then (from the 1570 edition onwards) the reign of King John provided defining moments in the progressive unleashing of the papal antichrist. The subsequent reign of Henry III, propelled by the discovery of Matthew Paris' largely anti-papal *Chronica Majora*, allowed Foxe elaborately and colourfully to extend that thesis and show his readers

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<sup>78</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 465.

<sup>79</sup> A&M, 1570, bk. 4, p. 475.

that England had indeed fallen under the control of a false religion both in terms of beliefs and in terms of worldly governance. The contention between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket provided Foxe with the opportunity to explore his theme of martyrdom from the perspective of a false-martyr who died not for religion but for secular reasons. The reigns of Richard I and Edward I allowed Foxe to describe the warrior-king but more specifically provided a rare opportunity to show how government could and should operate. Indeed, the importance of good governance formed the backbone of Foxe's wider arguments and especially emphasised the threat that the papacy posed to harmony between Parliament, monarchy and the people. Taken as a whole, Foxe's intermingling of the English monarchy from the eleventh- to thirteenth-centuries into his ecclesiastical history provided an important English grounding for what was, in essence, the story of the Christian Empire and its alteration by the Antichrist.

As with Bale, Melancthon, Matthias Flacius Illyricus and others, Foxe regarded this narrative as reiterative, offering a series of 'warnings' that God's providence provided to the present for those who were in a position to understand and interpret them. The title of Foxe's history accurately reflects its ambition to be not merely an ecclesiastical history in a Eusebian mode but a history that will educate and teach its readers about the warnings and lessons of history, organised not in ecclesiastical but in political time. It was an ecclesiastical history in so far as it offered to present the 'Actes and Monuments...especially in the Church of England'. But the title also chose to do so by structuring them in accordance with 'euery kynges tyme in this Realme'. There was artful bookselling at work here, no doubt, since it was probably the case that the history of kings sold better than a history of the church. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in the 1570 edition, the one where he developed this portion of the text most considerable, was an educative tool to support the fragile and uncertain Protestant kingdom. As far as Foxe and his sustainers were concerned the securing of the Elizabethan regime was equally important as the conversion of England's populace, both mind and body, to the 'true' faith. If it were necessary to bring interest to his book through the use of secular history then this was a small price to pay in the hope of re-establishing God's rule in England.