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Exchanging the Old with the New: Medieval Influences on Early Modern
Representations in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*

by

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For Marcie, Griffin and
Donald

Abstract

In *The Examinations*, Anne Askew represents herself as a reform martyr. Her editors John Bale and John Foxe further this representation in their comments on her responses, and situate her in the *mulier fortis* literary tradition. Bale's commentary results in his self-representation as a historian of the reformed church. I argue that these representations are shaped by Askew's and her editors' employment of conventions associated with medieval hagiographies and histories. Medieval saints' lives celebrate the heroes of the traditional religion. Why, and how, did Askew and her editors appropriate conventions of saints' lives when, as reformers, they were against saints' cults?

This dissertation participates in the growing scholarship on Askew by being the first monograph dedicated to her text. I explore the ways in which Askew and her editors refashion the medieval representation of the martyr to present her as a reform martyr and *mulier fortis*. I also examine Bale's self-representation as a sixteenth-century ecclesiastical historian.

Chapter One investigates Askew's reference to St Stephen with whom she aligns her self-representation as a martyr. Chapter Two analyzes Bale's representation of Askew as a *mulier fortis* and his own representation as a historian. The chapter includes a brief survey of the *mulier fortis* tradition in order to situate Bale's representation of Askew. Chapter Three examines Bale's fashioning Askew with Marian features. Reformers recognized the Virgin Mary, a biblical example of a *mulier fortis*, as Christ's mother, but negated all features of

Marian devotion that conveyed saints' cults. Chapter Four examines John Foxe's inclusion of *The Examinations* in his *Acts and Monuments* and the possible medieval influences on his text. I argue that his treatment of Askew resembles John Capgrave's representation of St Katherine.

This dissertation underscores the relationship between history and textual representation: representations from the past are refashioned to produce representations in the present. I contribute to the current studies on periodization and to the discussions on the blurred border between the medieval and early modern literary periods. The medieval representation of the Christian martyr provides a framework for the construction of the early modern reformist martyr.

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Introduction

In 1546 at twenty-five years of age, Anne Askew, an English reformer, was burned at the stake for her heretical views on transubstantiation. For Askew, the bread and wine were only signs of Christ's body and blood, representing his suffering and death for mankind. She did not believe that they changed in substance into Christ's body and blood after being consecrated during the Mass. She was arrested three times for this belief, and was imprisoned and examined twice for heresy. During her incarcerations, Askew wrote a thorough record of her examinations, *The first examinacyon* and *The lattre examinacyon*. In these texts, she offers a detailed account of her examiners' questions and her responses to them. After her death, the polemicist John Bale published *The first examinacyon* in 1546 and *The lattre examinacyon* in 1547. These editions include commentaries by Bale in which he offers his opinions on the examination process, the interrogators' questions and Askew's answers.

At one point in his elucidations, Bale comments on a letter that Askew sent to fellow reformer John Lassels. In the letter, Askew communicates to Lassels her surprise in discovering that he believes she has renounced her beliefs in religious reform. Bale glosses her letter for his readers and states of Askew, "I wolde but knowe of them whych are common readers of chronycles and Sayntes lyves, where they ever redde of a more fervent and lyvelye faythe than was in thys

godlye yonge woman” (133).¹ Bale contends that readers of chronicles and hagiographies would recognize Askew as an exemplary religious female figure because her piety models that of the saints and martyrs. But of more significance, Bale infers that Askew, by design, represents herself as a godly young woman to her readers. To create this representation, Askew refashions conventions from medieval hagiographical stories that record saints’ lives in order to present herself as an early modern martyr of the reformed faith. Medieval hagiographers portrayed Christian martyrs from the past as intelligent educated speakers who articulated their faith in Christ when confronted by repressive authorities. Likewise, Askew portrays herself as rhetorically skilful in her responses to her interrogators who are unable to procure heretical statements from her in the first examination. Where martyrs eloquently speak of their devotion to Christ, Askew conveys her devotion to Christ by citing the Bible, demonstrating the importance reformers place on reading the Bible to further one’s Christian faith and to determine religious practices. Medieval hagiographers also incorporated scriptural typology to represent some martyrs as Christ-like in their resistance to religious oppression. Similarly, Askew presents herself as Christ-like in championing her religious beliefs: she defends herself against a host of examiners, suffers physical torture, and is sentenced to death. Her examinations reveal her modification of hagiographical conventions, drawing attention to the influence of, and her reliance

¹ All quotations from Bale regarding Askew are from Elaine Beilin’s edition of *The Examinations of Anne Askew*.

on, late medieval hagiographical tradition to convey her dedication and steadfast endurance to the reformed faith.

Bale, a reformer who prior, to his conversion, was a friar and “loyal to the old religion” (J. King, “Bale”), is cognizant of Askew’s created representation because of his past membership in and faithfulness to the traditional religion of which saints’ cults were a prevailing feature. Paintings, pilgrimages, church feasts, saints’ legends, and prayers to saints are just several manifestations of the medieval, and the early sixteenth-century, traditional religion’s fascination with saints. Bale’s statement not only points to Askew as intentionally creating a self-representation as a martyr, but also signals that his representation of Askew as a martyr and a *mulier fortis*, a pious and wise “strong woman,” and his own self-representation as a learned hagiographer and historian, originate from medieval histories and saints’ lives. He creates these representations by integrating his own commentaries with Askew’s responses to the examiners’ questions. Bale, a prolific writer of plays, polemics, and hagiographies before and after his conversion, creates his representation of Askew by typologically comparing her and her situation to celebrated female, as well as male, martyrs and saints whose *vitae* are found in the writings of early Christian church historians and medieval hagiographers. His references to these historians and hagiographers, combined with his portrayal of Askew as a sixteenth-century reform version of these martyrs, result in a representation of himself as a sixteenth-century historian and hagiographer.

Bale is not the only sixteenth-century editor of Askew's text to portray her as a reform martyr and a *mulier fortis*. Martyrologist John Foxe includes her version of her examinations in his *Acts and Monuments*, a history detailing the lives of English reform martyrs. Foxe's inclusion of Askew's story in his mammoth text, alongside other martyr stories, identifies her to his readers as a reform martyr. His comments on several episodes in *The Examinations* heighten the drama between Askew and her examiners and underscore Askew as a victim confronting her oppressor, a scenario played out repeatedly in martyr stories.

This project undertakes to demonstrate that Askew, Bale, and Foxe paradoxically rely on conventions found in medieval hagiographical legends to represent Askew as a reform martyr while simultaneously denouncing the established religion. These conventions are integral to their representations. Stephen Greenblatt, best known for his research on early modern representation, explains that a

work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society. In order to achieve the negotiation, artists need to create a currency that is valid for a meaningful, mutually profitable exchange. ("Towards a Poetics" 12)

The representation of Askew as a martyr is similar to a "work of art" in that it is created by Askew and her editors, and it is a result of the exchange that occurs

between them (the creators) and their readers (the recipients of the representation). As creators, Askew, Bale and Foxe employ conventions found in medieval saints' legends for their representations of Askew as a martyr because the conventions embody meaning for their reform readers, readers who would be familiar with saints' lives because of their pervading presence within the established religion and within English society. Michel Foucault describes the mechanism at work:

It is through resemblance that representation can be known, that is, compared with other representations that may be similar to it, analysed into elements (elements common to it and other representations), combined with those representations that may present partial identities, and finally laid out into an ordered table. (*Order 68*)

Readers “recall” the representations of martyrs, the characteristics inherent amongst martyrs, in order to imagine Askew as a martyr.²

Medieval saints' lives illustrate the tribulations of Christians from approximately the first century to the twelfth century in their battles against their oppressors that result in their victorious deaths for Christ. Despite medieval saints' legends articulating heroic and steadfast devotion to Christianity, the Reformation movement desired to eradicate saints' cults because of its focus on the saints' intercessory powers. Brad Gregory notes that reformers rejected the

² Foucault states that “resemblance is situated on the side of imagination, or, more exactly, it can be manifested only by virtue of imagination, and imagination, in turn, can be exercised only with the aid of resemblance” (*Order 68*). “There must be, in the things represented, the insistent murmur of resemblance; there must be, in the representation, the perpetual possibility of imaginative recall” (*Order 69*).

intercessory power of saints because they believed it to be “an affront to the Lord and an act that reflected an erroneous theology. Why pursue in piecemeal fashion from specialised wonder-workers what Christ alone could and did offer all at once?” (“Saints” 109). Reformers also believed that saints’ lives, which were not scripturally substantiated, to be fictions. A.G. Dickens asserts that the agenda of the English Reformation was “first and foremost to establish a gospel-Christianity, to maintain the authority of the New Testament evidence over mere church traditions and human inventions masquerading as universally approved truths and ‘unwritten verities’” (13). Notwithstanding these objections, reformers such as Askew, Bale and Foxe incorporate medieval hagiographical conventions associated with the traditional religion with reform views, resulting in a “refashioning” of these conventions so as to represent Askew as an early modern reform martyr and *mulier fortis*. These conventions provide Askew and her editors an established and recognizable framework in which to create textual subjectivity for themselves. The victim versus oppressor structure of medieval saints’ lives offers them the ability to portray Askew resisting the traditional religion, which results in the reformer’s torture and death. As well, the genre of saints’ lives offers a space in which to display Askew’s utmost devotion to Christ. The intrinsic nature of saints’ lives is the displaying idealistically of one’s love of and loyalty to Christ. Late medieval and early modern reform martyrologies, despite differing confessional beliefs, portray martyrs devoted to Christ.

The representation of Askew reflects a society in transition, a society experiencing political and institutional reforms resulting from a shift away from the traditional religion that is centered in Rome to a religion now headed by the King of England. Askew and Bale are writing during the last years of Henry VIII's reign, a period in English history marked by conflict, tension, and violence. Norman Jones explains that English society underwent turbulent changes in the sixteenth century as a result of Henry VIII's rejection of the papacy and the dissolution of the monasteries, and the further Protestant initiatives instituted during Edward VI's realm (2). Historiographers have debated how long it took for English citizens to accept reform ideas during the Reformation. Notable revisionist critics J.J. Scarisbrick, Eamon Duffy, and Christopher Haigh claim that the Reformation in England was not initiated by the majority of English men and women. Scarisbrick asserts that "on the whole, English men and women did not want the Reformation and most of them were slow to accept it when it came" (1). Haigh agrees with Scarisbrick, stating that

Catholic piety was expanding rather than contracting in the years before the Reformation. Henry VIII did not challenge a moribund Church and a declining religion: he attacked institutions and forms of piety which were growing and vigorous. The fact that there *was* a Reformation does not mean that it was wanted: it does not imply that there was a deep-seated popular demand for religious change. (4)

Duffy concurs with Haigh and Scarisbrick insisting that Reformation historians have exaggerated the extent of the success of the Henrician Reformation. He states his revisionist views in articulating the agenda for his text *The Stripping of the Altars*:

If this book with its broader time-span does anything to persuade its readers of the intrinsic interest and vitality of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English Catholicism, and to set a question mark against some common assumption about the character and progress of the Reformation up to the middle years of Elizabeth's reign, it will have served its purpose. (6)

The research of such scholars as A.G. Dickens, G.R. Elton, and Peter Marshall conflict with the above revisionist views. Dickens believes that the reformations occurring on the Continent profoundly influenced the English Reformation and cannot be discounted by revisionist historians. He states,

This real dynamic of the English Reformation has obviously eluded those historians who seek to make this episode a mere act of state, foisted upon a nation which did not want to receive it. This seems to the present writer a simplification by historians rightly aware of English popular conservatism, but all too little aware of the powerful European forces which during the reign of Henry VIII crossed the sea, penetrated that conservatism, and started to loosen

its grip, beginning with the accessible south-eastern region of England. (22)

Elton argues that in England Thomas Cromwell's enforcing and policing of reform initiatives in the 1530s initiated Protestantism's firm hold on England. Cromwell heightened the punishments associated with treason laws, which resulted in people acquiescing to the religious changes. Peter Marshall identifies the 1530s as the onset of a "full-scale Reformation" that produced a "head-on crash between Church and State, and the fundamental reordering of their relationship" (19). Despite Mary's ascension to the throne and her re-institution of Catholicism as the country's official religion, the Protestant changes made during Henry's and Edward's reigns had made deep inroads in England's religious and political landscape. Jones argues that,

Although some churchwardens rushed to restore their rood lofts and altars and the mass was "up again" in some places by popular demand, those Catholics had seen a world in which priests married, in which worship was in English, in which they had read the Bible in their own tongue. Their shrines were no more, and they showed little interest in monasticism. (3)

Under Queen Elizabeth I, England re-adopted Protestantism making it the country's official religion. According to Jones, "Traditional, pre-Reformation Catholicism was dying of natural causes by then" (3).

The debate between historians who present the Reformation as readily accepted by populations, that “England became God’s Protestant nation in the three decades from 1529 to 1559” (Daniell, *The Bible* 122), and the revisionists who portray the Reformation as a much more gradual process since some communities adamantly rejected reform initiatives illustrates the competition amongst historical narratives to be the accepted interpretation of historical events. In this dissertation I argue that Askew, as a reformer, spotlights the sixteenth-century reform debates on transubstantiation, on the Mass, and on reading the Bible in the vernacular by the laity in order to represent herself as a martyr for the Reformation movement. Her representation demonstrates the reform beliefs circulating at the time, but also the authority and influence of medieval traditional religion during King Henry VIII’s reign in England since she employs medieval hagiographical conventions to further her representation as a martyr.

The representation of Askew as a martyr documents how history and society produce “specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment” (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 3-4). Askew’s self-representation is a negotiation of the control, as well as the freedom, that her English sixteenth-century society denies or grants her. Bale’s and Foxe’s representations of Askew produce a further layer of the negotiation of that control. As male mediators, Bale and Foxe ensure through their comments to her responses that Askew’s representation does not convey a transgressive woman who deserves to be incarcerated and condemned to death since her views are

unauthorized. Instead, their representations are buttressed by the discourses of Christianity and of history so that she is made to conform to and model past representations of women who are historically documented not only for their contributions to the advancement of Christianity, but because their actions align with the prescriptions of Christian discourse. Living within a world of, and directed by, discourses, what Foucault describes as bodies of knowledge that contain power, Askew creates a self-representation that inscribes her with meaning (“The Order” 48). Additional discourses that shape Askew include the traditional religion, reformation theology, and the ecclesiastical legal and juridical systems. Prior to her conversion, Askew was a member of the traditional church and probably believed in and voiced traditional beliefs. It is this past membership that encourages her to use hagiographical conventions to represent herself as a martyr. As a member of the reform community, reform beliefs now influence Askew’s treatment of the traditional religion in her self-representation. Reform discourse dictates that she communicate reform beliefs and sentiments in her representation so that she is understood as a reformer. These sentiments include castigating the traditional church as the Antichrist. Her conversion moves her out of a community and a discourse that is in power to one that is on the margins trying to make a presence and become valid and accepted. Askew’s, Bale’s and Foxe’s representations bolster Reformation discourse. They further the establishment and the entrenchment of Reformation discourse and the Reformation community by propounding reform beliefs in opposition to

traditional religious beliefs within the representations. The existence of these representations provides exposure for Reformation discourse by discussing reform beliefs, ideas and issues. In turn, Reformation discourse makes the representations possible by giving them statements and beliefs to advance.

Askew's representation as a reformer came up against the ecclesiastical legal system, which was governed by the institutionalized traditional religion consisting of its ecclesiasts and its laws.³ Canon law criminalized Reformation beliefs. Askew's articulation of reform theology, although sanctioned by the Reformation community and Reformation discourse, was illegal. With Reformation discourse competing against the discourses of traditional religion and the legal system, Askew's death sentence was guaranteed if she continued to represent herself as a reformer and voice reform beliefs that were prohibited by the discourses in power. Askew understood that her beliefs were banned, but her commitment to them, even if it resulted in her death, produces her representation as a martyr.

Askew's portrayal as a martyr develops from these discourses and from historical representations of martyrs. The characteristics of martyrs, which will be discussed further in Chapter One, include devotion to God with a willingness to die for this devotion; exceptionally heroic behaviour; extremely good speaking skills; and intelligence (Waters 74; Gregory, *Salvation* 45). Askew and her editors apply these martyr characteristics to Askew, which results in her becoming a

³ See McQuade 2-6.

martyr like St Katherine of Alexandria. Askew's rhetorical skills resemble those of St Katherine, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The representation of Askew is created from the juridical process of examining alleged heretics, which produces a subject who is a witness of the reformed faith and symbolizes the struggle for religious reform and expression. John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* provides details of the examinations of reform martyrs through history. In his text, Askew joins other martyrs such as the fourteenth-century Lollards William Thorpe and Sir John Oldcastle who were examined for their beliefs. Bale also records the examinations of both these early reformers. Foxe's and Bale's accounts of reform martyr examinations demonstrate religious persecution in English history and link the victimization of reform martyrs with the persecution of historical Christian martyrs. Associating reform martyr persecution with Christian martyr persecution from the past assists them in presenting the reform church as the true church and the established church as the Antichrist.

This dissertation on Anne Askew stems from my interest in the writings of persecuted women, which began with my BA Honours's project and my MA thesis on the fourteenth-century French mystic and Beguine Marguerite Porete. Porete was arrested in 1308 for heresy and for disseminating her banned book, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. Porete's book was associated with the heretical movement "The Brethren of the Free Spirit." It is an allegorical treatise personifying Love, Reason and the Soul, in which these three female characters

discuss the mystical union between God and the Soul. Such a union endows the Soul with divinity while still living; however, divinity in orthodox terms is not be received until the afterlife. Porete's text infers that the Soul would be above the religious authority, which confronts and challenges the ecclesiastical structure. Like Askew, Porete refused to recant her unorthodox views and was condemned a heretic and burned at the stake. Although Porete's and Askew's texts differ in how they communicate their religious devotion, both women suffered for their piety and beliefs, which did not entirely conform with those of their religious authorities.

In this dissertation, I examine how Askew and her editors utilize saints' lives, Marian devotion, and historiography in their writings and how these forms of writing and religious expression are ancillary to the representations of Askew as a devout holy woman, as well as to the self-representation of Bale as a historian. The foundation of this dissertation originates in the work of such scholars as Elaine Beilin, Thomas Freeman and Sarah Elizabeth Wall, Paula McQuade, and Megan Matchinske. Beilin's edition of Askew's writings, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, is one of two texts devoted solely to Askew's literary history.⁴ Beilin has also written several articles that focus on Askew's self-representation and her gender.⁵ Beilin's treatment of Askew focuses on her as a

⁴ The other text that concentrates on Askew is Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen's *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile of Essential Works: Part I, Printed Writings, 1500-1640* (1996). This text is part of a series documenting women's writings of the early modern English period. It is a facsimile of John Bale's edition of Askew's text.

⁵ See Beilin, "A Challenge to Authority: Anne Askew"; "Anne Askew's Dialogue with Authority"; "Anne Askew's Self-Portrait in the *Examinations*"; and "A Woman for All Seasons: The Reinvention of Anne Askew."

sixteenth-century woman writer and analyzes her position as a female and how she subverts male power in her examinations. Her investigation on Askew examines how Askew achieves an authoritative presence within an environment that ideologically and theologically presents women as inferior to men. She explores Askew's female voice and the ways in which she forces her male examiners to hear it, thus interrogating the gender dynamics in the examinations. As well, Beilin studies what Askew's voice reveals about her, such as the extent of her education and her social class. Beilin does not discuss the historical or contemporary textual exemplars that Askew may have read to assist her in creating a representation of a learned woman. As well, Beilin does not discuss in depth Askew's self-representation as a martyr. She states that Askew shows herself to be "a vanquisher of the papist foe, a learned, honest, God-fearing, Scripture-loving comrade in the faith" ("Anne Askew's Self-Portrait" 79). Beilin believes that "Askew was seeking to show her true identity" ("Anne Askew's Self-Portrait" 79). Beilin underscores Askew's religious calling; however, her chosen adjective "true" is troubling since this identity is created by Askew. Beilin's statement highlights the success of Askew's agenda, which was to create a posthumous identity as a steadfast witness of the faith. I will show the ways in which Askew and her editors create such an identity. She represents herself to be "a vanquisher of the papist foe" by appropriating hagiographical characteristics that would make her resemble a martyr who opposes the papacy.

Freeman and Wall also examine the influence of Bale's and Foxe's mediations of Askew's writing, exploring the ways in which they become collaborators with Askew in producing her representation as a martyr and in articulating reform beliefs. They concentrate on Bale's and Foxe's editions of Askew's text, arguing that Foxe, whose comments on Askew's responses are far less substantial than Bale's, assists in creating a dramatic presentation of Askew verbally battling her examiners and withstanding brutal torture. I expand on Freeman and Wall's work by exploring the textual origins of Bale's and Foxe's representations of Askew and Bale's self-representation, and in what historical traditions they participate.

McQuade's work discusses Askew's legal representation of herself and her "bid for legal recognition" (2). She presents Askew's knowledge of the law, which Askew communicates in her responses. McQuade examines Askew's secular representation of herself. She argues that Askew constructs a representation of a woman as a female legal subject who demands her legal rights. My dissertation builds on McQuade's analysis of Askew by investigating the additional layers of self-representation in Askew's attempt to be treated fairly during the juridical process. Askew presents her own secular and religious representations while simultaneously putting forward a representation of her interrogators as unintelligent and incapable of discussing Scripture with her.

I also build on the scholarship of Megan Matchinske who, like McQuade, focuses on Askew's negotiation of the legal system and how she creates authority

and agency for herself. Matchinske explains that Askew's skillful and performative use of language and gender assists her in evading entrapment during the interrogations. She also discusses Askew as a subject formed by social, cultural and political structures that are, at times, in conflict with one another. These structures, through their membership criteria, legitimize and gender Askew's actions, voice, and agency (Matchinske 13). While Matchinske's research focuses on Askew's secular representation, this dissertation concentrates on Askew's religious representation, a representation that relies on the beliefs of two religious viewpoints that are in conflict. Although her representation as a reform martyr relies on features of the traditional religion, it still clashes with her religious and political authorities. I expand on Matchinske's work by exploring how Askew acts on her own behalf by portraying herself as a reform martyr, an identity that is incompatible with the religious and political structures of her society.

The growing scholarship on Askew motivates my exploration into Askew's, Bale's and Foxe's representations.⁶ Studies on Askew's agency, her legal knowledge, her piety, her reading, her writing, and her male mediation have been published as articles and as chapters in edited collections that concentrate on women's religious devotion, women's education, and women's reading and writing. My dissertation will be the first comprehensive full-length monograph on

⁶ See Genelle Gertz-Robinson, "Stepping into the Pulpit?: Women's Preaching in *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *The Examinations of Anne Askew*"; Elizabeth Malson-Huddle, "Anne Askew and the Controversy of the Real Presence"; Patricia Pender, "Reading Bale Reading Anne Askew: Contested Collaboration in *The Examinations*"; Joan Pong Linton, "The Literary Voices of Katherine Parr and Anne Askew"; and Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England*.

Askew that explores how she and her editors create and shape textual early modern reform identities that are embraced by their readers. I examine how Askew, Bale and Foxe fashion a representation of Askew the subject as a martyr with agency, a representation that is authoritative and cogent. In the representation, Askew speaks only when questioned by an examiner. Her responses are short and succinct. From such pithy answers, how do Askew and her editors not only create a representation, but communicate reform beliefs and a criticism of the traditional religion? What purposes do medieval literary conventions serve in the representations advanced by Askew, Bale and Foxe? I argue in this dissertation that literary conventions employed during the medieval period to represent individuals as martyrs and as historians can be readjusted so as to address the needs and world of sixteenth-century English reformers.

My investigation into Askew's and her editors' employment of medieval hagiographical conventions also questions literary periodization since Askew, Bale and Foxe are early modern writers but employ medieval conventions in their texts. The recent critical debates on periodization influence my investigation into how these Reformation representations advanced by Askew, Bale and Foxe appear to have organically grown out of the pre-Reformation periods. I contribute to the ongoing research by such critics as Jennifer Summit, Cathy Shrank, Helen Cooper, James Simpson and Andrew King that examines how the literature, culture, religion, and politics of the Middle Ages register in the Reformation and

post-Reformation eras.⁷ Their texts encourage critical discussions of and investigations into the constructed nature of periodization. My project will expand on these discussions by examining how the medieval text, the written and the iconographic, impress on early modern self-representation.

Askew's and her editors' incorporation of medieval hagiographical characteristics leads us to believe that they understood medieval traditional religion to contain meaning for them and their readers. One reason for this is that medieval religion was still the established religion even though King Henry VIII's reorganization of it had altered its institutional structure (the termination of the Pope's role in England positioned Henry as the leader of the Church of England) and its expressions of devotion (the dissolution of monasteries, churches, and chapels and the cessation of saints' cults). The implications of Askew's, Bale's, and Foxe's actions to create a representation of Askew as a martyr result in a reconsideration of periodization. The accessibility and adaptability of medieval hagiographical conventions in the early modern convey that the literary border between the two periods is fluid allowing these writers to cross over unimpeded into the medieval and take what they need to be successful in representing Askew, and Bale, in specific ways in the early modern period. We are left with the impression that Askew, Bale and Foxe viewed medieval literary conventions as available to them for their writing. Askew's and her editors' employment of

⁷ See Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England*; Shrank, "John Bale and Reconfiguring the 'Medieval' in Reformation England"; Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*; Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Reformation: The Oxford English Literary History*; and King, "The Faerie Queene" and *Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory*.

medieval conventions demonstrate the continuities between the medieval and early modern periods in creating textual representations. Jennifer Summit and David Wallace explain that terms like “medieval,” “early modern,” and “Renaissance” describe “our [scholarship] fields, their relative place in history, and their relationship with one another” (“Rethinking Periodization” 447). These terms result in specific features being assigned to each period, thus creating borders between the literary periods. Margreta de Grazia explains the relevance of the medieval and early modern border to scholarship:

Everything after that divide has relevance to the present; everything before it is irrelevant. There is no denying the exceptional force of that secular divide; indeed, it works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not. It is no wonder that Renaissance studies should covet its inaugural title “early modern,” and that medieval studies might wish to preempt it with the still earlier claim of being “premodern.” (453)

Reconsidering the dividing line between the medieval and early modern periods forces us to interrogate the origins of such value judgements, and what ideological purposes they serve and for whom. In this dissertation, I examine the border between the medieval and early modern periods to analyze the extent of the influence that the medieval hagiographical tradition had on Askew and her editors in their representation of Askew as an early modern reform martyr.

The dissertation consists of four chapters that concentrate on the influence of saints' lives, the *mulier fortis* tradition, Marian devotion, and ecclesiastical history on the representations advanced by Askew, Bale and Foxe. The first chapter examines the medieval hagiographical conventions used by Askew and Bale that demonstrate the permeable boundary between the medieval and the early modern that Reformation representation broaches. The chapter interrogates Askew's invocation of the first Christian martyr St Stephen to represent herself as a martyr and to communicate reform theology. Askew uses the biblical protomartyr St Stephen and his examination speech to support her reform arguments on transubstantiation, idolatry, heresy and salvation, resulting in reform beliefs becoming scripturally sanctioned. The chapter also discusses Askew using a male martyr to "authorize" her representation as a female martyr, and the authority, agency, and voice that comes with being a martyr. Askew hopes that by implicating St Stephen in her reform arguments she will persuade her interrogators that her beliefs accord with the Bible.

Chapter One addresses Askew's and Bale's hagiographical representation of Askew as a virgin martyr despite her marriage to Thomas Kyme and her purportedly having two children. Bale's mediation of Askew incorporates characteristics of the medieval female virgin martyr so he can cast her as a devout young woman. His representation of her as a virgin martyr does not focus on her physical sexual virginity but her inner "spiritual virginity." Bale also compares Askew to female martyrs from the Bible and from the early church so as to

confirm to his readers that she is indeed a martyr since she experiences similar religious oppression and responds as they did to being persecuted.

In Chapter Two, I examine Bale's comment regarding Askew's scriptural knowledge. He compares her to historical religious English women "lernerd also in scriptures" (31), positioning Askew as a reform version of a *mulier fortis* and himself as a historian. The *mulier fortis* tradition originates from the depiction of the wise, devoted and ideal wife in the Book of Proverbs 31.10-31. The chapter examines briefly the historical and exegetical treatment of the *mulier fortis* before interrogating the woodcut found in Bale's edition of Askew's first examination, which displays a woman holding a book with the word "Biblia" written on the cover and standing over a dragon that is wearing a papal crown. Underneath the woman are lines from Proverbs 31.10-31, the Song of the Valiant Woman. The woodcut is a reflection of Askew's and every devout reformer's battle with the established religion. As well, Bale refers often to the Book of Revelation presenting Askew's martyrdom as an apocalyptic sign that the established church, which he refers to as the Antichrist, will be destroyed by the steadfast endurance and actions of such reform martyrs as Askew, William Tyndale, and Robert Barnes.

My discussion of the medieval influences in Bale's representation of himself as a historian originates from a footnote in Beilin's edition of Askew's text in which she asserts that Bale consulted such medieval historians as Matthew of Paris and Robert Fabyan in order to reference the names of the devout learned

women. Bale also cites the works of Eusebius of Caesarea and the Venerable Bede. In Chapter Two I discuss how Bale's edition of the *Examinations* is possibly a supplement to medieval histories that document the lives of martyrs and esteemed individuals. I also examine how Bale's portrayal of Askew as a *mulier fortis* advances his representation of himself as a historian and England as a godly nation, depictions that stem from his engagement with the Bible and with medieval histories.

Chapter Three continues the dissertation's discussion of Bale's fashioning Askew as an early modern *mulier fortis*. The chapter shifts from interrogating medieval hagiographical representation as in the previous two chapters to now examining medieval Marian representation. Bale's comment on Askew's scriptural knowledge points to medieval Marian devotion. He refers to the Gospel of Luke Chapters 1 and 2 and mentions the names of Elizabeth, Anna, and the Virgin Mary, stating that these women were not censured for their knowledge or for speaking of the Bible. The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke focus on Mary's relationships with God and Christ and include her pregnancy, the Magnificat, and Christ's birth, events that underpin medieval Marian devotion. Bale's references to these opening chapters of Luke encourage an investigation into his shaping Askew with characteristics ascribed to the Virgin Mary, an example of a *mulier fortis* (Biscoglio 33), to represent Askew as a devout woman. These characteristics include Mary's identity as God's handmaid and spouse, her devotion, her learning and wisdom, and her receiving the Word of God. Bale

incorporates these characteristics for his fashioning of Askew in his Prologue, presenting her as an obedient servant to God. The quotation from Proverbs 31.10-31 in the woodcut associates Askew with being God's earthly spouse. As well, the woodcut woman holding a book and Bale's discussion of Askew reading Scripture speak to medieval images of the Annunciation in which the angel Gabriel interrupts the Virgin Mary's reading of devotional material. Bale's reference to the first two chapters in the Gospel of Luke persuades readers to understand Askew's reading of Scripture as a form of meditation and prayer similar to the Virgin Mary's meditation on the Word of God. Images of Mary reading correspond with the reform belief that men and women should engage on their own with the Bible and with devotional material.

Bale's Marian shaping of Askew reveals the paradoxical relationship Reformers had with the Virgin Mary. Marian devotion symbolized "the cultic and devotional world of which she was a centrepiece," a world that Reformers wanted destroyed (MacCulloch, "Mary" 191). However, Mary was also a resilient religious commodity, "a symbol of the church since the time of the church fathers" (Pelikan, Flusser, and Lang 11). She was revered by magisterial sixteenth-century reformers such as Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther, who wrote of her often. However, over time Luther changed his stance on certain aspects of Marian devotion when he began to oppose saints' cult. Luther did not believe in Mary's intercessory powers but did preserve Mary's identity as "Mother

of God” and highlighted “the importance of Mary’s virginal purity for the sinlessness and purity of Christ” (Kreitzer 134-135).

The Virgin Mother’s religious symbolism appealed to Bale, probably because of his previous association with the traditional church prior to his conversion to reform theology. His shaping of Askew includes references to the Book of Revelation’s woman clothed with the sun (Chapter 12), a symbol of “Mary and the community of her faithful and the martyrs” (Pelikan, Flusser, and Lang 11). Like the woman clothed with the sun, Bale presents Askew having to fight Satan’s earthly minions, which contributes to his narrative of the traditional church as the Antichrist.

The chapter also discuss the three woodcuts in Bale’s 1546 and 1547 editions of Askew’s examinations and their scriptural allusions, including the woman clothed with the sun. As discussed above, two of the woodcuts encourage a discussion of Askew’s knowledge and piety in relation to medieval images of the Annunciation that portray the Virgin Mary as a reader, as well as images of St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary how to read. I will also use the woodcuts to discuss Askew as a queen or heroine of the Reformation movement and as a symbol of the reform church similar to Mary being the Queen of Heaven and a symbol of the Christian church. The third woodcut displaying two trees, one dying and the other vibrant, reinforces Bale’s representation of the reform church as the true church and encourages viewers to understand Askew as a reform disciple and a protector of the true church embracing and living the Word of God.

Chapter Four concentrates on Foxe's hagiographical representation of Askew as a reform martyr and as a *mulier fortis*, which is similar to Bale's use of the tradition. Foxe, like Bale, portrays Askew as a devout follower of Christ, who could have chosen an easier life because of her "stock and kynred, that she might have lyved in great wealth and prosperitie," but instead "suffred to die" for Christ (191). I explore the influence that Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, and William Caxton's *The Golden Legend*, a translation of Jacobus's text, may have had on Foxe's mediation of Askew's writing and on his representation of her. Foxe knew of *The Golden Legend*, referencing it in the Latin preface to his 1570 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* as containing fictitious stories (J. King "Literary Aspects"). As previously mentioned, Foxe's history of the reformed church in England is predicated on the individual stories of reform martyrs. It is a Reformation response to the medieval *Legenda aurea*, a thirteenth-century catalogue detailing the history and lives of over two hundred Christian saints (J. King, "Religious Dissidence" 145). I examine Foxe's treatment of Askew's marital situation so as to portray her as a virgin martyr, which resonates with Foxe's representation of Elizabeth I's piety, as well as her virginity. Foxe dedicates the first edition of the *Acts and Monuments* (1563) to England's virgin queen, comparing Elizabeth to Constantine in establishing true Christianity in England. The chapter also investigates Foxe's minimal narratorial comments and the impact his remarks have on his shaping of Askew. Unlike Bale, Foxe comments only twice in his edition of Askew's text: to question her alleged

recantation and to describe Sir Anthony Knevet's protest of Askew's racking. Foxe's comments are meant to emphasize Askew's martyrdom, supporting his choice of including her in his history. The chapter concludes with a comparison of Foxe's representation of Askew to John Capgrave's portrayal of St Katherine. Foxe's handling of Askew's text resembles Capgrave's *Katherine* in that both allow their heroines to speak with few interruptions by the male narrators, thus providing a forum for the female voice. As well, Askew and Katherine undergo two examination processes in which they display their rhetorical skills and piety.

My study of Askew and her text examines the continuities between the medieval representation and the early modern representation of the martyr. I argue that the boundary between the medieval and the early modern periods is blurred because of the influences of medieval hagiography, piety and historiography on the early modern representation of Askew. Medieval hagiographers produced representations of the female saint in order to define exemplary spiritual devotion to Christ for their listeners and readers. These representations have meaning for the early modern reformer who desires to produce a representation of the reform martyr that will illustrate impeccable spiritual commitment to the Reformation movement. Medieval conventions fit harmoniously with Askew's and her editors' early modern representations. Early modern readers would have unquestionably accepted their use of the medieval to represent the early modern because these conventions had currency in the sixteenth century. Eamon Duffy explains that "Traditional religion had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay, and

indeed in a whole host of ways, from the multiplication of vernacular religious books to adaptations within the national and regional cult of the saints, was showing itself well able to meet new needs and new conditions” (*Stripping* 4). Askew and her editors rely on the conventions associated with the traditional religion to invent the representations of the early modern reformer, the martyr, and the historian. I demonstrate in this dissertation that early modern representation is not distinct and separate from late medieval religiosity, but that its conventions function as a foundation in the construction of the reform martyr.

Chapter One: Hagiographical Representations of Anne Askew, “thys godlye yonge woman”

Anne Askew begins her first examination stating her motivation for writing. According to Askew, “good people,” whom she does not identify, have requested that she write about her examination experience (19). In doing so, she spends no time explaining how or why she ended up in prison, probably since her intended readers are familiar with the details of her incarceration. Instead, she begins immediately to recount her version of the oral examination process by introducing her first examiner at Saddlers Hall and his question. Askew writes that Christopher Dare asked her if she “ded not beleve that the sacrament hangynge over the aultre was the verye bodye of Christ reallye” (20).⁸ His question draws attention to transubstantiation, the most contentious issue in the debate between traditional and reformed religion. Askew and her fellow reformers assert that the bread does not change in substance into the body of Christ during the Mass, a belief that results in her imprisonment for heresy.

Instead of answering the question regarding the sacramental bread, Askew responds with a question for Dare: “wherfore S. Steven was stoned to deathe?” (20). According to Askew, he does not know the answer to her question, so she refuses to respond to his. Askew’s question to Dare and his inability to answer it specifically presents her as having biblical knowledge superior to that of

⁸ Beilin notes that Christopher Dare is “unidentified, [and] one of the twelve appointed to the quest” (19n24).

her interrogators, which assists her in discrediting her examiners, representing them as incapable of debating with her.

Askew invokes the figure of St Stephen several more times during the first and second examinations, as does her editor John Bale in his elucidations on her comments to her examiners. These references to St Stephen, the protomartyr, display traditional religion's influence on Askew and Bale and the cultural framework in which they live, a framework that includes traditional religion's attachment to saints' lives. Reformers believed that the excessive adoration paid to the saints during the medieval period and by early modern religious conservatives was not necessary in forging a relationship with God. Reformers were influenced by Martin Luther's commentary on St Paul's letter to the Romans (1.17), which proclaimed that justification by faith, not solely good works, underpinned a union with God. Romans 1.17 states, "For by it [the Gospel] is the ryghtewesnes of God opened from fayth to fayth. As it is writte the iust shall lyue by fayth."⁹ As David Daniell points out, "the New Testament makes this clear, though works are obviously of great value, forgiveness is dependent on a willingness to meet God" (*The Bible* 10). Performing good deeds was still an important feature of Christianity; however, the belief that we receive the grace of God through faith was paramount for reformers in their devotion to God.

⁹ Biblical quotations are from *The Great Bible* (1539) with modern verse numbers included in the square parentheses. It is likely that Askew read from this particular Bible. *The Great Bible* "was the only Bible ever to be 'authorized' in Britain" (Daniell, *The Bible* 204). Reformer William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament (1526) was "met with keen demand" in England; however, it was banned and burned (Simpson, *Burning to Read* 35).

The magisterial Luther also influenced reform theology with his views on the sacraments of the church and on the Bible in the vernacular. Luther argued in *A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* that only three of the seven sacraments, baptism, penance, and the bread, had divine sanction and were found in Scripture. He states that “Nevertheless, it has seemed proper to restrict the name of sacrament to those promises which have signs attached to them. The remainder, not being bound to signs, are bare promises” (*Three Treatises: A Prelude* 258). Unlike Askew and Bale, Luther believed that Christ’s body was present in the bread during the Mass. Luther also stressed that, since all individuals are of one Christian faith in God, everyone should have the right to read and interpret the Bible, not just the clergy (*Three Treatises: An Open Letter* 21). Luther’s views on the Bible would persuade reformers on the Continent and in England to resist the axioms instituted by the conservative religious authorities who guarded access to the Bible.

The reform philosophy that everyone should have unmediated contact with the Word of God buttresses Askew’s employment of St Stephen. The translations of the New Testament from Greek into vernaculars by reformers such as Luther and William Tyndale made the Bible accessible to Askew and others who could read it in the privacy of their own homes. The New Testament also aligned with the convictions of the Reformation movement. “The Reformation,” as Peter Harrison points out, “was an attempt to reconstruct Christian religion from its origins, and those origins were to be found in the New Testament” (97). Reformed

religion cast itself as a return of the original, primitive Christian church, pure and authentic in its devotion to God. Reformers understood their persecutions as a continuation of the martyrdoms featured in the New Testament and in the early centuries of the church. They desired to read the book that detailed the teachings and persecution of Christ and his followers. The New Testament came complete with heroes who provided examples of piety and courage. Askew's invoking of St Stephen aligns her devotion to Christ displayed during her examinations with that of the protomartyr. St Stephen's *vita* found in the New Testament provides Askew with a model in which to shape her own representation for her readers. Askew also employs St Stephen's martyrdom to demonstrate that her reform beliefs on transubstantiation and salvation emanate from the Bible.

St Stephen's *vita* was not limited to the New Testament, but could also be read in medieval hagiographies that detail the lives of the saints and martyrs. Askew and Bale use medieval hagiographical conventions, such as those found in St Stephen's martyrdom as well as in other saints' lives, to bolster their representation of Askew as unjustly incarcerated. These conventions persuasively direct the reader to make comparisons between Askew and St Stephen, which support a martyr-like representation of her.

In this chapter, I investigate how and why Askew and Bale draw on St Stephen's New Testament story and on medieval hagiography to produce representations of Askew as a reform martyr, especially since medieval hagiography glorifies the martyrs of the traditional church. My investigation will

discuss how St Stephen becomes a vehicle for the transmission of reform doctrine on transubstantiation, idolatry, heresy, and salvation. This chapter will also include critical discussions of authority, agency, and gender stemming from Askew's choice to align herself with a male saint to develop her female voice. Such discussions lead to an investigation into the intersections of gender, genre and representation, and how the implementations of hagiographical conventions within her polemical account of her incarcerations help her to create a self identity that is gendered, resistant, and grounded in a historical context of both the immediate present of the reformers and the longer tradition of Christian piety. The employment of the narrative structure of victim versus oppressor that is found in the Acts of the Apostles and in medieval hagiography puts forward the would-be martyr as strong-willed, articulate, and knowledgeable, which are characteristics that manifest in the writer's representation of herself. Askew stands before her sixteenth-century opposition presenting herself as a true, devout follower of Christ, bearing witness to her faith.

The chapter also examines the torturing of Askew who, like most martyrs, suffered physically and emotionally for God. Her documentation of her torturing is similar to the pain, agony and grief found in medieval hagiographical texts. But, there are also moments of humour in Askew's text, as well as in saints' lives. I explore the subversive element of humour in her examinations and how it contributes to her representation as a martyr.

Askew's self-presentation as a martyr and Bale's mediation of it links her to the medieval hagiographical representation of the virgin martyr. Askew and Bale make use of virgin martyr conventions to offset Askew's disobedience to her male superiors and to account for her estrangement from her husband.

Incorporating virgin martyr conventions has the potential to elevate Askew to a position as a spiritual spouse of Christ, an identity familiar to medieval mystics.

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of Bale's insistence that Askew wrote her own text and how this assertion creates an authenticity claim that situates Askew as a writer, but more importantly, lends credibility to Bale as a writer. Bale's mediation of Askew, specifically the questions regarding the extent of his intervention in her writing, reminds us of Wynkyn de Worde's and Henry Pepwell's mediation of Margery Kempe, which resulted in an unrecognizable representation of the "creature" found in the original medieval text. These sixteenth-century mediators choose to represent these women using conventions that will draw their readers' attentions to their extraordinary female pieties and away from their socially undesirable behaviours.

Overall, in this chapter I explore Askew's and Bale's utilization of St Stephen's story and their refashioning of medieval hagiographical features in order to present the new heroes of the reformed church to their readers. Protestant hagiography from the early modern period reveals Reformation martyrs to be behaving similarly to their Catholic counterparts, despite the reformers' adamant assertion that their heroes are the true martyrs in contrast to the traditional

martyrs. Askew's and Bale's transformation of medieval hagiographical *topoi* for the representation of an early modern reformer illustrates that representation is derived from and relies on history.

I. The Cult of St Stephen

The martyr represented in medieval hagiographies embodied characteristics that were emblematic exemplars of what it meant to be a true Christian who was prepared to suffer and die for God. The medieval martyr as a paradigm of Christianity originated during the early centuries of the Christian church when individuals turned to the past for their exemplars, believing that the present lacked heroes to venerate. Peter Brown explains that Christianity offered the Romans salvation from a God who desired to save all Romans, which produced the belief that "God, and no purely human system of transmission, was now held to play the decisive role in bringing the exemplars of the past alive from age to age" ("The Saint" 6). The "man of God," "the righteous man," was God's earthly representative with God "as the Exemplar behind all exemplars" (Brown, "The Saint" 6).

Human history was presented as containing exemplars in every age who displayed Christian ideals. Early Christians understood the history of these human exemplars as beginning with Adam, who was created in God's likeness, and then progressing to and including Christ, as well as those after Christ's death who preached his message and readily died for Christianity. According to Brown, "In

Christ, the original beauty of Adam had blazed forth; and it is for that reason that the life of the Christian holy man could be treated as a prolonged and deeply circumstantial ‘imitation of Christ’” (“The Saint” 7). In Romans 5.14, Paul presents Christ as the “new Adam” (Harvey 502): “neuerthelesse deeth raygned fro[m] Adam to Moses, euen ouer the[m] also yt had not synned wyth lyke transgressio[n] as dyd Ada[m]: which beareth the similitude of him that was to come.” Adam’s partner Eve established a framework for female typology. Just as Adam was a male precursor for Christ, Eve was a female precursor for the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary, “the second Eve,” assisted in saving humanity from Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden by giving birth to Jesus Christ, mankind’s saviour (Warner 59).¹⁰ The typology of Eve and the Virgin Mary will be discussed further in Chapter Three in relation to Bale’s employment of Marian traits in his representation of Askew.

The exemplar’s *imitatio Christi* and her or his own willingness to die for Christianity manifested the history of all exemplars which in turn embodied God, the ultimate exemplar. Historical representatives of God were identified as martyrs and saints, two terms which “were indistinguishable in the Christian consciousness” since both identities included living like and dying for Christ (Woodward 53).¹¹ From the first century through the fourth century in the Greco-Roman world, Roman persecution of Christians was widespread and produced

¹⁰ For further discussion of the Adam-Christ and Eve-Mary typologies, see Maja Weyemann’s “The Typologies of Adam-Christ and Eve-Mary and their Relationship to One Another.”

¹¹ The term “martyr” is a borrowing of a Greek word for “witness,” and means “A person who bears witness for a belief” (“Martyr,” def. 3).

martyrs who were tortured and died for their belief in and devotion to Christ (Woodward 53). Upon a martyr's execution, her body, clothing, and any other items with her on the day of her death were gathered by other Christians and placed in a catacomb. On the anniversary of the martyr's death, the contents in the catacomb would be retrieved and put on public display. Relatives, friends, and followers of the martyr would observe her relics and celebrate her death for Christ (Woodward 56). The body and soul were understood as connected, giving relics spiritual powers; if the soul were infused with God's power, the relics equally contained God's power. The idea that the relic participates in the essence and authority of God is the same kind of thinking that supports the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Community celebrations of the martyr and her relics produced a local following. Countries, cities, towns, as well as guilds and churches, had identified their own martyrs to whom they prayed and that they celebrated. For instance, at Great Yarmouth in the fourteenth century citizens "founded a gild in St. Nicholas's church to burn a candle at Mass each day in the honour of St Peter" (Duffy, *Stripping* 163). As well, England's and Ireland's patron saints were, and still are, respectively, St George and St Patrick (Woodward 73).¹² As Michael Goodich observes,

¹²Duffy notes that "Every region had its own distinctive saints, its own shrines, its own observances, yet comparison of the names of saints mentioned in wills in different counties reveals a striking similarity from region to region, and it is possible to generalize about the character of devotion to the saints in the country as a whole" (*Stripping* 157).

The saint's cult served as an agency for the public expression of patriotic or communal fervor; the social harmony displayed in such civic rituals reduced intra-group or familial violence and emphasized the treasury of common values and history to which all citizens were heir, thereby strengthening social integration. ("Miracles" 23)

Devotion to a saint was an experience shared amongst all classes within the community. A saint's cult also connected the local clergy with the laity since it required the enthusiasm and involvement of both sectors. The clergy endorsed a saint's cult by giving the saint a feast day and including her story in the liturgy. The laity endorsed the saint's cult through prayers and devotion, through involvement in and retelling of the miracles surrounding the relics, and through pilgrimages to her shrine or the churches where her relics were housed (Vauchez 142). Individuals prayed to their chosen saints in the hope that their prayers would be heard and answered, prayers that ranged from protecting oneself from disease, to reversing blindness, to raising the dead.

The church enforced its authority over the making of saints during the ninth century by stipulating that an altar dedicated to a saint must have the saint's relics on site. Barbara Abou-El-Haj explains that such a condition was an attempt to increase devotion to church-recognized martyrs while attempting to curtail the making of martyrs who were not worthy of the title (10). During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, saints' cults developed exponentially promoting an increase in

the liturgies devoted to saints, in the building of shrines and churches, and in the writing of saints' lives (Abou-El-Haj 13). One reason for the increased attention to saints' lives by the church was that the Roman papacy was under attack from heretical and radical factions that asserted the church was corrupt (Goodich, "The Politics" 294). The church increased devotion to and control of saints' lives in order to control the laity and receive support for the papacy. According to Goodich, "With the aid of such cults, and the organizations which supported them, the church hierarchy could control and oversee a form of religious enthusiasm which might otherwise find more destructive channels" ("The Politics" 294). To receive ecclesiastical consideration for canonization, the individual's posthumous reputation as a martyr had to be universally accepted; she had to portray the utmost devotion to Christ; she had to demonstrate dauntless courage in battling heresy; and she, in particular her relics, had to have thaumaturgic powers (Woodward 62).

Political motives also influenced saint-making with the championing of clergymen, monarchs and aristocrats for sainthood. The church endorsed the members and founders of mendicant orders such as the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians for canonization since these orders promoted a Christianity approved by the church. As well, members of dynastic families that helped the church battle heresy received papal approval for canonization. The nobility and the aristocracy were canonized since wealth and power were seen "as signs of divine favour and election" (Vauchez 175). As Goodich points out, "The

poor, obscure, but pious man who reaches the honors of sainthood is very much a myth; for the pantheon of Christian saints in the thirteenth century is rather a reflection of the social and political structure of the times” (“A Profile” 437).

Notwithstanding the church’s involvement in trying to regulate saints’ cults, some martyrs were still venerated despite not being canonized. Political defenders and the unjustly murdered were two cases that regularly received devotional attention which might develop into saints’ cults. For example, St Margaret of Antioch, “a somewhat apocryphal saint,” enjoyed much veneration in England and on the Continent but was never canonized (Bond 148). Early versions of her *vita* appear in Greek, Latin, and Old French (Shuffelton). Her legend was retold by Wace, Jacobus de Voragine, Osbern Bokenham, and John Lydgate. She is described as a noble pagan princess who converts to Christianity. She was brutally tortured and survived being swallowed by a dragon, which separated into two after she made the sign of the cross. During childbirth, women prayed to St Margaret in the hope that they would be spiritually sheltered from evil (Bond 159). Surviving documents reveal that Margaret had nine late medieval guilds in England dedicated to her, which, of the virgin martyr saints, put her in second place to St Katherine who had twenty-one (Lewis 72). Margaret also had approximately two hundred and sixty-one church dedications in England, “more than any other female saint” (Lewis 79), and her image was featured in statues, church panels, rood screens, stained glass, and Books of Hours (Bond 148).

We cannot rely solely on church and gild dedications, or on surviving statues as an indication of a saint's "popularity" since all information regarding dedications is based on often incomplete and inadequate evidence. As Nicholas Orme's research reveals, prior to the twelfth century not many written records survive detailing church dedications (*English Church* 25). From the twelfth century onwards, there is an increase in such documents but not to the extent that would make them reliable sources regarding an area's attraction to a particular saint. The Reformation's suppression of saints' cults also impacted the accuracy of church dedications and the number of saints' images in existence. During the 1530s King Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, which resulted in the selling off and destruction of shrines, chapels, and statues (Orme, *English Church* 42; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* 402). Church dedications that were removed during the Reformation, but reestablished in later centuries, were not necessarily the same dedications from the pre-Reformation periods. For instance, Henry's efforts to abolish saints' cults included banning the veneration of Thomas Becket, causing churches dedicated to the saint to change their name (Orme, *English Church* 42). Orme provides the following example to illustrate the challenges in determining accurate church dedications in England because of Henry's actions:

In Devon, at least 73 of the current dedications of ancient churches are absolutely different from the pre-Reformation ones, and at least 27 others (where the churches have had a pair of patron saints) are partly different. Since these figures relate only to the 70% of

Devon parishes where pre-Reformation evidence is known, it follows that about 140 of the county's modern dedications are likely to have been altered wholly or partly--about 30% of the total. (*English Church* xii)

Such alterations, inaccuracies, and discrepancies may result in the statistical "evidence" of church dedications to be not entirely accurate and misleading. However, the numbers that we do have can provide some indication of a region's veneration to a particular saint.

Askew, growing up in the "generally conservative and Catholic" Lincolnshire, would have been influenced by saints' cults and the government's initiatives to suppress them (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xviii). In October 1536, Lincolnshire experienced an uprising against the government's evangelical actions of dissolving the monasteries and changing traditional religious practices (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xviii). Duffy argues that the government's repeal of holy day feasts, except for those pertaining to the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin, St George, St John the Baptist, All Saints's Day, and Ascension Day, angered the Lincolnshire rebels "perhaps because one of the abolished feasts, St Anne's Day, was a major festival, marked by the performance of religious plays" (*Stripping* 396). The Lincolnshire uprising, which became known as the Pilgrimage of Grace, directly affected the fifteen-year old Askew, a member of the traditional religious community who had not yet converted to reform theology. Her father, Sir William Askew, a landowner, a high sheriff, and a Member of Parliament, was

detained by the insurgents “and forced to write a letter to the king asking for a general pardon” on their behalf (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xviii). Undergoing such an experience during the formative years of her life would have had an impact on the conservative Askew. The anger over the suppression of medieval saints’ cults might have registered and remained with her, and later manifested itself in her representation as a martyr and thus her reference to St Stephen during her defense against the accusations of heresy. Her reference to Stephen also demonstrates the saint’s scriptural, spiritual and cultural authority during the Reformation, a period in which reformers, like Stephen, are voicing beliefs that are contrary to those held by the established religion.

Scripturally, St Stephen the protomartyr is briefly featured in the Acts of the Apostles. His name is first mentioned in Acts 6 where he is one of the seven men chosen to ensure that Hebrew widows were taken care of and to assist with the preaching of God. He is described as a man “full of fayth and power, [and] dyd great wondres and miracles amo[n]ge the people” (Acts 6.[8]). Stephen is believed to have been an Israelite “enculturated in Greek values, language, and custom” (Pilch ix). He was charged with blasphemy and brought before the Sanhedrin because men from the synagogue were threatened by his speeches praising Christ. He was accused of speaking “blasphemous wordes against Moses, and agaynst God” (Acts 6.[11]). His accusers “brought forth false wisse, which sayde: Thys man ceaseth not to speake blasphemous wordes against this holy place and the lawe: for we heard him saye: this Iesus of Nazareth shal destroye

this place, and shal chaunge the ordinaunces, which Moses gaue vs” (Acts 6. [13-14]). In Acts 7, Stephen defends himself to the examiners by drawing attention to “Israel’s history in which the continuity of divine revelation, begun with Abraham, is shown to be fulfilled in Christ” (Hartdegen 509).

Stephen delineates the history of Israel into three periods: that of Abraham, of Moses, and of “the occupation of Palestine under Joshua” (Scharlemann 36). Stephen’s stories of Joseph (the son of Jacob and Rachel) and Moses present both men as being first castigated but then honoured. Stephen recalls how Joseph was sold into Egypt, but “God was with hym, and delyuered hym out of al his aduersities, and gaue him fauour & wysdome in the syght of Pharao kyng of Egypte” (Acts 7.[9]). Egypt and Canaan experience a famine, resulting in Joseph supplying his brothers with food: “Ioseph was know[n]e of his brethren, & Iosephs kynred was made knowne vnto Pharao. Then sent Ioseph a message, and caused hys father to be brought, and all his kynne .lxxv. soules” (Acts 7.[13-14]). Moses is rejected by his brethren as the liberator of the Israelites but then accepted after he returns from Midian. When Moses is on Mount Sinai, the people ask Aaron to “make vs goddes to go before vs. For as for thys Moses yt brought vs out of the lande of Egypte, we wote not what is become of hym. And they made a calfe in those dayes, and offered sacrifice vnto the ymage, and reioysed ouer the workes of theyr awne hands” (Act 7.[40-41]). Stephen underscores the killing of the golden calf as the worshipping of false idols. He continues his speech on idolatry by discussing Solomon’s building of the temple. He states,

Oure fathers had the tabernacle of witnes in the wyldernesse, as he had appoynted them speaking unto Moses: that he shulde make it, according to the fassyon that he had sene. Which tabernacle also oure fathers that cam after, brought in with Iosue into the possession of the Gentylys, whom God draue out before the face of oure fathers, vnto the tyme of Daud: which founde fauoure before God, and wold fayne haue founde a tabernacle for the God of Iacob. But Salomon bylt him an house. Howbeit he that is hiest of al, dwelleth not in te[m]ples made with handes, as sayth the prophete: heauen is my seate, and earth is my fote stole. What house wyll ye bylde for me, sayth ye Lorde? or which is ye place of my rest: hath not my ha[n]d made al these thinges? (Acts 7. [44-48])

To Stephen, the construction of the temple “represented the same kind of idolatry that was associated with the creation of the golden calf” (Scharlemann 53). He asserts that worshipping the temple’s physical structure diverts believers from the true faith in God: God does not reside solely in the temple but is to be found everywhere. According to John Pilch, Stephen’s speech before his examiners “presented a new interpretation of Moses and of God’s law. He declared that the cult of the temple was over” (xii).

Stephen ends his speech accusing his examiners of rejecting God’s prophets:

ye haue allwayes resysted the holy ghost: as youre fathers dyd, so do ye. Which of the prophetes haue not your fathers persecuted? And they haue slaine them which shewed before of the comming of that Iust, whom ye haue nowe betrayd, a[n]d murdred. And ye also haue receaued ye lawe by the minystracyon of aungels, and haue not kept it. (Acts 7.[51-53])

Stephen asserts that the killing of Jesus Christ follows in the historical tradition of his examiners' ancestors erroneously killing God's prophets. His earlier discussion of the rejections and eventual acceptances of Joseph and Moses demonstrates a typological similarity with the rejection of Jesus Christ. Martin Scharlemann explains that "The implication would be that, even as Joseph and Moses were not accepted for what they were until the second encounter, so God's Righteous One, Jesus, had not been recognized in His royal prerogatives at His just coming but that he would be known at His return" (40). Stephen's speech, which "reads like a lesson in biblical history," presents him as a reader and interpreter of the Bible (Harvey 408). Stephen's speech situates Christ as the governing figure for the explication of biblical events, making Christ and his story the antitype for all biblical stories. For Stephen, the biblical stories in the Old Testament lead to and are fulfilled by Christ and his story. Stephen's speech has implications for sixteenth-century reformers, who, like Jesus, are rejected, tortured, and killed for their beliefs. Reformers believe that they will be wholly embraced by God as members of the true Christian church. As well, Luke's representation of Stephen

reading and interpreting Scripture demonstrates the reform view that individuals should read and have unmediated access to Scripture.

Stephen may also be making a case for himself in that his examiners are erring in their rejection of him, just as they erred in their rejection of Joseph and Moses. However, Stephen's argument fails to convince his immediate audience. After his speech he looks up towards the sky and says to the crowd, "I se the heuens open, and the sonne of man standyng on the right hand of God" (Acts 7. [56]). The crowd takes Stephen outside the city to stone him to death during which Stephen calls out "Lorde Iesu, receaue my sprete" (Acts 7.[59]). In his final words, Stephen tells God that his torturers are not responsible for their actions.

During the stoning, Stephen's torturers lay their coats at the feet of Saul of Tarsus who is watching the persecution. Saul, also known as Paul, had hunted down and incarcerated Christians prior to his conversion. After Stephen's burial, Saul "made hauocke of the co[n]gregacyon, and entred into euery house, and drew out both men and women, and thrust them into preson" (Acts 8.[3]). After his conversion, Paul begins to teach people about Christ. As mentioned above, Paul's letters in the New Testament, especially Romans 1 and his description of justification by faith, influenced sixteenth-century reformers in England and on the Continent. David Daniell claims that Paul's thirteen letters "turned nations upside down. A neat definition of the Reformation is 'People reading Paul'" (*The Bible* 10). Like Stephen, Paul's preaching on Christianity results in his own persecution and imprisonments.

Stephen's death parallels that of Jesus Christ in that both were brought before the Sanhedrin to answer for their public statements on and beliefs about God. False witnesses were brought forward to testify against them; they were tortured and condemned to death; and they asked God to forgive their enemies of their sins. There is also a similarity in the burials of Jesus and Stephen. Joseph of Arimathea takes Jesus's body off the cross, wraps him in cloth, and buries him in a tomb (Luke 23.50-56). Similarly, a group of men devoted to Stephen retrieve his body from the desert and bury him (Acts 8.2). As Kenneth Woodward explains, the protomartyr's "story is constructed in such a way that Stephen's arrest, testimony of faith, and death directly parallel the arrest, testimony, and death of Jesus" (53). Because of the resemblances between Stephen's martyrdom and Christ's crucifixion, "the Christian community was able to recognize Stephen as a saint *only* by the way of analogy with the story of Jesus' passion and death. The story of Stephen is the story of Christ all over again. To be a saint, then, was to die not only *for* Christ but *like* him" (Woodward 53).

Stephen's death is mentioned in two other passages in Acts. In Acts 11.19, Christ's followers flee from Jerusalem to Antioch after Stephen's slaying. In Acts 22, Paul acknowledges his presence at Stephen's death during his defense in Jerusalem. Paul tells the Jews that God told him to leave Jerusalem but he refused, recounting to the audience his words to God:

Lorde, they knowe that I presoned, and bett in euery Synagoge
them that beleued on the. And wha the bloude of thy wytnes Steuen

was shed, I also stode by, and consented vnto hys death, and kept the rayment of them that slewe hym. And he sayd vnto me departe, for I wyll sende the a farre hence vnto the Gentyls.

(Acts 22.[19-21])

Paul's dialogue with God and his reference to Stephen illustrates his own pre-conversion involvement in the deaths of innocent people and underscores God forgiving him and offering salvation. Paul's and the apostles' examinations and tortures are analogous to Stephen's trial and martyrdom, and thus Christ's crucifixion. They are repeatedly imprisoned and tortured on their preaching missions. Stephen's story as the first Christian martyr resonates in the Acts of the Apostles because it establishes persecution and suffering as features of exemplary devotion to Christ.

Stephen's story was also preserved by early Christian chroniclers and Fathers of the Church in their documenting of church history and in their commentaries on the Bible. Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Ecclesiastical History* from the fourth century, which records the first three hundred years of the history of the Christian church, spotlights Stephen as the first individual to die for Christ after his ascension. He describes him as "that perfect martyr" who asked God to forgive his torturers (181). Eusebius emphasizes Stephen's forgiving nature that mirrors Christ: "But if he prayed for those who stoned him, how much more for the brethren" (181). Eusebius's quotation might also be underlining Stephen's importance in building the Christian community since Eusebius infers that

Stephen prays for his persecutors and for his fellow Christians. Eusebius's statement might inspire sixteenth-century reformers to imitate Stephen. Their resistance, perseverance, devotion, and forgiveness would encourage others to convert, which would increase and strengthen the reform community.

St Augustine of Hippo, whose writings and biblical commentaries influenced the development of Christianity, wrote sermons dedicated to Stephen and other martyrs because he believed they "were the *membra Christi* par excellence" (Brown, *Cult* 72). In his Sermon 273 from the fifth century, Augustine states that a martyr was chosen by God and "received an eternal crown, immortality without end" (*The Works* III/8: 17). Augustine emphasizes that saints are exemplars of Christian behavior since "they have left us lessons of encouragement. When we hear how the martyrs suffered, we rejoice and glorify God in them" (*The Works* III/8: 17). Augustine's particular interest in Stephen may have stemmed from his living and preaching in Hippo, which had a shrine dedicated to the protomartyr. In his Sermon 314, "On the birthday of the martyr Stephen," dated approximately 415 to 425, Augustine compares Christ's birthday on December 25th to Stephen's martyrdom on December 26th, the date assigned for the Feast of St Stephen in the church calendar. There are no extant documents, scriptural or otherwise, stating that Stephen actually died on December 26th. Augustine's sermon provides an explanation as to why Stephen's feast follows Christ's birthday. Augustine discusses Stephen's death as a birth, signifying his entry into the kingdom of heaven because of his faith in Christ:

What we celebrated on the Lord's birthday was his becoming like us; what we are celebrating on his servant's birthday is his becoming as close as possible to Christ. Just as Christ, you see, by being born was joined to Stephen, so Stephen by dying was joined to Christ. (*The Works* III/9: 126)

Stephen's death on December 26th is his Christian birth and entry into heaven. Augustine encourages his listeners to emulate Stephen since "It is above all in the matter of loving our enemies that he is to be followed and imitated" (*The Works* III/9: 127). Those who imitate Stephen "shall be crowned with the victor's laurels" (*The Works* III/9: 127). Augustine also celebrates the Feast of St Stephen with his Sermons 315 and 316 in which he discusses the similarities between Christ's and Stephen's arrests, trials, and tortures. The sermons are introduced with these words: "The Acts of this martyr, unlike those of others, are to be found in canonical scripture, the Acts of the Apostles, which are read every year during Easter time" (*The Works* III/9: 129). Augustine reminds his listeners that Stephen's martyrdom is scripturally substantiated, thus a "true story" in contrast to some martyr cults that develop from local followings and may be fictitious.

Augustine's Sermons 319 to 324 recount the miracles associated with people coming into contact with Stephen's relics. These miracles are repeated in Augustine's *City of God*. Augustine elaborates on the tremendous power of St Stephen's relics and the cult, highlighting miracles that occurred as a result of individuals touching the relics, praying to the saint, and visiting shrines that were

dedicated to him and housed his relics. In one legend, siblings from a noble family are cursed by their mother resulting in their limbs shaking uncontrollably. Two of the siblings, Paulus and his sister Palladia, travel to Hippo to pray before the relics of St Stephen. On Easter, Paulus places his hands on the bars of the tomb containing the relics. Paulus is immediately cured. While describing this miracle to his listeners during Sermon 323, Augustine is interrupted and told by witnesses to the event that Palladia is also cured because she placed her hands on the same bars. In another miracle story, Lucillus, bishop of Sinita, was carrying some of St Stephen's relics and was miraculously cured of a fistula. The strength of the saint, which Stephen's devotees believed could be found in his extant body parts and any items present at his death, infused into the body of the bishop. Other miracle stories include individuals being cured of blindness and physical ailments.

For Augustine and the early Christians, "recorded miracles of healing at the shrines show God's power and his abiding concern for the flesh" (Brown, *Cult* 77). God created his son in man's human form, in flesh that embodied God's power. Christ's body was crucified, died, and resurrected. Brown explains that, for the early Christians, God's power "is shown most appropriately at the places where those dead [martyrs] now lie, who had been prepared to lose their close-knit bodies in the faith of the unimaginable mercy of the resurrection" (*Cult* 77). Augustine asserts that the miracles associated with the martyrs illustrate faith in Christ's resurrection: "To what do these miracles witness, but to this faith which preaches Christ risen in the flesh, and ascended with the same into heaven?" (*City*

831). The miracles derived from praying to and contact with Stephen's relics confirm the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

St Stephen's legend and the miracles of his relics were found in other texts of late antiquity. According to François Bovon, "Stephen aroused a great deal of curiosity in the minds of early Christian believers, and the literature produced about him during the late antique period is extensive" (93). Bovon explains that, during the early Christian period, there were three types of Greek texts written about St Stephen, which were then translated into other languages such as Latin. These texts focus on "the martyrdom story (*Passio*)," the finding of Stephen's relics by the priest Lucian (*Revelatio*), and "the translation of Stephen's relics from Jerusalem to Constantinople (*Translatio*)" (Bovon 93). In general, these three types of texts become conventional patterns for medieval hagiographies. Each saint's life includes his suffering and death for Christ, the collection of and miracles associated with his relics, and the movement of these relics from the original burial site to a shrine within a church.

The recounting of Stephen's legend continued into the Middle Ages. His *vita* is found in Jacobus de Voragine's mid-thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea*, an exhaustive compilation of saints' legends. It is considered to be the exemplar for later hagiographies. William Caxton translated the *Legenda aurea* into English in the late fifteenth-century. Known as *The Golden Legend*, the English translation went through several printings well into the sixteenth century to meet the demand by the laity (Ashton 40). Caxton's compilation appealed to lay readers and

listeners because his saints' lives were shorter and less didactic than Jacobus's, and they were "plain and simple in style" (Ashton 41). Ashton claims that the audience for *The Golden Legend* consisted of both men and women, and that Caxton's intent was "simply to allow wider access to these popular tales of Christian edification, to compile a series of devotional, and yet entertaining, texts in the role of translator and compiler rather than preacher" (41).

F.S. Ellis notes that "while Wynken de Worde was engaged in printing the last of the Old English editions of *The Golden Legend* in London, William Tyndale was busily occupied at Cologne trying to get into type the first of the unnumbered editions of the English New Testament." Cuthbert Tunstal, Bishop of London, ordered the banning and burning of Tyndale's New Testament (1526) in England and recruited Thomas More to attack Tyndale's translation, which he did in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (Simpson, *Burning* 35, 49). Myles Coverdale's Bible (1535), dedicated to Henry VIII and probably financed by Thomas Cromwell (Daniell, *Bible* 176), was the first printed English Bible to contain both the Old and New Testaments. Coverdale's Bible became the foundational text for The Great Bible (1539).

Bibles had been available for purchase during the medieval period, but they were expensive and large. Archbishop Thomas Arundel's Constitutions (1409), articles that confirmed what comprised orthodox religious practices, would halt the production of Bibles in the vernacular. Arundel's Constitutions, instigated by John Wycliffe's translations of the Bible, censored vernacular

religious writing, stopped translations of the Bible that did not have “diocesan permission,” and banned Wycliffe’s Bibles (Daniell, *Bible* 110). Daniell explains that “From 1401 and the Act of Parliament *De heretico comburendo* until the 1530s and Henry VIII’s break with Rome, writing in England, and most especially that suggesting religious protest or an English Bible, was under the severest censorship in the country’s history” (*Bible* 108). With Henry allowing the publication and distribution of The Great Bible, combined with the mass production and commercialization of book production making printed books available and affordable, people in the sixteenth century could buy Bibles for their homes allowing them to read, or hear, in the vernacular the Acts of the Apostles featuring St Stephen’s martyrdom. Daniell notes that “After the 1530s, Bibles in English were everywhere, the whole Bible, well printed, and, by government command, intended to be open for reading in all 9,000 parishes” (*Bible* 132).

Bibles were

to be read at home or in local gatherings of enquiring Christians. They were also to be read aloud to the people in church, clearly and comprehensibly, in the services of the new Church of England--as they still are. The New Testament was to be read right through, aloud, clearly and in English, to the people, three times in the year (later twice, as now), the Old Testament once a year, and the Psalms, said or sung, every month. (Daniell, *Bible* 121)

The post-Reformation service, with the minister facing the congregation speaking in English, contrasted with the pre-Reformation mass “which was conducted at the distant altar by the priest murmuring in Latin with his back to the people” (Daniell, *Bible* 121). The availability of the English New Testament in print, along with hagiographies such as *Legenda aurea* and *The Golden Legend*, kept Stephen’s story textually present for readers like Askew.

Jacobus’s version of St Stephen’s martyrdom begins with an etymology of the name Stephen, translating it from Greek (to be crowned) and from Hebrew (to suffer). The legend tells of Stephen’s encounters with the Jews and how God and Christ came to his aid in these battles. The *vita* concludes with a detailed account of the miracles produced from contact with his relics and praying in churches dedicated to him.

The miracle stories of St Stephen are similar to other miracle tales found in saints’ lives. The purpose of the miracle story “is to console and bring the faithful closer to God, or to confound the non-believer or heretic” (Goodich, “Filiation” 310). Abou-El-Haj’s statistical research on miracles stories in illustrated saints’ lives reveals that the restoring of vision and mobility, the raising of the dead, the exorcising of the possessed, and the curing of the sick are just some of the types of miracles featured in medieval hagiographies (154). For instance, in the *Life of St Edward, King and Confessor*, Caxton recounts the miracle story of the paralyzed and disfigured man who prays at St Edward’s tomb. Caxton describes the man’s condition: “the synewes of his arme were shronken to

gyder, that his feet were drawe vp to his buttokkis that he myght not goo, neyther on his feet ne on his knees, but sat on a holowe vessel in maner of a basyn, drawyng his body after hym with his hondes” (940). While praying to God and to Edward to cure him, the man is joined by others who pray to the saint on his behalf. The prayers are heard and he is cured. The Life of St Clare of Assisi includes the miracle story of a young boy who was possessed by the devil and suffered from convulsions. “Somtyme he hurtled strongly ageynste the ground, somtyme he bote the stones soo that he brake his teeth, and otherwhyle brake his hede that alle his body was bloody, and fowled his mouthe and put oute his tongue” (Caxton 1042). His father took him to St Clare’s tomb and prayed to the virgin saint to cure his son upon which he was immediately healed. Caxton’s version of the Life of Thomas Becket states that innumerable miracles occurred at his shrine in Canterbury. He claims that “Yf I shold here expresse alle the myracles that it hath plesyd god to shewe for thys holy saynt it shold conteyne a hole volume” (312-313). According to Abou-El-Haj, there were seven hundred miracles attributed to Thomas Becket (35). The continual telling of miracle stories and the ongoing occurrence of such miracles contributed to keeping a saint’s cult prominent among its followers.

The cult of St Stephen was apparent in medieval church paintings and stained glass windows depicting his image, *vita*, and passion. The telling of his story in images traditionally has Stephen holding the Gospel, underscoring his reading and interpretation of Scripture, and his participation in spreading the

Word of God. Iconic representations of Stephen also include him “holding stones in his hand or in a napkin or in his robe or on his shoulders or on a book,” which reminds viewers of his suffering and his death (Bond 42). Such iconographical details assisted the parishioner in distinguishing Stephen from other saints. For example, St Edward was featured with a crown and sceptre, symbolizing his royal authority (Bond 316). He was also presented “holding up a ring, or with a purse” (Bond 316). St Clare was dressed in a nun’s habit, specifically that of the Franciscan order, with an “abbess’ staff and closed book” in one hand and a monstrance in the other (Bond 313).

Artists from the medieval period also created cycle paintings of Stephen featuring episodes from his life. Fra Angelico (1387-1455) and Vittore Carpaccio (1455-1523/1526) were two such artists who painted events described in Acts, beginning with Stephen being chosen with the other six men to dispense alms to the Hebrew widows. The cycles also include his preaching the story of Christ, his appearance before the Sanhedrin, and his stoning. Angelico’s cycle is in the Chapel of St Nicholas in the Vatican.

As mentioned above, as a result of the lack of surviving documents and the Reformation’s suppression of saints’ cults we are unable to rely solely on paintings, stained glass, and church dedications as indicative of the medieval presence of a particular cult. Surviving evidence does not necessarily reflect the degree of a cult’s overall presence and influence in a society. That being said, images of Stephen are found in English medieval stained glass in Salisbury

Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. The Cathedral, which also has an altar dedicated to St Stephen, had stained glass representing his martyrdom (Marks 63).¹³ Westminster Abbey has a thirteenth-century window of the *Stoning of St Stephen* (Fritze and Robison 32). The Abbey was also documented in the eighteenth century as housing some of the saint's relics. According to John Dart in *Westminster; or, The History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of St. Peter's Westminster*; Edgar the Peaceful, King of England during the late tenth century, "gave some of the stones with which St. Stephen was ston'd and some of his bones; together with part of his blood; a thigh-bone" to the Abbey (36).

There are about forty-six churches and chapels in England bearing Stephen's name, many of which date back to the Norman Conquest (Farmer, "Stephen [1]"). One of the most famous English chapels to be dedicated to him is the Royal Free Chapel in the Palace of Westminster. The number of churches dedicated to Stephen is relatively low compared to the Virgin Mary and St Peter, who are recorded as having 2235 and 1140 respectively (Bond 29). Their high numbers reflect their authority in Scripture and in the church: the Virgin Mary is the mother of Christ and the ultimate intercessor; and St Peter is the apostle "to whom Our Lord Himself promised the keys of heaven" (Bond 33). Even St Margaret of Antioch has more dedications than Stephen. Francis Bond claims that Stephen's number is low because his story, although powerful, is in the Bible, which curtailed hagiographers from elaborating on or amplifying its details (147).

¹³ The stained glass was "installed in the parish church of Grateley (Hampshire)" in the eighteenth century ("Medieval Glass").

As an intercessor, Stephen competed with the likes of the Virgin Mary, Peter, and Margaret.

Stephen's *vita* was recorded in English medieval hagiographies, a genre that, according to Gail Ashton, can be paradoxically described as "diverse and reductive" in nature (1). A saint's life can vary from one legend to the next and the conventions used to represent the saint are "repetitive and restricting" (Ashton 1). Saints' lives in the vernacular offered readers and listeners the opportunity to connect, individually and textually, with their faith and to learn the stories of their Christian heroes whom they could emulate. The content and writing style of a collection of saints' lives dictated its audience. Some were composed for clerics, while others for devout lay followers. The *South English Legendary* (*SEL*) from the thirteenth century, for instance, was intended for a lay audience because of its "sanctorale and temporale material" and its lack of doctrinal teachings (Crachiolo 147). It consists of saints' lives, miracle stories, and histories of individuals that are not saints such as Judas and Pilate. According to Manfred Görlach, "the *South English Legendary* must have been one of the most popular vernacular texts of the late 13 and 14 C, as the number of the extant manuscripts, the variation in the contents, and the wide geographic distribution over the South of England and parts of the Midlands indicate" (1).¹⁴ As Ashton notes, the *SEL* "seems designed to entertain; instruction is implicit within this process" (24). By contrast, John Mirk's *Festial* from the fifteenth century, which also includes Stephen's legend,

¹⁴ Twenty-five major manuscripts survive, as well as nineteen fragments, and eighteen miscellanies containing single items from the *SEL* (Crachiolo 162n3).

“is a collection of homilies in the vernacular” and has an intended audience of male clerics (Ashton 13). Ashton describes *The Festial*’s style and content:

the tone of the collection is sometimes strident and frequently anti-feminist in its warnings against the lechery of women and against adultery, and in its praise of maternity and virginity. The stories within the collection are mainly of men or, more specifically, monks, often devoted to the Virgin Mary. Where women are the subjects, they are either virgin martyrs or sinners. Mirk emphasises the importance of observing Church ritual, especially the keeping of feast or saints’ days, an intention reinforced through its organisational principle. Written by a man for a clerical male audience, his intention appears to be a strengthening of belief, a series of orthodox and traditional readings of saints’ lives confirming a more general misogyny and mistrust of the feminine’s potential for disruption. (13)

The Festial had eighteen printings from 1483 to 1532, demonstrating the clerical demand for it (Long 59).

It is possible that Askew read or heard priests preach from such medieval hagiographical texts as Mirk’s *Festial* and Caxton’s *Golden Legend* since they were still being reprinted in the sixteenth century. Her contact with these texts that included Stephen’s story may have supplemented her reading of Stephen’s martyrdom in the New Testament. Having established the presence and influence

of saints' cults in the medieval and early modern periods, along with the authority of St Stephen and his cult, I will now discuss Askew's reference to St Stephen and how it figures in her representation of herself as a reform martyr.

II. Askew's and Stephen's textual relationship

Askew was a well-educated woman, as evidenced by her writing, her knowledge of the Bible, and her responses to her examiners. Askew came from a well-to-do family, which would have provided her with the education demonstrated in her text. According to John Bale's description of Askew found in his Prologue to *The Examinations*, "she was borne of verye auntyent and noble stocke" (9). As a gentlewoman, Askew's education was probably conducted at home by private tutors and her parents (Stjerna 46-47). A woman's birth, as well as her marital status, normally determined the extent of her education (Stjerna 46). Aristocratic women could receive an education "in the humanist disciplines," which would include learning Latin, and possibly Greek, Hebrew and such modern languages as French and Italian (Stjerna 46). Since Askew was from a wealthy and prominent family, she would probably have been "surrounded by learned people," and may have been "in a position to sponsor learned activities and such risky enterprises as spreading new theology" (Stjerna 47).

Askew belonged to a religiously conservative family during the formative years of her life. She does not adopt reform attitudes until after her marriage to Thomas Kyme, whom Diarmaid MacCulloch describes as "a traditionalist

gentleman” (*Reformation* 655). Kyme was initially to marry Askew’s sister Martha but she died. Bale states that Askew, “In processe of tyme by oft readyng of the sacred Bible, she fell clerelye from all old superstycyons of papystrye, to a perfyght beleve in Jhesus Christ” (93). Her reading of the Bible during her marriage would have put Askew in contact with St Stephen and other biblical saints’ martyrdoms. As well, prior to her marriage her religious indoctrination while growing up in a prosperous Catholic family would have included attending Mass, and while there she would have heard more about martyrs and saints from the Bible and from hagiographies. Specifically, Askew would have heard Stephen’s legend read aloud in church every December 26th, the Feast of St Stephen. The remnants of the late medieval attraction to saints’ cults in Askew’s early modern society would have left traces on her religious upbringing, an upbringing in Lincolnshire that, as previously mentioned, included experiencing the Lincolnshire uprising against Henry VIII’s religious reform policies. The medieval influence of saints’ cults from her youth as a religious conservative would have coalesced with Askew’s reform interest in the New Testament as an adult. As Daniell explains, “From the beginning, the Reformation was powered by the Bible: Luther’s *Sola fide* (‘By faith alone’) and *Sola gratia* (‘By grace alone’) came from *Sola Scriptura* (‘From the Scriptures alone’)” (*Bible* 127). As already noted, reformers were attracted to the New Testament, especially the Acts of the Apostles, because of their desire to present their reform movement as a return of

the primitive church and themselves as the Reformation's persecuted "apostles" evangelizing Christ's message.

Beginning her examinations with a reference to St Stephen displays Askew's desire to represent herself as a reformer devoted to God. Askew's question to Dare, why was St Stephen stoned to death, begins to shape how she wants the audience to perceive her: with whom and with what to identify her. Askew, the writer, will create her individual identity in her text through language. This subject is created from her responses to her examiners and her additional comments woven through the texts. Askew, the self, is created in response to the legal action taken against her and as part of her record of it. The self is also fashioned out of reform doctrine since Askew is writing specifically to the reform community consisting of individuals who share her purported heretical beliefs. Stephen Greenblatt, in his discussion of William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, argues "that the shaping of the individual, even at the most intimate level, depends both on the institutional mode of secular power and religious doctrine and on the communal perception of the alien and the devilish" (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 88). In Askew's account, the secular and religious authorities, although the center of power in her society, are cast as the other, as that which is the Antichrist. The religious authorities, from Askew's reform-inflected perspective, do not embody the true belief according to Scripture. What is true to Askew are her reform community's convictions, which she believes accord with God's spiritual plan presented in the Bible. Askew's self is

shaped at the meeting point of her community's beliefs, within a matrix where traditional religiosity collides with reform principles. Paradoxically, both traditional religiosity and reform beliefs inform and shape Askew's articulation and construction of herself as a martyr.

Askew's self is also shaped by cultural codes that are grounded in history and have developed over time resulting in these codes reflecting the sixteenth-century ideological objectives of her English society, a society experiencing conflict over religious reform. These codes are displayed in Askew's questions and responses to her interrogators, and in the character traits she displays for the examiners and her readers. Askew fashions an identity for herself as an outsider in a society governed by traditional religion, and as an insider in a community that opposes this society's religious rule. Although Askew fashions her own identity as a martyr, she is also interpellated by factions of a dynamic and unstable English society that is transitioning from the cultural concerns of medieval religiosity to the social, political, and religious issues of the sixteenth century. We locate Askew's self at the axis of warring late medieval religion and early modern reform beliefs. Her self-representation lays bare the tensions between late medieval religiosity and reform convictions. Reformers wanted the practices and sacraments of the traditional church that were not scripturally authorized abolished. They not only attacked transubstantiation and saints' cults, but criticized purgatory, which was introduced by St Augustine on "a slender Scriptural basis" and "perfected by [Thomas] Aquinas" (Dickens 20). Reformers

believed that the concept of purgatory was an exploitive abuse by the clergy, which received money from parishioners in exchange for indulgences for their deceased family members and friends, whom they wanted extricated from purgatory and delivered to Heaven. Reformers wanted the number of sacraments reduced from seven (baptism, confirmation, holy communion, penance, extreme unction, orders and matrimony) to two (baptism and holy communion), those which were documented in the New Testament (Daniell, *Bible* 125). Reformers were against auricular confession and celibate priesthood. According to Dickens, Pope Gregory VII instituted celibacy for secular priests during the eleventh century (20). Thomas Aquinas opposed celibacy for priests, asserting that it was not mandated by God. Aquinas's opposition attempted to "safeguard the repute of the early generations of married clergy, beginning with St Peter, the first pope" (Dickens 20). Askew's self-representation reflects these historical conflicts over traditional religious practices, her reform beliefs, and the established church's authority in her contemporary culture.

The general representation of Askew as a "godlye" woman is a conscious creation by Askew the writer. She is the hagiographical narrator of her *vita* and passion. Her writing "is an example of diegesis, because even the direct speech of characters [her examiners] is told to the reader through a narrating" (Hawthorne 49). Specifically, Askew is an intradiegetic narrator: all events and characters' perspectives come from Askew's own perspective as a narrator and as a character involved in the events that she narrates. The text displays a fixed focalized

narrative since everything we learn comes from Askew's perspective; we focus on Askew's participation in the events. Her narration draws us into the dramatic battle between Askew the defendant and her examiners. Askew narrates the events as a Reformation hagiography with the defendant describing her experiences in the examinations, which functions as her *vita*, followed by her torture, which denotes her passion. Her text is a narrative of resistance with herself portrayed as the victim battling her oppressors. The self represents a martyr for the Reformation movement, who is steadfast, defiant, courageous, and faithful.

Askew may not be conscious of the host of hagiographical characteristics she assigns herself or the techniques that she uses which result in her representation as a martyr because they are engrained in her society's culture. Askew may adopt them without any recognition of what she is doing. As a member of this society, the strategies are familiar to her because they are consistently displayed in the Bible and in hagiographies. One such tactic that Askew utilizes is the hagiographical convention of typology. Scripturally speaking, typology is

defined as the method of interpreting scripture in which the persons and events, incidents and narratives of the Old Testament, the Old Testament *res ipsae*, are viewed as realities which are also at one and the same time prophetic signs and foreshadowing of the

persons and events in God's redemptive plan as it is fulfilled and revealed in the New Testament. (Galdon 23)

In his Sermon 300, "On the Solemnity of the Maccabee Martyrs," Augustine provides an understanding of the Old Testament's relationship to the New Testament: "The Old Testament, you see, is the veiling of the New Testament, and the New Testament is the unveiling of the Old Testament" (*The Works* III/8: 277). The Old Testament foreshadows the New Testament, and in turn the New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament. As mentioned above, Adam of the Old Testament "points to" Christ of the New Testament (Galdon 45). "There is a basic relationship between them. But Christ is also a more perfect Adam, like him in many ways, but also endowed with qualities quite foreign to the Adam of Genesis" (Galdon 45). Adam is the type who points to Christ the antitype.

In hagiographies, Christ is the archetype to whom all other martyrs point. He represents the desired attributes and behaviour of martyrs. Hagiographers incorporate typological analogies so that readers understand that the proposed martyr epitomizes the same Christian virtues as their heroes from the Bible. Christ is invoked as the archetypal typological figure for whom, and like whom, Christian saints and martyrs die. Christ, as John Mirk explains, "come[s] to be executour of þys testament and was boren, trauayled and dyed. He was bore for to bryng men out of seknes into erlastyng hele; he trauayled to bryng mon to erlastyng rest; he was ded to bryng mon into erlastyng lyf þat neuer shal haue end" (*Festial* 4). Each martyr lives a life predicated on promoting the Word of

God and on suffering like Christ and other Christian biblical figures. For example, Mirk informs his *Festial* readers that they celebrate St Andrew for his “gret passyon suffryng. He was a mon of holy lyuyng” (7). St Andrew fasts for a man who lived a lecherous life, vowing not to eat or drink until he hears from God whether this man’s soul is to be saved. He is also put in prison for standing up for a man wrongly accused of wanting to have intercourse with his mother. In another instance, while in the city of Patras preaching and converting people to Christianity, Andrew angers the town’s provost who orders him to be crucified on the cross. St Andrew’s preaching, converting, fasting, suffering and crucifixion suggest immediate parallels with Christ’s *vita* and passion.

Askew also employs a typological reference to Christ in her self-representation when she compares her examiners to Judas. She states, “Then the Byshopp sayd, he wolde speake with me famylyarlye. I sayd, so ded Judas when he unfryndelye betrayed Christ” (97). Askew presents herself as conspired against like Christ, who has taught her through his own ordeal not to trust those who will ultimately do her harm. Like Christ, as well as St Stephen, Askew is tortured, which contributes to the hagiographical structure of her text and to her self-presentation as a martyr. Claire Waters explains that,

In the early Church, the period that created and bequeathed the concept of martyrdom and its idealized hagiographical form to the Middle Ages, martyrdom was seen as triumph over both death and death-dealing power. It became an expression of Christian identity

and resistance, and as such was embraced and trained for. (79)

Askew provides the details of her suffering to display her stamina in tolerating pain. She is placed on the rack by Richard Rich and Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Lord Chancellor, when she refuses to provide them with the names of the women who give her money while she is in prison and who are members of her reform community. Askew explains, “bycause I laye styll and ded not crye, my lorde Chauncellour and mastre Ryche, toke peynes to racke me [with] their owne handes, tyll I was nygh dead” (127). Her peaceful suffering and fortitude resembles Christ’s behaviour on the cross. Her death results in her body becoming separated from her self as the victim. Although the body is relinquished to her oppressors, it is given up to God and becomes a symbol of sacrifice for the members of her community and the Reformation movement.

Bale and Foxe further Askew’s typological representation as Christ-like in their comments on her torture and death. Bale explicitly compares Wriothesley and Rich to the bishops and priests that crucified Jesus. He writes that

the malycyouse Byshoppes and prestes whych waged Judas to betraye hym [Christ], hyred false wytnesses to accuse hym, monyed the multytude to dyffame hym, fayned false matter agaynst hym, compelled the lawe and terryfyed the judge, to have their full myschefe accomplyshed, as our Byshoppes have done in thys cruell acte and soch other. . . . Wrisleye and Riche with their

ungracyouse affynyte, have in everye poynt folowed here the
 execrable affectes of the prestes. (153)

Foxe implies a typology to Christ in his discussion of Askew's inability to walk on her own volition to the stake because of the torture inflicted on her body: "Wherfor the daie of her execution was appointed, and she brought into Smithfielde in a chayre, because she could not go on her feete, by meanes of her great tormentes, when she was brought unto the stake, she was tied by the middle with a chaine, that helde up her body" (191).¹⁵ Foxe's statement parallels Askew's inability to walk to the stake with Christ's fall on the way to Golgotha. Burdened by the weight of the cross, Christ falls and is helped by Simon of Cyrene. As well, Foxe's discussion of Askew being burnt at the stake beside three men can be compared to Christ also being crucified on the cross alongside other men; they did not die alone, but with others who were also condemned. Bale's and Foxe's comments align Askew's torture and death with Christ's passion, contributing to the representation of Askew as a Christ-like reform martyr.

Askew, like Christ, is not afraid to die. After the racking, Askew is moved from the Tower of London to a house to recover. Because she refuses to recant, Askew is then moved to Newgate to be burned. She writes a letter to John Lassels, a reformer burnt to death with her, addressing her possible death and confirming to her reform community that she is not afraid to die. It is uncertain whether Askew intended the letter to be incorporated into her account, or if it was found

¹⁵ All quotations from Foxe regarding Askew are from Elaine Beilin's edition of *The Examinations*, unless stated otherwise.

amongst her writings and included by Bale. Regardless, Askew's letter speaks to her desired representation as a martyr. She asserts, "I marvele not a lyttle, what shuld move yow, to judge in me so slendre a faythe, as to feare deathe" (133). It appears from the letter that Askew's reform identity has come into question because of her alleged recantation from her first examination. She writes, "I have redde the processe, whych is reported of them that knowe not the truth, to be my recantacyon. But as sure as the lorde lyveth. I never ment thyng less, than to recant" (135). If fellow reformers believe Askew to have recanted, her identities as a reformer and a martyr will cease to exist. If she recants, her reform community identifies her as an apostate, like Nicholas Shaxton, who, as part of his reprimand for preaching reform theology, was given instructions to persuade Askew to recant and to accept the Doctrine of Real Presence (Wabuda, "Shaxton"). For the reform community, apostates pose a problem since their rejection of reform beliefs questions and challenges the claims made by, and the legitimacy of, these reform convictions. David Bromley argues that apostasy results in organizations being "labelled subversive when their organizational practices and objectives are deemed illegitimate" (5). If the reform community were to be rejected by a large percentage of its own members, its claim to be the true church would be considered false and the accusation made by the traditional church that it is a heretical movement would be believed by society. For Askew, people believing that she recanted damages her reputation as a reformer. Askew writes the letter to confirm her commitment to the Reformation cause. By

choosing to be a reformer, which for Askew entails death, she demonstrates an agency to choose her own beliefs and, as a result, to determine her own fate. Her willingness to die for reform beliefs will complete her posthumous representation as a martyr, as well as contribute to the reform movement's claim to be the true church whose members are persecuted by the traditional church, the Antichrist.

Askew's acceptance of her imminent death is patterned on the experiences, characteristics and identities ascribed to martyrs, in particular those of St Stephen. Askew's first reference to Stephen begins to shape her identity as a martyr. She assigns to this self characteristics that will mirror St Stephen's identity as a martyr, creating a typological relationship between herself and Stephen. In the course of her account, Askew narrates her experiences of being incarcerated for her beliefs and displays her resolute commitment to those beliefs, just as Stephen portrayed his steadfast loyalty to his own theology. Askew can embody such martyr characteristics as endurance and resistance like Stephen, but because of her gender she is excluded from taking on some of his characteristics. For example, Stephen preached the Word of God, but Askew's female gender bars her from this role. Women were prohibited from preaching publicly from the Bible, which was reserved for men who occupied ecclesiastical positions in the religious establishment. As E. Ann Matter explains,

Women were categorically excluded from sacramental leadership in the church, that is, from positions like the priesthood, which centered on symbolic activities in the place of Christ [*in loco*

Christi], because of cultural expectations about gender roles, which rarely gave women position of authority over men. (45)

St Augustine in his explication of Genesis, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, communicates to early Christian readers the gender roles for man and woman that he asserts are substantiated by Scripture. Augustine explains “that God said, *It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a help suited to him* (Gn 2:18)” (*The Works* I/13: 377). God created woman to be man’s helper, positioning man as woman’s superior. Augustine writes, “If the question is asked, though, for what purpose it was necessary for this help to be made, no more likely answer suggests itself than that it was for the sake of procreating children--in the same sort of way as the earth is a help to the seed, so that the plant may be born of each of them” (*The Works* I/13: 378). For Augustine, woman is the “weaker” and “inferior sex” (*The Works* I/13: 389). It was this type of thinking by the Church Fathers that prohibited women from assuming the authoritative role of preacher.¹⁶

Shannon McSheffrey’s research on women in the Lollard movement, a movement that allowed women as members, reveals that “women did not generally play leading roles in Lollardy” as preachers since society was against women actively and visibly displaying power and authority (*Gender and Heresy* 108). Alice Rowley is an example of a Lollard woman who held a prominent position in the Lollard movement because of her “high social position, which could allow a woman, interacting with a group of men below her in rank, to

¹⁶ For further discussion on the question of women and preaching see Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer’s Pardoner and Wife of Bath*, Chapter 3 “*De impedimento sexus: Women’s bodies and the Prohibition of Priestly Power*” (170-245).

stretch the conventions governing the behaviour of lower-status women” (McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy* 108). McSheffrey’s work on late medieval and early sixteenth-century Lollard women concurs with Kirsi Stjerna’s research on Reformation women’s participation in preaching the Word. According to Stjerna, women, on the whole, did not resist social prescriptions that barred them from publicly preaching, but instead situated them in maternal and household roles, which could include teaching religious beliefs to family members (214). As well, there was no “visible groundbreaking leadership [by women] either in theology and religious life or in society in general--with the notable exception of a few individuals. It speaks both of women’s overall content, and their lack of power and voice as a group or class” (Stjerna 214). Reformation women, like Askew, did contribute to the movement “as daughters, sisters, spouses, mothers, widows and as believers [who] espoused the new faith and ‘taught’ it and ‘preached’ it in their own domains” (Stjerna 214).

Although women were forbidden from preaching because of their gender, there are some instances from history of them teaching and learning Scripture while residing in religious houses. For instance, abbess St Hild, who will be discussed further in Chapter Two, founded the monastery of Strensall-Whitby during the seventh century and taught Scripture to five male bishops including Wilfred II, Bishop of York (Thacker). Hild was recognized for her intelligence by the religious and secular authorities.

In contrast to St Hild, Askew's knowledge and her articulate and persuasive voice are not celebrated by her examiners but result in her being accused by the Bishop's Chancellor of preaching Scripture. He believes that her references to the Bible contravene the proscriptions for females in Pauline Scripture. He states that "S. Paul . . . forbode women to speake or to talke of the worde of God" (29-30). Askew confirms that she is well aware of the passage and its authority over her. She corrects his interpretation: "I answered hym, that I knewe Paules meanynge so well as he, whych is, i Corinthiorum xiiii, that a woman ought not to speake in the congregacyon by the waye of teachynge" (30).¹⁷ Her response would have been considered impudent because she disagrees with a male ecclesiast's interpretation of the Bible; but she does acknowledge that her female gender limits her participation in promoting the Word of God while in church. Askew states that Scripture permits her to "speake" of the Bible outside the confines of the church, thus sanctioning her discussion of the Bible during her examinations. Askew adheres to the Bible's rules because Scripture is the ultimate authority that governs her life and as a reformer she will obey its dictates.

Although preaching was off limits, Askew's society did allow her to read the Bible. In 1543, the Act for the Advancement of True Religion permitted

¹⁷ Askew uses the Latin term "Corinthiorum" for Corinthians. It is possible that she may have been using, or at least have come into contact with, a Latin Bible, which would imply that she knew Latin. Or, she may have heard the term recited by the priest during Mass when she was still a member of the traditional church. Another possibility is that Bale inserted the term to bolster Askew's representation as a learned woman, especially since his commentary that follows this passage discusses devout learned women from the Bible and from history, which will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

“noble and gentlewomen . . . [to] read the Bible in private” (Duffy, *Stripping* 433). The Act does not forbid her from repeating what she has learned. Askew’s representation of herself as a reader and interpreter of the Bible corresponds with the representation of Stephen as a reader and interpreter of the Bible during his examination. Askew is not using scriptural references to preach to her examiners but using them to defend herself against the charges of heresy. She does not adopt a preacher identity for herself because that would challenge the Bible’s proscription, as well as society’s gender structure that values men over women. If she were to appropriate the identity of preacher, she would be communicating to her audiences that she believes herself to be the intellectual equivalent of men. Her objective is not to change prescribed societal roles for women; she wants to be taken seriously by her examiners and by her audience, persuading her readers of her devotion to the Gospel. If she strays into identities that are forbidden for women she risks being considered irrelevant by her community.

Another hagiographical identity of Stephen’s that would be outside the approved societal boundaries for Askew is that of converter because of its proselytizing nature that resembles preaching. Askew does not formally take on the identity of converter, but alludes to it. Conversion requires the individual to renounce his or her beliefs and to adopt the converter’s views. This is accomplished by educating, or “preaching” to, the individual on the desired way of thinking or by the individual witnessing a spiritual act only explicable through faith. In the *Golden Legend*, Stephen converts Marcial, a sick man who recovers

to full health after sleeping on flowers from a church dedicated to St Stephen (Caxton 287). St Katherine is said to have converted “many creatures to the cristen feythe of Jhesu cryste, on whom al hir ioye was hooly sette and euer he was in hyr mynde,” including the “fyfty oratours” to whom she had to defend her faith (Caxton 1107, 1109). These kinds of miraculous conversions seem to lie behind Askew’s description of her exchange with one of her examiners that appears to come especially close to converting him to her way of thinking. During her questioning by Archdeacon John Wymesley she holds a book written by the reformer John Frith. Wymseley warns her that “Soche bokes as thys is, hath brought yow to the trouble ye are in” (42). Askew criticizes him for having judged the book without reading it, telling him “that soche unadvysed and hastye judgement, is a token apparent of a verye slendre wytt” (43). Askew follows up her bold criticism of his intelligence by reviewing Frith’s text with him. She reverses the assigned gender roles by becoming an educator and spiritual advisor while Wymesley is denigrated to the role of pupil. The examination is no longer an interrogation of Askew, but a book review with Askew in control of the session.

After Wymesley peruses the book, Askew states that he could not find anything wrong with what Frith has written. This is highly unlikely considering that critics believe the text to be Frith’s *A Boke Made by Iohn Frith Prisoner in the Tower of London Answeringe vnto M. Mores Lettur*, which also includes *The Articles Wherfore John Frith Died* (Coles 518; Demers 101). In his book, Frith

argues the validity of his sacramentarian and anti-purgatory theology against Thomas More's orthodox views. Frith states that the bread "is but only a token of a remembrance / & a signe of his bodie breakinge / and a representacio[n] of his passion." Frith did not believe in transubstantiation because he deemed Christ's body to be in heaven and unable to be in two places at once. Frith's views would have juxtaposed with the archdeacon's conservative theology. Wymesley would have been a traditionalist given his position as an interrogator in Askew's heresy examination. His role on the panel was to persuade her to admit to and to condemn the sacramentarian beliefs of which Frith writes. Askew notes that after Wymesley is unable to disagree with Frith's text she gives him a stern condemnation: "Then I desyred hym, nomore to be so swyft in judgement, tyll he throughlye knewe the truthe" (43). Wymesley leaves having been educated in the "true" religion. His inability to find heresy in Frith's text and his departure from the examination makes it appear that he agrees with Frith's (and Askew's) views. Askew's representation of this exchange sounds as though she convinced Wymesley that the beliefs articulated in Frith's text are orthodox, which presents Askew as an educator having the potential to convert.

The examination process authorizes Askew's female voice, demanding that she speak; it provides her with the agency to act on her own behalf. It is only through answering their questions that she can prove that she is not a heretic. Her examiners question her and she is expected to respond. Askew acts according to contemporary expectations for her female gender by only speaking when asked a

question. When she responds to their questions with an answer, Askew meets the gender expectations of a secular female subject that is programmed by social prescriptions of appropriate female behaviour. However, there are moments during the examination when Askew's female voice turns the juridical process and society upside down by taking control of the proceedings away from her male examiners. Anthony Fletcher maintains that "Speech represents personal agency. The woman who speaks neither in reply to a man nor in submissive request acts as an independent being" (12). Askew exercises her agency by determining when and how she will respond. Askew's refusal to answer Dare's question until he answers hers situates her as an examiner in her own examination.

Askew also displays agency in other rhetorical strategies that allow her to use her "gender to avoid entrapment" (Matchinske 41). There are instances when Askew refuses to respond and remains silent. For example, when asked whether a mouse receives God if it were to eat the consecrated bread, Askew writes, "I made them no answere, but smyled" (27). Here, Askew demonstrates one of her society's desired female traits, that of silence. But she is displaying this trait in response to the examiner's question, which she is supposed to answer, despite it being a question that is meant to incriminate her (McQuade 7). In doing so, she frustrates her examiners by highlighting their inability to manage her. When asked by another examiner the same question of whether an animal were to receive God, Askew demands that he answer his own question. Yet again, Askew takes control of the examination. The priest tells her that "it was agaynst the ordre of scoles"

that he answer his own question (34). Askew sarcastically replies that she “was but a woman, and knewe not the course of scoles” (34). Her comment might be a criticism of scholasticism, the medieval academic way of learning that constituted “a logical system of questioning . . . from the authorities” (MacCulloch, *The Reformation* 25). Askew demonstrates from her responses a humanist approach to spirituality in that reading and interpreting Scripture is an individual occupation leading towards inward spirituality and that learning by the scholastic method is not necessary. Her comment highlights her gender’s lack of access to institutional learning.

Askew’s witty responses and rhetorical acumen produce humour, which is not uncommon in saints’ lives. It can be found in a saint’s clever responses to her or his oppressors or from the saint’s experiences. In the Life of St Barbara, for example, the saint’s father demands that a cistern he is having built have only two windows. Barbara comes to view the cistern on her own and questions the workmen why there are only two windows. She believes that there should be three, which would allow for more light. The workmen listen to Barbara and put in three windows, abandoning her father’s order. Upon seeing the extra window, her father questions the workmen, demanding why they did not adhere to his instructions. The workmen point their collective finger at Barbara. Her father asks her why she feels that there would be more light from three windows than two. The obviousness of his question produces a comical moment. Humour in these texts is subversive, revealing the intellectual inadequacies of the ruling authority.

St Barbara's pagan father's inability to understand a basic premise that more windows allow for more light results in Barbara's Christian answer, that the three windows metaphorically represent "the fader, the sone and the holy ghoost" (Caxton 1050). The humour in Askew's text also subverts the power of her examiners. Her sharp responses, her silence, and her smiles say much about her interrogators and are meant to portray them as intellectually inferior, a common hagiographical characteristic assigned to the martyr's oppressor. For example, when Askew corrects the chancellor in his interpretation of Pauline Scripture that prohibits women from preaching in the pulpit, she asks him how many women he has seen in the pulpit. He responds that he has never seen a woman in the pulpit. Askew states, "Then I sayd, he ought to fynde no faute in poore women, except they had offended the lawe" (30). This amusing exchange purposely created by Askew makes the chancellor look foolish and incompetent as an examiner. Askew's reform audience would delight in reading the exchanges that present her examiners as incapable; they cannot defend their traditional religion or debate with a female. These are moments where Askew appropriates power for herself from those in power.

Askew's intelligent responses replicate St Stephen's agility with language. He attracted many listeners, who "coulede not resyste the wisdom & the sprete, which [he] spake" (Acts 6.[10]). Askew's wisdom and oratorical power are traditional hagiographical characteristics demonstrated by both male and female martyrs. As mentioned above, St Katherine was educated and well-spoken like

Askew. Katherine debated with her barons on why there was no need for her to marry and that she would be able to rule effectively on her own. As well, Caxton describes the fifty philosophers with whom she debated as being “abashed [with her rhetorical skill] and wyste not what to saye, but were al styll” (1110).

Martyrs, regardless of gender, are represented in legends as strong-willed, articulate and knowledgeable. Askew could have called upon a wide array of female saints with which to support her self-presentation as a godly woman. But these saints would not be able to assist her in her polemical dialogue with her examiners. Comparing herself to St Margaret, for example, would have had virtually no rhetorical effect in her argument against transubstantiation. She chooses St Stephen because of his scriptural speech on idolatry, which she can connect with her reform theology on the bread, the Mass, and election and salvation. As a male martyr, Stephen’s presence in Askew’s text authorizes her polemic. Askew hopes that her examiners will accept that her beliefs are consistent with Stephen’s, making her alleged heretical arguments orthodox. The examiners would comprehend that her beliefs stem from the revered male Christian protomartyr, a biblical authority. Drawing on St Stephen is Askew’s strongest argument in proving that her reform convictions are biblically sound.

A key feature in Askew’s employment of St Stephen is his defense against charges of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin. As noted above, he documents the historical persecution of God’s prophets, including the Israelites’ rejection of Joseph and Moses, and their veneration of a statue, the golden calf. Stephen

informs his examiners that they need to move beyond worshipping the temple as God. His speech highlights the idolatry in venerating false gods and structures. John Kilgallen asserts that Stephen's accusers "have tried to place the true God in something false. More exactly, Stephen's contemporaries reduce God to what God is not, when they boast of God dwelling in a house made by human hands" (294). His examiners believed his statements to be heretical and charged him with blasphemy. As a result, Stephen was cast out of the city and stoned to death.

Askew is in a similar predicament. Her views on the bread conflict with the Act of Six Articles (1539) that confirmed transubstantiation. Anyone found to be denying the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine after they were consecrated during the Mass was to be burned at the stake. During the first examination Askew skillfully avoids fully articulating her view on the bread. However, her question to Christopher Dare asking "wherfore S. Steven was stoned to death?" contextually contains her reformist belief that the bread and wine do not contain Christ, but are signs of his passion. If God does not dwell in temples made by human hands, he would not dwell in the bread either. Askew's question comments on her examiners' theology: by focusing on the bread and wine as changing into the body and blood of Christ, her examiners are committing the same error as Stephen's Sanhedrin interrogators. They are committing idolatry by worshipping a false image or object of Christ, locating Christ where Christ does not exist.

The traditional theology of the sacrament of the Eucharist promises sanctifying grace to individuals for their eternal salvation, their freedom from sin and evil. The belief is predicated on Christ's words from the Last Supper with his disciples, found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke:

Iesus toke bread, and wha[n] he had geue[n] thanks, he brake it, & gaue it to ye disciples, & sayd: Take, eate, this is my body. And he toke ye cup, & tha[n]ked, and gaue it the[m], sayinge: dri[n]cke ye all of this. For this is my bloud (which is of the new testament) that is shed for many, for ye remissyon of synnes. (Matt. 26.[26-28])

Askew and her fellow reformers do not believe in the literalness of these words. She states in the latter examination “that after the priest hath spoken the wordes of consecration, there remayneth bread styll. . . . I beleve it to be a moste necessary remembraunce of his glorious sufferynges and death” (189-190). Although she deems the bread to be “a moste syngular comfort” (190), she believes that it is misrepresented during the Mass. She asserts that, “concerning your masse, as it is nowe used in our dayes, I do saye and beleve it, to be the mooste abhominable ydoll that is in the worlde. For my God wyll not bee eaten with teeth, neither yet dyeth he agayne” (190). Askew's view against the Eucharist echoes and interacts with past English reform rejection of transubstantiation. In the fourteenth century John Wycliffe, whom Diarmaid MacCulloch describes as mounting the “first challenge” to the church (*Reformation* 35), did not believe that Christ's actual body and blood were in the bread and wine after consecration, but that Christ was

figuratively in the bread and wine, thus alluding to the symbolism that Askew advocates. In the early sixteenth century, reformer William Tyndale, of whom Askew would have been well aware from his notoriety after translating the New Testament into English and being put to death for it in 1536, also denounced the doctrine of transubstantiation. In his *A Brief Declaration of the Sacraments*, Tyndale draws on scriptural evidence from the Gospel of Luke that the bread was meant to be a remembrance of Christ. He writes, “Here ye see by these words that it was ordained to keep the death of Christ in mind, and to testify that his body was given and his blood shed for us” (356); and, “hereof ye see, that our sacraments are bodies of stories only; and that there is none other virtue in them, than to testify and exhibit to the senses and understanding, the covenants and promises made in Christ’s blood” (357-58). Although *A Brief Declaration of the Sacraments* “seems not to have been published until 1548” (Daniell, Introduction, *William Tyndale* xiv-xv), his *Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528), published years before Askew’s incarceration, confirms, with scriptural references, Tyndale’s belief that the bread and wine are signs and not the corporeal presence of Christ. He writes that “the priest should declare in the English tongue: This is my body that is broken for you. This is my blood that is shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins. This do in remembrance of me saith Christ (Luke 12 and 1 Corinthian 11)” (*Obedience* 108). Tyndale uses this specific biblical quotation because it contains the word “remembrance,” underscoring his belief that the bread and wine are only signs of Christ’s sacrifice.

Askew's renunciation of transubstantiation would include her rejection of the Mass, which reenacted Christ's Passion and included the consecration of the bread and wine, "the centre and source of the whole symbolic system of late medieval Catholicism" (Duffy, *Stripping* 110). Transubstantiation redeemed and renewed the world and the church (Duffy, *Stripping* 91). As Duffy explains further, the bread "was for more than the object of individual devotion, a means of forgiveness and sanctification: it was the source of human community" (*Stripping* 93). Receiving the consecrated bread during the Mass was known as "taking one's rights," communicating its "unitive and corporative dimension" (Duffy, *Stripping* 94, 92). The Blessed Sacrament united an individual with God and with the community of fellow believers. Because Askew believes transubstantiation, the focal point of the Mass, to be idolatrous, she would believe the Mass to be futile, if not another symbol of the conservative religion's idolatrous doctrine. When asked by Christopher Dare if she said that she would "rather to reade fyve lynes in the Bible, than to heare fyve masses in the temple," she responds, "I confessed, that I sayd no lesse. Not for the dyspraye of eyther the Epistle or Gospell. But bycause the one ded greatlye edyfye me, and the other nothinge at all" (21). Askew renounces the Mass, presenting it as spiritually pointless. She would rather read the Bible because it strengthens her spirituality and her faith in God. Attending Mass will not put Askew on the path to salvation. The true God is not found at Mass, just as he is not found in the temple of Stephen's examiners. Instead, reading Scripture gives Askew unmediated contact with God, and the

opportunity to be one of his followers and to attain salvation. For Askew, the real God can be found in his Word.

Askew's focus on the importance of reading Scripture was articulated in the early sixteenth century by the Dutch priest Desiderius Erasmus in his *Exhortation to the Diligent Study of Scripture*. He argues for Scripture to be made available in the vernacular to all Christians. He hopes "that it might be reade diligently of the private and seculare men and women" (77). He imagines people of all stations reading and reciting Scripture daily as they go about their duties. Erasmus believes it will produce virtuous behavior, by which man will "declare effectuously his mind vnto his neighburre" (78). From his position as a member of the clergy, Erasmus could work within the church to promote his views that the laity be granted opportunities to read Scripture in the vernacular. Erasmus's convictions were taken up by William Tyndale who then translated the New Testament into English. Tyndale, in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, demands that we "arm our souls with the comfort of the scriptures" (12). Unlike Erasmus, Tyndale, who was also a priest, had to work outside of the church and outside of England since his views were deemed heretical. Daniell posits that once he was captured and imprisoned in England, Tyndale probably "suffered the public, and ceremonial, degradation of the priesthood" on the same day that he was condemned in August 1536 ("Tyndale"). Askew's focus on reading the Bible is a product of Erasmus's and Tyndale's shared belief that people's spirituality will grow through personal reading of the Word of God.

Askew's reading of the Bible and communicating her knowledge of it to her examiners assists in shaping her self-representation as an intelligent and godly reform martyr. This representation, which has her speaking of Christ, St Stephen, and Paul, heroes of the Bible, is further shaped by the influence of medieval hagiographical conventions. As discussed above, martyrs were portrayed as intelligent and articulate persuasive speakers in their affirmations of their devotion to Christ to their pagan interrogators. The Bible provides Askew with her own sense of a true understanding of Christ and Christianity, which she extends to her interrogators. Askew's representation as a martyr displays the reform emphasis on the Bible, but employs medieval hagiographical conventions to further develop this representation.

III. The Virgin Martyr Anne Askew

Askew's embrace of reform theology, her employment of medieval hagiographical conventions, and her spotlight on St Stephen make obvious her self-representation as a witness to her reform faith, which is finalized by her recounting of her torture and her acceptance of death. Askew's female gender, combined with hagiographical *topoi*, also suggest parallels of her representation as a martyr with the medieval virgin martyr. Claire Waters describes the typical virgin martyr as someone "nearly always of noble birth; always extraordinarily beautiful; excellent public [speaker], when called upon; and extraordinarily and exceptionally strong-willed" (74). I point to Askew as representing herself as a

virgin martyr because of her response to her examiners when they desire to know more of her failed marriage to Thomas Kyme. Askew refuses to provide any information about her husband and her previous life with him that is alleged to have produced two children. Askew distances herself from the marriage, as other hagiographers have done for saints such as Cecilia (Bernau, “Gender” 108). Even when her examiners insist that the king would like to know more of her situation, Askew says, “if it were the kynges pleasure to heare me, I wolde shewe hym the truthe” (92).¹⁸ Askew’s response could communicate her desire to look solely devoted to God, similar to the godly women from the medieval period whose devotion had no room for an earthly spouse. Askew might be drawing on the medieval female mystic’s ambition of becoming Christ’s spiritual spouse, as the medieval mystic Margery Kempe sought to do in her self-representation in her *Book* (c. 1433-38). According to Anke Bernau,

Marriage is . . . a framework within which gendered and sexual identities are played out. The family context, primary in shaping the lives of all of its members in a range of hierarchical

¹⁸ Divorce in the medieval and early modern periods was attainable but not in the same sense as we understand divorce today. A legal divorce in which a marriage is dissolved and both parties are allowed to remarry does not become attainable until 1857 (Stretton 19). Shannon McSheffrey explains that “a medieval divorce did not dissolve a valid marriage, leaving both parties free to marry” (*Marriage* 23). “A marriage, once entered into in a canonical fashion, was indissoluble except through the death of one of the spouses, after which the surviving widow or widower could, and often did, remarry. Under specific circumstances, two other kinds of marriage termination, both called divorce (*divorcium*), could be declared by the ecclesiastical courts of late medieval England: divorce *a mensa et thoro* (“from table and bed”) and divorce *a vinculo* (“from the bond”)” (McSheffrey, *Marriage* 23). Divorce *a mensa et thoro* was a separation in which the parties “no longer had to share a table and bed” (McSheffrey, *Marriage* 23). Although divorced, the husband and wife were not free to remarry. Divorce *a vinculo* was an annulment and made the marriage invalid; the husband and wife could remarry. See further McSheffrey, *Marriage* 23 and Stretton 19-20.

relationships, is also an arena in which sanctity and gender are performed and achieved. (“Gender” 108)

If Askew were to discuss her marriage to Kyme, it would remind her interrogators and her audience that she is a woman who should be with her husband. Any reference to her seeking a divorce from Kyme results in Askew resembling a transgressor of social values because she left her husband, her moral superior. Robert Parsons, a Jesuit, comments on Askew’s subversive behavior in his *Three Conversions of England* (1603-04), a Catholic response to John Foxe’s tirade against the papacy in the *Acts and Monuments*. Parsons calls her a “coy dame, and of very evil fame for wantonnesse,” attempting to underscore Askew’s undisciplined and rebellious female behavior (309). Although this quotation is from almost sixty years after Askew’s death, it reflects the patriarchal values that would have been prevalent during her time.

Askew’s defiance of her male examiners mirrors that of the medieval virgin martyr. Disobedience to the pagan authorities reflects obedience to God (Bernau, “Gender” 110). Although Askew does not comply with her examiners, she does display loyalty to the crown. According to Leslie Fairfield, in Protestant hagiography the martyr “supported the English monarch, both as God’s anointed representative and as the nation’s only bastion against political and spiritual subversion from Rome” (129). When told that King Henry VIII demands to know about her marriage, Askew is willing to talk to him directly about it (92). She will not be insolent to the king since she refers to herself as “hys faythfull

subject” (92). Askew displays the desired behavior advocated in Tyndale’s *Obedience of a Christian Man*. Quoting Romans 13, Tyndale writes, “Let every soul submit himself unto the authority of the highest powers. There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God” (*Obedience* 36). For reformers, the king is God’s earthly representative, not the pope whom they consider to be the Antichrist. Tyndale asserts that “Kings were ordained . . . and the sword put in their hands to take vengeance of evil doers, that others might fear” (*Obedience* 46-47).¹⁹ Askew’s outspokenness and defiance categorically and simultaneously reflect a virgin martyr and a reformer who must stand up to the Antichrist’s minions while pledging allegiance to the crown.

IV. John Bale, hagiographical mediator

Askew’s martyr representations conveyed through reform theology and hagiography, as demonstrated above, are furthered by her editor John Bale. As previously mentioned, Bale was a member of the traditional religion’s ecclesiastical establishment prior to his conversion. During the 1530s, Bale converted to reform beliefs and wrote polemical plays and treatises denouncing the papacy. However, between 1539 and 1540, Bale wrote *Anglorum Heliades*, “a

¹⁹ In his *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (1721), John Strype relates an incident that indicates that Queen Anne Boleyn owned a copy of Tyndale’s *Obedience of a Christian Man*. According to Strype, Boleyn loaned her copy of Tyndale’s book to a lady-in-waiting, a Mrs. Gainford. A gentleman named Mr. Zouch took the book from Mrs. Gainford. At the time, Cardinal Wolsey tried to ensure that such reform-minded books did not reach King Henry VIII. A Dr. Sampson saw Zouch with the book and took it from him, giving it, in turn, to Wolsey. Upon finding out that Wolsey had her book, Anne went to Henry to have it returned to her. He retrieved the book for Anne, “who besought his Grace most tenderly to read it” (113). Strype claims that it was “no Wonder the King took a liking to it. For in it there is an exposition of the XIIIth Chapter to the Romans” (113). For Henry, Tyndale’s book and this scriptural passage justify his authority as divinely sanctioned.

historical and bibliographical account of the Carmelite order in England” (J. King, “Bale”). Having once been the prior of a Carmelite convent, Bale’s writing of this text intimates that he had not yet completely renounced his former life (J. King, “Bale”).

In 1544, Bale wrote *A Brief Chronicle Concerning the Examination and Death of Sir John Oldcastle*, which employs medieval hagiographical features to document the fifteenth-century Lollard as an early martyr and hero of the reform movement. Describing Oldcastle as a “most Christian knight” (53), Bale compares the Lollard’s witnessing of the faith in Christ to the martyr Thomas Becket, presenting Oldcastle as more deserving of the martyr designation. Bale believes that they are “far different and unlike” (55) since Becket “died upon his own seeking only, for maintaining the wanton liberties and superfluous possessions of the Romish church here within England” (56). He asserts that “Sir John Oldcastle died at the importune suit of the clergy, for calling upon a christian reformation in that Romish church of theirs, and for manfully standing by the faithful testimonies of Jesu” (56). Bale’s hagiographical account of Oldcastle, and his mediation of Askew’s text, are further examples of the conventions associated with the conservative religion found in Bale’s writing.

In his Prologue to Askew’s first examination, Bale immediately begins to shape Askew as a martyr by comparing her to Lydia, Cecilia, and Blandina, women of the early church. These comparisons document the progress of Askew’s conversion and faith. Lydia, the purple cloth seller from the Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 16, “whose harte,” Bale states, “the lorde opened by the godlye preachynge of Paule at Thyatira” (9), mirrors Askew’s conversion to evangelical beliefs. Cecilia, a third-century martyr and saint, dedicated herself to the Gospel just as Askew dedicated herself to reading Scripture. Bale’s most extensive comparisons are between Askew and Blandina, a martyr from the second century whose story is found in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History*. Bale identifies Askew with Blandina so as to call attention to Askew’s devotion to Christ and her martyr-like characteristics of resistance and persistence. He describes Askew as “a gentywoman verye yonge, daynty, and tender” (7) and “borne of verye auntyent and noble stocke” (9). Blandina is also described as “yonge and tender” (10). Both are portrayed as weak and “frayle of nature” but “made most stronge” by their faith in Christ (10). Askew withstands torture, which is illustrative of the endurance displayed by the early martyr. According to Bale, “Reade burnynge plates of yron and of brasse had Blandina put to her sydes” (11). These comparisons provide the Reformation movement with a modern day champion in Askew, whose behavior and religious commitment imitate that of the early martyrs.

Bale also supports his representation of Askew as a martyr, and as Christ-like, with a reference to Christ and male martyrs and saints in his conclusion to her first examination. There he situates her in the historical narrative of male religious resistance. Askew stands firm against her examiners, just as

Moses resysted Pharao, Helyas kynge Achab, Helyseus Joram, Zachary Joas, Daniel the ydolaters, Johan Baptist the Pharysees and Herode, Steven the Jewes, the Apostles the Byshoppes and prestes. Christ rebuked hys dysciple Peter, and bade hym, come after hym devyll. (70)

Bale also mentions that “Johan wycleve and Johan Huss confesse in their writynges, that they were by stronge force inwardlye constrayned of God to worke agaynst the great Antichryst” (70). Bale frames his representation of Askew as a martyr in the first examination by initially comparing her to the three female martyrs in the Prologue and then by citing the chronological touchstone examples of male resistance in the conclusion. Bale concludes the first examination declaring that “The grace of that lorde Jhesus Christ, be ever with them, whych ryghtlye hate that synagoge of Sathan, as ded Anne Askew” (71). Situating Askew in a resistance narrative of the Bible’s most famous men authorizes a representation of her as a martyr even further than relying solely on female martyrs. But Bale does not completely efface Askew’s female identity, as will be shown below. However, by comparing her to female and male martyrs, Bale stresses that her gender does not qualify or restrict her demonstration of faith and her martyrdom.²⁰

In the second examination, Bale compares Askew to Christ in his reference to her as a lamb, thus dismissing her gender yet again. During his discussion of

²⁰ The resistance narrative also legitimizes Bale as a historian of religious resistance and of the reformed church. His self-representation as a church historian will be discussed in Chapter Two.

her torture, he states that, “lyke a lambe she laye styll without noyse of cryenge, and suffered [their] uttermost vyolence, tyll the synnowes of her armes were broken, and the strynges of her eys peryshed in her heade” (129). In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist proclaims “beholde the lambe of God, whych taketh awaye ye synne of the worlde” when Jesus approaches him in Bethany (John 1.[29]). In Revelation 7, a slain lamb, representing Christ, destroys evil in the world and saves the new Israel. The martyrs “came out of great tribulacyo[n], & made their garme[n]tes large, & made them white by the bloude of ye lambe” (Rev. 7.[14]). Bale uses the Christ-centered image of a lamb as did medieval hagiographers. In Osbern Bokenham’s *A Legend of Holy Women*, St Margaret states, “I see myself, lord, like an innocent sheep surrounded by ravenous wolves. Help now, good lord, and keep me from them, if it please your sovereign majesty” (11). Bale, like other hagiographers, compares Askew to a lamb so as to reveal her vulnerability and to demonstrate that she withstands pain like Christ, which verifies her sanctity for the readers. Askew’s female gender does not exclude her from being a witness to faith in Christ or from emulating Christ.

Bale’s representation of Askew as a martyr does not ignore her female gender regardless of locating her in his references to historical male resistance. He draws on traits of the medieval virgin martyr to press forward his presentation of Askew’s godly image. His attention to Askew’s social class parallels that of the virgin martyr. Both St Margaret and St Katherine were gentlewomen like Askew. His depiction of her torture on the rack competes with Margaret being “hung high

in the air and [being] beaten with rods” (Bokenham 13) and Katherine being “despoyled naked and beten wyth scorpyons, and so beten to be put in a derke pryson, and there was tormented by hongre by the space of twelue dayes” (Caxton 1111). Askew has a “countenaunce stowte, myghtye and earnest” (12) like the virgin martyrs. Bale asserts that she was “verye lowlye to true teachers, but scornefull and hygh stomaked to the enemyes of truthe” (12). Although Askew shares many traits with the virgin martyrs, Bale’s representation must account for her marriage and children, thus hindering Askew’s status as a virgin. He asserts that “she was compelled agaynst her wyll or fre consent to marrye with hym” (92). His explanation coincides with the stories of virgin martyrs who are pressured into marrying, but resist and find themselves in prison. As mentioned above, St Katherine’s barons demanded that she marry and relinquish her authority. Askew, unlike Katherine, marries and, according to Bale, “demeaned her selfe lyke a Christen wife, and had by hym (as I am infourmed) ii. chyldren” (92). Bale presents Askew’s marriage as an antecedent to her martyrdom in which she even behaves like a “martyr” in marriage. She sacrifices her own happiness by doing as she is told by her father; she behaves according to society’s patriarchal prescriptions for a female and a daughter. During the marriage, Askew converts to reform theology and leaves Kyme. Bale explains that Askew’s request for a divorce is sanctioned by “S. Paule 1. Cor. 7. If a faytfull woman have an unbelevynge husbande, whych wyll not tarrye with her, she may

leave hym” (93). Bale excuses Askew’s subversive behavior of leaving her husband and children by making it scripturally authorized.

Bale believes that Askew is a true martyr notwithstanding that he assigns medieval martyr traits to her representation. Paradoxically, Bale appropriates medieval hagiographical conventions associated with the traditional religion in his representation of Askew, and, in turn, uses the representation to create a polemical attack against the traditional church. In his Prologue to the latter examinations, Bale asserts that the martyrs associated with the traditional church are celebrated “with so manye latyne wawlynges, torches and candell burnynges” (79). Bale’s comment articulates his Reformation aversion to saints’ cults. Dedicated churches and pilgrimages are not required for Askew to be one of the “stronge witnesses of Jesus Christ” (5). What makes Askew a true martyr is that her martyrdom is not predicated on contrived celebrations and worship like that from the medieval period. Bale writes that “Anne Askewe and her sort, gave dylygent hede to their lorde Jesus Christ, sought the kyngedome of heaven in daylye repentaunce, myghtelye detested all ydolatrouse worshyppynges, and in conclusyon suffered most tryumphaut deathe for the same” (80). Her martyrdom represents the true church, whose foundation is the Bible. Bale believes that medieval martyrs are canonized for reasons that do not exemplify their sanctity. He provides the example of Thomas Becket, as he did in his martyrology of John Oldcastle, maintaining that Becket defended the Pope’s “pompose kyngedome, supported hys churches excesse, and wretchedlye dyed for the synnefull lybertees of the

same” (80). Askew, as a reformer, dies being loyal to the English monarchy and exclusively for her faith in God and the Bible. Bale declares that “Anne Askewe and her felyshypp, had non other rellyckes aboute them, whan they stode at the stake to be brent in Smythfelde. but a bundell of the sacred scriptures enclosed in ther hartes, and redye to be uttered agaynst Antichristes ydolotryes” (80).

According to Bale, the only relic that should survive a martyr’s death is the understanding that the martyr devoted herself to Christ and internalized Scripture in her heart. The translation of material bodily relics is not a feature of Askew’s martyrdom. Bale refashions the translation with a reform perspective in which the focus on relics becomes an appreciation of Askew’s reading of and commitment to the Bible.

Theresa Kemp asserts that, even though there may be no physical remains of Askew left to worship and glorify after her burning at the stake, Bale replaces her tortured and dead body with her text, making the text a relic that “[bears] witness to her newly sanctified status” (1029). The text as a relic substantiates Askew as a martyr since “holy women--like virgin martyrs--only really become representable in the moment of their dying, the moment when they meet their Bridegroom” (Burrus 59). Like other female martyrs, Askew’s *vita* is contingent on her death and the male writer who documents it.

Although Bale casts Askew in a Reformation hagiographical context by focusing on her dedication to Scripture, he still falls back on the medieval hagiographical apparatus of miracles to further his representation of her as a

martyr. Initially in his Prologue to the first examination Bale sets Askew's martyrdom apart from medieval martyrs by drawing attention to miracles. He contends that "the myracles shewed at [the martyrs'] deathes more than at these, as that unfaythfull generacyon is ever desyerouse of wonders Math. 12. I wolde but knowe of them, what myracles were shewed whan Johan Baptystes head was cut of in the preson?" (6). Bale explains that the traditional church fabricates miracles for their martyrs and that martyrs from the Bible, like John the Baptist, did not have miracles at their death. He asserts that reform martyrs like that of "the holye mayde of kent [Elizabeth Barton] with Doctor Bockynge" may have "wrought great wonders by their lyfe, yet apered non at their deathes" (7). Bale must have forgotten writing these comments once he reaches the discussion of Askew's death. He states that at Smithfield, when Askew and the men condemned with her began to suffer,

the skye abhorrynge so wycked an acte, sodenlye altered coloure,
and the cloudes from above gave a thonder clappe, not unlyke to
that is written, Psal. 76. The elementes both declared therein the
hygh diyplesure of God for so tyrannouse a murther of
innocentes, and also expreslye synfyed hys myghtye hande
present to the confort of them whych trusted in hym. (154)

Caxton's translation of St Margaret's legend includes a thunder clap from God. About to be drowned, Margaret speaks to God: "I beseche the my lord that thys water may be to me the fonte of baptysme in to euer lastyng lyf" (618).

Immediately after Margaret has spoken these words, the narrator asserts that “there was herde grete thondre, and a douue descended from heuen and sette a golden crowne on her hede” (618). Unable to relinquish his traditional religious roots, Bale includes the miracle of thunder so as to complete the medieval hagiographical structure of his commentary on Askew’s text, which already includes the discussion of Askew’s life (the *vita*), her torture (the *passio*), and her internalization of Scripture (the reform relic as described above). The miracle of the thunder clap at Askew’s death finalizes Bale’s martyr representation of her because it assists in substantiating her sanctity for the readers. God has spoken and confirmed her martyrdom.

The thunder clap in martyrology produces the conventional wave of conversions. In St Margaret’s legend over five thousand men converted to Christianity, which resulted in their beheading. Bale confirms that at Askew’s burning “Full manye a Christen hart have rysen and wyll ryse from the pope to Christ through the occasyon of their consumynge in the fyre” (154). Before the discussion of her death, in the Prologue and conclusion to the first examination, Bale has already introduced Askew’s power to cause conversion. In the Prologue, he compares Blandina’s and Askew’s power to cause conversion, with Askew’s martyrdom having the stronger muscle. He states that “Manye were converted by the sufferance of Blandina. A farre greater nombre by the burnynge of Anne Askewe” (12). In the conclusion, he provides an exact number of converts, claiming “that by burnynge Anne Askewe and her .iii. companyons, they have one

thousande lesse of their popysh beleve than they had afore” (67). Bale’s repeated references to Askew’s converting power demonstrate his heavy reliance on the medieval hagiographical trope to represent her as a *bona fide* martyr. Her conversion power is stronger than that of the early martyrs, making Askew an example of superior godliness for the Reformation movement. Bale’s representation can be understood as promoting Askew as the standard for female reform martyrdom because of her ability to convert many.

Bale’s representation of Askew differs from her own in that he does not rely on St Stephen, as she does, to present reform theology, to substantiate her responses, or to identify her as martyr. Bale, from his safe position as mediator, is able to voice his reform beliefs without having to incorporate St Stephen to mask it or authorize it. After Askew asks Dare why St Stephen was put death, Bale immediately asserts that the Eucharist is a sign and cites St Augustine. Had Askew responded as Bale, stating that “A sacrament (sayth Saynt Augustyne) ys a sygne, shappe, or symlytude of that yt representyth, and no God nor yet thyng represented” (20), she would have been condemned to death after her very first response. Also, we do not have any indication from Askew’s writing that she read theological treatises. We only have evidence that she read another reformer’s text (John Frith’s) and the Bible. When asked if she had read the “kynges boke,” she responded that she had “never sawe it” (23). The *King’s Book*, its formal title *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for Any Christen Man* (1543), stressed traditional religious doctrine in England. As well, Askew confirms that she did not

receive any institutional education, as mentioned above. Her polemical debate with her examiners centers on her knowledge of Scripture, whereas Bale's polemic draws on his scholastic and theological education at Cambridge as evidenced by his commentary on Askew's responses.

Bale, as a hagiographical narrator, uses the medieval to meet his Reformation needs. Salih attests that the "hagiographic narrator takes the position of mediator, both between the saint and the audience and between textual tradition and his own present day" (Introduction 11). Bale is the intermediary in transmitting the saint's story to the audience. But Askew also shares the narrator's duties with Bale. He asserts that "she wrote [*The Examinations*] with her owne hande" (19), identifying Askew as a real, live individual. Bale claims that she specifically wrote it "at the instant desyre of serten faythfull men and women, yea rather at the secrete mocyon of God, that the truth theroff myght be knowne the worlde over" (19). Not only is she encouraged by members of her community to write, but also by God. Adding God to the list displays Bale's reading of medieval devotional texts such as Margery Kempe's *Book* and Julian of Norwich's Short Version of *A Revelation of Love*. Both medieval women decline the authority, the *auctoritas*, of writing their texts, "For the written text both carried and created 'authority' and it was a tacit assumption that 'authority,' and therefore authorship, were incompatible with femininity" since it "was thoroughly male" (Barratt 5-6). A rhetorical strategy in negotiating authority was to assert that the desire to write did not originate in the writer but was only undertaken at God's request, "the

supreme and highest *auctor* (the Latin word from which ‘author’ ultimately derives)” (Barratt 6).²¹ For example, Julian states it was God’s decision for her to write about her visions: “that [it] is his wille that it be knawen” (155 vis. 6.18-45). Similar to the modesty *topos* in which the writer apologizes for her or his coarse and uncultured writing, the rhetorical strategy of asserting that God compelled the individual to write “should not be taken at face value” (Wogan-Browne et al. 9). These conventions “serve to establish both a poet’s own achievement and that of the vernacular literary tradition in which the poet is working” (Wogan-Browne et al. 10). The claim that it is God speaking and not the writer demands the audience to continue reading since the message originates with God, despite the message in fact originating with the writer who is putting the words on the page. For instance, Kempe in her *Book* explains that “when it pleased our Lord, he commanded her and charged her that she should have written her feelings and revelations and the form of her living so that her goodness might be known to all the world” (4). Employing the rhetorical strategy that God requested that she record her experiences provides Kempe, with the assistance of her amanuenses, the opportunity to present her piety to readers. Similarly, Bale’s assertion that Askew

²¹ In his study of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Marshall Grossman writes that the term “author” had different meanings during the late seventeenth century (“authority, creator, and writer”), all stemming from “its Latin antecedents: *auctor* (writer, progenitor), derived from *auctus* (magnified), the past participle of *augere* (to increase)” (1-2). Considering the term *auctor*, writers, in relation to the terms *auctus* and *augere*, can “magnify the life histories they write” and “increase” the number of faithful through their writings (Grossman 2). Askew, Bale and Foxe, in their representations of Askew as a martyr, magnify, thus intensify and heighten, Askew’s experiences. They also have the promising potential to attract individuals to the reform movement and increase its membership.

writes because it is God's desire gives him and Askew the opportunity to display their piety to their readers.

Bale's employment of this rhetorical device also communicates to the audience that God has authorized this text and that the reformed religion is the true religion. God wants people to be aware of the atrocities committed by the traditional church against the members of God's church. Askew's writing will illustrate what Bale describes as "the perpetuall infamy of so wyllfullye cruell and spyghtfull tyrauntes" and will reveal "their spirytual wyckednesse and treason knowne moche farther of" than England (8). Askew's story, with Bale's help, will travel the world informing people of the atrocities committed by the traditional church. Since Askew's book will be published outside of England, it escapes being "condempned and brent, by the Byshoppes and prestes with their frantyeck affynyte, the great Antichristes upholders, whych seke by all practyses possyble to turne over the kynges most noble and godlye enterpryse" (8). Her text corroborates Bale's polemical writings that depict the religious authorities as "the malygnaunt Synagoge of Sathan" (5), and "cruell Byshoppes and prestes, whom Christ calleth ravenynge wolves, devourers, and theves" (11). Unlike Askew's text, Bale's martyrology of Sir John Oldcastle was compiled from notes taken from the trial. There are no extant writings from Oldcastle detailing his examination and his examiners' conduct. Bale had to rely on "the books and writings of those popish prelates which were present both at his condemnation and judgment" (*A Brief Chronicle* 5). In Oldcastle's story, Bale describes the

examiners as “beastly blockheads these bloody belly-gods were in their unsavoury interrogacyo[n]s” (6). Askew’s account of her examinations substantiates Bale’s attack on the traditional church. Askew may not descend to name calling as does Bale, but her rhetorical skill in depicting her examiners as inferior and foolish helps to further Bale’s textual agenda of casting the traditional church as false and the Reformation church as true.

Critics have questioned whether Bale interfered significantly with Askew’s text, adding phrases and passages to further his own propagandist agenda. Leslie Fairfield argues that Bale has fabricated some historical “facts” in his writing to show the Reformation as needed and essential (x). She questions if his efforts to present Askew as a martyr with all the desired characteristics resulted in him tweaking “the Askew documents to make his heroine conform more closely to the type she represented” (133). For example, Askew uses the phrase “mutuall pertycypacyon,” which according to Fairfield is not a common phrase in writing; however, it is found frequently in Bale’s texts. Fairfield concludes, with this one exception, that Bale does not seriously alter Askew’s writing since “nowhere in his works can one find duplicated Anne Askew’s patient simplicity” (133).

Theresa Kemp also believes that Bale did not tamper extensively with Askew’s own account of her examinations. Kemp argues that Bale could have summarized the story but chose to keep it intact, commenting when he felt her words needed further explanation. As well, Kemp asserts that Askew’s writing style and agenda are different from Bale’s. Where Bale’s focus is to present her

examiners as Roman torturers, Askew's aim is to shape her posthumous reputation by countering possible rumours about herself. She understands the power of words and of interpretation and wants to make sure that she is not misinterpreted by her readers and her chroniclers. Kemp asserts that Askew shapes herself as an obedient woman who knows her scriptural place, as a literate woman who can read and accurately interpret the Bible, and as a faithful woman who is a member of the reformist community. These representations along with Bale's careful mediation assist in Askew's posthumous reputation as a female martyr.

V. Sixteenth-Century Mediation: Margery Kempe and Anne Askew

The issue of textual interference is a valid concern when we consider the medieval and early modern mediation of Margery Kempe and her *Book*. Unable to write, Kempe "dictated episodically from memory" her travels and experiences to two separate scribes (Staley viii). Initially the work was undertaken by an Englishman, who had been living in Germany, but had returned to England with his family and was living at Kempe's house. After his death, a priest took over recording Kempe's story. Both Kempe and Askew represent themselves as holy women who continuously confront and challenge male ecclesiastical and secular authority. There were conflicts over religious orthodoxy in Kempe's time, as in Askew's. As discussed above, in 1409 Archbishop Thomas Arundel issued his Constitutions which were designed to censor Lollard heresy. Believed by some to

be a Lollard or to have Lollard sympathies, Kempe's behaviour became suspect and she was imprisoned for a short time.

Askew shares similar personality traits with Kempe, which include her commitment to her religion, her desire to display publicly her religious zeal despite numerous and constant threats of persecution, and her willpower in opposing the contemporary male hierarchy. Kempe's self-representation consists of her "constant praying, her boisterous and prolonged weeping, and her unwillingness to live as others live [making] her doubly vulnerable to the hostility of townspeople, as well as open to the charges of heterodoxy that put her in physical danger" (Staley x). Kempe records episodes in which she speaks with the Virgin Mary, with God, and with Jesus Christ. In her representation as a spiritual spouse, she records the Godhead making her his earthly partner, passionately saying to her, "Daughter, I will have you wedded to my Godhead, for I shall show you my secrets and my counsels, for you shall dwell with me without end" (63). Like that of many mystics, Kempe's emotive language conveys a fervent spiritual relationship between herself and the Godhead.

In 1501 Wynkyn de Worde published a short excerpt from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and "omits any descriptions of the disruptive and challenging nature of Margery's life and travels, presenting her through her calmer mystical conversations with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin" (Staley ix). Kempe speaks very little in the excerpt. Instead, she listens to Jesus Christ, who gives her directions on how better to serve him. For example, when asked by Margery how "she

sholde best loue him,” Christ responds “Doughter yf thou were the haberyon / or y^e here fastynge brede & water / & yf y^u saydeste euey day a thousande patern [oste]r[s]. thou sholde not please me so well as thou dost whan [you] art in scylence / & suffrest me to speke in thy soule” (A1). Kempe’s questions and her silence present her as a female enacting the behavior valued by her patriarchal society. The excerpt excises the passionate language between Margery and the Godhead and her confrontational behavior with the male authorities, which were found in her medieval representation. In the excerpt, we are left with the prescribed model of a sixteenth-century female.

In 1521, Henry Pepwell reprinted the de Worde abridgement and incorrectly identified Kempe as an anchoress. This identification locates Kempe in a “recognizable place within late medieval society,” a place approved by the religious authorities for women to display their utmost devotion to God (Staley ix). Unfortunately, the “creature” Margery from the *Book* is unrecognizable to the Margery presented in the excerpt.

Kempe’s sixteenth-century mediators refused “all that is radical, enthusiastic, feminist, particular, potentially heretical and historical” in Margery’s representation from her *Book* (Holbrook 35). Similarly, Bale mediates Askew in a somewhat analogous fashion by initially focusing on her female gender, stating that she is weak and frail. This is a cultural construction that Bale employs to show Askew as a recognizable sixteenth-century female to his readers. The weak female image is also a hagiographical *topos* to demonstrate that “the weak of the

world are strong in Christ” (Summit, *Lost Property* 49). Askew’s frail female figure transforms over the course of Bale’s mediation to become what he describes as “Christes lyvely membre, and of a perfyght christen martyr . . . Thus is she a Saynt canonysed in Christes bloude” (148). In his final words, Bale has left behind any discussion of Askew’s gender. Where Kempe’s mediators feel that her representation needs to be rigorously managed for a sixteenth-century audience, Bale chooses to implement medieval hagiographical female characteristics and literary *topoi*, which would mollify Askew’s transgressive traits that would disturb his readers.

Askew’s and Bale’s appropriation of medieval hagiographical *topoi* to represent Askew as a martyr displays their negotiation with late medieval religiosity. Despite wanting to reform the religion of the late medieval period that is still the ruling religion of their early modern period, they employ the literary conventions of its spiritual writing to present paradoxically the spirituality of their champions. My investigation of Askew’s and Bale’s portrayal of Askew as a martyr confirms Reformation representation to be a matrix that unites the social, cultural, political, and religious discourses of the late medieval with the early sixteenth century. Askew’s and Bale’s representations of Askew as a martyr are embedded in history. The representations of Askew mirror the religious power struggles that are in the Bible and that have played out through early Christian and English histories. Askew and Bale document these conflicts while concurrently

recording their contemporary religious conflicts and desires. In the next chapter, I will continue this discussion of the impact of mediation on early modern representation by exploring Bale's presentation of Askew as a *mulier fortis* and himself as a historian.

Chapter Two: Askew the *Mulier Fortis* and John Bale the Historian

Early in his account of Askew's first examination, John Bale comments on Askew's interrogation by the Bishop's Chancellor who, according to Askew, believes she should not discuss the Bible. The chancellor's charge that women should not "speake or . . . talke of the worde of God" (30) was discussed in Chapter One in relation to Askew using scriptural references as a defense against heresy charges. Askew's response to the Bishop's Chancellor that she "knewe Paules meanynge so well as he" and her question to him "of how manye women he had seane, go into the pulpett and preache" (30) demonstrates how she appropriates power from her interrogator by subversively questioning his scriptural knowledge and experience. We can also examine this significant exchange between Askew and the chancellor by analyzing Bale's comments on it, which will be the focus of this chapter and the next chapter. In his elucidation, Bale depicts Askew as a devout and learned woman, connecting his portrayal of her to the women mentioned in the Gospel of Luke and to prominent pious English women from history. Bale's attention to these women aligns his depiction of Askew with the *mulier fortis* model from early Christianity and the medieval period. This chapter will examine Bale's representation of Askew as an early modern *mulier fortis* and will focus on his discussion of historical women in relation to Askew. The following chapter will continue the investigation of Askew

as a *mulier fortis* by examining Bale's reference to the Virgin Mary and his employment of Marian devotional characteristics in his representation of Askew.

Bale states that “In the prymatyve church, specyallye in Saynt Hieromes tyme, was it a great prayse unto women to be lerned in the scriptures. Great commendacyons geveth our Englysh Cronycles to Helena, Ursula, and Hilda, women of our nacyon, for beyng lerned also in the scriptures” (30-31). Bale’s statement justifies Askew’s knowledge of Scripture since women of the early church were praised for such learning and wisdom. The statement also communicates three objectives that Bale has for his depiction of Askew: it presents her as a *mulier fortis*, a “faithful, trustworthy, God-fearing” woman (Biscoglio 7); it situates her in the history of English religious women; and it represents himself as a chronicler of the English church. Several times in the course of *The Examinations*, Bale refers to chronicles in general and cites the names of historians and chroniclers from the past. He writes that “common readers of chronycles” would recognize Askew as a devout young woman (133). Elaine Beilin claims that Bale reviewed the works of medieval historians such as Matthew of Paris and John Capgrave, and the chronicler Robert Fabyan (30n299), which account for his knowledge of Helena, Ursula, and Hild. These women emulate the *mulier fortis* model, which displays characteristics of attentiveness, wisdom, fortitude, endurance, and eloquence. Displaying such qualities results in these women being recorded in history.

Bale's comments on chronicles and histories combined with his Prologue to *The Examinations* represent him as a historian of the English reformed church. In the Prologue, Bale acknowledges Eusebius of Caesarea, historian of the early Christian church, and the Venerable Bede, historian of the early English church. I will examine in this chapter how Bale's references to these historians and their writings position Askew as a *mulier fortis* in ecclesiastical history while concurrently establishing Bale's self-portrait as a church historian. These two representations are supported by the influence of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and such well-known medieval chronicles and pseudo-chronicles as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, Matthew of Paris's *Chronica majora*, and Fabyan's *New Chronicles*, which include the lives of the learned English women whom Bale mentions. I will discuss how Bale's portrayal of Askew dovetails with the *mulier fortis* model and these medieval women. I focus on the above mentioned English historians and chroniclers, setting Eusebius aside for the moment, as influences on Bale because their works contain English content, which would connect with Bale's "nation" narrative that develops out of the Prologue and his reference to the three English heroines. Bale promotes England as a godly nation that is on the threshold of accepting religious reforms that will return the true religion of early Christianity to the country. Like his early Christian and medieval predecessors, Bale's writing of history includes devout, strong, valiant women who contribute to England's identity as a Christian nation.

I. The *mulier fortis* model

The *mulier fortis* (“strong woman”) originates in Proverbs 31.10-31, The Song of the Valiant Woman. Because the poem describes the characteristics of the virtuous wife, the term *mulier* also meant “wife” to medieval authors (Biscoglio 7). Proverbs 31.10-31 lists the ways in which the perfect wife cares for her husband and children. She “occupyeth woll and flaxe, & laboureth gladly with her ha[n]des” [Prov. 31.13], feeds and clothes her family, and “maketh cloth of sylke and selleth it” [Prov. 31.24]. In her study of Chaucer's employment of the *mulier fortis topos*, Frances Minetti Biscoglio describes the *mulier fortis* as “the domestic centre of her household” (7), who “possessed great eloquence and great physical and moral strength” (8). On the literal level, the *mulier fortis* of Proverbs is the ideal wife whose “appeal and consequently her virtue are derived from her energetic diligence and generosity rather than from a demure or seductive appearance” (Biscoglio 13), while, allegorically, she represents wisdom.

The Song of the Valiant Woman is the final chapter in the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is one of five books from the Old Testament classified as wisdom texts, the other four being Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and Wisdom (Biscoglio 9). Biscoglio claims that situating the poem at the end of Proverbs was “a deliberate statement about the relationship of the valiant woman to the personified Wisdom of the Prologue and to the general theme of wisdom which pervades the book” (16). The introductory chapter of Proverbs discusses the importance and value of wisdom in devotion to God: “The feare of the Lorde

is the begynnyng of wysdome. But fooles despyse wysdome & instruccion” (Prov. 1.[7]). In Proverbs 1.20 wisdom is personified as a woman, warning people in the streets to follow her, since “whoso harkneth vnto me, shall dwell safely, and be sure from any feare of euyl” [Prov. 1.33]. The Book of Proverbs, with its focus on and teaching of wisdom, is framed by women who listen to and follow those who speak the Word of God, as well as demonstrate valued traits of knowledge, devotion, and strength.

In the early centuries of Christianity, exegetes included discussion of the *mulier fortis* in their commentaries on the Bible. Initial discussions on the *mulier fortis* focused on her literal representation as a devout, praiseworthy woman.

Biscoglio provides an extensive history of textual references to the *mulier fortis* beginning with Clement of Alexandria's literal interpretation of her as a hard-working and worthy wife in his second-century *Paidagogos*, a text that addressed the Christian indoctrination of the Greek heathen (24). In the third century, the Christian theologian Origen was the first to concentrate on the *mulier fortis*'s allegorical interpretation as Wisdom, an interpretation that continued into the Middle Ages (Biscoglio 24). The *mulier fortis* also became a symbol of Scripture, “the soul, the Virgin, and most particularly, the Church” (Biscoglio 24). In the early fifth century, Augustine highlights the *mulier fortis* as the symbol of the church in his Sermon 37, dedicated to the Scillitan protomartyrs in Africa from the second century. Of the twelve martyrs, five were women, which is probably why Augustine chose to focus on Proverbs 31 (Hill 201n1). In his explication of

the poem, Augustine states to his listeners, “Now all of you listeners, it’s quite clear from your response, are saying to yourselves, ‘She must be the Church.’ I support this idea. Who else, after all, could be the mother of martyrs?” (*The Works* III/2: 184). Augustine asserts that the valiant woman should be celebrated on the feast day of the Scillitan martyrs because “now she is prominent, now she’s conspicuous, now she’s glorious, now she’s adorned, now she’s full of light, now--as I shall soon be explaining--she is spread throughout the whole world” (*The Works* III/2: 186). Augustine explains that the Scillitan martyrs embody the valiant character of the *mulier fortis* and are members of the church that she symbolizes. He states that “The woman's valor fits the martyrs’ feast day very well. If she hadn’t been valiant, those members of hers would have broken down under their sufferings” (*The Works* III/2: 185).

The Venerable Bede's discussion of Proverbs, included in the *Glossa ordinaria*, the standard interpretative glosses of the Bible by the Church Fathers, influenced the literal and allegorical representations of the *mulier fortis* (Biscoglio 31). As Biscoglio asserts, the *Glossa's* scriptural importance to readers and interpreters of the Bible, combined with Bede's remarks on Proverbs 31, “assured the dominance of the valiant woman as an allegorical figure of the Church in the Middle Ages” (31). The allegorical representation of the valiant woman as the church continued into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Similar to Bede, the Dominican theologian and cardinal Hugh of St.-Cher “equated the valiant woman

with the Church and the soul” in his *Postilla super totam bibliam* (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*) (Biscoglio 31).

Medieval clerics, theologians, and philosophers drew upon the virtues of the strong woman to articulate the desired characteristics of the devout female. In his sixth letter to Abbess Heloise, twelfth-century theologian Peter Abelard praises women for their virtue. He employs the women who followed Christ before his death as examples of “blessed women” who received “honor and favor from Christ himself and later from the apostles, as our sacred histories carefully record” (128). He points to the domestic and spiritual actions of Martha and Mary, which mirror those of the valiant woman: “So, while Martha was busy with the food, Mary dispensed the oil: one inwardly, one outwardly, they both attended to the Lord” (128). Similar to the valiant woman in Proverbs 31, Mary and Martha demonstrate the active and contemplative life, with Martha working in the temporal world and Mary attending to the spiritual and eternal world; the valiant woman attends to both worlds in her dedication to her family and to God. Abelard states that women have an “intrinsic dignity” that they display in their devotion to God (129).

In the late fourteenth century, the Wycliffe Bible (1395) depicted the valiant woman of Proverbs 31 not only as a “strong woman” whom Lollard followers could emulate, but also as a symbol of the Bible. The Wycliffite commentator interprets the phrase “strong woman” as follows:

Cristen doctours expownen comynly this lettre, til to the ende, of hooly chirche, which bi figuratif speche, is seid a strong womman; hir hosebonde is Crist, hir sones and douytris ben Cristen men and wymmen; and this is the literal vndurstanding, as thei seyen; and this exposicioun is resonable, and set opinly in the comyn glos. But Rabi Salomon seith, that bi a strong womman is vndurstandun hooli Scripture; the hosebonde of this womman, is a studious techere in hooly Scripture, bothe men and wymmen; for in Jeroms tyme summe wymmen weren ful studious in hooly Scripture.

The Wycliffite gloss of Proverb 31 allegorically presents the strong woman as a symbol of the Bible because of her devotion to God and to her family. She is married to Christ, which results in any children she bears being Christians. The Bible's interpretation of the strong woman, similar to that of the above mentioned Church Fathers and Abelard, locates her within the patriarchal household headed by her husband who oversees her religious instruction of the Bible. The gloss states that men and woman are taught the Bible; however, the teaching is conducted by men. The gloss evinces that women were allowed to read, and talk of, the Bible, but it does not communicate whether women were allowed to preach from it. The Lollard movement accepted women as "learners, readers and expounders of the gospel and other vernacular texts" (Aston 49). As noted above, McSheffrey argues that Lollard women generally did not preach in public. From her research on the Lollard movement, Margaret Aston confirms that there is

limited extant information as to whether women actually performed as priests during liturgical services (49). Nonetheless, “at one formative stage at least in Lollard development, claims were being advanced for women as capable of ‘priesthood’” (Aston 49).

John Gower also comments upon the *mulier fortis* in his *Vox Clamantis*, but focuses on the literal interpretation of Proverbs 31. In his comparison between “those most praiseworthy women” and the “woman who has acted just the opposite” (Gower 202, 203), Gower takes “almost verbatim from the passage of the valiant woman” (Biscoglio 60). He writes that “Tongue cannot recite nor pen describe the worth of her whom utter goodness properly distinguishes. Her noble husband dwells revered within his gates, and her household contains all that is good” (203). Gower's discussions on the virtues of the *mulier fortis* and the vices of evil women participated in the medieval period's debate on virtuous women versus evil women.

Chaucer, as well, engaged in the virtuous women-evil women debate with his portrayal of good wives and wicked wives in *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's ideal wives (Constance, Griselda, Prudence, and Cecilia) are courageous, devout, and intelligent. They, as Biscoglio explains, “possess a spiritual strength which medieval thought associated with wisdom. This virtue is manifested by renunciation, steadfast endurance, and a tenacious clinging to the will of God which mark them as exemplars of Christian perfection in the world” (136). As models of Christian devotion, Chaucer's perfect wives present a portrait of the

mulier fortis, which underscores her as the quintessential woman. Conversely, Chaucer's antithetical representations of the ideal wife, they being the Wife of Bath and the wives in "The Miller's Tale" (Alison), "The Merchant's Tale" (Mayus), and "The Shipman's Tale" (the merchant's wife) "violate the code of behavior set forth by the valiant woman of Proverbs" (Biscoglio 99). They do not portray unwavering devotion to God, to their husbands, or to their families, but rather are depicted as ungodly, licentious and deceitful. The contrast between the good wives and the wicked wives in *The Canterbury Tales* highlights the *mulier fortis* as an archetype instructing the medieval population on female spiritual values. However, mirroring the behaviour of the *mulier fortis* would have been difficult for the medieval woman because as an ideal the *mulier fortis*, like the good wives, is without fault; the ideal is perfect and unattainable. Medieval women could attempt to live up to the virtues of the *mulier fortis*. The behaviour of the godly medieval woman, with her shortcomings and defects, is probably situated on a continuum somewhere between the good wife and the wicked wife.

Bokenham's *Legend of Holy Women* features the *mulier fortis topos* in its hagiographical treatment of thirteen female saints. In his Prologue to the Life of St Margaret, Bokenham describes her as "strong in six virtues: chastity, meekness, and charity, constancy in enduring wrong, in spiritual comfort, and in victory" (8). Both Bokenham and Chaucer, in their respective texts that celebrate female virtue and strength, challenged the medieval clerical written works that were hostile

towards marriage and women in order to encourage clerics and members of the monastic orders to remain celibate (Wilson and Makowski 5).

This historical overview of the *mulier fortis* tradition reveals its prevalent use in written works that spotlight women's strength, endurance and spirituality, virtues that also assist in making them a good wife and the foundation of the household. Bale draws on this tradition to represent Askew as a strong godly woman despite not being a "good wife." As mentioned in Chapter One, Askew left her husband and children and tried to obtain a divorce. One would think that such actions would automatically prevent her from being considered a *mulier fortis*. But Bale asserts that Askew demonstrates commitment to her family in her marriage to Thomas Kyme. Askew's father had entered into a financial arrangement with Kyme's father that entailed Askew's sister Martha marrying Kyme. However, Martha's death before the marriage resulted in Askew's father substituting her for Martha so as "to save the moneye" (92). Askew obeyed her father's wishes and married Kyme. Just as Bale refashioned medieval hagiography to represent Askew as a martyr, he refashions the *mulier fortis* ideal to represent Askew as a strong and dedicated woman. The next section will focus on Bale's employment and reshaping of the *mulier fortis* tradition to present Askew as an exemplar of a godly reform "strong woman" who is wise and knowledgeable.

II. The *mulier fortis* in Bale's writing of ecclesiastical history

The early Christian and medieval references to the characteristics and virtues of the strong woman in biblical commentaries and in hagiographies would have impressed upon Bale the need to portray Askew as a *mulier fortis*, demonstrating that her virtues, which include religious devotion and fortitude, accord with those of heroines from the Bible, from saints' lives, and from English history. As a learned friar and antiquarian, Bale probably read the above mentioned early Christian texts that highlight women's achievements and their spirituality. In 1548, Bale published *Illustrium maioris Britanniae scriptorum, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae summarium*, a catalogue in which he attempts to list all the British writers in history (J. King "Bale"). John King notes that Bale was incensed by "the destruction of the libraries resulting from the dissolution of the monasteries" and undertook to carry on John Leland's program "of preserving and cataloguing their manuscript holdings" ("Bale"). His work on the *Illustrium* may have included reading the medieval texts of Chaucer, Gower, Bokenham and Caxton, especially since Chaucer's and Caxton's texts were reprinted in the sixteenth century.²² The *Canterbury Tales* was published by Richard Pynson in 1526, and by William Thynne in 1532, 1542 and 1545 as part of a collection of all his works (Pearsall 325). As mentioned in Chapter One, Caxton's *Golden Legend* underwent several printings in the sixteenth century to meet reader demand. The recent availability of such texts, coupled with his collecting of manuscripts, would

²² Bale does not include Gower in the *Illustrium*'s 1548 edition but does so in the 1557 edition. According to John Fisher, Bale "inserted a full and very accurate list of Gower's work" (17).

have given Bale opportunities to read about historical women and to recognize and understand the *mulier fortis* framework in which they are presented, which, in turn, would have influenced his portrayal of Askew as a strong woman.

Bale's representation of Askew as a *mulier fortis* begins with the text's title page. In Bale's 1546 edition of *The first examinacyon* the title page woodcut "represents a woman clothed as an early Christian martyr, holding the Bible and a martyr's palm, and trampling the 'papist Beast' underfoot" (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xxxiv). The woodcut would persuade readers to associate the woman in the woodcut with Askew since both the woodcut and the text communicate to readers a story of a woman battling the papacy. Underneath this image is the following passage from Proverbs 31: "Fauoure is disceytfull / and bewtye is a wayne thyng. But a woman that feareth the lorde / is worthy to be prayesd. She openeth her mouthe to wysdome / and in her language is the lawe of grace. Prouerb. xxxj" (1). In the Bibles available to Bale the last line from the above quotation precedes the line beginning with "Fauoure is disceytfull."²³ We may attribute this reversal to Bale and his printer Dirik van der Straten wanting to emphasize women's spirituality in which women could read the Bible and could speak of, and live according to, its content and dictums. Underscoring women's reading of the Bible draws attention to the reform belief that all individuals, including women, should have access to the Bible. Women's reading of the Bible furthers their faith, scriptural knowledge, wisdom, and devotion, bringing them

²³ The Bibles that Bale may have read were Miles Coverdale's Bible (1535), Thomas Matthew's Bible (1537), and The Great Bible (1539). See Daniell 173-220.

closer to embodying the virtues of the *mulier fortis*, as well as closer to the authority given to ecclesiasts to learn and read from the Bible. Viewing the woodcut would encourage readers to approach Askew's text within an interpretative framework that presents her as a Reformation version of a *mulier fortis* in which she represents lady Wisdom, the church and Scripture.

Bale's employment of the *mulier fortis* tradition for his portrayal of Askew is conjoined with his writing of church history and his portrayal of himself as a historian. In his Prologue to the first examination, Bale begins to craft these connected portraits. He directs the "dyligent reader" to the Old Testament's Book of Malachi, the final prophetic book in the Old Testament (3). The book's author denounces the heretical behaviours of the priests and the laity. He declares that they have offended God by having "despised" his name (Mal. 1.[6]), and offering "vnclene bred vpon [his] aulter" (Mal. 1.[7]). The author insists that the priests "haue caused the multitude to be offe[n]ded at the law" and "haue broken the couenau[n]t of Leui" (Mal. 2.[8]). In the book's final chapter, the author insists that God will send his messenger the prophet Elijah to the people to announce "the comynge of the daye of the greate and fearefull Lorde" (Mal. 3.[23]). John the Baptist fulfills this prophecy of being the Lord's Messenger in the New Testament's Gospel of Matthew. Christ tells the disciples that "Helias is come already, & they knewe hi[m] not: but haue done vnto hym whatsoeuer they lusted. In lykewyse shal also ye sonne of ma[n] suffer of the[m]. Then the disciples vnderstode, yt he spake vnto the[m] of Iohn Baptist" (Matt. 17.[12-13]). The Book

of Malachi, in its rebuke of the priests for their sacrilegious actions, aligns with Bale's agenda of casting his contemporary ecclesiasts as "the great Antichristes upholders" (8). Bale cites the final words of the Book of Malachi in his Prologue and connects it to the New Testament's fulfillment: "They shall turne the hartes of their auntyent elders into the chyldren, Mala 4. And the unbelevers of their tyme, to the wysdome of those ryghtouse fathers, as ded Johan Baptyst afore hys first commynge, Luce 1" (3).²⁴ Bale employs these lines to identify his own time with the period described in the book, illustrating that the current religious authorities are not true Christians; they persecute and put to death God's true followers. For Bale, Christ's second coming will confirm the reform church as the true church.

Bale supports this description of his contemporary time by referring to The Venerable's Bede's *De temporum ratione, The Reckoning of Time*, which focuses on "measuring time and constructing a Christian calendar, or what later medieval writers called *computus*" (Wallis xvi). Bale writes,

For by the seyd Bedas testymonye in the begynnyng of the same chaptre, two most certayne sygnes shall we than have that the lattre judgement daye is at hande. The returne of Israels remnaunt unto their lorde God, and the horryble persecucyon of Antichrist. (3)

Bale quotes from the text's sixth book entitled "Future Time and the End of Time" and indicates that he is referencing Chapter 68, "Three opinions of the faithful as

²⁴ Bale cites the last chapter of Malachi as Chapter 4. The early modern English Bibles that would have been available to Bale that included the Old Testament (Miles Coverdale's Bible, Thomas Matthew's Bible, and The Great Bible) contain only three chapters for the Book of Malachi. Since all three versions have the same wording, "He shal turne the hertes of the fathers to theyr children" (The Great Bible), the discrepancy of Bale citing an extra chapter may be a result of him quoting the passage from memory.

to when the Lord will come.” However, according to Faith Wallis’s translation of Bede’s text, Bale actually quotes from Chapter 69, “The Time of the Antichrist.”²⁵ The chapter’s title fits appropriately with Bale’s polemic against the papacy.

Bale’s inclusion of Bede’s statement, coupled with his condemnation of the religious authorities, immerse the reader into the narrative of apocalyptic history. From the earliest days of Christianity, the New Testament Book of Revelation produced an “apocalyptic element” in western Christian religious history (McGinn 31). The book records the revelation to John by an angel who is sent to him by Jesus Christ. The revelation depicts confrontations between good and evil, culminating in the defeat of Satan; the creations of a new heaven and earth; and the second coming of Christ. Revelation provided exegetes and biblical commentators with a literary structure in which to fashion divine history.²⁶ Augustine’s writings on Revelation influenced medieval and early modern history by

teaching that the climax of history had already been reached and passed in the life and death of Jesus. God’s purpose had been unveiled and there was no room for a new revelation within history. For all future generations what remained of the time-process was a period waiting until the End was consummated in the Second Coming. (Reeves 41)

²⁵ Bale’s discrepancy may be attributed to the manuscript that he was using, which may have referenced the chapters differently.

²⁶ See further McGinn 6-31.

Augustine explicates the Book of Revelation in his vast *City of God*, a text that Gerard O'Daly describes as having “a wide-ranging scope, embracing cosmology, psychology, political thought, polemic, Christian apologetic, theory of history, biblical interpretation, and apocalyptic themes” (v). Briefly, Augustine presents “a philosophy of history” in which two cities exist, an eternal city ruled by God and a destructive city ruled by the devil (Schaff 1). Augustine describes the present period as the city ruled by the devil. He asserts that “From this hell upon earth there is no escape, save through the grace of the Saviour Christ, our God and Lord” (501). Augustine’s interpretation created a mood of impending doom but one with a silver lining. During the medieval period, as Marjorie Reeves explains,

People had no sense of looking ahead through uncounted ages stretching out before them: whether the actual End was imminent or not, they lived close to it, for “The Lord is at hand” rang in their ears. But, though the Day of the Lord would be terrible, apocalyptic expectation linked time with eternity and nourished the hope of passing from the shifting sands of history to the eternal realm of beatitude. (41)

The Book of Revelation gave the medieval church “a history with meaning and structure,” a history that included the battle between good and evil, which would conclude with the Second Coming (Reeves 41, 49).

For early sixteenth-century reformers the Book of Revelation provided an explanation for the suffering they endured for their religion. Revelation could be

used to explain the religious battle between the traditional conservatives and the reformers. As Martha Himmelfarb explains, the term revelation is from the “Latin *revelatio*, which is the standard translation for *apokalypsis*,” to uncover, to unveil, to reveal (1). Revelation includes conventions found in apocalyptic literature such as a revelation “mediated by an angel” (Himmelfarb 1), symbolic language, history progressing in the direction of “a final judgment,” and a universe populated by powerful celestial and devilish beings who represent either good or evil (Carey 3). Revelation also incorporates the convention of dualism, emphasizing an antithesis between this world and the next (O’Daly 54). The present world in Revelation is portrayed as the evil and immoral Babylon, while the heavenly spiritual world of Jesus Christ is the New Jerusalem. In the final cataclysmic battle between these two worlds, the New Jerusalem prevails over Babylon, assuring all Christians that Christ will return: “Beholde, I come shortly” (Rv. 22.[7]). Revelation is eschatological in that in the end salvation will be for those who patiently persevered for Christ; righteousness triumphs and evil is destroyed (Carey 2). Revelation was “a prophecy of God’s plan for the world” (Capp 93). Revelation confirmed for reformers that the reformed church would prevail over the traditional religion in the end and validate the reformed church as the true religion. The description of the souls in Revelation “that were kylled for ye worde of God, & for ye testimony whych they had” (Rev. 6.[9]), and of the battle between the dragon and the woman clothed with the sun (Chapter 12), symbolized the struggles and deaths reformers endured for their beliefs. As

Bernard Capp illustrates, “Revelation foretold the persecution of the godly by Antichrist, who would be exposed at the last, paving the way for the Second Coming and triumph of the saints” (93-94).

In *The Image of Both Churches* (1545), Bale explicates the Book of Revelation, using it as a blueprint to write the histories of the traditional and reformed churches. John King notes that *The Image* was “the first complete commentary on the book of Revelation to be printed in English” (“Bale”). Influenced by Augustine’s concept “of two churches running parallel throughout history, one persecuted yet true, the other false but powerful” (Capp 94), Bale presents reform theology and the traditional religion as two churches in which the former embodies the true religion that has been plagued by the traditional church, the Antichrist. According to Bale, the Book of Revelation illustrates the current battle between these two churches because it “containeth the universal troubles, persecutions and crosses, that the church suffered in the primitive spring, what it suffereth now, and what it shall suffer in latter times by the subtle satellites of antichrist, which are the cruel members of Satan” (*Image* 253). Bale writes that “For all people, since Christ’s ascension, hath this Rome infected with her pestilent poison gathered from all idolatrous nations, such time as she held over them the monarchial supremacy” (*Image* 494). Just “as Babylon had the Israelites captive under a bodily tribute,” Bale claims, “so hath this Rome had the Christians both in their bodies and souls” (*Image* 494).

Bale's references to Bede's *Reckoning of Time* in his Prologue to Askew's first examination, combined with his focus on the Book of Revelation in his *Image of Both Churches* published two years before Askew's *Examinations*, intimate an apocalyptic quality to Askew's martyrdom, suggesting that it is a record of the Antichrist's reign. Bede's chapter, "The Time of the Antichrist," invokes Chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation in which two witnesses of the Christian faith ascend to Heaven after being killed by the beast, who represents the Antichrist. Chapter 11 states that,

after .iii. dayes & an halfe, the sprete of lyfe from God, entred into them [the two witnesses]. And they stode vp vpon their fete, & greate feare came vpon them whych sawe them. And they herde a greate voyce fro[m] heauen, sayinge vnto them. Come vp hyther. And they ascended vp into heauen in a cloude, & their enemyes sawe the[m]. And ye same houre was ther a great erthquake, and the tenth parte of the cytye fell, and in the erthquake were slayne names of men seuen .M. and ye remnau[n]t were feared, and gaue glory to ye God of heauen. (Rev. 11.[11-13]).

Bale's attention to Bede's chapter contributes another layer to his portrayal of Askew as a martyr. She, too, is a witness of the Christian faith who is killed by the Antichrist's agents.²⁷

²⁷ The Book of Revelation also influences Bale's portrayal of Askew as a queen of the Reformation movement which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Bale's comments in the Prologue to the first examination demonstrate the influence of the Book of Revelation on his apocalyptic understanding of world history and of England. He informs the reader that the world is currently experiencing "the terryble turmoilynges of our tyme" (3), conveying that this is the persecution period that Scripture describes as the period which precedes the end of the Antichrist's authority. He points to England, stating that the deaths of reformers William Tyndale and Robert Barnes are examples of the "Antichristes vyolence" (4). Bale follows this statement with a description of Anne Askew and the men burned at the stake alongside her as "constaunt dyscyples, and now stronge witnesses of Jesus Christ" (5). His comments on the deaths of reform martyrs result in a depiction of England's martyrs as apocalyptic signs that anticipate the New Jerusalem in which the Antichrist will no longer rule. He refers to the martyrs as "foreronnors, in thys most wonderfull change of the worlde before the lattre ende therof" (4). Bale urges the reader to recognize the deaths of Tyndale, Barnes, Askew, "and soche other more" as evidence of the papacy's eventual extinction in England (4). Bale's discussion of English martyrs as apocalyptic signs presents England as a godly nation whose devout citizens play a necessary role in the abolition of the Roman papacy's authority in England.

Bale's inclusion of Bede in his Prologue to the first examination also functions as Bale's initial effort to establish Askew in Christian church history. As a monk, a historian, and a theologian from the late seventh and early eighth centuries, Bede was one of the most influential and prolific writers of English

church history. Early modern readers would have read or heard of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* which tells of the development of the Christian church in England and the people involved in its inception and evolution. As Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors note, “almost everyone writing about the history of the English people or interested in the lives of the saints borrowed from his work all through the Middle Ages” (xviii). Citing Bede not only bolsters Bale’s depiction of Askew as a persecuted witness of the faith, but it encourages the reader to situate Askew in English church history. With Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* finishing “in the year of our Lord 731” (Bede 561), Bale’s edition of Askew’s story is a sixteenth-century continuation of the history of Christianity in England and of its followers. Bede’s texts assist Bale in underscoring the apocalyptic character of Askew’s martyrdom and in emphasizing the reform church as the tortured, long-suffering, yet true, Christian church.

If Askew’s story is a historical record, then her editor who brings her story to the reading population becomes a historian, a historian who continues Bede’s project. Bale’s discussion of Bede conveys an image of himself as a historian to his readers. My discussion of Bale as a historian like Bede will be explored later in this chapter in my investigation of Bale’s reference to the three learned women as examples of the *mulier fortis* since they are featured in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*. For now, I will examine Bale’s reference to Bede as the initial seed in situating Askew in church history.

After his discussion of Bede, Bale proceeds to focus on Askew and the men martyred with her at Smithfield. He writes,

I dare boldelye afferme these 4. myghtye witnesses also to be the same, so well as the martyrs of the pryntyve or Apostles churche. For so strongelye had these those vertues as they, and so boldelye objected their bodyes to the deathe for the undefyled Christen beleve, agaynst the malygnaunt Synagoge of Sathan, as ever ded they, for no tyrannye admyttyng anye create or corruptyble substaunce for the eternall lyvyng god. (5)

Bale establishes Askew as a martyr for the reader because her behaviour is identical to that of the martyrs of the early church. She displays the same virtues as these martyrs and is willing to die for her reform beliefs, beliefs that articulate pure, “undefiled” Christianity, which distinguishes and separates reform beliefs from the traditional religion. As discussed in the previous chapter, early modern readers of medieval hagiographies would have recognized Bale’s martyr portrayal of Askew since she embodies conventional characteristics. Bale’s intended readers are those who are not only familiar with hagiographical writing and Scripture, but “common readers” of historical writing who would identify Askew as a “godlye yonge woman” (133). To support his martyr portrayal of Askew, and to present her as a *mulier fortis*, Bale compares her to the second-century early church martyr Blandina from Lyon, who is featured in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History* from the fourth century. In Chapter One, I discussed Bale’s

comparison of these two martyrs to reveal how he represents the early modern martyr. He focuses on Askew's and Blandina's shared female traits: they are young and frail, but strong in faith. From his reading of Eusebius, Bale states that "I fynde them in so manye poyntes [to] agree" (10). According to their chroniclers, both women suffer admirably. Eusebius writes that "Even the Gentiles confessed, that no woman among them had ever endured suffering as many and as great as these" as had Blandina (*Ecclesiastical History* 179). Bale counters stating that Askew "made no noyse on the racke, and so earnestlye afterwarde rejoyced in [Christ]" (11).

Eusebius's decision to record the lives of Blandina and the other martyrs in his *History* registers in Bale's presentation of Askew as a martyr. Eusebius states that

Others, indeed, that compose historical narratives, would record nothing but victories in battle, the trophies of enemies, the warlike achievements of generals, the bravery of soldiers, sullied with blood and innumerable murders for the sake of children and country and property. But our narrative embraces that conversation and conduct which is acceptable to God. The wars and conflicts of a most pacific character, whose ultimate tendency is to establish the peace of the soul. Those, also, that have manfully contended for the truth, rather than for their country, and who have struggled for piety rather than for their dearest friends. Such as these our

narrative would engrave on imperishable monuments. The firmness of the champions for the true religion, their fortitude in the endurance of innumerable trials, their trophies erected over daemonical agency, and their victories over their invisible antagonists, and the crowns that have been placed upon all these, it would proclaim and perpetuate by an everlasting remembrance.

(Ecclesiastical History 168)

Eusebius situates Blandina in his historical record of the Christian church and its martyrs because she displays the characteristics he describes above and she consciously decides to die for what she believes to be the true religion. Her victory over her pagan authorities is a result of her steadfast faith. Eusebius remarks on Blandina's extraordinary courage in facing torture and inevitable death, noting that she

was filled with such power, that her ingenious tormentors who relieved and succeeded each other from morning till night, confessed that they were overcome, and had nothing more that they could inflict upon her. Only amazed that she still continued to breathe after her whole body was torn asunder and pierced, they gave their testimony that one single kind of torture inflicted was of itself sufficient to destroy life, without resorting to so many and such excruciating sufferings as these. *(Ecclesiastical History 172)*

When tied to the stake, Blandina reminded her fellow Christians of Christ suffering on the cross. Eusebius produces a dramatic story of torture and stamina. His account of Blandina's martyrdom is a didactic monument of Christian values, endurance and conduct for Bale in his portrayal of Askew.

Eusebius's portrayal of Blandina also situates her in the *mulier fortis* tradition of the valiant woman. Eusebius portrays martyrs as strong, brave, and constant in their battle for God. Like the valiant woman who embraces her identity as a follower of God, Eusebius presents Blandina as equally embracing her identity as a follower of God in her resistance to pagan authority for the Christian faith. His description of martyrs as being involved in "wars and conflicts" gives them militant characteristics, which coincides with the valiant woman depiction as warlike. Biscoglio asserts, "Superimposed on the image of the woman as worker is the very clear picture of the woman as warrior, evoked mainly through the language of the Hebrew text, which carries military connotations" (13). The Hebrew word usually translated as valiant means "man of power" and has military connotations in some of its biblical occurrences (Bromiley 964). For example, in the Book of Isaiah Chapter 5, The Vineyard Song, which can be read as an allegory of God and his elect, the valiant are depicted as warriors who battle those who do evil. The warrior's "arowes are sharpe, & al his bowes bent" (Isa. 5.[28]). Eusebius presents Blandina in the *mulier fortis* context as a warrior, a Christian soldier, who achieves victory through her martyrdom. Although the words "warrior" and "soldier" suggest a

masculine image, Eusebius and other historians apply such words in their descriptions of female martyrs like Blandina because there are no specifically female gendered words or images to communicate a woman's exemplary battle for Christ. Eusebius is not focusing specifically on Blandina's sex, but on her relationship with God and her struggle to live the true religion.

Bale employs Eusebius's portrayal of Blandina for Askew so that readers understand her as a strong woman and as a martyr whose death presents her as a "champion" of the true religion. As Lacey Baldwin Smith explains, suffering and death were essential characteristics in creating a martyr representation: "Death had to be endured for the sake of the Word. Christians as well as Jews were required to prove their faith both in the style of their lives and in their willingness to suffer" (91). Would-be martyrs were not fearful of death but embraced it since they understood it as a victory over their tormenters that would bring them to God. As discussed in the previous chapter, Askew writes to John Lassels to confirm that she is not afraid to die. Askew states that "God wyll perfourme hys worke in me, lyke as he hath begonne" (133). The letter demonstrates Askew creating for herself a posthumous reputation as a reform martyr. She will be victorious in death since she is God's earthly emissary. The woman in the woodcut standing over the papal dragon is a reflection of Askew, communicating to readers her victory over her papal inquisitors. The woodcut responds to the hagiographical representation of Askew as a martyr advanced by Askew and Bale.

Bale compares Askew and her martyrdom to Eusebius's version of Blandina and her death so that Askew will be typologically recognized as a martyr and as a *mulier fortis*. He writes that

All these former reports of Blandina and manye more besides, hath Eusebius in Ecclesiastica historia, libero 5. cap. 1. 2. and 3. Hugo Floriacensis, Hermannus Contractus, Vincentius Antoninus, Petrus Equilinus, and other hystoryanes more. And as touchynge Anne Askewe, these ii. examynacyons, with her other knowne handelynges in England, are wytnesses for her suffycyent. (13)²⁸

Bale cites church historians and chroniclers from the eleventh to the fifteenth century who have recorded Blandina's martyrdom. He asserts that Askew's writing of her two examinations is also a historical record like that of Blandina's. Bale's statement presents Askew as a typological extension of the early Christian martyrs featured in ecclesiastical histories. In Chapter One, I discussed how Askew uses scriptural typology to cast herself as a martyr. Here, Bale employs typology in his comparison of Askew to Blandina to project Askew as the antitype and Blandina as the type. Askew fulfills and fine tunes the identities of martyr and of *mulier fortis* displayed by Blandina. Bale demonstrates in his comparisons between the two women that Askew is the superior martyr. Blandina was "unterryfyed" at the stake, whereas Askew was not only courageous but showed "a countenance stowte, mygthye and earnest" (12). As noted in Chapter One, Bale

²⁸ According to Beilin, the historians cited by Bale are as follows: Hugo of Fleury, Hermannus Contractus, Vincent of Beauvais, Saint Antoninus, and Petrus Equilinus (13n235-37).

claims that Askew's death converted more individuals to reform thinking than Blandina's conversion of individuals to Christianity. Bale affirms that in Askew "The strength of God is here made perfyght by weakenesse. Whan she semed most feble, than was she most stronge" (13). Bale's portrayal of Askew, in comparison and contrast to Blandina, demonstrates to his readers that Askew perfects and completes the roles of martyr and of *mulier fortis*.

Bale's portrait of Askew's martyrdom legitimizes reform theology and confirms it to be the true religion. Through Askew, Bale responds to the conservative religion's charge that reform theology is novel because it has no history. Bale's carefully crafted description of Askew's martyrdom is a link between the history of the early Christian church and the present day events of the reform church. Bale establishes Askew as a sixteenth-century martyr whose characteristics, behaviour and death complete those of a female martyr of the primitive Christian church. Bale presents Askew's martyrdom to be a historical continuation of the true church's battle with the Antichrist.

Bale chooses the Prologue to initiate Askew's placement in Christian history because it will shape the readers' initial impression of him. He cites two illustrious historians, Eusebius and Bede, to buttress his own self-presentation as a historian. As Lawlor and Oulton note, "Eusebius of Caesarea was the first writer to conceive the idea of presenting to the world a history of the Christian Church as a unit standing by itself. His aim was to trace its internal development, and its relation, century by century, to the Empire" (28). Bede, as mentioned above, was

equally noteworthy in documenting the evolution of Christianity in England. His *Ecclesiastical History* “has been seen as the first attempt at a national history . . . [providing] us with most of what can be used to compile a narrative history of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, from the fifth to the mid-eighth centuries” (McClure and Collins ix). Bede’s writing was heavily influenced by Eusebius, especially “in its use of sources and inclusion of documents” (McClure and Collins xviii). Bale follows this methodology in affirming that Askew’s text is her own creation and in his incorporation of her original documents into his history of her story. He asserts, “she sent abroad by her owne hande writynge” (7) and that he “receyved [Askew’s text] in coppye, by serten duche merchautes commynge from thens, whych had been at their burnynge” (88). Bale desires that his readers identify him as the sixteenth-century equivalent of Eusebius and Bede. To achieve this recognition, he draws attention to them and their works, compares Askew to individuals in their texts, and follows their methodology in recording history by using original documents.

Bale’s edition of Askew’s text is not a chronicle, nor is it a history in the conventional sense as are Eusebius’s and Bede’s texts since it records the story of only one individual. Both the chronicle and the history belong to the genre of history writing: the chronicle is a listing of chronological events with little or no narrative; the history is a narrative listing of chronological events that establishes causal relationships between the events, which produces historical continuities. Critics recognize Bale’s other texts as examples of history writing. John King

claims that Bale's *Illustrium maioris Britanniae scriptorum* is historical writing since it is "[arranged] along the lines of his own apocalyptic periodization of history" ("Bale").²⁹ His *Image of Both Churches* is also considered a history because he uses the Book of Revelations to interpret the history of the English church.³⁰ Although *The Examinations* is a record of a single martyrdom, I propose that it exemplifies history writing since it contains the narrative aspects of history with "extensive descriptive passages" found in Bale's commentaries (Heal 109). The text functions as a supplement, or an insert, to existing medieval histories documenting the heroes of the church like Eusebius's and Bede's texts. Medieval histories were continually updated by writers who then stamped their name on the new and improved text. In the late fourteenth century, Thomas of Walsingham continued the monastic chronicling of history that had established such historians as Bede and Matthew of Paris. His own *Chronica Majora* is an extension of Matthew's text in which "Walsingham added a retrospective section to the *Chronica majora*, beginning in 1272, in order to link the history of his own times to those of Matthew Paris" (Taylor). D.R. Woolf points out that this practice carried on into the sixteenth century:

Charles Wriothesley appended his own chronicle for Henry VIII's reign to a paraphrase of that of Richard Arnold for the reign of Henry VII, published in 1502 and 1521 and often known as *The*

²⁹ Bale includes Askew in the *Illustrium*. His discussion of her is a summary of his Prologue to *The Examinations*.

³⁰ See MacColl and Heal.

Customes of London. Arnold in turn had taken the early portions of his account from a manuscript chronicle that survives in the British Library. (18)

Bale imagines his edition of Askew's story continuing the narrative found in Eusebius's and Bede's writings. He provides the audience with a thorough record of Askew's life, supplying details of her birth, her family history, her marriage, her incarceration, and her death. Bale presents a storyline for Askew that would fit with a medieval historian's agenda for including saints' lives in his church history. Bale states that "In the prymatyve church, as the horryble persecucyons increased, manye dylygent wryters collected the godlye answers and tryumphaunt sufferynges of the martyrs, as necessarye examples of Christen constancye to be folowed of other" (75). Historians "faythfullye regestre[d] ther martyrdomes, to holde them in contynuall remembraunce, as witnesseth Plantina, Polydorus, Masseus, and soch other chronyclers" (75).³¹ Timothy Hampton explains that recording the heroic actions of exemplary figures from history is "a deliberate rhetoric intended to provoke action" in the reader (4). Askew's story, as shaped by Bale, is meant to fashion the response of the reform reader, to move the reader into taking action, as did Askew, against the traditional church by standing up for the beliefs of the reform church. Bale's publication of her examinations also continues the documentation of religious conflict in English history. It is a

³¹ Bale cites the Italian humanists and historians Bartolomeo Platina, "who wrote *Liber de vita Christi ac de vitis summorum pontificum omnium* (*Life of Christ and Lives of All the Greatest Popes*) (1479)" and Polydore Vergil, who wrote *Anglica Historia* (*History of England*) (Beilin 75n13). Beilin suggests that Masseus might be Matthew of Paris, who will be discussed further below.

sixteenth-century update that concatenates with English medieval histories of the persecuted religious.

Askew's story also becomes an addition to Bale's polemical tome of writings that essentially records his conceived history of the traditional church in England and its persecution of the reformed church. Bale's salient texts, beyond the texts mentioned above, portray papal injustices as a historical and recurring feature of the traditional church. After his conversion to reform doctrine, Bale wrote the historical drama *King John* (c.1538) that presents to the audience medieval opposition to the pope. The play is also a metaphor of Bale's contemporary period, paralleling King John's resistance to papal authority with Henry VIII's split from Rome. Bale's *A Brief Chronicle Concerning the Examination and Death of Sir John Oldcastle* (1544) presents the battle for church reform during the early fifteenth-century through the examinations of the Lollard Oldcastle. John Knott argues that Bale publishes Oldcastle's examinations because it provided him "an opportunity to portray one of the new warriors of Christ" and to "create an image of protestant sainthood" (48). In 1546, Bale wrote *Actes of English Votaryes*, which Beilin claims is "another 'historical' work designed to prove that foreign clerics and their domestic agents had for centuries undermined the true faith of the English" (Introduction, Askew xxxiv). The text's full title speaks to Bale's agenda of documenting the corrupt behaviour of clerics: *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes Comprehending Their Vnchast Practyses and Examples by All Ages, from the World's Begynnyng to thys Present Year*. Bale's

The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishopricks of Ossorie in Ireland (1553)

continues his attack on the priests for their licentious behaviour, while detailing his unbearable time in Ireland. Bale begins with a scriptural history of God's elect starting with Adam, but then descends into a polemical tirade against the historical "abominable ydolatories" of the priests (fol. 11). He writes that, after Constantine's arrival in England and the introduction of Christianity, the priests "serued God in lyberte / and were fedde of their owne true labours. These serued Antichrist in bondage / and deuoured vp the labours of other" (fol. 14). These texts, as well as Askew's *Examinations*, present Bale's construction of the history of church reform in England, with each text including an invective against the papacy.

F.J. Levy claims that Bale wanted to write a history of the English church but his books were stolen by a ship's captain after he left Ireland. "Rather than attempt it, he made available to [Archbishop] Parker all the information which a lifetime of collecting had put at his disposal" (Levy 96). In a letter to Parker, Bale outlines the necessary texts required to compose such a history and indicates where these books could be found. Bale underscores in both *The Examinations* and in his letter to Parker the papacy's destruction of texts that has inhibited the writing of a history. In *The Examinations*, he states "that our bokes are now in Englande condempned and brent, by the Byshoppes and prests with their frantyck affynyte, the great Antichristes upholders, whych seke by all practyses possyble to turne over the kynges most noble and godlye enterpryse" (8). Bale insists that the

papacy's English representatives, the agents of evil, are destroying books that record the country's history.³²

History writing illuminated for readers the characteristics of virtuous and immoral behaviours from the depiction of historical figures. Christian heroes were honourable and portrayed as God's earthly delegates who upon death went to heaven. The lesson's message was meant to emphasize "personal morality and of the workings of Providence" (Levy ix). Levy confirms that "history had to be didactic" and that "Almost all of the great medieval historians had that idea in their minds, though the degree of emphasis naturally varied" (7). In the preface to his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius defends his text as *the* authoritative instructive history, describing his writing as

a labour which has appeared to me necessary in the highest degree, as I have not yet been able to find that any of the ecclesiastical writers have directed their efforts to present any thing complete in this department of writing. But as on the one hand I deem it highly necessary, so also I believe it will appear no less useful, to those who are zealous admirers of historical research. (14)

³² In the late 1530s during his reform-minded period, Henry VIII instituted measures to dissolve monasteries resulting, ironically, in the destruction of libraries housing catholic books. As Jennifer Summit explains, "Given that England's religious institutions housed its greatest libraries in the Middle Ages, the dissolution of the monasteries meant the widespread loss of medieval books" (*Memory's Library* 101-102). Libraries with small holdings were left with virtually no books (Summit *Memory's Library* 102). For example, the cathedral library at Worcester was able to retain only six books from its previous holdings of six hundred titles (Murray and Basbanes 94). Some books suffered "ignominious and foul fates" in which their pages were used as toilet paper, as well as "sold to grocers and soap sellers" (Murray and Basbanes 94). During the sixteenth century, medieval as well as reform books were confiscated, sold, or destroyed, all in the name of reform.

Bede informs his readers that

Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God.

(Ecclesiastical History 3)

The Examinations is equally edifying in Bale's portrayal of Askew compared to his depiction of the examiners. Bale claims of Askew that "An example of stronge sufferance might thys holye martyr be, unto all them that the lorde shall after lyke maner put forewarde in thys horryble furye of Antichriste, to the glorie of hys persecuted church" (13). Conversely, Bale not only describes the examiners as the Antichrist but also as Judas (22) and "The ignoraunt magystrates of England" (27). His portrayal of Askew is meant to be instructive, offering readers an illustration of what constitutes exemplary devotion to God. Bale's devout reform readers are to learn from Askew and her experience that they will have to defend themselves against the Antichrist and how to prepare themselves for such a battle. Bale's commentaries that shape Askew into this archetypal mold stem from reading histories like Eusebius's and Bede's that display virtuous and courageous individuals for their readers' edification.

Bale's moral instruction of his readers, which is similar to that found in early Christian and medieval histories, combined with his references to histories and their authors speak to his desire to be recognized as a historian similar to Eusebius and Bede. He imparts to the reader his admiration for Eusebius, noting his renown and the popularity of his texts:

In the most terryble persecucyons of the prymatyve church, were the examynacyons and answers, tormentes and deathes of the constaunt martyrs written, and sent abroad all the whole worlde over, as testyfyeth Eusebius Cesariensis in hys ecclesyastyck hystorye. Their coppys habounde yet everye where. (8)

He compares the fate of Eusebius's texts to those of John Wycliffe: "Great slaughter and burnynge hath bene here in Englande for Johan wycleves bokes, ever sens the yere of our lorde. M. CCC. LXXXII" (8). Bale will later refer to Wycliffe as "the verye organe of God, and vessell of the holye Ghost" (53). His comparison of the circulation of Eusebius's and Wycliffe's texts serves Bale in suggesting to his audience that Eusebius is an early reformer documenting, like himself, the persecutions of martyrs. Bale conveys to his readers what he believes to be a paradox concerning these two reformers: Eusebius's writings are allowed to exist unscathed while Wycliffe's are destroyed. However, Bale does not underscore the explicit difference in their writings. Eusebius's texts chronicle the history of Christianity and its persecution by the Roman pagan church. Bale's religious authorities understand Eusebius's texts as orthodox material recording

the evolution of traditional Christianity. By contrast, the ruling authorities understand Wycliffe's texts, as well as Bale's, as questioning and threatening the existence of traditional Christianity.

An unsurprising similarity in the biographies of Bale, Eusebius, and Bede is the part that books and libraries played in their chronicling efforts. Both Bale and Eusebius were antiquarians, collecting vast numbers of books. From his contact with Pamphilus of Caesarea, an ecclesiast with an extensive library of his own, Eusebius sharpened his antiquarian and chronicling skills. Timothy Barnes observes that "Eusebius was soon helping Pamphilus to enlarge the library and to make the texts it contained available to others" (94). Access to a library was also essential to Bede. At the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow where Bede spent most of his life, learning was valued and books were in great supply to facilitate it. Bale, an accomplished scholar like Bede and Eusebius, had a library of books until they were stolen, as already noted. In his letter to Archbishop Parker he refers to his collection and its demise:

for in those uncircumspect and carelesse dayes, there was no
 quyckar merchaundyce than lybrary bokes, and all to destuctyon of
 learnynge and knowledge of thynges necessary in thys fall of
 antichriste to be knowne--but the devyll is a knave, they
 saye--well, only conscyence, with a fervent love to my contray
 moved me to save that myghte be saved. (157)

Bale's antiquarian efforts also communicated his nationalist passion for England. He appreciates that books recount history and that without these texts England's history will go unheard. Bale writes texts, such as his contribution to Askew's account of her examinations and his *Illustrium*, to keep the stories of England's heroes and its history extant. Not only does Bale want to save English books, but he wants to save England from the Antichrist through his writings.

Eusebius's and Bede's writings on the early Christian church underpin Bale's writing of English history in which he reveals that the present traditional church has become disconnected from the ideals of the early church. Levy argues that during the Reformation some people's perspective of the church had changed: "No longer did men think of the church as a continuous organism: instead, they contrasted the church now with the church then, and were displeased with the comparison" (x). For Bale, the traditional church and its martyrs do not resemble the early Christian church and its martyrs. The traditional church mirrors the historical Roman pagan church which undertook to persecute the early Christians. Its condemnation of Askew models that of the Roman church's treatment of Eusebius's Blandina. "Of no lesse Christen constancie," declares Bale, "was thys faythfull wytnesse and holye martyr of God, Anne Askewe, nor no lesse a fast membre of Christ by her myghtye persystence in hys vertye at thys tyme of myschefe, than was the afore named Blandina in the prymatyve churche" (19). The papacy is cast as the historical pagan church in its killing of devout Christians like Askew. Bale extends this comparison of the traditional church to its

manifestations of faith. He refers to the Mass as “their most monstrous Masse, or mammetrouse Mazon” (43),³³ presenting it as idolatrous and related to Mahomet, a reference to Muhammad of Islam (43n606). Such a depiction of the traditional church results in a representation of the reform church as the advocate of true Christianity, recovering the morals and principles of the early Christian church.

Bale refers to Eusebius to demonstrate that the massacres and the corruption of the early period resemble the conduct of the present religious authorities. Askew is an English martyr that suffers similarly to the early martyrs like Blandina “who suffered for the Word on the Continent” (Levy 94). Askew is an exemplar who presents the history of the reformed church and reveals it as a continuous entity that stems from the early church. Bale also refers to Askew as Christ’s “true dysciple,” aligning the reform movement to the early days of Christianity (95), which, in turn, creates a history of the reform church as a narrative beginning with Christ. Bale furnishes the reform movement with an ongoing history that stems from Christ which he appropriated from Eusebius, who writes, “And indeed, whoever would give a detail of ecclesiastical history to posterity, is necessarily obliged to go back to the very origin of the dispensation of Christ, as it is from him, indeed, that we derive our very epithet, a dispensation more divine than many are disposed to think” (14-15). Bale replicates Eusebius’s narrative by comparing Askew to Lydia, the purple cloth seller in the Acts of the Apostles. He writes that

³³ Beilin translates “Mazon” from Hebrew to mean bread (43n607)

Soch a won was she, as was Lydia the purple sellar, whose harte
 the lorde opened by the godlye preachyng of Paule at Thyatira,
 Acto. 16. For dylygent hede gave she to hys worde whan it was
 ones taught without superstycyon, and wolde no longar be a false
 worshyper or ydolatour after the wycked scole of Antichrist. (9)

The comparison to Lydia informs the readers that both women's conversion to true Christianity is based on the Word and not on superstition. Comparing Askew to biblical figures serves to connect her to the Bible, which in turn connects reform beliefs to true Christianity.

Bale's references to Eusebius and Bede are designed to portray him as their early modern counterpart, the historian who will continue their collective project of writing ecclesiastical history. The Prologue's apocalyptic statements speak on a separate metaphorical level to Bale wanting to be the second coming of Eusebius, Bede and other notable medieval historians. He is writing the history of the persecuted true church that carries on their tradition of writing church history. His elucidations on Askew's treatment by the unjust and intolerant religious authority are a reflection of Eusebius's description of Blandina. Bale's attention to English individuals like Askew and Oldcastle illustrates his desire to play an equally significant role in documenting England's church history as did Bede. Bale's writings, including *The Examinations*, reveal a medieval apocalyptic historiography of the Reformation church in which he projects himself as its lead historian.

III. Helena, Ursula, and Hild: The power of the *mulier fortis* in assisting Bale's self representation

Bale situates himself as a historian alongside such notable medieval historians as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Matthew of Paris, and Robert Fabyan when he mentions the three learned English women from history.³⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth from the twelfth century is celebrated for his *Historia regum Britannia* (*The History of the Kings of Britain*) that included such famous legendary characters as King Arthur and Merlin. The thirteenth-century historian and Benedictine monk Matthew of Paris is best known for his *Chronica majora*, “a vast, universal, contemporary history” of England (Lloyd and Reader). Matthew was a prolific writer of hagiographies and chronicles, and his work experienced a resurgence during the Reformation because of its criticism of the church. Bale comments on Matthew's *Chronica majora* in his letter to Parker, noting that “It was muche pytie that that noble storye shulde perish in one coppye--for no chronycle paynteth out the byshopp of Rome in more lively colours, nor more lyvely declareth hys execrable procedynges, than it doth” (172-73). In the mid-sixteenth century, Parker and Edward Hall would publish further editions of Matthew's text so as to reveal the historical transgressions and indulgences of the papacy (Lloyd and Reader). The chronicler Robert Fabyan from the late fifteenth

³⁴ Bale also knew of other famous historians such as Polydore Vergil (see footnote 31). Bale was critical of the historian Vergil because of his connections to Rome. In his text on Oldcastle, Bale criticizes him stating that “his writings [are] greatly, polluting our English Chronicles most shamefully with his Romish lies and other Italish beggarys” (8). Bale asserts that Vergil “was too familiar with the bishops, and took too much of their counsel, when he compiled the twenty-six books of his English history” (8). Although Bale references Polydore Vergil, the historian is not directly relevant to the current discussion on the three learned women.

and early sixteenth century initiated innovation in the writing of history with his text, *The Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce*, which was one of the earliest chronicles to “[present] parallel histories” of the two countries (McLaren).

These medieval historians included in their texts the legends of the three English women to whom Bale refers on the question of why Askew should not be reprimanded for her knowledge of Scripture. The women’s stories were shaped by historians to present them as didactic examples of the *mulier fortis*. Their stories represented them as embodying socially valued female traits such as piety and familial obedience. They also had achieved extraordinary accomplishments and exercised considerable power and authority in their respective lives, which is why they were historically documented. Bale’s discussion of Helena, Ursula, and Hild aligns Askew with devout women from history and presents her as equally powerful. Askew’s decision to die, and the manner in which she accomplished this, locates her, according to Bale, as a most significant martyr who “shuld be a great blemysh” to “the popes Englysh churche” (13).

St Helena, the first woman Bale mentions, lived during the third century and is primarily known as mother to Constantine, the first Christian emperor. Eusebius is the first to record Helena’s history through his documenting of Constantine’s life. He describes her as “the Godbeloved mother of the Godbeloved Emperor” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 138). Constantine bestowed considerable power on his mother, “providing her with the right arm of imperial authority” (*Life of Constantine* 138). Eusebius writes that Constantine

honoured her with imperial rank that she was acclaimed in all nations and by the military ranks as *Augusta Imperatrix*, and her portrait was stamped on gold coinage. He even remitted to her authority over imperial treasuries, to use them at will and to manage them at her discretion, in whatever way she might wish and however she might judge best in each case, her son having accorded her distinction and eminence in these matters too. (*Life of Constantine* 139)

As an old woman, Helena travelled to Jerusalem and “founded the great church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, a still standing memorial of her munificence” (Bond 73). Upon her death, “Her very soul was thus reconstituted into an incorruptible and angelic essence as she was taken up to her Saviour” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 139).

A century after her death, the historian Socrates of Constantinople introduced fictional details to Eusebius’s version of Helena’s life (Bond 75). Socrates includes such features as her discovering the cross upon which Christ was crucified, the *Inventio Crucis*, as well as her founding the Holy Sepulchre church, whose true founder was Constantine (Bond 74-75). Francis Bond describes this Helena as “extremely unhistoric” (74). Geoffrey of Monmouth contributes to the mythical Helena by creating an English version of her in which he gives her a larger persona compared to Eusebius’s and Bede’s portrayals of her, which focus on her maternal relationship to Constantine. Geoffrey’s text is a

pseudo-history since he incorporates fabricated details within the stories. Bond claims that Geoffrey was one “of the worst liars in the Middle Ages” (75). Geoffrey’s myth presents a detailed history of Helena, claiming that her father was Coel, duke of Kaercolum, or Colchester, who “rebelled against King Asclepiodotus, killed him in battle and took his crown. When the senate heard this news, they rejoiced over the death of a king who had weakened Roman power in every way he could” (Geoffrey 94, 96). The Roman senate sent Constantius, who would become Constantine’s father, to England to take back control of the area from Coel. The legend records that Helena’s father was frightened of Constantius because of his power since he had defeated Spain for the senate. Rather than battle Constantius, Coel makes peace with him. Coel dies and Constantius takes over as king and marries Helena. Geoffrey writes that Helena

was more beautiful than any girl in the country and was considered to have no equal in playing musical instruments and in the liberal arts. Lacking any other offspring to inherit the throne, her father had taken pains to educate her in such a way that she could rule the country more easily when he died. (96)

Constantius eventually dies and Constantine, the son of Helena and Constantius, assumes the throne. Mario Costambeys claims that Helena had “no historical connection with Britain, despite a widespread belief that she was of British origin.” Despite a lack of evidence substantiating Helena as English, she became a notable fixture in England having many church dedications especially in the

northeast (Farmer, “Helena”). She has approximately one hundred and thirty-five church dedications (Bond 72).

Geoffrey’s legend of Helena differs from other medieval representations of her in that he does not mention her sainthood or the narrative that she found the cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified. The cross narrative is not found in Eusebius’s or Bede’s texts either, but it is recorded in some Christian writings from the late fourth century, such as in the texts of Gelasius of Caesarea and the church father St Ambrose, whose texts were influenced by Eusebius (Costambeys). Helena’s finding of the cross is also recorded in Fabyan’s chronicle in which he writes that “the sayd Helayne was [conuerted] vnto the fayth of cristes Church, and traueyled soone after to Ierusalem, where she by her Industry and labour, fande out the holy Crosse, with the. iii. nayles that oure Lorde was nayled with to the same crosse” (47). J.S.P. Tatlock argues that Geoffrey’s omission of Helena’s monumental find may be attributed to “his usual secularity of interests, and his emphasis on her worldly charms and greatness” (236).

Bale employs Helena to support his representation of Askew as a queen of the Reformation movement, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. Helena’s noble lineage and conversion to Christianity encouraged writers to represent her as the exemplar of “female Christianity” (Costambeys). Bale’s reference to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, prior to mentioning Helena’s name, and his focus on Helena, is designed to influence reform-minded readers to perceive Askew as a queen and as Helena’s early modern counterpart. Askew is

Helena's equivalent in establishing true Christianity in England. Helena has a most important role in England's adoption of Christianity. Without her giving birth to Constantine, England might have remained a pagan nation during that time period. Like Helena, Askew has a foremost role in England adopting true Christianity. Because she is not afraid to die for her reform beliefs, Bale asserts that, with certainty, Askew will "be knowne for Christes stedefast membre" (136). Askew possesses the "frutes of inestymable wholesomnesse, declarynge thys woman a most perfyght and innocent membre of Jesus Christ" (143). As the only woman among the four reformers burned on the stake that day, Askew occupies an esteemed position among reform women. Bale notes that "Manye a wone sayth yet both in Englande and Duchelande, also, O that woman that woman Oh those men those men" (154-155). Bale's comments focus on Askew as an extraordinary woman who is as courageous as the men burned with her. Her flawless piety makes her a posthumous example of noble piety for women and men.

Bale's comparison of Askew to St Ursula is a moment in the text in which he displays conflicting sentiment regarding English martyrdom. Ursula is a martyr from the mid-fifth century who "was venerated at Cologne, but is traditionally supposed to be of British birth" (Pfaff). In Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of her legend she is the daughter of Dionotus, King of Cornwall. In Fabyan's *Chronicle*, her story includes the martyrdom of the eleven thousand virgins. He writes that

Conan Merdoke, to whom Maximus [King of Britain] had gyuen
the Lande of lytll Brytayne, for somuche as he and his Knyghtes

hadde no wyll to mary the doughters of Frenschmen, but rather to haue wyues of theyr owne blode, therefore this Conan sente Messengers vnto Diuotus, than Duke of Cornewall, and chief ruler of Brytayne, wyllynge hym to sende his Doughter Vrsula with a certayne Nombre of Virgyns, to be coupled to hym and to his Knyghtes in maryage. (51)

Ursula follows her father's instructions and leaves "in a flotilla of eleven ships, each holding a thousand virgins" (Pfaff). Her martyrdom underscores female obedience and virginity. Fabyan substantiates his version of Ursula's legend stating that it is true "as wytnessyth the Englysshe Cronycle, Gaufride and also Policronica" (51). Rather than continue to discuss her martyrdom, he refers the reader "In this matier, vnto the Legende of Seyntes, radde yerely In the church, whre they maye be suffyciently taughte and enfourmed" (51). Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins are later killed at Cologne by the Huns.

Despite praising Ursula as a learned woman in the first examination, Bale overlooks this moment of admiration when he disparages her martyrdom in the latter examination. He includes the legend of St Ursula in his tirade against English martyrs. He writes that

Saynt Ursula also and her she pylgrymes, with their chaplaynes, nurses, and suckynge babes, were but homelye handeled at Coleyne of the hunnes and pyctes (if that legende be true) as they were commynge homewardest from Rome. Compare me Anne

Askewe and her comdempned cumpanye, with these clowted,
 canonyed, solempnyed, sensed, mattensed, and massed martyrs,
 and tell me by the Gospels tyrrall, whych of these seme most
 Christenlyke martyrs. (84)

Bale questions the veracity of Ursula's legend and advances his own interpretation. According to Bale, St Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins were not killed "but homely handeled," that is, treated roughly and possibly raped. Bale's placement of the word "but" before "homely handeled" could imply that they were "only" or "just" raped, which might leave the reader with the impression that Bale diminishes the attack on the women, especially since he doubts if the "legende be true." He also mentions that there were breastfeeding infants on board, resulting in the reader questioning Ursula's and the women's virginities. Bale presents Ursula and her female travelers as promiscuous unmarried women, asserting that Ursula is an example of the Roman church's martyrs who are not worthy of the devotion they are accorded.

Bale's oversight that he had previously recognized Ursula for her knowledge of Scripture undermines his polemic against the papacy. He shifts from extolling Ursula to castigating her, first identifying her as a learned role model, but then suggesting that she is a fictional character whose martyrdom is compromised by her association with unchaste women. For a modern reader, this contradiction weakens Bale's self-depiction as a historian. It chips away at his representation of his knowledge and undercuts the power of his diatribe against

the papacy. Notwithstanding Bale's apparent blunder, his initial purpose in mentioning St Ursula is to align Askew with a scripturally knowledgeable female from history who was also a leader. As mentioned above in Fabian's martyrdom of Ursula, she commanded a group of eleven thousand women from Britain to France. From this voyage, Ursula becomes a martyr and a leader of martyrs.

St Hild, the third woman whom Bale references, anchors his shaping of Askew as a *mulier fortis*. Historians portray St Hild as a leading figure in the establishment of Catholicism in England. She is cast as a learned, chaste, and devout woman. She was purported to be the daughter of a prince who renounced her royal heritage to become an abbess. Bede spotlights St Hild in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He writes that Hild's "career falls into two equal parts, for she spent her first thirty-three years very nobly in the secular habit, while she dedicated an equal number of years still more nobly to the Lord, in the monastic life" (Bede 407). Upon entering the monastery, Hild

at once set about establishing there a Rule of life in all respects like that which she had been taught by many learned men; for Bishop Aidan and other devout men who knew her visited her frequently, instructed her assiduously, and loved her heartily for her innate wisdom and her devotion to the service of God. (Bede 407)

Hild, "the handmaiden of Christ," attracts the attention of religious men as well as secular kings because of her intelligence (Bede 411).

Bale's respect for Hild focuses on her scriptural knowledge, a knowledge that instructs and guides men and women. He values Hild because of the reverence granted to her by men in authority who were not threatened by her knowledge. Bale presents Askew as equally capable of instructing men in his comment on the "quarellynge, and (as apereth) unlearned chauncellour" who questions Askew's interpretation of Pauline Scripture (30). By referencing a venerated female saint of the traditional church who teaches and counsels men, Bale presents Askew's behaviour before the Chancellor as acceptable, as well as desirable. Her encounter with Archdeacon John Wymesley regarding the content of John Frith's book is another example of Askew instructing a male authority figure whom she states has "a verye slender wytt" (43). Askew's intelligence is unassailable and divinely inspired since "In all her affayres most fymelye she cleaveth to the scriptures of God" (143).

Bale incorporates Hild in his discussion because she was not threatened by the authority of male superiors and would readily debate with them. This characteristic would have conventionally come with rhetorical acumen that would have enabled her to be taken seriously by male ecclesiasts, which is a pattern demonstrated in many female saints' lives. Askew is also cast as possessing debating skills that procure her release from prison during the first examination. Hild and Askew willingly defend their beliefs before male authorities. Of Hild, Bale writes that, "Soche a woman was the seyde Hilda, as openly dysputed in them [the scriptures] agaynst the superstycyons of certen byshoppes" (31). Bale's

emphasis on Hild's criticism of superstitious acts conducted by some of the clergy spotlights the reform narrative on superstition in the traditional church. As Helen Parish and William Naphy point out,

Evangelical theologians and polemicists saw superstition in the “externals” of Catholic piety, in the multiplication of rituals in the church, in the repetition of a set number of masses, and especially masses for the dead. . . . The lighting of candles, the recitation of a fixed number of prayers, the consecration of physical objects and their use inside and outside the church was “superstitious.” (2)

Hild's disapproval of clerical superstitions would not have included the above items since these were official practices of the traditional church of which she was a member. Her criticism may have been with sorcery and magic conducted by some priests. However, Bale uses Hild to further his reform attack on the traditional church, presenting Hild as a historical female figure who challenges several bishops. For Bale she becomes, in a sense, an early reformer because she shares his opinion that superstitions do not have a place in religious doctrine and practice.

Bale's decision to buttress his portrayal of Askew with these English heroines of the traditional religion addresses his desire to establish a history of the English reformed church. However, this history depends on the heroines and history of the traditional church. As mentioned above, Bale's reform readers would have known what constitutes the characteristics and behaviour of a female

saint or martyr because of the enduring relevance and the survival of traces of the culture of traditional religion. Prior to Henry VIII's split from Rome all English citizens were members of the universal Catholic church. They were schooled in the church's history and its champions. Although they were now members of the reformed church, models of reading and of martyrology had not changed and would still assign generic traits of wisdom, steadfastness, chastity, piety, and leadership to new religious heroines. Bale's female protagonist must embody the equivalent traits while articulating reform tenets if he is to situate her in his history of the English church.

These learned and deeply devout women, models of the *mulier fortis*, play an important role in providing the female model of sanctity. After publishing Askew's examinations, Bale cites Helena, Ursula, Hild, as well as Askew and a host of other historical English women, in his "Epistle Dedicatory" and "Conclusion" to Elizabeth I's *The Glass of the Sinful Soul*, her translation of Marguerite Navarre's *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, which she presented to Queen Katherine Parr in 1545. Bale addresses the significance of women in English history, stating that "No realm under the sky hath had more nobel women, nor of more excellent graces, than hath this realm of England, both in the days of the Britons and since the English Saxons obtained it by valiant conquest" ("Conclusion" 97). In his reference to Askew, Bale requests his readers to

Consider yet how strongly that spirit in Anne Askew set them all at naught with their artillery and ministers of mischief, both upon the rack and also in the fire, whose memory is now in benediction (as Jesus Sirach reported of Moses) and shall never be forgotten of the righteous. She, as Christ's mighty member hath strongly trodden down the head of the serpent and gone hence with most noble victory over the pestiferous seed of that viperous worm of Rome, the gates of hell not prevailing against her. ("Conclusion" 101)

Bale presents Askew and the others as women learned in "the study of good letters" ("Conclusion" 102). The women "appear glorious in [Christ's] sight by daily exercise in His divine scriptures" (Bale, "Conclusion" 102). England profits from such historical *mulier fortis* models because of their "beauty, wit, wisdom, science, languages, liberality, policies, heroical force, and such other notable virtues, and by reason of them [have] done feats wonderful" (Bale, "Conclusion" 100).

Bale's discussion of these heroines, not only in his edition of Elizabeth's *Glass*, but specifically in his commentaries on Askew's examinations produces a history of England that includes godly and learned women. His history is part polemic and part encomium, combining rhetoric against the traditional church with praise of women's learning and devotion. Bale's writing of history in *The Examinations* highlights and models Askew on females found in medieval histories. Askew provides a representation of the desired characteristics for

reform-minded women, but it is a representation that is not foreign so as not to disturb reform members. Askew's reading of the Bible demonstrates the reform tenet of *Sola Scriptura*, as well as her refusal of the traditional church which discouraged the laity's reading of the Bible.

IV. Writing the Christian Nation

Bale's version of English ecclesiastical history includes the Christian woman sympathetic to reform and her endeavors in purifying the traditional church in England. It also showcases the reform church's historical existence as England's true church. Bale draws on medieval historiography by referencing the names of medieval chroniclers and historians and by including content found in their texts. His employment of material found in English medieval histories is a political strategy to demonstrate that the reform church is a return to the ideals of early Christianity. Bale writes a narrative of the English nation that has Christianity and its historical defenders as its cynosure. He writes,

Now in conferryng these martyrs, the olde with the newe, and the popes with Christes. I seclude first of all the Brytayne church, or the prymatyve church of thys realme, whych never had authoryte of the Romysh pope. Her martyrs in dede were agreeable to that Christ spake afore in the Gospell concernynge hys martyrs, wherby we shuld knowe them, as we evydentlye fynde in the lyves

of Emerita kynge Lucy's syster, Amphibalus, Albanus, Aaron,
Julius, Dionothus, and soch other. (76-77)

Bale focuses on the early “independent British church” by referencing St Emerita and also King Lucius, Britain’s first Christian king (Summit, *Memory’s Library* 160). Jennifer Summit notes that St Emerita, along with St Ursula, was used by early Protestants as “admissible evidence for British history” (*Memory’s Library* 159). Bale also cites St Alban, the first Christian martyr in Roman Britain. For Bale, these names harken back to a time when Christianity was in its purest form before the papacy instituted its doctrines, doctrines that Bale believes are not scripturally authorized. Bale’s statement that the British Christian church was initially independent of Rome presents the reform church as the true church which derived from early Christianity. Although Bale’s statement suggests that the British church was not under the authority of the pope, he does refer to England’s traditional church as “the popes Englysh churche” (76).

Bale refers to England as a nation early in his Prologue calling attention to “thys realm of Englande, besides other nacyons abroad” (4). He fashions England as a nation in relation to other countries. His presentation of England as a Christian nation derives from his reading of medieval histories like Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, a narrative that presents individuals with a common English heritage and religion. His title conveys a universal group sharing one past. In his preface, Bede writes that his text records the history of England including “when the English race accepted the faith of Christ” (5). Further, he states, “I

humbly beseech all who either read this history of our nation or hear it read, that they will not forget frequently to ask God's mercy upon my weaknesses both of mind and body" (7). Although England was anything but one group of people speaking a common language, Bede organizes them under one rubric seeking truth. He writes that

At the present time, there are five languages in Britain, just as the divine law is written in five books, all devoted to seeking out and setting forth one and the same kind of wisdom, namely the knowledge of sublime truth and of true sublimity. These are the English, British, Irish, Pictish, as well as the Latin languages; through the study of the scriptures, Latin is in general use among them all. (17)

Krishan Kumar hypothesizes that

Since Bede's concern was mainly the conversion of the pagan Germanic invaders to Christianity, and the struggle between the competing versions of Christianity--British, Irish and Roman--in Britain, the English could appear unified to him by virtue of their common acceptance of Roman Christianity and their common submission to a single church, based in Canterbury. (41)

Bede's text communicates this commonality in its documenting of the stories of English martyrs and saints dying for Christ. Bede's definition of nation as a culmination of people following one theology may have influenced Bale's desire

to present England as a Christian nation whose people historically originate from one unified, independent, pure Christian church that later came to be encumbered by a false non-indigenous religious authority.

The narrative of England as a godly nation independent of the Roman papacy gained acceptance during the Reformation resulting from King Henry VIII's decision to sever England's religious ties with Rome.

With the schism, England declared its national independence: from now on, all appeals to courts outside the realm were forbidden; the Pope was no longer granted any jurisdictional authority in England, just as foreign interventions in English affairs on religious grounds lost all legitimacy. (Rück 1)

Henry emerged as the “head of state and church and thereby sovereign ruler of all Englishmen” (Rück 1). The formation of the Church of England produced a “collective identity” that Stefanie Rück claims connects England as a nation with Protestantism (2). Patriotic pamphlets and texts declaring England an emancipated nation circulated from the 1540s onwards. One such pamphleteer was Thomas Becon, an evangelical and reform preacher, who wrote of England as “our country” which has “most goodly and godly virtues” in his *The Policy of War*, first published in 1542 (230). Becon emphasizes that England belongs to its citizens, who are spiritually devoted to Christianity. In 1544, Bale participated in this patriotic pamphlet writing with his *The Epistle Exhortatorye of an Englyshe*

Christyane vnto his Derelye Beloued Cou[n]treye of Englande.³⁵ Filled with scriptural quotations and invectives against the papacy, the text expresses Bale's appeal for England to be rid of the pope's influence. Bale claims that Rome's power within England is so insidious that the country might never be completely free of the Antichrist. He writes that it is "all in vayne to banishe the pope out of Englande / but he will styll dwell there in the secret consciences of menne / do the kynges maieste and his nobilite and commons what they will or maye to the contrarye" (8). Although Bale voices skepticism regarding the idea of England ever being entirely free of Rome's influence on people's thinking, he believes that the actions of martyrs like Tyndale, Barnes, Lassels, and Askew will return England to its earliest state of embodying pure Christianity, thus establishing the reform church as the restoration of the true Christian church in England.

Bale's history of England and his depiction of the country as a nation rely on his extensive knowledge of medieval history and its heroines. He integrates his portrayal of Askew as a martyr alongside the strong and holy women featured in medieval histories. Bale presents Askew and the early English learned women as God's human representatives who read and speak his Word. They mirror the *mulier fortis* who speaks "wysdome" and "feareth ye Lord" (Prov. 31.[26, 30]). According to Bale, English learned women are the representatives of the "Manye godlye women both in the olde lawe and the newe, [who] were lerned in the

³⁵ Bale was living in exile on the Continent and published the pamphlet "under the pseudonym 'Henry Stalbrydge'" (Rück 20)

scriptures and made utterance of them to the glorye of God” (30). His focus on English women asserts a narrative that England produces devout Christian women who are learned in Scripture. The reading of the Bible by English Christian women like Askew will stamp out the papal enemy in England, which will further reinforce the country as a godly nation, bound by true Christianity, whose citizens, men and women alike, exemplify spirituality based on Scripture.

Askew, as a reform version of a *mulier fortis* who is learned and has read the Bible, is a vehicle for Bale to present himself as a historian. He writes a history of England within his commentaries to her responses, documenting the country as a spiritual nation whose religious reform initiatives have existed from the inception of Christianity in England. Bale, according to Levy, provides historians that follow him, specifically John Foxe and other Elizabethan writers, “a twofold legacy: a comprehensive view of the history of the Christian church in general and the position of its English branch within it” (97). Bale’s is a history that locates and records the experiences of religious women as strong leaders. In the next chapter, I will continue my investigation of Bale’s employment of the *mulier fortis* tradition in the way in which he endows Askew with Marian traits.

Chapter Three: John Bale's Marian Fashioning of Anne Askew

As discussed in Chapter Two, Bale refers his readers to the Gospel of Luke Chapters 1 and 2 in his comments on Askew's interrogation by the Bishop's Chancellor. These chapters include Elizabeth's and the Virgin Mary's pregnancies, the Magnificat, and the birth of Jesus Christ. He indicates that Elizabeth, Anna the Prophetess who was at the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple, and the Virgin Mary read Scripture but "were . . . not rebuked for it" (30). Bale highlights the fact that these women were readers of the Bible, and emphasizes their freedom to discuss their knowledge of it, in order to foreground the injustice of the rebuke that Askew experiences for reading the Bible. Bale's reference to the Virgin Mary aligns Askew with her. He fashions Askew with Marian characteristics such as humility and modesty, characteristics that are also conventional traits of a martyr. Medieval and early modern women were encouraged to emulate the Virgin Mary's humility and obedience, as well as her motherly and "wifely virtues" (Biscoglio 41). Representations from the medieval period of Mary as the mother of Christ, as handmaid and earthly spouse of God, as bearer of the Word, and as reader of the written Word assist Bale in shaping Askew as the Reformation's model of a strong female, a *mulier fortis*. Bale appropriates Marian characteristics for Askew to present her as a heroine of the Reformation movement who will save the true church from the Antichrist.

Bale's employment of some of the features of medieval Marianism to portray Askew as a role model for Reformation women could have failed if his fellow reformers believed that Askew reminded them too much of the traditional church. Reformers were conflicted with respect to their devotion to the Virgin Mary. They understood that she was to be revered because she was the Mother of God (*Theotokos*); further she was featured in Scripture and in the theological writings of the early church. Patricia Crawford asserts that "Protestant reformers had a fine line to tread, for they sought to give Mary due honour without encouraging exalted views of her power" (37). The reform focus on the Bible pressed reformers into establishing which features of Marian devotion were substantiated by Scripture; which features were fabrications and superstitions originating from medieval devotion to her; and which features were associated with doctrines and practices of the traditional church that they would no longer maintain.

Bale's Protestant readers lived in a society permeated with reminders of the late medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary until the crown implemented a course of action in the 1530s to destroy saints' cult and to reform practices of the traditional church. Eva De Visscher explains that Mary was "the subject of countless doctrinal treatises, prayers, songs, sermons, legends and works of art" (177). Shrines were dedicated to her and monastic orders devoted to her. The traditional church encouraged pilgrimages to sites that contained relics associated with Mary's life and also sites associated with "modern" appearances of Mary.

For example, legend has it that Mary appeared before a widow at Walsingham in Norfolk “and had led her in spirit to Nazareth, given her measurements of the house in which she had received the angel Gabriel and lived with the Holy Family, and asked her to build ‘England’s Nazareth’” (Warner 295). The construction of the shrine Our Lady of Walsingham was completed in 1130. The house was purported to contain a “vessel of breast-milk” that belonged to the Virgin Mary (Rubin 365). Mary was also featured in stained glass panels, which displayed events from her life, both from the Bible and from her legend. “At Faversham in Kent the parish church had at least four images of the Virgin, including Our Lady of the Assumption in the chancel, Our Lady of Pity in the south aisle, Our Lady in Jeseyn (childbirth), and Our Lady and Saint Anne” (Duffy, *Stripping* 155). Reformers believed that these devotional displays were redolent of saints’ cults; they had no scriptural foundations and needed to be removed from the church. As mentioned in Chapter One, King Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries triggered the destruction and selling off of shrines, chapels, relics, and statues associated with saints’ cults. The Royal Injunctions of 1536 and 1538 castigated pilgrimages, image worship, and relics, including those identified with the Virgin Mary. The Injunctions of 1538 banned individuals from “wandering to pilgrimages, offering of money, candles or tapers to images or relics, or kissing or licking the same, [and] saying over a number of beads, not understood or minded on” (qtd. in Duffy, *Stripping* 407). Attempts to eradicate saints’ cults and Marian devotion continued under King Edward VI. As Duffy

explains, the 1547 Injunctions instituted at the beginning of Edward's reign were modeled on those of 1538 and reinstated the reform attack on saints' cults (Duffy, *Stripping* 450).

Marian devotion would not be completely abolished because "the symbolic deposits were too great to be ignored" (Rubin 378). Devotion to the Virgin Mary would endure because of her role in Christianity as Christ's mother. The 1549 Book of Common Prayer includes the scripturally substantiated Marian feasts of the Annunciation (25 March) and the Purification (2 February) in the Church of England's liturgical calendar (Mitchell 477).³⁶ The Gospel of Luke Chapter 1 describes the angel Gabriel informing Mary that she will bear the son of God (the Annunciation) and Chapter 2 recounts Mary and Joseph taking the infant Christ to the temple for her purification and Christ's presentation. Marianism would reappear in late sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century poetry, which will be discussed below.

The reform objective for Marian devotion was to separate the details of Mary's life found in the Bible from the fabricated features found in her legend. For instance, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary was supported by Scripture, but its feast took on a devotional feature that reformers believed conveyed image worship. In the Book of Leviticus, Mosaic Law stipulated that women who had given birth to male children were deemed unclean for seven days

³⁶ The feasts of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2 July), the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 September), and the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 December) would appear in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer during the reign of Charles II who supported religious tolerance (Spinks 51). In 1661, Charles agreed to a review of the Book of Common Prayer, which resulted in existing services and celebrations being revised, but also additional celebrations being incorporated into the liturgical calendar (Spinks 53-54).

and were to refrain from entering the temple for forty days (Lev. 12.2-4).

According to the Gospel of Luke,

when the tyme of their purificacio[n] (after the lawe of Moses) was come, they brought him [Jesus] to Hierusalem, to present him to the Lorde (as it is wrytten in the lawe of the Lorde euery man chylde that fyrst openeth ye matrix, shalbe called holy to ye Lord) and to offer (as it is sayde in the lawe of the Lorde) a payre of turtle doues, or two yonge pigions. (Luke 2.[22-24])

The Feast of the Purification, which was instituted by the church in the fourth century, celebrates this moment of Mary's life. It was also known as Candlemas, as well as The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and celebrated forty days after Christmas. The name Candlemas referred to the lighting of candles during the Feast, which symbolized the Virgin's offering at the temple and Simeon's words regarding Christ: "A lyght to lighten ye gentyls" (Luke 2.[32]).³⁷ Duffy explains that the medieval laity purchased "blessed candles" for a penny each, which "were probably often burned before the principal image of the Virgin in the church" (*Stripping* 16). The laity also believed that the candles had the power to ward off evil. According to Duffy, the first five prayers of the Candlemas

³⁷ In his translation of Jacobus's *Golden Legend*, Caxton describes Candlemas symbolically as the feast that "is made in remembrance of the offering that our Lady offered in the temple as said is, and every each beareth this day a candle of wax burning, which representeth our Lord Jesu Christ. Like as the candle burning hath three things in it, that is to wit, the wax, the wick, and the fire, right so be three things in Jesu Christ, that is the body, the soul and the godhead. For the wax which is made of the bee purely, without company and mixture of one bee with another, signifieth the body of our Lord Jesu Christ, and the fire of the candle signifieth the divinity of our Lord Jesu Christ, which illumineth all creatures. And therefore if we will appear in this feast tofore the face of God, pure and clean and acceptable, we ought to have in us three things which be signified by the candle burning: that is good deeds, true faith, with good works" (385).

feast petitioned for the flames of the candles to frighten the devil, who upon seeing them would flee. Reformers would continue to celebrate the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary but without the lighting of candles. Injunction three from 1547 banned the burning of candles in the church, “except [for] two candles on the altar before the Sacrament” (Duffy, *Stripping* 451).

Jacobus de Voragine included a description of the Feast in his *Legenda aurea*, which was also incorporated into Caxton’s translation. In their descriptions of the Feast, both texts include a story of a noble lady who built a chapel and received Mass daily. However, on one particular Feast of the Purification her priest was unable to conduct Mass for her. She went to the chapel and knelt down before the altar to pray to the Virgin. She fell asleep and received a vision of the Mass. She was given a candle but refused to part with it at the end of the Mass. The Virgin demanded a messenger retrieve the candle from the noble lady who still refused to part with it. On the third attempt by the messenger to regain the candle, it broke in half with the noble lady keeping a portion. The lady awoke to find the broken candle still in her hand. Caxton writes, “And all the days of her life after she kept that piece of that candle much preciously, like an holy relic, and all they that were touched therewith were guerished and healed of their maladies and sicknesses” (382). Reformers viewed such Marian miracle stories as examples of the idolatry inherent in the teachings of the traditional church since they were not based on any Bible story of Mary.

Reformers hesitantly continued to praise the Virgin Mary, even though they disapproved of the non-biblical stories about her and of the representations of her as the ultimate intercessor. During the medieval period, the laity would pray to the Virgin Mary who would intercede on their behalf with Jesus Christ.

“Increasingly from the twelfth century onwards, she appears as merciful advocate of her faithful, but sinful, devotees. Saints’ lives, folktales and miracle stories frequently show her untiring willingness to plead the cause of lapsed human beings before her son” (De Visscher 185). Underpinning Mary’s identity as an intercessor was the belief that Jesus Christ would never say no to his mother.

Crawford contends that “Protestant reformers were deeply troubled by Catholic veneration of the Virgin, particularly given the widespread popular belief in her power over Christ” (36). Reformers felt that devotion to Mary as an intercessor presented her as being more powerful than Jesus Christ who was theoretically the all-powerful. Reformers did not reject Mary as an intercessor because she was a female who would have authority over a man, despite reformers understanding woman, in a Christian and patriarchal sense, as “the weaker vessel” (Fletcher 60) and man as God’s “[representative] within the family to whom servants, children, and wives owed a duty of obedience” (Gill 1175). Rather, reformers like Martin Luther rejected Mary as an intercessor because “Mary was merely the ‘instrument’ of God’s work, not the one who accomplished the work” (Kreitzer 135). As Beth Kreitzer explains, reformers advocated praying directly to Christ,

for he is the supreme almighty and the only one who has the “power to help” (135).

As a polemical writer representing the traditional church as the Antichrist, Bale would have been aware of this tension between Marian devotion based on Scripture and excessive adoration based on legend. However, he wants to shape Askew into a heroine and into a recognizable role model that his reform readers would unquestionably accept. To achieve his goal, Bale gives Askew Marian characteristics that heighten her *mulier fortis* representation, but also negate her cult association with the traditional church. Biscoglio notes that the increase in devotion to the Virgin Mary during the medieval period resulted in her becoming “another *mulier fortis*” since many of the characteristics of the valiant woman in Proverbs 31 were assigned to her (33). Bale translates these medieval Marian and *mulier fortis* characteristics in a manner that will speak to a sixteenth-century reform audience. He situates his representation of Askew in the divide between the traditional church and reform beliefs. By locating Askew in the divide, Bale can attract potential reformers who still adhere to the practices of the traditional religion, but question whether the practices are what God intends for his followers. Lewis Rambo describes religious conversion as a gradual “ongoing process of transformation” (146) with the convert “exploring, experimenting, and in some sense ‘negotiating’ the new possibility” of being a member of a new faith (170). Bale might attract new members to the reformed faith who are considering converting if he presents Askew in a way that seems familiar to these readers. By

giving Askew Marian traits such as humility and modesty, as well as casting her as God's handmaid, Bale advances a godly woman that is recognizable to potential converts. These Marian traits also articulate early modern Reformation values. Members of the traditional church who experience doubts about their religion would not find the representation of Askew unsettling and might be won over to the reformed church if Askew's criticism of the traditional religion addresses their doubts. The portrayal of Askew is a negotiation between the traditional religion and reform beliefs that embody a faith that might appeal to prospective reform converts.

This chapter begins with a brief historical overview of Marian devotion from the early church to the early modern period, which will provide insight into Marian devotion's theological beginnings, and its spiritual and cultural longevity. The chapter continues with a discussion of the significance and impact of Marian devotion on the reformer Bale and how he employs Marian features to create a Protestant *mulier fortis*. Bale's Marian portrayal of Askew displays the medieval influences on, and continuities in, early modern representation. Continuities in medieval and early modern representations create meaning for an intended audience; readers recognize the meaning behind conventional traits. When medieval Marian characteristics appear in an early modern representation of a woman, the reader translates these traits and understands the woman to be godly. Bale employs medieval Marian features for his early modern representation of

Askew so that his reader, who is familiar with these conventional traits, would understand Askew to be a godly woman and an exemplar for reform members.

I. Marian Devotion from the Early Church to the Early Modern

Mary's identity as the Mother of God originates from the nativity narrative of Jesus Christ, featured in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, Chapters 1 and 2. Despite such an important role as the mother of mankind's redeemer, Mary's appearances in the Bible are fairly limited. She appears in the aforementioned chapters of Luke and Matthew and in Matthew 12.46-50, Mark 3.31-5 and Luke 8.19-21, which refer to her in the story of Jesus speaking to a crowd; he is told that "his mother and brethren" wish to speak to him. Mary is also briefly referred to in Mark 6.3 as Jesus's mother during his rejection at Nazareth. In John 2.1-12, the story of The Wedding at Cana, Mary tells Jesus that there is no more wine for the guests. Jesus responds, "woman what haue I to do wyth the, myne houre is not yet come." Mary also appears at Jesus's crucifixion in John 19.25-7 and stands by the cross with Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalen. The Bible story states that "Whe[n] Iesus therefore sawe his mother, & ye disciple sto[n]di[n]ge who he loued, he sayeth vnto his mother: woma[n]: beholde thy sone. Then sayde he to ye disciple: beholde thy mother. And from yt houre the disciple toke her for hys awne" (John 19.[26-27]). These sentences possibly cast the disciple as symbolically representing the Christian church. Christ's command that the disciple "beholde" Mary as his mother directs the disciple to assume Christ's role

as Mary's son; he, with all the disciples, will spread the Word of God after Christ's death. In turn, Mary is to "beholde" the disciple as her son, which would situate her as the mother of all followers of Christ. Luke Timothy Johnson explains that this scene conveys Mary's "important symbolic value: she represents the intimacy that exists between Jesus and his followers" (488).

Mary is also mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles 1.14 which recounts the first Christian community of Jerusalem after Jesus's ascension into Heaven. His disciples enter a room and "all contynued with one accorde in prayer and supplicacyon with the wemen & Mary ye mother of Iesu, and with hys brethren" (Acts 1.[14]). Mary's presence with the disciples and the women, who "constitute the essential nucleus of Jesus' followers" (Harvey 389), represents her as an early member of the Christian community. Mary is also indirectly referenced in Paul's letter to the Galatians 4.4: "God sent hys sonne, made of a woma[n], and made bonde vnto the lawe."

Luke's and Matthew's nativity narratives contain the most information about Mary's life that we have specifically from the Bible. Luke is the more extensive of the two and "is the scriptural source for all the great mysteries of the Virgin," containing the stories of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and the Presentation (Warner 7). The expanded story of Mary's life derives from apocryphal writings, specifically the *Protevangelium of James*, which describes

her childhood.³⁸ The oldest manuscript of the *Protevangelium* dates from the fourth century and identifies its writer to be James of Jerusalem. The two main Latin translations of the text are *The Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew* from the seventh or eighth centuries and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* from approximately the ninth century. The *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* is believed to be the work of the monk Paschasius Radbert. It is a re-working of the *Pseudo-Matthew* and was used by Jacobus for his *Legenda*. The *Protevangelium of James* introduces Mary's parents, Anna/Anne and Joachim, who are described as wealthy; however, Anna and Joachim are childless. Similar to the Annunciation at which time the angel Gabriel visits Mary and tells her that she will bear the son of God, an angel visits Anna and informs her that she will have a baby. Mary is born and presented at the temple when she turns one year old. When she is twelve years old, the priests decide it is time for Mary to have a husband. The *Protevangelium of James* describes how an angel gives the high priest Zacharius instructions to assemble the widowers and that God will give a sign as to which man will wed Mary. The widowers, including Joseph, gather in the temple. A dove emerges from Joseph's rod and flies over his head, thus announcing him as God's choice to be Mary's husband. The *Protevangelium of James* incorporates the apocryphal events of Mary's life with the events recounted in the canonical Gospels: the angel Gabriel informing Mary that she will give birth to the son of God (the

³⁸ The *Protevangelium of James* is not to be confused with the Proto-evangelium which refers to Genesis 3.15 where God threatens the serpent after it has enticed Eve to eat the fruit. God states, "I will also put enemytie betwene the & the woman, betwene thy sede and hyr sede: The same shall treade downe thy head, and thou shalt treade vpon hys hele." The Proto-evangelium, translated as "first gospel or good news," is interpreted as the first biblical promise of salvation for mankind (Panella 775).

Annunciation); her visit to Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist (the Visitation); a line from the Magnificat in which Mary communicates her modest acceptance of being chosen by God (Luke 1.48); Mary's and Joseph's trek to Bethlehem; Jesus's birth; the arrival of and warning from the Magi; and the holy family's departure from Bethlehem.

The apocryphal stories of Mary's parents and her youth combine with the biblical stories to form the foundation of Marian devotion. Beginning in the second century, Mary was typologically recognized as the "new Eve" in the writings of such Church Fathers as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Irenaeus (Carroll 266, Hamington 14, Warner 59). As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, Mary was acknowledged for her assistance in saving mankind from Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden. Mary's role in the history of salvation is at the center of Marian devotion. Bale incorporates this feature of Marian devotion by spotlighting Askew's willingness to die for her faith, which corresponds to Askew assisting in saving mankind from the Antichrist.

Feasts dedicated to Mary contribute to the devotion directed towards her. In the fourth century, the Feast of Christmas honoured both Christ's birth and Mary's "virginal maternity" (Rouillard and Krosnicki 157). The feast celebrated Mary's maternal role as Christ's mother. The Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, also from the fourth century, was believed to be "the greatest" Marian feast because it "venerates the one through whom the Savior was given to the whole world, thereby clarifying what is fundamental to Mary's role and the

cause of all her privileges” (Rouillard and Krosnicki 159). The Feast of the Presentation of Mary has been observed “since the 6th century in connection with the dedication of the church of St. Mary the New in Jerusalem” (Rouillard and Krosnicki 157). The Feasts of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Blessed Mary were introduced in the middle of the seventh century. These are considered ancient feasts and of “Oriental origin,” having been “brought to Rome by those Christian communities that had been banished from the East by the Muslims” (Rouillard and Krosnicki 157). These early Christian feasts demonstrate Marian devotion (*hyperdulia*) that was centered on “Mary’s holiness as Mother of God (*Theotokos*)” (Carroll 268).

In the fifth century controversy surrounded the use of the term *Theotokos* for Mary, which had been used since the fourth century (Carmody 936). *Theotokos* signifies Mary as “God-bearer” and “Mother of God” (Carmody 936, Warner 65). The patriarch of Constantinople Nestorius refused to accept Mary as the *Theotokos* because he believed Jesus, God’s Son, “took the form of Man. Salvation depended on the Sacrifice of the Son by an all-powerful God for the sake of humanity” (Rubin 43). Identifying Mary with the term *Theotokos* “would be in effect to say that the divine nature had been born of a woman; Mary had begotten only a man, to whom the Word of God was united” (Camelot 253). Nestorius believed that the correct term for Mary should be *Christotokos*, Mother of Christ (Camelot 253). The Council of Ephesus (431) confirmed Mary as

Theotokos, which proclaimed the divine nature and human nature of Jesus Christ.

Nestorius was denounced and eventually exiled to Libya.

Mary as *Theotokos*, bearer of the Word, has implications for sixteenth century reformers who encountered Marian devotional images of St Anne teaching the young Mary to read and portraits of the Annunciation that depict the angel Gabriel interrupting Mary while she reads a book (Haskin 125). Dayton Haskin explains that in the Annunciation paintings that portray her reading some Church Fathers asserted that “she had been studying the Book of Isaiah and had just come to the place where it was predicted that a virgin would conceive [Isaiah 7.14] when, behold! the prophecy began to come true” (125). Such representations of Mary present her as a reader and as an interpreter of scriptural and devotional passages, illustrating Mary as bearing the Word, as well as the written Word. Representations of Mary as a reader underscore her internalization of the Word, emphasizing the reform tenet that all individuals should have access to reading the Bible. For reformers, reading the Bible on one’s own results in the individual acquiring spiritual knowledge and adopting the Bible’s values and its message for her or his own life. Bale’s employment of Marian devotional characteristics in order to present Askew as a reader, which will be discussed further below, highlights his reform beliefs that center on the laity having opportunities to read the Bible without clerical mediation or intervention.

To continue with the historical overview of Marian devotion, from the eighth century onwards celebrations of Mary as Mother of God and of her biblical

stories and legends increased. The Feast of the Visitation and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception observed Mary's role in salvation and her holiness. These feasts "strive to show the reflection of her exceptional vocation in her life and soul. With various nuances, they all proclaim Mary's beauty and sanctity" (Rouillard and Krosnicki 159). The collection of *The Feasts of Our Lady* honour Mary as an exemplar for women; she is "our lady," who intercedes on our behalf and protects us (Rouillard and Krosnicki 159). Persons associated with Mary were also honoured with their own feasts on the basis that they, too, were spiritually connected in some way to Christian redemption history. Mary's parents, for instance, were given their own feast celebrations by the church since the *Protevangelium of James* told of their inability to conceive a child. They prayed to God, who hears their prayers and grants them their wish. Their child is instrumental in humankind's salvation.

Because of Mary's role in the deliverance of mankind from sin, efforts were made to connect her to other scriptural passages in the Old and New Testaments that would further substantiate her importance to salvation history. She became linked to the Old Testament's Song of Songs and to the New Testament's Book of Revelation. Jewish exegetes interpreted The Song of Songs, or the Canticles, "as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel," whereas Christian interpreters understood it "as an allegory of the love between Christ and the church, or Christ (or the divine logos) and the individual believer" (Exum 73). According to Marina Warner, Christian exegesis also

identified the Song's lover and his beloved as Christ and the Virgin Mary (125). The beloved's description contains typological symbols of Mary: "A garden well locked is my syster, my spouse, a garden well locked, and a sealed well" (Song of Sg. 4.[12]). The images of an "enclosed garden," an *hortus conclusus*, and a "sealed" fountain symbolize Mary's womb and virginity. She was also represented as the "fountain of living waters" which originated from Christian exegesis of Psalm 36.10, "For with the[e] is the well of lyfe, and in thy lyght, shall we se lyght" (Ferguson 42). The enclosed garden and fountain images in Song of Songs foreshadow the conception of Christ (Cañizares-Esguerra 420). Annunciation images from the 1300s commonly portrayed Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel near an enclosed garden (Rohr Schaff 111). In the twelfth century, St Bernard of Clairvaux developed a reading of the Song of Songs into an "intensely personal love of the Virgin," which fervently intensified her followers' devotion to her "with the same highly wrought and intimate sweetness. His eloquence on the Canticle, the Annunciation, and the Assumption mark the fulcrum of devotion to the Virgin in the west" (Warner 130).

Biblical commentary from the fifth century linked Mary to the woman clothed with the sun from the Book of Revelation Chapter 12 (Warner 93). As well, exegetes connected Mary to John's vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation Chapter 21. The New Jerusalem wears a wedding dress, signifying the arrival of the new church. The Christian church is the "newe Ierusale[m] come downe from God out of heauen, prepared as a bryde garnished for her

husband” (Rev. 21.[2]). The Virgin Mary symbolizes this new Christian church. Jerusalem is also underscored in the Song of Songs in which “the daughters of Jerusalem” become the third voice in the Song. The beloved of the Song goes “aboute the cytie, in the wayes in all the stretes” of Jerusalem to find her lover (Song of Sg. 3.[2]). The King describes his beloved as “fayre as Ierusalem” (Song of Sg. 6.[4]). Cheryl Exum notes that in the Old Testament Jerusalem “has always been the biblical city par excellence, ‘perfect in beauty, joy of all the earth,’ ‘beautiful in elevation, joy of all the earth,’ [and] ‘perfection of beauty’ (Lam. 2:15; Pss. 48:2 [3H]; 50:2)” (217). Like Jerusalem, the Virgin Mary is exalted; she is an exemplar among women. During the Visitation, Elizabeth greets Mary, crying out, “Blessed art thou among wemen” (Luke 1.[42]). The Jerusalem of the Song and of Revelation underscores love and nuptial imagery, which are characteristics of Mary in her portrayal of the loving mother and wife, and in her symbolism as the church in which she represents Christ’s spiritual bride.

Christopher King writes that

the ease with which marriage as both a natural and revealed human covenant of love could be associated with God's covenant of love guaranteed that even in the first, creative moments of Christianity, the Church would come to be understood as a spiritual Bride, wedded mystically to Christ her Spouse. Not surprisingly, then, nuptial imagery acquired a durable and increasing prominence in the teaching and worship of early Christians, even while the rite of

marriage itself waited for centuries to receive a uniquely ecclesiastical and sacramental form of its own. (2)

Christian nuptial imagery described in the Song and in Revelation spotlights Mary's participation in the covenant between God and his followers. As Christ's spiritual bride, and mother, Mary loves all of God's followers and, because of her role in the history of salvation, saves them from sin and death. Mary's association with the Book of Revelation will be discussed further below in connection with Bale's portrayal of Askew as a queen of the Reformation movement.

Marian devotion also manifested in prayers to and stories of the Virgin Mary and featured prominently in medieval prayer books. Devotion to the Virgin Mary was the foundation of Books of Hours, which were originally created for the affluent laity. Also known as primers, they contained "psalms, hymns, and scripture passages arranged in eight daily 'hours' of prayer, imitating the Divine Office of the monastic life (with its canonical observances of matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline), in honor of the Virgin" (Spurr 28). Barry Spurr contends that "Almost all the Books of Hours featured the Hours of the Virgin, a series of readings about Mary's life. Lists of her joys and sorrows were provided for contemplation and provided, thereby, an ample range of subjects for poetic and other artistic treatment" (28). Books of Hours ranged in artistic and literary quality depending on for whom they were made. Wealthy patrons would pay dearly for Books of Hours that contained lavish artwork depicting scenes from the Bible and images of the Virgin Mary. However, "by the

fifteenth century, cheaper versions for a wider market were being produced, and by the early Tudor period an unbound printed Book of Hours could probably be bought for 3d or 4d” (Duffy, *Marking* 4). The number of extant copies of Books of Hours attests to their popularity (Witty 604). There are approximately eight hundred medieval manuscript Books of Hours in existence today (Duffy, *Marking* 3).

The medieval laity purchased primers for their personal, spiritual growth. Individuals could read on their own, in the privacy of their homes, the stories of Mary’s life and meditate upon illuminated images of her. Private reading of Marian devotional texts during the medieval period looks forward to the Reformation in which people were encouraged to read devotional material and the Bible on their own so as strengthen their faith in God. The medieval Book of Hours was essentially a Marian prayer book providing readers and listeners with familiar devotional material. Eamon Duffy notes that

A favourite form of Marian piety was the use of prayers and meditations on her Joys and Sorrows. The Joys of Mary, most commonly in England counted as five--Annunciation, Nativity, the Resurrection, Ascension, and her own Coronation in Heaven--were familiar to every man, woman, and child from their endless reproduction in carving, painting, and glass. (*Stripping* 257).

The Virgin Mary was also a prevalent subject for medieval drama, music, and poetry. For instance, her character made appearances in the N-Town cycle of

plays, a cycle of forty-two biblical plays, in which experiences from Mary's life were portrayed as similar to those from Christ's life (Coletti 88). Songs and poems described Mary as beautiful, majestic, and gracious. Medieval music demonstrated the "communal perspective" of Marian devotion with Marian anthems being sung in the nave of the Church after compline, the final Mass of the day which completed the church's canonical hours (Skinner 171). The *Salve Regina* ("Hail Holy Queen") from the eleventh century was one of the most popular of the surviving pre-Reformation English Marian anthems. It presents Mary as the Queen of Heaven to whom we pray "for her help in obtaining God's mercy" (Warner 287). During the sixteenth century reformers would reject the *Salve Regina* since it presented Mary as an intercessor for Christians (Kreitzer 33-34). Similar to the *Salve Regina*, some medieval poems represented Mary as the queen of the spiritual royal family. In the thirteenth-century lyric "Edi beo thu, heuene quene" Mary is a courtly queen who emotionally captivates the verse's speaker. She is "Swa fair, so schene, so rudi, swa bright, / Swete leuedi, of me þu reowe, / And haue merci of þin knicht" (14-16). The courtly motif of the aristocratic "virtuous and untouchable maiden" was a natural fit with representations of the Virgin Mary, who is untouched by man and theologically understood as the Queen of Heaven to whom the poem's title refers (Warner 135). As well, the courtly love language of the knight to his queen communicated the overwhelming love followers had for Christ's mother.

Mary's representation as the Queen of Heaven was presented as well in the *felix culpa* tradition. Latin for "blessed fault," the *felix culpa* positively spins the story of the fall of Adam from Genesis, Chapter 3: if Adam had not eaten the forbidden fruit, the Christian believer would not have experienced "such joys as hopeful penance, suffering, acceptance of forgiveness, reconciliation, thanksgiving for conquered sin, and resurrection from penal deaths" (Jeffrey, *Dictionary* 274). The fifteenth-century poem "Adam lay ybounden" employs the *felix culpa* tradition to create a distinctly Marian *felix culpa*. The poem begins with "Adam lay i-bowndyn, bowndyn in a bond" (1) because he ate the forbidden fruit. However,

Ne hadde the appil take ben, the appil taken ben,

Ne hadde never our lady a ben hevene qwen.

Blyssid be the tyme that appil take was,

Therefore we mown syngyn, "*Deo gracias!*" (5-8)

Were it not for Adam's error, the Virgin Mary would never have existed to give birth to Jesus Christ, nor would she reign in Heaven.

Also from the fifteenth century, John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady* commemorates Mary's life in an extended and elaborate devotional poem. Including events from the Bible and from her legend, the poem begins with her birth and ends with the presentation of Jesus and herself in the temple. Other than the Vulgate Bible, Lydgate used the *Legenda aurea* and *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* as sources in telling Mary's story since they provided more details of the

Virgin's experiences than the *Protevangelium of James* (Lauritis 140). An example of an apocryphal incident that is included in *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* but not in the *Protevangelium* are the details of the high priest Abiathar's wish for Mary to wed his son. Lydgate writes,

And to fulfill his entention
 Abyathar behotyth, gold and Rent
 To the Bisshoppys, to make hir assente
 To his purpose, and to hir thay gone. (I: 551-553)

Upon receiving the gifts from Abiathar, the Bishops attempt to persuade Mary:

With sugrede tonge, of many wordez whyte
 That god above dothe hym more delyte
 In birthe of chyldren then in virginite
 Or any suche, avowede chastitye
 And more in children, is he honourde certyn. (I: 557-561)

Mary responds by recounting the biblical stories of Abel's and Elias's virginities and affirming her vow to God. She asserts that

For lyve or deth, only for his sake
 Fro which purpose, shall I not deceuere
 Thorough his grace, whedir I slepe or wake
 To kepe and holde I have vndir take
 My maydynhode, Sythyn goo full yore
 Agaynst which, ne spekyth to me no more. (I: 590-595)

Lydgate's employment of this apocryphal episode in his poem participates in medieval Marian devotion by casting Mary as a devout, steadfast virgin.

Sixteenth-century reformers such as Luther would also participate in "traditional Marian theology" by believing in Mary's "perpetual virginity" (Kreitzer 134).

The fifteenth-century Marian lyric "I Sing of a Maiden" is another example of the impassioned devotion medieval followers had for the Virgin Mary. Considered to be "one of the finest of medieval religious lyrics," the verse's "balladlike incremental repetition of folk motifs from nature (dew, grass, flower, spray) . . . [celebrates] reverdie, the rebirth and coming of spring" (Garbáty 661). In the first lines the speaker announces his love for Mary, the "maiden / That is makeles"(1-2). The speaker repeats "As dew in Aprille" in lines 7, 11, and 15, expressing the intensity of his love for the Virgin Mary by creating the image of spring and its renewal of nature. Spring is the time of year associated with the burgeoning of love between individuals. Such Marian poems as "I Sing of a Maiden" display the Virgin Mary as a religious figure who stimulates one's emotions and spirituality, and lends herself as a muse to articulate these passions.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary is also present in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. "The Prioress's Prologue" is a prayer that "begins with a versifying of Psalm 8" (Spector 191). Psalm 8 begins,

O Lorde our governoure, howe excelle[n]t is thy name in all the
world, thou that hast sett thy glory aboute the heaue[n]s? Out of the
mouth of very babes and sucklynges hast thou ordeyned strength

because of thyne enemyes, that thou myghtest styll the enemye and
the auenger. [1-2]

Similarly, the Prioress states,

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world y-sprad-quod she-
For noght only thy laude precious
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee. (19-23)

In his study of the paradoxes in “The Prioress’s Prologue and Tale,” Stephen Spector, referencing the work of Sister Madeleva, writes that the Psalm alludes to the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin (192). It also “appears in the Mass for the Feast of the Holy Innocents, and so links the [Prioress’s] prayer to the liturgical and scriptural reminiscences of the slaughter of the innocents in the tale” (Spector 192). The Feast of the Holy Innocents honours the infants killed by Herod in his effort to locate and kill the infant Christ, which is told in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 2. Continuing with her prayer, the Prioress invokes the Virgin Mother: “O moder mayde! o mayde moder free!” (33). Her appeal to the virgin as mother

underscores “her divine motherhood, her virginity, her immaculate conception, and her assumption into heaven” (Warner 19).³⁹ The Prioress proclaims,

O bush unbrent, brenninge in Moyses sighte,
 That ravysedest doun fro the deitee,
 Thurgh thyn humblesse, the goost that in th’alighte,
 Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
 Conceived was the Fadres sapience. (33-37)

The Prioress revises the angel Gabriel’s Annunciation and the Incarnation, having the Virgin ravish “the Holy Ghost down from the Deity” (Spector 192) through her “bountee,” her “magnificence,” her “vertu,” and her “humilitee” (41-42).

Spector views this representation of Mary as a paradox that combines the Virgin’s modesty with sexual attraction.

The Prioress calls upon the Blessed Mother for help in telling her fellow pilgrims the Marian miracle tale of the little *clergeon* whose throat is slit by Jews: “Help me to telle it in thy reverence!” (38). In the last lines of the prayer, the Prioress refers to herself as a small child “of twelf month old, or lesse” (50), which puts her at the same age as the holy innocents who were killed by Herod. As Spector claims, the Prioress’s representation of herself as an innocent child

³⁹ Warner explains that Mary’s divine motherhood, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption, and her perpetual virginity are “declared dogmas about the Virgin Mary” (19). The Council of Ephesus declared Mary as “Mother of God” in 431. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed her Immaculate Conception in 1854 and her Assumption in 1950. Early Christian Church Fathers championed Mary’s perpetual virginity, which would become a feature of Marian devotion (Warner 19, 23). Warner explains that even though Christian orthodoxy supports “the virginity of Mary during and after Jesus’ birth . . . Christians are finding this increasingly difficult to accept, and the dogmatic constitution of the Second Vatican Council of 1964 refrained from proclaiming it an article of faith” (45). Mary’s perpetual virginity will be discussed further below.

“mirrors herself in that other innocent, the *clergeon* of her tale. The simple, faithful child becomes the repository of her own simple, childlike faith” (192). Both the Prioress and the *clergeon* are devoted to Mary, “and for both, fervor substitutes for substantial understanding” (Spector 192).

“The Prioress’s Tale” includes such Marian devotional features as the singing of Marian hymns and the reciting of Marian prayers. The little *clergeon* attends a Christian school where “he saugh th’ymage / Of Cristes moder” (71-72). The *Tale* states that he was taught “to knele adoun and seye / His *Ave Marie*, as he goth by the weye” (73-74). The *clergeon* also reads his primer, which would have included the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. He learns to sing the *Alma redemptoris mater* in honour of the Virgin Mary, which is the hymn he sings after his throat is cut. As with the *Salve Regina*, the hymn *Alma redemptoris mater* originates from the eleventh century. Its lyrics praise Mary and ask her to “be merciful toward sinners” (Kolve and Olson 427). According to V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson, “Stories of the miracles performed by the Virgin Mary constitute one of the most familiar genres in medieval literature” (418). “The Prioress’s Prologue” and her “Tale” derive from “many analogues, in a variety of languages” (Kolve and Olsen 418). The Prioress’s Tale closely resembles a fifteenth-century Latin version of a Marian miracle tale of a little *clergeon* whose tongue is cut out of his throat by Jews. The Virgin Mary appears and places a pebble in the little *clergeon*’s mouth upon which he begins to sing the *Alma redemptoris mater*. The Latin version is found in MS Trinity College, Cambridge

0. 9. 38 and “was compiled ca. 1450” (Kolve and Olsen 418n). The story is similar to Chaucer’s version, except that the Latin story ends with the Christian conversions of the Jew who slit the boy’s throat and of a pagan who witnessed the Marian miracle of the boy’s recovery (Kolve and Olsen 423). In Chaucer’s version of the story, the Jews who knew of the murder are killed for the crime against the boy. The Prioress’s tale is violent and antisemitic compared to the analogues that convey forgiveness and model conversion to the Christian faith. The Prioress’s initial representation of herself in her prologue as an innocent “babe” devoted to the Virgin Mary, in conjunction with her tale of horror and vengeance, demonstrates her ignorance of the Christian ideals she professes to embody as a prioress. Marian miracle tales like the story of the little *clergeon* demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of medieval Marian devotion that would later influence Bale’s representation of Askew. As well, Chaucer’s portrayal of the Prioress as ignorant of Christian ideals of forgiveness and mercy is similar to Bale’s and Askew’s representations of her examiners as having inferior knowledge of the Bible and as torturous monsters who kill her. Chaucer’s, Bale’s and Askew’s representations highlight the malevolent behaviour and hypocrisy of those individuals who are members of the traditional faith and profess to be devout Christians.

Marian devotion was also manifested in the writings of medieval mystics such as Margery Kempe who claimed to have had visions not only of Christ but of Christ’s mother that include having conversations with her. Her devotion to the

Virgin differs from her adoration for Christ. She displays intensely ardent emotions for Jesus; in one instance, she has a vision in which Jesus states that Margery should love him “as a good wife ought to love her husband” (66). However, Margery’s devotion to the Virgin Mary is of humble submission and respect. Her first vision of Mary stems from a conversation she has with Jesus. Margery informs Jesus of her difficulty in determining what to think of during meditation. Jesus directs her to “think on my mother, for she is the cause of all the grace that you have” (15). Jesus’s advice underscores Mary’s role in saving humanity from Eve’s mistake in the Garden of Eden. It underlines the early Church Fathers’ understanding of Mary as mankind’s savior because she “[consented] to the Incarnation” (Warner 117). Jesus’s advice to Margery results in her having a vision in which she is a servant to St Anne who is about to give birth to Mary. Margery becomes the infant Mary’s “handmaiden” (15), which parallels Mary’s announcement in the Magnificat that she is God’s “handmaiden” (Luke 1.[48]). This reference emphasizes Margery’s imitation of the Virgin Mary, presenting herself as the ultimate spiritual servant. Mary, as God’s handmaiden, provides Margery, as well as Bale’s representation of Askew, an inspirational model of female sanctity.

During Margery’s vision, Mary departs “for a certain time” and returns to Margery, announcing, “Daughter, now am I become the mother of God” (15). Margery’s vision has her at the Visitation, at the birth of Christ, and at the family’s departure from Bethlehem. Her participation in these biblical events derives from

the Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* from the thirteenth century, which encouraged readers to identify with the human life of Christ. David Jeffrey argues that the most significant attribute of the *Meditations* "is its fusion of the affective pietistic ideals of Franciscan spirituality with an attempt to transmit the biblical story" ("Franciscan" 20). It invites readers to identify and share with Christ the "common physical and emotional experience" (Jeffrey, "Franciscan" 23). Franciscan spirituality claimed that for redemption to occur there must be an "affective" encounter and participation with the story of Christ (Jeffrey, *People* 366). The English medieval cycle plays employed these principles in their productions on Christ's life. In 1400, Nicholas Love translated and adapted *Meditations* to produce *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. Sarah Beckwith claims that Margery's meditations are influenced by Love's *Mirror* and inspires her to weave her life with the lives of Christ and his mother (285). Sixteenth-century reformers would also mediate on the stories of Christ so as to nurture their unmediated relationship with him. Martin Luther believed that meditating on biblical passages facilitated in making praying personal and more effective, which will be discussed further below. Protestant devotional texts from the late sixteenth century, some modeled on those written by Catholics, encouraged Protestants to meditate on the life of Christ and other biblical stories. For example, in 1584 Puritan minister Edmund Bunny wrote *The first booke of the Christian exercise, appertayning to resolution* using Jesuit Robert Parsons's text from 1582 (with the same title) as a template. Both Parson and Bunny recommended that individuals

practice “serious, introspective reflection on certain basic Christian teachings” (Gregory, “The ‘True and Zealous’” 256). Bunny modified Parson’s text for a Protestant audience by extracting all “references to Purgatory, the Virgin Mary and the like” (MacCulloch, *Reformation* 588).

The events of Mary’s life were included in medieval writings because of her prominence as the supreme saint. Her intercessory powers, her virtuous characteristics, and her miracles were features of her cult. For example, Jacobus’s *Legenda aurea*, Mirk’s *Festial* and Caxton’s *Golden Legend* include descriptions of her church feasts: the Conception of our Lady, the Purification, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Assumption and the Nativity of our Lady. Mary’s perpetual virginity contributed to hagiographers’ recognition of her as a saint. Warner observes that virginity holds power for women in Christian theology for two reasons: virginity was believed to “[reduce] the special penalties of the Fall in women,” thus making them holy beings; and, “the image of the virgin body was the supreme image of wholeness, and wholeness was equated with holiness” (72). Although there were debates about whether Mary’s virginity remained intact *in partu* and *post partum*,⁴⁰ most of the Church Fathers maintained that her body was “seemless, unbroken, [and] a literal epiphany of integrity. The Virgin Mary is a ‘closed gate,’ a ‘spring shut up,’ a ‘fountain sealed,’” as mentioned above in relation to the symbols of Mary derived from the Song of Songs and Psalm 36

⁴⁰ See Warner 64-67 for a discussion of the early church formulations of the doctrine of Mary’s virginity.

(Warner 73). Caxton's description of The Feast of the Purification explains why the birth of Christ does not alter Mary's virginity:

This feast is called the purification of our Lady, not for that she had need ne ought make her purification, for she was pure and clean without having of any tatche of deadly sin ne venial, like as she that had, without company of any man, by the virtue of the Holy Ghost, conceived the Son of God, and was delivered without losing of her virginity. (385)

Medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary presented her as the archetypal female. She is humble, modest, and obedient; she is willing to serve to the utmost. Her hagiographical representation is twofold: she is authoritative and powerful in the identity of intercessor whose "regal status can therefore be read as a sign of her supereminent position among the saints of the Church--a position of such central importance that she can be portrayed as holding the office of highest authority after that of Christ" (Boss "The Development" 159); and she represents the height of female submissiveness during the Annunciation when she agrees to bear God's child. Mary is "the passive and submissive one, the vessel that received. Therefore she could be held up to women as a model of how they ought to behave, in submissive obedience to God, to their husbands, and to the clergy and hierarchy of the church" (Pelikan 83). This representation of Mary presents her paradoxically as being both passive and powerful in her role as Mother of God. Bale employs a similar binary in his representation of Askew. As mentioned

in Chapter One, Bale writes that Askew was weak, but “made most stronge by [Christ’s] grace” (10). Similar to Mary, Askew is obedient to God. Askew’s obedience displays her inner strength as a witness of the faith, giving her the power to confront her examiners. Askew is made strong by her steadfast devotion to God.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary would come under scrutiny in the sixteenth century as reformers questioned the reasons for her authority. Although her identity as an obedient female demonstrated the socially valued traits of passivity and compliance, reformers questioned her characteristics that did not have scriptural origin. Desiderius Erasmus was not a reformer; however, he argued for such reform tenets as the Bible to be translated into vernaculars and that the laity should be able to read the Bible. He initially praised Mary in his early writings but later altered his views to reflect the importance he placed on the Bible as authoritative truth. Erasmus’s prayers “Paeon in Honour of the Virgin Mary” (*Paeon Virgini Matri*) and “Prayer of the Supplication to Mary, The Virgin Mother, in Time of Trouble” (*Obsecratio ad Virginem Matrem Mariam in rebus adversis*) were some of his first published writings (O’Malley xiii). Both works were written in 1499 and, according to Stephen Ryle, “it is clear that the two works represent a genuine expression of Erasmus’s devotion to the Blessed Mary” (19). The prayers praise her as the “Singular glory of heaven, earth’s surest safeguard” (“Paeon in Honour” 20) and as the “sole hope to us in our afflictions” (“A Prayer of Supplication” 41). Erasmus’s devotion to the Virgin

Mary changed in tandem with his opinion on the excessive adoration paid to relics and iconography. He singles out the Virgin Mary in *The Whole Familiar Colloquies* when he writes of his aversion to saints' cults. Defending his position he states,

It is as false that the favour of the blessed Virgin and other saints are drolled upon in my *Colloquies*, but I deride those who beg those things of the saints which they dare not ask of a good man; or pray to certain saints with this notion, as if this or that saint either could or would sooner grant this or that thing than another saint or Christ himself would do.

Erasmus articulates what he, and Protestant reformers, considered to be the senselessness of intercessory prayers. There is no need for one to pray to the Virgin Mary or a saint in order to obtain Christ's ear. It is acceptable for the individual to pray to Christ directly for he hears all supplicants.

In "The Shipwreck" in *Familiar Colloquies*, Erasmus continues to convey his antipathy for any Marian devotion that resembles excessive devotion to saints through a dialogue between Adolph and Antony. Adolph recounts to Antony his experience of being on a boat during a storm, telling Antony that he and the others were told to prepare themselves to die. Adolph states that

the Mariners, they were singing their *Salve Regina*, imploring the Virgin Mother, calling her the Star of the Sea, the Queen of Heaven, the Lady of the World, the Haven of Health, and many

other flattering Titles, which the sacred Scriptures never attributed to her.

Antony humorously responds, “What has she to do with the Sea, who as I believe, never went a Voyage in her Life?” This exchange communicates Erasmus’s main desideratum about Marian devotion: devotion to Mary must be predicated on her appearance in Scripture.

Like Erasmus, Martin Luther also experienced conflicted feelings over his devotion to Christ’s mother since he, too, wanted to reform aspects of the traditional religion that did not have biblical roots. In his *Commentary on the Magnificat*, Luther expresses his devotion to the Virgin Mary. He refers to her as the “laudable virgine Mary,” and writes that “the blessed virgine had proued by herselfe that God hadde wrought so great thynges in her” (A.v.). However, Luther would denounce features of Marian devotion that did not have a scriptural foundation. He eventually rejected the Virgin’s assumption into heaven since there was no mention of her death in the Bible (Warner 96). Similar to other reformers, he, too, would criticize the idolatry of saints’ cults, such as devotion towards relics, demanding that “cult images . . . be removed from churches, but for a ‘crucifix or saints’ image’ to be retained for the purpose of witness and memorial” (Rubin 373).

In England, Marian devotion suffered during Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries. Orders such as the Carthusians, who adored the Virgin Mary, were forced to disband. Their libraries containing Marian writings were destroyed

(Hennessy 171). The shrines of the Lady of Walsingham and the Lady of Ipswich were ruined because they were considered idolatrous. Religious practices, such as pilgrimages, processions, and graveyard rites that provided opportunities to display and cultivate devotion to Mary disappeared from the religious and cultural landscape (Frijhoff 89).

English reformers rejected relics associated with Mary's birth of Christ and her assumption to heaven. Wilfrid Holme's poem *The Fall and Evill Success of Rebellion* (1537) includes a stanza expressing the reform position against saints' and Marian relics:

For (thanked be God) saint Frauncis cowle is spied,
 And saint Brides head, with Saint Hellyns quickingtree,
 Their girdles inuented, and their faire hayres died,
 With their chaulke oled for the milke of our Lady.⁴¹

The girdle and the milk refer to two relics associated with Mary. It was believed that Mary dropped her girdle and a quantity of her breast milk "to earth as proof of her ascent into heaven" (Rubin 377). Such beliefs were the target of the reformers' attack on saints' relics as matters of superstition and their assertion that "the bulk of the stories of Mary's life were apocryphal" (Rubin 367).

Reformers took to the pulpit to broadcast which features of Marian devotion were biblically sound. Hugh Latimer disqualified Mary as an intercessor but believed she set an example that women should follow (Wabuda, "Latimer").

⁴¹ See also Rubin 377.

Latimer's sermon on St Stephen's Day in 1552 presents Mary as the paradigm of modesty. He describes the birth of Jesus Christ and how his mother did not have receiving clothes for God's child. He writes,

But what was her swaddling-clothes wherein she laid the King of heaven and earth? No doubt it was poor gear; peradventure it was her kercher which she took from her head, or such like gear; for I think Mary had not much fine linen; she was not trimmed up as our women be now-a-days . . . for she used no such superfluities as our fine damsels do now-a-days: for in the old time women were content with honest and single garments. (108) ⁴²

In his sermon on St Evangelist day, Latimer draws attention again to Mary's identity as Christ's mother. He castigates Joan Bocher (Joan of Kent, Joan Knell), who was convicted as a heretic because she believed that Jesus Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary. He states, "But our creed teacheth us contrariwise; for we say, *Natus ex Maria Virgine*, 'Born of the Virgin Mary'" and "it appeareth evidently in the epistle to the Hebrews, where St Paul plainly saith, that Christ was made of the woman, that he took his flesh from the woman" (114). Latimer specifically points to the Bible to confirm Mary's identity as the Mother of Christ, and that through Mary the "worde became flesshe, and dwelt amonge vs" (John 1. [14]). Mary contributes her body for the human presence of God, which saves mankind. Similarly, Bale portrays Askew as offering her body as a sign of her

⁴² The evils of fashion were a popular sermon topic during the medieval and early modern periods. See Owst 170-172 and Hentschell.

commitment to reform beliefs, which Bale and Askew believe convey the ideals of true Christianity. Latimer's focus on Mary's role in the Incarnation demonstrates the reform reliance on the Bible to confirm or dispute aspects of Marian devotion that are found in the traditional religion.

Latimer was not consistent in his reverence for Mary. In the same sermon, he claims that Mary "was pricked with vain-glory" (117). He cites the Gospel of Matthew as his evidence, stating that

when [Jesus] was preaching, [Mary] came and would needs speak with him, for she would have been known to be his mother: which doing of hers no doubt had a smell of ambition. And it is good for us to know such things, for so we may comfort ourselves; when we hear that the very mother of Christ had sins, and yet was saved, we shall be saved too. (117)

Latimer contradicts the traditional representation of Mary as sinless and pure. He presents Mary as an ordinary human being with character weaknesses such as excessive pride. Latimer communicates reform sentiment against extravagant Marian devotion, annulling the representation of Mary as the supreme saint and intercessor with Jesus Christ.

Marian devotion's religious, political, cultural and historical context influences Bale's representation of Askew, which I will discuss in the next section. Evangelical reformers such as Bale and Latimer were in a period of transition as they excised features of the traditional religion that did not align with their

religious values and engaged with those that did. Medieval devotion to Mary informs and impacts Bale's overall religious understanding and vocabulary in his shaping of Askew. The next section will explore Bale's employment of Marian devotion for his representation of Askew so as to produce an authoritative reform heroine and *mulier fortis* that exemplifies reform principles.

II. Bale's Marian Askew

Bale's translation of Marian characteristics for his protagonist's depiction begins with the text's woodcut title page. I will begin first with a general discussion of Bale's preoccupation with the Book of Revelation because it provides the necessary information to elaborate the Marian features found in the woodcut. After Askew's examination by Christopher Dare, Bale writes that her examiners are "wycked mynysters, and cruell servaunt slaves to Antichrist and the devyll, Apoc. 17" (27). Revelation 17 introduces the "gret Babylon the mother of whordom and abominacions of the erth" (Rev. 17.[5]), who is "droncken wyth the bloude of saynctes, and with the bloude of the wytnesses of Iesu" (Rev. 17.[6]). The whore of Babylon rides a beast with seven heads and ten horns; the horns represent kings of Babylon who "haue one mynde, and shall geue their power and strength vnto the beast. These shall fyght with the lambe, & the lambe shall ouercome the[m]. For he is Lorde of lordes, and kyng of kynges, and they that are on his side, are called, and chosen, and faythfull" (Rev. 17.[13-14]). Bale's

reference to Revelation 17 depicts Askew's examiners as the kings of Babylon whom Christ with his martyrs, including Askew, will eventually overthrow.

Bale's representation of Askew battling her Satan-like examiners corresponds to the woman clothed with the sun from Revelation 12. The woman is pregnant and about to give birth when

ther appered another wo[n]der i[n] heauen, for beholde, a gret red dragon hauynge .vii. heddes, & ten hornes & seuen crounes vpon hys heades: and hys tayle drue the thyrde parte of the starres (of heauen) and cast them to the erth. And the dragon stode before the woman whych was redy to be delyuered: for to deuoure her chylde as sone as it were borne. (Rev. 12.[3-4])

The woman gives birth to "a man childe, which shulde rule all nacyo[n]s with a rodd of yron. And her sonne was taken vp vnto God, & to his seate. And ye woman fled into wyldernes, where she had a place, prepared of God, yt they shulde fede her there a .M.ii. hundred and .lx. dayes" (Rev. 12.[5-6]). Since the woman clothed with the sun has been interpreted as the Virgin Mary, as already noted, the birth of the male child and his ascent to heaven corresponds to Mary's birth of Jesus and his return to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Revelation 12 is read during the Catholic mass for the Feast of Mary's Assumption, thus furthering the interpretation of the woman clothed with the sun as a scriptural representation of Mary ("Aug. 15" 1013).

Readers of *The Examinations* would recognize Bale's portrayal of Askew as a Marian figure from his references to the Book of Revelation, a biblical text that includes themes of suffering and persecution, themes that buttress Askew's account of her incarcerations. The woman's persecution of living in the wilderness for three hundred and sixty days is situated within a text that presents adversity and oppression as necessary experiences that lead to the destruction of evil and the creation of the new world. The persecution of the woman clothed with the sun aligns with Bale's presentation of Askew's persecution. As mentioned in Chapter One, according to Bale the deaths of reformers like Askew, Tyndale and Barnes will bring about the destruction of the Antichrist and the establishment of the reformed church as the true church. Reformers would identify Bale's shaping of Askew with Marian characteristics from his references to Revelation: Askew and her battle allude to the woman clothed with the sun since they are both depicted as confronting representations of Satan and are persecuted; the woman's giving birth to a son who is swept up to God is analogous to the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus; therefore, Bale's representation of Askew is connected to the Virgin Mary through the woman clothed with the sun. Bale argues that the woman is not a symbol of the Virgin Mary, thus rejecting the traditional Christian interpretation of the Book of Revelation that advances the relationship between these two female figures. In *The Image of Both Churches*, Bale states that "Not Mary, Christ's mother, is this woman though many hath so fantasied in their commentaries; but it is the true Christian church, of which Mary is a most notable member" (404). Bale

may not have wanted the woman clothed with the sun to represent Mary because there is no scriptural evidence to support this association. Nonetheless, his statement reveals that he is aware of the connection between the woman in Revelation 12 and Marian devotion.

Bale's statement also draws attention to another characteristic of Marian devotion: the woman clothed with the sun is a symbol of Mother Church, which spotlights medieval interpretation of the Virgin Mary as a symbol of the church. Mary participates in the world's salvation having given birth to Christ, which makes her an essential player in the creation of the church. Without Mary's agreement to be the bearer of God's child, the church would not exist. She is "the perfect type of both the Church and of every individual soul within it" (De Visscher 179). The apocryphal story detailing Mary's Assumption contributes to her being a symbol of the church as well as being Queen of Heaven. Since God is figured as the King, it is only fitting that the woman who bore his son be known as the Queen. Warner explains that "At the Assumption, Mary becomes Queen of Heaven, and the crown she wears on her head is the token of her triumph" (103). Similar to Mary's representation as a symbol of the traditional church, Bale casts Askew as a symbol of the reformed church through her association with the woman clothed with the sun. Bale's representation of Askew as a symbol of the reformed church rests on her being elected by God, just as the woman clothed with the sun and Mary are elected by God. In the *Image*, Bale writes that "A woman was seen clothed with the sun, yea, of John: for to God's only elect is the

verity shewed to advantage” (404). In *The Examinations*, Bale presents Askew as elected by God when she responds to the question if she “had the sprete of God in [her]” (24). Bale affirms her sanctity by underscoring her election: “Electe are we of God (sayth Peter) through the sanctyfyenge of the sprete” (24). He also states that the souls of elected individuals are “sanctyfyed temples of the holye Ghost” (24). Askew is a temple of God embodying the true Christian church.

Bale refers several times to Askew being crowned, which is a reference to the conventional martyr’s crown. However, Bale might also be fashioning her as reformed church royalty similar to Mary being portrayed as Queen of Heaven. Because of “her faythfull perseveraunce,” Askew will wear “the crowne of eternall lyfe” since she “is bowne towardes heaven” (107). According to Bale, Askew “obtained the crowne of lyfe, Apoca. 2” (137). In Revelation 2, in God’s letter to Smyrna, Christians are told by God that, although they are poor and suffer slander and imprisonment, they are to “Be faythfull vnto ye deeth, and I wyll geue the a crowne of lyfe” (Rev. 2.[10]). The persecuted Christians will receive eternal happiness in heaven after death. Placing a crown on Askew presents her as a martyr, but also extends an image of her as a queen or a leader in the Reformation movement. Such an image also furthers Bale’s *mulier fortis* representation; Askew is a strong woman who will receive eternal life at her death because of her election, her determination, and her devotion.

Bale’s edition of *The Examinations* contains three woodcuts, two that further his Marian shaping of Askew from the Book of Revelation and one that

further his Reformation beliefs in opposition to the traditional religion. All three woodcuts allude to the Book of Revelation. There is no extant evidence to verify whether Bale chose the woodcuts for his text. However, Honor McCusker notes that “Bale appreciated good book-making, and there can be no doubt that he personally supervised the publication of some of his works” (111). Such supervision might include choosing, or at least discussing with the printer, the woodcuts for his edition of Askew’s text. John King proposes that since Bale was “the commentator” of Askew’s text he was probably “the likely designer” of the woodcut that introduces the first examination (*Tudor* 207).

As discussed in Chapter Two, the woodcut displays a woman whose head is framed in a saintly nimbus, clothed in a gown holding a palm leaf in one hand and a book with the word “Biblia” written on the front in the other hand. She is also standing on top of a dragon which is wearing a crown. The woodcut has obvious connections to the Book of Revelation, Chapters 6 and 12. The woman’s gown refers specifically to Revelation 6 in which John looks under an altar and finds “the soules of them that were kylled for ye worde of God, & for ye testimony whych they had” (Rev. 6.[9]). The martyrs ask John how much longer they must wait for God to avenge their deaths. They are given “lo[n]ge whyte garme[n]tes” to wear and told to be patient “vntyll the number of theyr felowes, and brethren, & of them [that] shulde be kylled as they were, were fulfilled” (Rev. 6.[11]). The palm leaf held by the woman is a symbol of victory originating from Jesus’s arrival into Jerusalem as a “king” who is greeted by the

crowd holding palm branches. The palm leaf is a symbol for martyrs representing the victory of spirit over flesh and a triumph over their aggressors. The palm leaf and the white gown present the woman in the woodcut as a martyr. The crown-wearing dragon in the woodcut epitomizes the seven-headed crowned dragon who stalks the woman clothed with the sun. The dragon represents Satan, who, in turn, for Bale, represents the traditional religion. The woman standing on the dragon evokes other martyrs who are associated with dragons that symbolize Satan and pagan religion. Images of St Margaret have her standing over a dragon stabbing it with a cross (Bond 7). St Michael is customarily depicted as a Christian fighter battling the dragon. Ss Martha, George, Silvester and Julian are several more saints whose visual representations feature them vanquishing a dragon beneath them (Bond 300). The woodcut presents the woman as a symbol representing Christian martyrs and who have, in particular, defeated their religious oppressors. Since this is the opening title page to *The Examinations*, the woodcut “presents [Askew’s] experience as a contemporary version of the flight of the apocalyptic woman into the wilderness” (J. King, *Tudor* 207). Askew is a martyr of the reformed church who conquers the traditional church represented by a dragon.

The woodcut has quotations on three sides of the image of the woman that further the woodcut’s theme of presenting Askew’s text as a treatise that documents a female reformer’s battle with the traditional church. The passage to the left of the image, “The veryte of the lorde endureth for euer,” is from Psalm 116.2 (Psalm 117 in the King James Bible). It articulates the scriptural message

that the irrefutable truth and love of God is forever. The passage might also be drawing attention to Askew's text, conveying that Askew's reform beliefs manifest the eternal truth of God, which would confirm that the reformed church is the true Christian church. The second passage to the right of the image applies Psalm 116.2 to Askew: "Anne Askewe stode fast by thys veryte of God to the ende." John King asserts that the epigraphs present Askew's "spiritual condition as a recapitulation of the faithful soul in battle with the enemies of the Lord" (*English Reformation* 73). Underneath the image is the passage from Proverbs 31 of the *mulier fortis*, which was discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Bale's representation of Askew as a "strong woman." The last line in the woodcut's passage from Proverbs 31, "She openeth her mouthe to wysdome / and in her language is the lawe of grace," communicates that a woman is to receive the word of God and is authorized to speak (but not preach) because her words embody God's wisdom. The description of the ideal wife from Proverbs 31 and the Revelation overtones in the woodcut allude to Askew as God's spiritual spouse, similar to the Virgin Mary. Askew becomes the bride from Revelation 21, who symbolizes the true church that now breaks away from the false old church. According to Warner, "in the Apocalypse, the radiant bridal appearance of the Church is preceded by and associated with the 'great wonder in heaven,' already established as a figure of the Virgin" (124). The woodcut, as a reflection of Askew's experience, offers Askew a Marian role as the New Jerusalem, the new reformed church, which overtakes the traditional church. The Proverbs 31

passage, in conjunction with the other two inscriptions that accompany the image of the woman, underscore for readers the representation of Askew in the first examination as a strong, female witness of God's truth and love.

The phrase "the lawe of grace" from Proverbs 31 might also be communicating to readers of the text the reform message that Christ is the only "distributor of grace" (Kreitzer 32). In the Old Testament, God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob and David reveal God's grace, his bestowing of favour and salvation. The "lawe of grace" in the woodcut might be conveying the Protestant belief concerning grace in that it is delivered solely through God, in contrast to the traditional religion's doctrine on grace, which understood it "as accessible through the adoration of intermediary saints" (Hamrick 342). As mentioned above, Martin Luther rejected the representation of Mary and the saints as intercessors. He repudiated the idea that Mary bestowed grace upon individuals who prayed to her. As Kreitzer explains, "Luther insists that grace comes from God through Christ, and neither Mary nor any other person can dispense grace, which he thought was implied by the words *gratia plena*," words used in the *Ave Maria* to describe Mary (31). The woodcut might be communicating that Askew, as a reflection of the woodcut woman, conquers the traditional belief of grace. She establishes the reform doctrine of the "lawe of grace" in which only God through Christ bestows grace. The woodcut woman's holding the book with the word "Biblia" on the front cover would affirm the reform theology of grace as scripturally substantiated.

The next woodcut in the text, which is at the beginning of the latter examination, contains an image of two trees in which one is larger than the other.⁴³ At the bottom of the larger tree are the initials JVK, which “is the printer’s emblem of Johann van Kempen of Cologne” (Beilin, Textual Introduction, Askew xlvi). The woodcut also appears in Bale’s *Rhithmi vetustissimi de corrupto ecclesiae statu*, which is the “Latin poem, the *Apocalyses goliae*” (Evenden and Freeman 75). The *Apocalyses goliae* is from the twelfth century and derides the hierarchical organization of the church (Ziolkowski and Putnam 860). According to Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman, Bale discovered the poem in a manuscript and printed it 1546 as the *Rhithmi vetustissimi* (Evenden and Freeman 75).⁴⁴ McCusker confirms that the *Rhithmi vetustissimi* has “the device of Iohann von Kempen of Cologne, used in the *First examinacyon of Anne Askewe*” (118). Beilin claims that, despite the initials JVK on the woodcut, the text’s printer was

⁴³ The woodcut of the two trees is not in Beilin’s edition, but in Bale’s 1547 edition of Askew’s latter examination.

⁴⁴ Evenden and Freeman note that the *Rhithmi vetustissimi* was included in Matthias Flacius’s *Varia doctorum piorumque virorum* (1557) and attributed to satirist Walter Map (75). Flacius referenced Bale as his source for the poem (Evenden and Freeman 75). In his *Summarium*, Bale assigned “either John of Salisbury or Robert Grosseteste” as the poem’s author, but would later cite Map as its author in his *Catalogus* (1557) (Evenden and Freeman 75-76).

actually Dirik van der Straten whose alias was Theodoricus Plateanus (Textual Introduction, Askew xlvi).⁴⁵

In the woodcut of the two trees, the larger tree's branches are leafless and its roots are exposed, whereas the smaller tree's branches are lush with leaves and its roots are concealed. The smaller tree weaves around the larger tree intimating that it is taking over or choking the life of the larger tree. A banner with the Latin phrase "*Amor Vincit Omnia*" (Love Conquers All) twines through the trees. This phrase originated in Virgil's *Eclogues* 10 initially as "*omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori*" (69) (Love conquers all, and all must yield to love) (Ferry 83) in which the poem's Gallus is "perishing from passion" that he has for Lycoris, who has run off with another man (Perkell 129). In the poem, the line highlights Gallus's anguish as he accepts "that Amor is merciless and powerful" (Williams 132n69). The phrase "*Amor vincit omnia*" appears in Chaucer's "General Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales*. The General Prologue describes the Prioress as wearing "a broche of gold ful shene, / On which ther was write a crowned A, / And after *Amore vincit omnia*" (160-162). The Latin phrase is also the title of Caravaggio's early seventeenth-century painting of the Roman god Cupid. In *The*

⁴⁵ Dirik van der Straten printed many of Bale's texts including *Rhithmi vetustissimi*, *The true hystorie of the Christen departyng of the Reuerende man D. Martyne Luther* (1546), *A Tragedye or enterlude manyfestyng the chefe promyses of God vnto man* (1547), *A brefe comedye of enterlude concernyng the temptacyon of our Lorde* (1547-48), *A comedy concernyng thre lawes* (1548), *A Godly Meditacyon of the christen sowle* (1548), *A treatyse made by Johan Lambert* (1548) and *Ilustrium maioris Britanniae Scriptorum* (1548) (McCusker 118). Based on the research of Robert Steele, McCusker explains that the type used in the above works by Bale "is that of the Marburg press of Tyndale on a new body (82mm. to twenty lines) used in connection with a larger German fount of the same character" (117). According to Steele, the type was not used by Tyndale and "is not in sympathy with the Reformation" (208). Steele states that the type "seems to have fallen into the hands of a Wesel printer [van der Straten], who used it for ordinary trade purposes" (208).

Examinations woodcut, the Latin phrase conveys the message that love for Christ has the power to conquer all evil.

The image of the two trees in the woodcut may symbolize the death of the traditional church due to the development of the Reformation movement. The larger tree represents the traditional church that does not embody true Christianity, but the Antichrist. The tree dies because its roots are out of the soil where it can no longer receive nourishment to grow. The smaller tree represents the reformed church, which has its roots firmly entrenched in the Christian soil as it conquers the larger tree. The Reformation movement will defeat the traditional church because it is predicated on a return to the roots of true Christianity, which are the early church and the Bible. The reform church demonstrates true devotion to, and love for, God that is buttressed by reading the Bible.

The biblical image of the tree begins with Genesis 2 in the Garden of Eden where “out of the grounde made the Lorde God to growe, euery tre that was pleasau[n]t to the sight, and comodious for meate. The tre of lyfe also and the tre of knowledge of good and of euyl” (Gen. 2.[9]). It is also referenced in the Book of Revelation, Chapters 2 and 22. In the letter to Ephesus in Chapter 2, God states, “Lett hym that hath eares, heare what the sprete sayth vnto ye cogregacyo[n]s. To hym that ouercometh, wyll I geue to eate of the tre of lyfe, which is in ye myddes of the Paradyse of God” (Rev. 2.[7]). God offers the tree of life to those who are steadfast in faith and prevail over persecution. The tree of life is mentioned twice in Chapter 22, the final chapter of Revelation. The angel shows to John

a pure ryuer of water of lyfe, clere as Crystall: procedynge out of the seate of God, and the lambe. In the middes of the stret of it, and of ether syde of the ryuer, was ther woode of lyfe: whych bare twelue maner of frutes: & gaue frute euery moneth: & the leues of the wood serued to heale ye people with al. (Rev. 22.[1-2])

The passage alludes to the Old Testament's Book of Ezekiel which combines both the river of life and the tree of life to describe the New Israel, the promised land:

“By this ryuer vpon both the sides of the shore, there shall growe all maner of frutefull trees, whose leaues shall not fall of, nether shall their frute perysh: but euer be rype at theyr monethes: for theyr water runneth oute of theyr sanctuarie. Hys frute is good to eate, and his leafe profytable for medicyne” (Ezek. 47. [12]).

The second reference to the tree of life in Chapter 22 states, “Blessed are they that do his comaundementes, that theyr power maye be in the tree of lyfe, and maye entre in thorow the gates into the cytie” (Rev. 22.[14]). These passages communicate that unwavering faith in God is powerful, resulting in everlasting spiritual life. The small tree in the woodcut is a symbol of the reform movement whose leaves will protect God's followers, compared to the tree representing the traditional religion that is bare and lifeless. The reform movement promises that the truth contained in the Bible will protect God's followers and, like the tree of life, will provide eternal life.

The woodcut also includes two passages from the Gospel of John, one above the tree and the other below the tree, which both address the reward

received for one's unwavering belief in God. The top message, "Whosoever lyueth and beleueth in me shall neuere die (Joan. 11)," is spoken by Jesus to Martha in the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The bottom message is from John Chapter 5 in which Jesus cures a man who is ill, blind, and lame. The Jews are upset with Jesus because he broke the Sabbath by curing the man, and also because he called God his father: "My father worketh hitherto, and I worke" (John 5.[17]). Jesus confirms to the crowd that he was sent by God and those that believe in him will have eternal life with God upon death. He states, as in the passage under the tree in the woodcut, "He that heareth my wordes, and beleueth on hym that sent me, hath euerlastynge lyfe, and shall not come into dampnacyon, but passe from deathe vnto lyf" (John 5.[24]). These lines, in conjunction with the two trees and the banner, convey the Reformation tenet of *Sola fide*, "By faith alone," that faith in and love of Christ will produce everlasting life. The woodcut communicates the reformed church's apocalyptic message that it represents the New Jerusalem and is taking over as the true Christian church, teaching the Christian message that love conquers all.

The last woodcut, which immediately follows the woodcut of the trees, is the same woodcut from the first examination, except that a passage from the prophetic Book of Joel Chapter 2 replaces the passage from Proverbs 31. The new inscription states, "I wyll poure out my sprete vpo[n] all flesh (sayeth God) your sonnes and your doughters shall prophecye. And who so euer call on the name of the lorde shall be saved. Johel. ii." (73). The decision to replace the first

woodcut's bottom inscription with the passage from Joel foreshadows the content and message of the latter examination. Askew states her reform belief on transubstantiation, explaining "that the breade is but a remembrance of hys death, or a sacrament of thankes gevyng for it, wherby we are knytt unto hym by a communyon of Christen love" (104) and that "God wyll be in nothyng that is made with handes of men" (106). Although Askew employs Scripture to defend her belief, she is condemned to death. Bale confirms for his readers that Askew died portraying "the nature of Christes lyvely membre, and of a perfyght christen martyr" (148). She is presented as a suffering subject who is an exemplar for other reformers. The passage also alludes to women speaking the Word of God. The scriptural quotation appears, as well, in the Acts of the Apostle Chapter 2 in Peter's speech at Pentecost. The quotation, in reference to Askew since the woodcut introduces the second examination, suggests that Askew is a reform disciple, who speaks of God's message. Askew as a possible prophetess will be discussed below.

The image of the woman standing over the dragon in the two woodcuts is similar to Albrecht Dürer's early sixteenth-century woodcut of *The Apocalyptic Woman* of the Book of Revelation Chapter 12. Dürer's woodcut features the woman clothed with the sun in a gown wearing a crown, drawing attention to her theological interpretation as the Virgin Mary. She is under attack by the seven dragons also wearing crowns which closely resemble the lone dragon in the woodcut. Dürer's woodcut would probably have been familiar to Bale and his

printer Dirik van der Straten since Dürer's woodcuts were popular in Europe. People scrambled to buy them "almost as soon as they appeared" (Knappe vii). The woodcut may have been chosen because it resembled Dürer's woman clothed with the sun, which would provide Bale's readers with a visual illustration of Askew that reveals her majesty, humility, modesty, and strength, like that of the Virgin Mary. Bale's readers would recognize the Marian and martyrological undercurrents projected in the woodcut. The Virgin Mary's identities as a symbol of the church and as Queen of Heaven were features of the traditional religion. Upon viewing the woodcut, readers might have associated Askew with the woman wearing the crown, but have adapted this association to view Askew as a symbol of the reform church having the power to stamp out the papacy.

The woman in *The Examinations* woodcut differs from Dürer's woman clothed with the sun in that *The Examinations*'s woman has a breast exposed and is holding a palm leaf and a large book with the word "Biblia" inscribed on its front cover. Dürer's woman is fully robed and has her hands clasped in prayer, displaying a valued manifestation of spiritual devotion for women in both the medieval and early modern periods. In the woodcut in Askew's text, the woman's exposed breast is an image associated with medieval devotional images of the Virgin Mary. The paintings and sculptures known as the *Madonna of Humility* display the Virgin Mother, usually seated, with her breast uncovered holding the infant Jesus who is about to nurse. The image, which "originated in Sieneese painting during the fourteenth century," displays the Virgin's maternal identity and

“her humanity and submission to divine will” (“Jacopo della Quercia”). The image of a woman’s exposed breast was also linked with various female saints such as St Agatha of Sicily, St Mary Magdalene, and St Katherine. It was also a visual characteristic of the mythical Amazon women, which was a community of untamed female warriors whose lives were predicated on fighting. Josine Blok explains that Greek intellectuals, who believed that they once existed,

created explanations of their (non-Greek) name, elaborating the common beliefs of what “Amazons” would have been like. Thus their name was either taken to mean *a-mazon*, “without breasts,” suggesting that the Amazons removed one breast to improve their archery; or *a-maza*, “without cereal food,” indicating a life of hunting rather than farming.

Visual illustrations from classical antiquity depicted the Amazons in battle with the Greeks. The theory of the Amazons having surgically removed a breast was not represented in art, “which always featured the Amazons with two breasts” (Blok). The Amazon warrior’s breasts were covered by warrior armor, which still accentuated their female bodies (Blok). Some representations, such as the Greek sculpture *Ephesian Amazon* from approximately the first to second century, has an Amazon warrior exposing one breast, thus underscoring her femaleness. The woman’s exposed breast combined with the “Biblia” presents the woman in *The Examinations* woodcut as a learned warrior whose weapon is the power of the Word. The palm leaf indicates that the woman is victorious in

defeating the dragon. As a reflection of Askew's experience, the woodcut communicates that the reformer Askew is equally victorious in vanquishing her papal examiners with the Word as her weapon.

The woman's breast exposed in *The Examinations* woodcut also calls attention to Askew's humanity and her identity as a female reform martyr that is predicated on the death of her physical body. Her breast is a synecdoche for her body which she sacrifices for her reform beliefs. Moreover, the woman's exposed breast is a symbol of her maternal identity, which highlights Askew's identity as a mother. As mentioned above, Askew was purported to have been the mother of two children. Askew transcends motherhood to become a virgin martyr of the reformed church, which will be discussed further below. The woodcut woman's exposed breast as a symbol of her maternal identity also points to her as the nurturing Mother Church. In relation to *The Examinations*, Askew represents the reformed Mother Church, who through the reform message of *Sola Scriptura*, conquers the traditional church.

The woodcut's "Biblia" speaks to the connection between Askew's learning and her piety. As a reformer, reading the Bible is paramount to the development of Askew's spiritual devotion. As a female, reading, like praying, is a suitable activity in which to display one's learning and piety. Edith Snook notes that reading passages from the Bible "could provide suitably feminine subject matter" (4). As a mirror of Askew, the woman holding the "Biblia" receives a spiritual authority that typically excludes women from such power (Snook 4).

Authorities associated with the traditional religion discouraged women from reading the Bible since it was considered an occupation reserved for ecclesiasts, who, in turn, interpreted Scripture for the laity. Women were encouraged to read devotional texts such as Books of Hours. Some heretical factions such as the Cathars and Waldesians, which gave women increased participation and social status in their religious movements, allowed them to read Scripture and preach (Biller 142).⁴⁶ The Lollard movement also permitted women to read and discuss the scriptures, but they were still dissuaded from preaching on them in public, as noted in Chapter One (McSheffrey 108). Askew's reading of the Bible has her participate, albeit in a limited fashion, in the religious and intellectual occupations of reading and interpreting scripture. As mentioned in Chapter One, the Act for the Advancement of True Religion (1543) permitted Askew to read the Bible in the confines of her home, but she was not permitted to disseminate her interpretations of Scripture publicly.

The woodcut's palm leaf also draws attention to Askew's spiritual learning in that it resembles a writing quill, which would allude to Askew being a writer. The woodcut woman, with a writing instrument in one hand and the *Bibla* in the other, registers with the early modern reform-minded female reader. The woodcut can be interpreted as an evangelical authorization for women to read scriptural material and to write about it in relation to their piety. Women writers, like Askew,

⁴⁶ Peter Biller notes that, even though the Cathars allowed women to preach, there are few documented cases of women preaching and teaching (142). Regarding the Waldensians, women preached primarily on morality and, mostly, to other women in private locations, whereas men preached in public locations with larger, and mixed, audiences (Biller 145).

were authorized by the Reformation to read the Bible and to write of their devotion to God. Elaine Beilin notes that

These writers, in keeping with their era, devoted themselves to regenerating the image of women in the familiar terms of their own culture, not to imagining or advocating a different society in which all women might change their ordained feminine nature for equality with men or public power. (Introduction, *Redeeming Eve* xvii)

Women wrote texts in which the content coincided with the doctrine propounded by the religious authorities and with the patriarchal female prescriptions of piety, chastity, and obedience. For example, Katherine Parr wrote a collection of *Prayers or Meditations*, published in 1545. Her prayers display her humility and service to God. She writes, “O heavenly father, God Almighty, I praie and beseeche thy mercy, benignely to beholde me thy unwoorthly seruaunt.” Parr would wait until Protestantism became the ruling religion before publishing *Lamentations of a Sinner* in 1547, a text described as “the queen’s reading of Protestant and reform-minded Catholic authorities” (Demers 104). Even when Protestantism became the ruling religion after King Henry’s death, women were not to interpret Scripture but to continue writing privately of their devotion to God and its manifestations in their lives.

The woodcut links Askew’s spiritual learning to images of the Virgin Mary that have her standing above, kneeling before, and holding books. As mentioned

above, Annunciation images have Mary reading from a book before she is interrupted by the angel Gabriel. For example, Joos van Cleve's painting *The Annunciation* (c. 1525) has Mary in her bedroom kneeling before a prayer-desk that has a book opened on it. The opened pages are colourful and resemble illuminated pages from a Book of Hours. Duffy notes that there are "a hundred Annunciation scenes" that display the Virgin reading and being startled by the Angel Gabriel (*Marking the Hours* 3). Antonello da Messina's painting *The Virgin Mary Reading* (1460-1462) portrays Mary by herself reading a book. Above her head are two angels holding a bejeweled crown emphasizing Mary's representation as the Queen of Heaven. As well, as discussed above, there are also medieval images of St Anne, Mary's mother, instructing the Virgin on how to read. The images have St Anne either sitting before, or standing behind, Mary with an opened book and her index finger pointing to the words on the page and Mary looking down at it (Sheingorn 70). Such images in Books of Hours of St Anne and Mary, role models of the devout mother and daughter, promoted religious instruction for women through devotional reading (Cullum and Goldberg 232). They also communicate Mary's identity as a reader and as *the* receiver of the Word, not just the literal word on the page but the Word of God; they present the divine relationship between Mary and God. The images of Mary reading present her as a prophetic model of the Christian female reader since she is to become the mother of Jesus Christ; Mary is the vessel that contains the new world. Sarah Boss explains that Mary is the New Testament's response to the Old

Testament's Ark of the Covenant: she is the new "Ark, or perhaps Tabernacle, of the Lord's presence, and . . . she may also be seen as the being out of whom the world is created, and certainly as the one in whom it is re-created" (Introduction 2).

Bale highlights Mary's responsibility as bearer of the Word in his discussion of her in the first examination when he valorizes Askew's reading of the Bible. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bale asserts that many historical women were learned in the Old and New Testaments. He writes that "As we reade of Helisabeth, Marye, and Anna the wydowe, Lu. 1 and 2. yet were they not rebuked for it. yea, Marye Christes mother retayned all, that was afterward written of hym, Luc. 2. yet was it not imputed unto her an offence" (30). Bale's statement reflects the inclusion of women in the reform belief that individuals should read the Bible. Bale does not equate women discussing the Bible with women preaching upon the Bible. As evidence, Bale points to the first chapters of Luke in which he observes that Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna were not punished for reading Scripture. Interestingly, Bale refers to Anna as a "wydowe" (30) in his reference to scriptural women reading the Bible even though she is identified as both "a Prophetisse" (Luke 2.[36]) and "a wedowe" (Luke 2.[37]). Bale perhaps chooses to recognize Anna as a widow rather than a prophetess because he might associate female prophesying with rebellious female behavior which results in punishment and death. In 1534, the nun Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, was hanged for stating that she had a revelation from God that if King Henry divorced

Katherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn he would no longer be king. Bale refers to Barton in his Prologue, stating that there were no miracles at “the holye mayde of [Kent’s]” death (7). Bale does not want to align Askew with female prophetesses or with transgressive women. Identifying Anna as a widow eliminates any association of women prophetesses with Askew. As well, Bale may associate female prophesying with preaching, which was a male occupation. Bale’s reform views encourage women to discuss the Bible, but not preach upon it. He understands that women are capable of reading from and conversing about the Bible, but he is shaped by his patriarchal society that does not grant women the intellectual authority to educate society.

Bale’s reference to Luke Chapter 2 draws attention to Mary’s portrayal as a reader and as a listener who meditates and ponders on what her son says to her and on what others have told her about her son. In the description of the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the shepherds to see him, Luke states that the shepherds

came w[i]t[h] hast, & founde Mary a[n]d Ioseph & the babe layde in a manger. And when they had sene it, they publissed a brode the sayinge, which was tolde them of that chylde. And all they that hearde it, wondred at those thynges which were tolde the[m] of the shepherdes. But Mary kepte all those saienges, and pondered them in her hert. (Luke 2.[16-19])

In his research on John Milton’s portrayal of Mary in *Paradise Regained*, Dayton Haskin notes that Luke’s use of the Greek “word *syballousa* (2.19), rendered

conferens in the Vulgate and ‘pondered’ in the English versions,” suggests that Mary meditated on her experiences (133, 138). In Luke 2.51, Mary retains in her “hert” the words Jesus speaks to her and Joseph upon finding him in the temple. The biblical passage asserts that Jesus’s parents did not understand what he said to them, “But his mother kept all these sayenges together in her hert” (Luke 2.[51]). Haskin explains that “The heart was often used to be the locus of one’s most private and intimate thoughts” (133). These biblical moments of Mary meditating illustrates that she “had brought forth the Word *to* her child as well as *in* him” (Haskin 131). Haskin argues that Milton presents Mary as a “responsible reader” because she “[ponders] over the meaning of God’s words” and “actively seeks out meaning” (136). Like Milton, Bale understands Mary as exemplary, but not the exalted figure advanced by the traditional church. Milton portrays “Mary as a model for all disciples, male and female” (Haskin 131). Similarly, Bale aligns Askew with Mary, a role model, by citing Luke Chapter 2, which encourages his readers to appreciate the similarities between Askew and Mary. Askew’s reading of the Bible is a meditation on the Word just as Mary meditates on what Christ and others say to her. In her examination by the Bishop’s Chancellor, Askew asserts that her Bible reading was not intended “to speake in the congregacyon by the waye of teachynge” (30). Bale presents Askew as a “responsible reader” like Mary; Askew’s reading is a form of contemplation and prayer bringing her closer to God through the Word.

In a letter to his friend Peter entitled “A Simple Way to Pray, Good Friend,” published in 1535, Martin Luther signals the relationship of reading to prayer and its effects on creating a meditative, spiritual experience with God. Luther states that he reads “the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and if I have time, some sayings of Christ or some verses of Paul and the Psalms” (125). Reading and then meditating on the messages found in devotional and scriptural passages “stir up and instruct your heart so that you may know what thoughts to lay hold of in the Lord’s Prayer. When your heart is properly warmed and in a mood for prayer, you may express such thoughts with different words and perhaps with fewer words or more” (Luther, “A Simple Way” 127). Reading leads to a meditative experience in which “the Holy Ghost is preaching here” (Luther, “A Simple Way” 127). Luther’s statements communicate the reform belief that the laity should have unmediated access to the Bible because it leads to a more personal spiritual relationship with God. Bale’s presentation of Askew as a reader demonstrates Luther’s belief that reading leads to meditation. It also portrays Askew as a sensitive reader, bearing the Word in her heart similar to Mary’s representation in Luke. Askew may not bear God in her womb like Mary, but, like Mary, “The Gospell of Christ bare she in her harte” (*The Examinations* 9).

Bale’s reference to Luke might remind the reader that the Gospel’s first chapter contains the Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55), Mary’s song of praise in which she presents herself as a servant to God. Mary voices adoration of God after the Annunciation and her visit with Elizabeth. In the Magnificat Mary thanks God for

what he “had wrought in her and for the salvation that has been given to Israel” (McIver and Wagner 43). Mary’s praise for God begins with “My soule magnifieth the Lord. And my sprete reioyseth in God my sauour For he hath looked on the lowe degre of hys hande mayden: for lo: now from hence forth shall all generacions call me blessed” (Luke 1.[46-48]). Mary fervently affirms her humility and servitude before God. Bale’s representation of Askew is comparable to Mary’s obedience to God, and it may have been informed by Luther’s *Commentary*. Luther writes that Mary “confesseth here frely that she is a handmayde[n] & seruaunte of all the world, seying the worke is acco[m]plyshed in her.” Bale writes that Askew, like Mary, is similarly “the worthye servaunt of God” (19).

To fashion Askew with Marian characteristics and identities, Bale must address the most significant characteristic of the Virgin Mary, that being her virginity. God spares Mary her virginity during Christ’s conception, hence physically distinguishing her from other women. In Chapter One, I examined Askew’s virginity in relation to Bale’s representation of her as a martyr. But Bale also identifies Askew as a virgin in a Marian sense. Bale, in his discussion against church ceremonies that are not mentioned in the Bible, states that Askew

wolde corrupt her faythe with no soche beggerye, least she in so doynge shuld admitt them and their pope to sytt in her conscyence above the eternall God, whych is their daylye stodye, 2 Thes. 2, A vrygyne was she in that behalf, redemed from the earthe and

folowyng the lambe, and havynge in her forehead the fathers
name written. (61)

For Bale, Askew's spiritual rebirth and incorruptible devotion to God are equivalent to her being reborn as a virgin in the spiritual sense.⁴⁷ Askew's spiritual virginity is similar to Margery Kempe becoming a "virgin" after having fourteen children. With Christ's help, "Margery is to be remade as a virgin" (Salih, *Versions* 181). When Christ informs her that she "is with child," Margery responds, "Lord, I am not worthy to hear you speak and thus to common with my husband" (36). Christ tells her, "for of unworthy I make worthy, and of sinful I make rightful. And so have I made you worthy to me, once loved and evermore loved with me" (37). Margery makes the transformation into a spiritually intact virgin possible because she has "despised" herself (Kempe 37).⁴⁸ Margery's and Askew's rebirths as virgins point to the representation of virginity in medieval and early modern literatures as a permeable, transcendent state and not solely as a reference to a sexually intact body (Salih, *Versions* 182). As Salih notes, virginity can be either a secular or religious state (*Versions* 16).

Megan Hickerson focuses on Bonner's examination of Askew to explain Bale's representation of Askew as a "virgin" similar to Mary. Bonner questions Askew's "honesty" which, Hickerson asserts, is a questioning of her chastity (67). After the exchange between Bonner and Askew, Bale, understanding that Askew's

⁴⁷ For further discussion of "spiritual" virginity see Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih, eds. *Medieval Virginites*.

⁴⁸ See further Salih, *Versions* 181.

chastity has been questioned, lambastes priests as using celibacy to be licentious.

Hickerson contends that,

Like Mary, Askew is innocent, not because she has lived a physically chaste life, but because she has committed her soul to God, which is evident in her rejection of “soche beggarye”--the man-made traditions of the anti-Christian church. This makes her sexual history--her disorderliness--irrelevant. It makes her chaste; even a virgin. (69)

Askew becomes a spiritual virgin because she changes her life by leaving her husband and devoting herself to God, thus becoming spiritually reborn and intact.

Bale's employment of devotional identities associated with the Virgin Mary for his heroine Askew displays a give and take relationship that reveals fondness for and adoration of Christ's mother. Bale ensures that his loyalty to Mary does not convey a saints' cult form of worship of Mary but is rather an appropriation of Marian devotion that communicates central tenets of reform theology. Reformers scrutinized Marian devotion, removing Marian feasts from the church calendar that had no scriptural evidence to support the celebration, and eliminating prayers dedicated to the Virgin from their primers. For instance, John Foxe attacked the cult of the Virgin in his marginal notes to the Psalter of Our Lady. His assault articulated the reform polemic against Mary's role as intercessor (Freeman, “Offending” 229-230).

In the late sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, “renewed interest in the Virgin’s earthly life and its connection with her Son’s led to a significant revival of poetry about her, even as the cult of the Virgin, in the English consciousness, was being replaced by that of the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth” (Spurr 35). Thomas Bentley in his *Monument of Matrones* (1582), which features the writings of devout women, Askew included, employs the Virgin Mary and other biblical women as role models for his female readers (B. 2.). In *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), Amelia Lanyer presents the Virgin Mary as the “most beauteous Queene of Woman-kind” (1039) as she silently grieves at her Son’s crucifixion.⁴⁹ The Virgin was a symbol of *the* virtuous woman for a patriarchal society that demanded women to be “pious, humble, constant, and patient, as well as, obedient, chaste, and silent” (Beilin, Introduction, *Redeeming* xix).

Bale’s Marian shaping of Askew during her examination with her interrogators does not include the Virgin Mary’s obedience and silent nature. Bale does not silence Askew, nor does he urge her to be obedient to these men. Instead, he relishes each time Askew frustrates her male examiners through her rhetorical skill. Bale appreciates that she must transgress the valued virtues for women so as

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Lanyer, in “To the Vertuous Reader,” shares a similar defiance of male authority that Askew demonstrates during the examinations. Lanyer confirms that she “has written this small volume, or little booke, for the generall use of all virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen of this kingdome” (48). She criticizes “evill disposed men, who forgetting they were borne of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world” (48). Like Askew, Lanyer employs a religious argument to justify women’s actions and their speech. Lanyer asserts that “God himselfe, . . . gave power to wise and virtuous women” (49). As mentioned above, Askew defends female speech in her explication of “Paules meanyng” to the Bishop’s Chancellor, asserting that women can speak the Word of God, but not preach it (30).

to defend her reform beliefs to the anti-Christian examiners. But Bale incorporates Marian characteristics in his representation of Askew to enhance and heighten her spirituality, thus making Askew an exemplar of a reform *mulier fortis*.

In the next chapter, I will continue the discussion of the representation of Askew as an early modern *mulier fortis* by examining John Foxe's hagiographical presentation of Askew in his *Acts and Monuments*. Foxe is writing during the mid to late sixteenth century in an environment that has just recently returned to Protestantism. I will explore the hagiographical representation of Askew and its reliance on late medieval religiosity, but how it now reflects the concerns of Elizabethan society.

Chapter Four: The Medieval Influences in John Foxe's Representation of Anne Askew

On January 28, 1547, six months after Anne Askew's burning at the stake, King Henry VIII died resulting in the accession of his son Edward VI as King of England and the development of England as an official Protestant state. Reform treatises which had previously been forbidden in England could now be published and disseminated without fear of persecution. John Bale's editions of Askew's *Examinations* circulated freely in England.⁵⁰ Askew's text was reprinted several times during King Edward's reign in 1547, 1548, and 1550. In 1553, King Edward died and his half-sister Mary ascended to the throne, reinstating Roman Catholicism in England and suppressing the publication of Protestant texts. During the reign of "Bloody Mary," English evangelical writers fled to the Continent in fear of being killed for their views and their writings. Over three hundred evangelicals were killed during Queen Mary's five year rule (MacCulloch *The Reformation* 285). Upon Mary's death in 1558, her half-sister Elizabeth ascended to the throne and Protestantism returned as the country's established religion, permitting the recirculation of Protestant-minded texts. *The Examinations* was published again around 1560 and as part of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in 1563.⁵¹

⁵⁰ For further reading on the textual history of Askew's *Examinations*, see Beilin, Textual Introduction xlv-lvii.

⁵¹ Elaine Beilin is unsure of the exact dating of the 1560 edition, which is a single copy. Similar to the 1548 and 1550 publications, this edition does not include Bale's commentary (Textual Introduction lii).

This chapter will investigate Foxe's treatment of Askew and the inclusion of her text in his history of Protestantism in England. The first section of this chapter will investigate the medieval hagiographical sources, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* and Caxton's translation of Jacobus's work, the *Golden Legend*, as texts that may have influenced Foxe. The chapter's second section will investigate Foxe's shaping of Askew with respect to the torture she endured at the hands of her interrogators. I will also discuss his handling of her as a married martyr in comparison, and in contrast, to his treatment of the wife of the Prest, as well as such married saints as Pauline and Elizabeth as they appear in the *Legenda aurea* and the *Golden Legend*. In particular, I will discuss Foxe's treatment of Askew's refusal to discuss her marriage with her examiners and the reason why he chooses not to provide an explanation similar to that given by Bale. Foxe's silence on Askew's marriage is also different from Jacobus's presentation of the typical married saint's renunciation of her marriage as an affirmation of her Christianity and virtuous persona. As well, Foxe does not narrate his martyr's story as does Jacobus, nor does he include a running commentary as does Bale. Instead, Foxe strategically interrupts Askew's dialogue with her readers on two separate occasions to provide further details of her incarcerations that were not included in Bale's edition. This chapter will investigate these narratorial interventions, which demonstrate Foxe's masculine control over the female narrative framework.

The third section of the chapter will discuss the possible influence that John Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine* had on Foxe's decision not to narrate

Askew's story. Both texts allow the heroine to speak her own words exclusively, providing an extended presentation of the female voice. The section explores how this representation of Askew might have appealed to early modern readers. This investigation contributes to a consideration of the specific impact of medieval hagiography on Foxe's shaping of Askew as an exemplary English female martyr and *mulier fortis*. Capgrave was a prolific medieval writer and his version of St Katherine's legend is the most extensive from that period. Karen Winstead notes that, compared to all of his other writing, Capgrave's *Saint Katherine* had "the broadest circulation, liberally using the techniques of popular romance to appeal to a general audience 'of man, mayde, and wyffe'" (*John Capgrave's* 60). Foxe would have been aware of Capgrave's text and had possibly read it before undertaking his mammoth project with an eye on how to represent female martyrs and how these representations could best be received by his readers.

I. Jacobus's *Legenda aurea* and Caxton's *Golden Legend*: Hagiographical Sources for Foxe

John Foxe was born in the early years of the sixteenth century, a period marked by demands for religious reform by figures such as Erasmus, Luther, and Tyndale. Foxe was educated at Oxford, but he left before officially becoming a priest because of his attraction to reform views.⁵² In 1548 he met John Bale, who would influence his martyrological writings and his employment of medieval

⁵² For John Foxe's biography see Thomas Freeman, "Foxe, John (1516/17-1587)."

hagiographical conventions. Thomas Freeman maintains that Bale lent Foxe “valuable manuscripts” from his extensive collection and probably encouraged Foxe to write the *Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum*, Foxe’s first martyrology (“Foxe”). Written in Latin, the *Commentarii rerum* details the suffering of English and Continental reform martyrs beginning with John Wycliffe.

Upon Queen Mary’s accession to the throne, Foxe left for the Continent with other reformers including Bale when it became too dangerous for reformers to remain in England. While self-exiled, Foxe was fairly productive, for he not only wrote the *Commentarii rerum*, but also a drama on the history of the reformed church, a book on how to improve memory, and a treatise on the persecution of reformers. In 1559, Foxe published a second Latin martyrology, *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum commentarii*, a six volume collection. The first volume “was largely a reprint of Foxe's 1554 martyrology with some additions,” and the second volume focused on the martyrdoms occurring during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI (Freeman, “Foxe”). The four remaining volumes of the collection document the persecutions of the Marian martyrs. The *Rerum in ecclesia* contains Bale’s edition of Askew’s *Examinations* with his commentary, which Foxe translated into Latin.

Foxe returned to England after Queen Mary’s death and began work on what would become his most comprehensive martyrology, the *Acts and Monuments*, also known as the *Book of Martyrs*. David Loades notes that there

were two predominant reasons why Foxe chose to write a history of the English Protestant church:

Firstly, England had just become officially Protestant, the most important state so far to have taken such a step, and this required justification. Secondly, Catholic practice in attacking the Reformers was to demand rhetorically “where was your church before Luther?”: to them “reform” was merely a pretext for destruction and plunder, and the whole doctrinal basis was a recent innovation (both “recent” and “innovation” being pejorative terms in the sixteenth century). To be Good, any thing, especially in the Church, needed to be Old; and there was a corresponding supposition that the Old was usually Good. (“Foxe’s *Book*”)

Foxe represented the Protestant church as the true apostolic church that was anything but novel. He portrayed the church as a historical, pervasive, and persistent institution in England. His history, which begins in 1000 CE, detailed the stories of courageous followers who endured atrocities perpetrated by the papacy. Such stories of church-sanctioned violence would also counter the conservatives’ argument that it was members of the reformed church who were violent and were destroying the traditional church.

Loades describes Foxe’s text as having a “scissors and paste” construction since it incorporates “letters, transcripts from bishops’ registers, eyewitness accounts taken down verbatim, and other verbal testimony” for his individual

martyr stories (“Foxye’s *Book*”). He also uses the martyr’s own writings such as Askew’s, when available. During Foxye’s life, the *Acts and Monuments* would go through four editions (1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583). These editions were not identical as some martyr stories were changed from one edition to the next. For instance, in the 1570 edition, Foxye’s account of Askew’s latter examination includes a discussion of Sir Anthony Knevet’s attempt to stop her racking, which was not included in the 1563 edition. According to Thomas Freeman and Sarah Wall, Foxye probably acquired the information regarding Knevet’s efforts from “an interview with an informant” that occurred after 1563 but before 1570 (1184). The informant may have been a soldier who was in the Tower of London during Askew’s racking (Freeman and Wall 1184).

Critics such as John King have argued that Foxye compiled the *Acts and Monuments* to unseat the *Legenda aurea*, the medieval hagiographical collection celebrating the saints and martyrs of the Catholic church. In his 1563 edition, Foxye asserts that the lives of the reform martyrs deserve to be recorded more than the lives of the martyrs of the Catholic church: “Now then if Martyrs are to be compared with Martyrs, I see no cause why the Martyrs of our time deserue not as great commendation as the other in the primitiue church, which assuredly are inferiour vnto them in no point of praise” (16). Believing the reform martyrs to be superior in faith to the Catholic martyrs, Foxye felt it was his duty to document their lives. He writes that

seinge wee haue found so famous Martyrs in this our age, let vs not faile then in publishing and setting fourth their doinges, least in that point we seme more vnkinde to them, then the writers of the primatiue church were vnto theirs. And though we repute not their ashes, chaines, and swerdes in the stede of reliques: yet let vs yelde thus muche vnto their commemoration, to glorifie the Lord in his Saintes, and imitate their death (as muche as we maye) with like constancy, or their liues at the least with like innocencye. (16)

Foxe articulates the reformist position against saints' cults in distinguishing the superiority of the reform martyr over the Catholic martyr. Rather than celebrate a saint's relics, which reformers believed was based on superstition, Foxe's text would celebrate the saint's witnessing of his faith. He describes the *Golden Legend* in his Latin preface to the 1570 edition "as a collection 'filled with prodigious portents and most empty and utterly vain fictions' that enables 'those Papists and impure monks to wallow in the ridiculous portents of their miracles'" (King, "Literary Aspects"). *Acts and Monuments* would become the new exemplar by which hagiographies would be judged. It would be free of fabulous stories in its historical documentation of reform martyrs in England, displaying for its readers the features of the true martyr.

Unlike Foxe, Jacobus, who was the Archbishop of Genoa and known throughout Italy during the thirteenth century for his preaching, did not set out to chronicle the history of the Christian church, but to compile saints' legends in

Latin for members of the church. Sherry Reames argues that the *Legenda aurea* was a priest's companion for use in delivering sermons and was designed to assist the church in suppressing heresy (86, 133). Jacobus's research on the saints contrasted with Foxe's archival methods that attempted to present factual information pertaining to the martyrs' experiences and their lives. According to Aviad Kleinberg, Jacobus "generally reworked existing versions of saints' Lives. At times he abbreviated and revised one version; at others he borrowed from several sources, creating his own mélange" (240). Kleinberg asserts that Jacobus's text relied on over one hundred different "sources from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," those including "the Apocrypha, the church fathers, contemporary chronicles, liturgical texts, and encyclopedic works" (240).⁵³ Jacobus initially entitled his text *Legenda sanctorum*, but soon after its publication it became known as *Legenda aurea* because its readers "considered it worth its weight in gold" (Ott).

In the fourteenth century, the *Legenda aurea* was translated into French by Jean de Vignay and entitled the *Legende dorée*. In the mid-fifteenth century, the *Legende dorée* was anonymously translated into the English vernacular *Gilte Legende*, which survives in eight manuscripts. William Caxton established the printing press in England in 1476 and produced another English version of *Legenda aurea* (1483) for medieval readers. N.F. Blake claims that Caxton's *Golden Legend* is an amalgamation of Jacobus's Latin text, Jean's French text,

⁵³ For further discussion of Jacobus's sources see Tracy 23-24.

and the *Gilte Legende* (William Caxton 37). Blake's evidence is found in Caxton's Prologue to the *Golden Legend*:

for as moche as I had by me a legende in frensshe, another in latyn,
and the thyrd in englysshe, which varied in many and dyuers
places, and also many hystoryes were comprysed in the two other
bookes whiche were not in the englysshe book, and therefore I haue
wryton one oute of the sayd thre bookes, which I haue ordryd
otherwyse than the sayd englysshe legende is whiche was tofore
made. (iv)

Jacobus's compilation is arranged according to the liturgical calendar, thus into five distinct periods: Advent to Christmas; Christmas to Septuagesima; Septuagesima to Easter; Easter to Octave of Pentecost; and Octave of Pentecost to Advent (Ott). The *Legenda aurea* begins with a discussion of the church divisions of the year. Each martyr's legend is situated within one of these divisions according to the church calendar and positioned by the date of his or her feast day. The first saint's life is that of St Andrew the Apostle (November 30th); the final saint's life in the collection is that of St Pelagius the Pope. The book concludes with a set of careful instructions on the procedure to follow when dedicating a church.

Caxton's *Golden Legend* differs from Jacobus's compilation in that his version includes stories from the Old Testament such as the histories of Adam and Noah, and the story of Moses, which are not found in the original. He also

includes saints not found in the *Legenda aurea* such as St Thomas Aquinas and St Erkenwald, whose cults were established after Jacobus's death. Caxton incorporates as well a number of English saints, such as St Edmund of Abingdon, archbishop of Canterbury (c.1175-1240); St Hugh of Lincoln; and St Edmund, King of East Anglia. These saints reflect the added English content that would appeal to Caxton's readers. A combination of Caxton's nationalistic, devotional, and commercial senses might have produced these changes. According to Blake, "Printing and publishing were an extension of his mercantile business; he was not a gentlemen scholar-printer as some have portrayed him" ("Caxton"). His decision to reorganize the *Legenda aurea* and add new saints was not based solely on a desire to develop further the religiosity of his readers. For example, Caxton "did not publish the writings of the English mystics" even though they attracted the attention of English readers during his time (Blake "Caxton"). Gail Ashton suggests that Caxton's purpose in publishing the collection was "simply to allow wider access to these popular tales of Christian edification, to compile a series of devotional, and yet entertaining, texts in the role of translator and compiler rather than preacher" (41). Restructuring and reinventing the *Golden Legend* may have made good business sense to Caxton. His translation would be the new and improved version of saints' lives that would address English readers' interest in the saints of their own country.

Similar to Caxton's inclusion of English martyrs in the *Golden Legend*, Foxe presents a historical account in the vernacular of steadfast and virtuous

English martyrs. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is a record of reform heroes battling the traditional church, which he depicts as the Antichrist. His text underscores the longevity of reform beliefs in England and the history of individuals willing to die for those beliefs. Having established Jacobus's and Caxton's texts as possible pretexts for the compilation of the *Acts*, I will now discuss Foxe's representation of Askew as a martyr and the medieval influences that shape his presentation of her.

II. Foxe's Portrayal of Anne Askew as a Martyr

In his reform version of the *Golden Legend*, Foxe describes Askew as a "singular example of Christen constancie" (192). His edition of Askew's *Examinations* contains minimal narratorial interference, which differs from the account produced by his friend Bale. Bale's edition of Askew's examinations has provoked several critiques of his representation of Askew when compared to Foxe's representation. As Thomas Freeman and Sarah Wall point out, such critics as Elaine Beilin, John King, and Diane Watt have [decried]

Bale's edition of Askew as a misreading and mis-shaping of Askew's story, and prefer editions such as Foxe's in which Bale's apparatus does not appear. These advocates for Askew believe that only Foxe's version allows her voice to be heard clearly and liberates her representation of herself. (1167)

On the other hand, Freeman and Wall argue that Foxe actively shapes Askew by inserting adjectives into her writing, by expanding her sentences with additional words, and by dividing her text into paragraphs. Foxe also provides a brief introduction, an explanation of her purported recantation, and a conclusion. As mentioned above, in the 1570 edition Foxe includes, and comments on, the incident of Sir Anthony Knevet's attempt to stop the racking of Askew and his later communication with the king regarding her torture. According to Freeman and Wall, these inclusions and alterations create a much more dramatic presentation of Askew and her story. Although they are not as overt and as pervasive as Bale's elucidations, Foxe's changes are nonetheless additions that shape his portrayal of Askew as a martyr.

Foxe's narrative additions intensify the conflict between the martyr and her oppressors. His interruptions within Askew's narrative, particularly his comments regarding her recantation, are made to validate her inclusion in his tome of martyrs. In the first examination, Askew describes a confrontation between herself and Bishop Bonner, who demands that she sign a recantation confirming her belief in traditional doctrine. Askew declares that he "enveygled and willed me to set my hand" to the recantation (175). She asserts that she signs it, as "I Anne Askew do beleve all manner things contened in the faith of the Catholike church" (175). Following this statement, Foxe includes a passage from Bishop Bonner's Register of what is alleged to be Askew's true recantation, in which she is said to have acknowledged "that after the words of consecratyon be

spoken by the priest accordinge to the common usuage of this church of England there is present really the body and bloud of our savior Jesu Christ” (176).

Pronouncing it to be a forgery, Foxe writes that there is a “double sleight of false coneyaunce” in Bonner’s Register since “she was araigned and condemned before this was registred, and also that she is falsly reported to have put to her hand whyche in dede by this her owne booke appeareth not so to be” (177). Beilin explains that Bonner’s Register indicates that the recantation supposedly signed by Askew was registered in June 1546, which was the date of the second examination, not the first. It is in Askew’s first examination that she asserts that she did sign a document stressing that she believed in the “Catholike church,” thus signifying the universal church (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xxxi).

According to Beilin, the recantation was given the June 1546 date so as “to justify Askew’s subsequent harsh treatment” (Introduction, Askew xxxi).

Foxe intervenes in Askew’s text so as to do damage control. His readers may be aware of Bonner’s Register and the signed recantation, which would result in their questioning his inclusion of her in his text and her martyr status if she indeed recanted. To combat this, Foxe redirects his readers’ interpretation of the recantation by questioning the integrity of Bonner and his Register. Foxe writes, “what credit is to be geven hereafter to such bishops and to such regesters” (175). Because of Foxe’s prominence in the reform community and the authority conferred on the *Acts*, Foxe’s intervention was successful in maintaining Askew’s status as a reform martyr. Instead of ignoring the damaging evidence against

Askew, Foxe presents it and then dismantles it by showing its cracks, revealing to his audience the reasons why it cannot be trusted. The result is that “a potentially subversive subject is brought back into the safe confines of hagiographical genre” with the narrator coming to the assistance of his subject and confirming her religiosity and her commitment to the faith (Heffernan 12-13). Freeman and Wall note that the inclusion of Askew’s *Examinations* in the editions of the *Acts* created a “wide diffusion of her autobiographical account,” making Askew “a celebrated figure” and the subject of the anonymous seventeenth-century ballad, “A Ballad of Anne Askew, Intituled: I am a Woman poore and Blind” (1166).⁵⁴

Foxe, like Jacobus and other hagiographers, presents the ruling authorities as dishonest, corrupt, and bent on destroying the victim, which confirms the martyr as a true Christian. Female victimization is at the heart of Foxe’s presentation of Askew because “it serves to show up the cruelty of his confessional enemies” and to equate his church with the early church which suffered persecution under the Romans (Hickerson 12). In Jacobus’s version of the *Life of St Cecilia*, he, too, focuses on Roman persecution, presenting Almachius as a ruthless oppressor who is determined to kill Cecilia. After ordering the death of Cecilia’s husband because of his Christian faith, Almachius then demands to see Cecilia. In their meeting, he brusquely asks her, “Of what condition art thou?” (695). Cecilia responds in her own words: “I am native born,

⁵⁴ Beilin states that despite Thomas Nashe mentioning the ballad and quoting its “first line in *Have With You to Saffron-Waldon* (1596), the ballad does not appear in the Stationers’ Register until 14 December 1624,” the same date that “A Ballad of Anne Askew” is recorded (Askew, Textual Introduction lvi).

and noble” (695). A discussion follows between them in which Cecilia frustrates Almachius with her responses since she does not state directly that she is a Christian. Jacobus describes the confrontation between Almachius and Cecilia:

Being exceeding wroth at these words, Almachius ordered her to be brought back to her house, and to be burnt in a boiling bath for a day and night. But she remained in the bath as in a cool place, nor felt so much as a drop of sweat. When this was reported to Almachius, he commanded that she be beheaded in the bath. (695)

Almachius’s order cannot be thoroughly accomplished since the executioner is unable to cut off her head. For three days she endures, living with her head barely hanging on to the rest of her body. She finally dies and is buried on the third day, which alludes to her Christ-like persona. Almachius’s words combined with the description of Cecilia’s death present him as violent and brutal. In turn, Cecilia’s defiance and the description of the miracle of her beheading confirm her as a true martyr.

Similarly, in the second examination, specifically the 1570 edition and those that follow, Foxe’s narrative supplements Askew’s own text to demonstrate the cruelty she endures at the hands of her oppressors. After Askew describes her racking by Wriothesley and Baker, Foxe breaks in to inform the reader that these two authorities demanded that Lieutenant Sir Anthony Knevet rack her.⁵⁵

According to Foxe, “because he denied to doo, tendering the weakenes of the

⁵⁵ The 1563 edition records the torturers as Wriothesley and Rich (732).

woma[n], he was threatned therfore greuously of the sayd Wrisley, saying that he woulde signifie hys disobedience vnto the kyng” (*Acts* 1570: 1458). Foxe describes how the examiners,

throwing of theyr gownse, would nedes play the torme[n]tors them selues: first asking her if shee were with childe. To whom she aunsweryng againe, sayd: ye shall not neede to spare for that, but do your wylles vpon me: And so quietlye and paciently praying vnto the Lorde, she abode their tyranny, till her bones and ioyntes almost were pluckt a su[n]der, in such sort, as she was caried away in a chair. (*Acts* 1570: 1458)

Foxe portrays these men as vicious in their removing of their coats so as to be physically unimpeded in inflicting the most damage on Askew’s body. Foxe’s inclusion of their questioning if she is pregnant heightens the torture scene by alluding to the possibility of an unborn child, an innocent victim who will suffer from the torture administered to Askew. The question also underscores the features of Askew’s womanhood, identifying her as a female, as a wife, and as a potential mother. The torture scene spotlights Askew’s physical vulnerability as a woman.

Askew’s response that they need not worry if she is pregnant implies that she is not. If we connect this answer to her refusal to respond to her examiners’ questions about her husband Kyme, Foxe’s representation of her borders on that of a medieval virgin martyr. Unlike Bale, Foxe does not intervene in Askew’s

narrative to provide a scriptural authorization for her leaving her husband. Since he does not comment on or verify her marital status, she could be understood as not married, not with child, and therefore chaste, if not physiologically a virgin. Askew's torture as a virgin martyr suggests a threat of rape, which illustrates medieval hagiography's "gender specific narrative" of female saints being sexually threatened by male pagan rulers (Gravdal 22). As Kathryn Gravdal explains, before a female saint's death scene the story usually includes an episode suggesting sexual violence: "The construction of sexual assault runs through hagiography like a shining thread in a tapestry, highly valued and useful" (22). The threat of sexual violence emphasizes the female martyr's virginity, which then lessens her "inferior female nature"; the female martyr becomes "like a man, *vir*, through virginity" (Gravdal 22). The sexual assault threat directed at Askew portrays her as a female *miles Christi*, a "soldier of Christ," facing brute savagery and battling heathen persecutors for her Christian faith (Gravdal 23). With no confirmation of her marriage, no mention of her two children, and no child on the way, Askew's tortured body remains virginal and becomes a symbol of her dedication to Christ and her willingness to die for him. Her death solidifies her martyrdom and her soul is deemed to have entered heaven to be with Christ, her spiritual spouse, and the other martyrs and saints.

Askew's torture parallels the torture of virgin martyrs like St Katherine of Alexandria whose oppressor, Maxentius, builds a machine with "four wheels of iron, environed with sharpe rasours, cutting soo that she myght be horribly al

detrenched & cutte in that torment” (Caxton 1112). Fortunately for Katherine, God hears her prayers and breaks the machine before she feels any pain. But, unfortunately, Maxentius’s anger and frustration continue to increase and Katherine is beheaded. Other virgin martyrs also suffer violent crimes: St Barbara has all her clothes removed, is beaten, and has her breasts cut off; and St Julian’s clothes are also removed and she is forced to endure a beating before being strapped to a wheel pulled by horses. Foxt’s description of Askew’s torture underscores the medieval hagiographical focus on the female body as a symbol of her weakness against the male oppressor but also as a symbol of power. The virgin martyr’s sublime body is an inherent feature of her status: it is tormented by her male torturers but never sexually violated, thus kept “intact” upon death for her spiritual spouse.

Gravdal claims that descriptions of the female body being helpless, tortured and at risk in medieval saints’ lives creates moments of voyeurism for the listener or reader. The descriptions of breasts and of naked limbs produce “a licit space that permits the audience” to dwell excessively and inappropriately on the female body (Gravdal 24).⁵⁶ Saints’ lives such as St Agatha’s tantalize the reader with sexualized images of the female body. Jacobus describes Agatha as “endowed with great beauty” and devoted to God since she was a child (157). Agatha was sought after by Quintianus, the consul of Sicily, who “longed to enjoy Agatha’s beauty” (157). When she refused his advances and insulted his pagan

⁵⁶ See also Ashton 145.

religion he placed her on a rack and ordered her breasts to “be roughly twisted” and cut off (159). Agatha’s breasts are restored to her body later that evening after St Peter visits her in prison, thus leaving her body undamaged for Christ. As Ashton notes, “The female breast *is* a marker of sexual difference, and any attack is a sexual assault upon the virginal, female body” (152).

Virgin martyr torture scenes locate the female body in peril, creating a prurient curiosity in readers. Foxe’s audience might justify such curiosity in Askew’s torture scene by conjecturing that she agreed to the torture since she tells the examiners to “do your wylles vpon me,” and then “quietlye and paciently” endures their abuse with no retaliation (1570: 1458). The episode intimates a gang rape as both men throw off their gowns, tear her limbs, and leave her in pain. Askew withstands the persecution and suffers in silence. Through violence, and the intimation that it is sexual violence, Foxe casts Askew as “surrendering her body to Christ,” which in turn confirms his presentation of her as a martyr and a spiritual spouse (Ashton 145).

Foxe’s presentation of Askew as a putative virgin martyr and his silence regarding her estrangement from her marriage may point to his own historical context. Foxe dedicates his 1563 edition to Queen Elizabeth I who is not married. He compares her to Constantine in her bringing about true Christianity in England. Foxe writes,

At length the Lord sent this mild Constantinus, to cease bloud, to staye persecution, to refreshe his people. In much like maner what

bitter blastes, what smarting stormes haue been felt in England
 duryng the space of certaine yeares, till at last Gods pitifull grace
 sent vs youre Maiestie to quenche fier brandes, to asswage rage, to
 releaue innocentes. (*Acts* 1563: 6)

Queen Elizabeth's virginal status was a formidable cultural phenomenon that presented her as being in "a symbolic marriage with England as her husband" (J. King, "Queen Elizabeth I" 30). Her virginity was celebrated in art and in such literary works as Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96). Foxe's representation of Askew as a virgin martyr aligns with the cultural representation of Queen Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen. Askew is a leader in faith, similar to Queen Elizabeth, the "representative of the English Church and the Protestant English nation" (Hackett 3). Although Marian iconography was also employed in the representations of Queen Mary, Foxe would not have aligned his representation of Askew as a virgin martyr with Queen Mary since she restored Catholicism in England. Foxe describes her reign as the "rage of Quene Maries persecution," underscoring the fact that over three hundred reformers were killed during her rule (1563: 1754).

Foxe's silence on Askew leaving her husband and children contrasts with his discussion of the wife of Prest leaving her papist husband and children. Foxe presents the wife, who was martyred in 1558, as choosing to leave her husband, a decision that was influenced by "a direct suggestion [to her] from God himself" (Monta 13). Foxe writes that the wife

made her prayer vnto God, callyng for helpe & mercy, & so at length lying in her bed, about midnight, she thought there came to her a certeine motion and feelyng of singular comfort. Wherupon in short space, she began to grow in contempt of her husband & childre[n], & so taking nothing fro[m] them, but euen as she went, departed from them, seekyng her liuyng by labour and spinnyng, as well as she could, here and there, for a time. (1570: 2289)⁵⁷

Susannah Brietz Monta explains that, in the late sixteenth century, “patriarchal marriage theory allowed such wifely disobedience only when the wife’s soul was in jeopardy” (13). In her first examination, the wife denies transubstantiation but is released because her examiners believe she is “not in her perfect witte” (1570: 2290). According to Foxe, “Then was her husband sent for, but she refused to go home with him, with the blemishe of the cause and Religion, in defense wherof she there stode before the Byshop and the Priestes” (1570: 2290). The wife of Prest will not leave with her husband because she is “contented to sticke onely to Christ my heauenly spouse, and renounce the other” (1570: 2289). Foxe supports the wife’s decision not to remain with her husband because it is predicated on her faith and her spiritual marriage with Christ. Foxe’s approval is similar to Bale’s scriptural justification of Askew leaving her husband in that the wife of Prest’s estrangement from her husband is acceptable since her husband opposes her

⁵⁷ There is no mention of the wife leaving her husband in the 1563 edition of the *Acts*. As well, the 1563 version does not include the wife’s dialogue with her examiners, which is in the 1570 edition. More details regarding her examinations, discussions with people, and her incarcerations are added to the 1570 edition. Foxe may have received further information and documents pertaining to the wife of Prest after the publication of the 1563 edition.

reform beliefs. Although Foxe applauds the wife's departure from her papist family, he communicates an uneasiness regarding her transgression at the end of her story when he identifies her as "the wife of one called Prest" (1570: 2292). Monta explains that even though Foxe insists that his readers accept this woman as a martyr because she demonstrates resolute devotion to her reform faith "despite familial and society pressures," he paradoxically chooses to recognize "her only by the marital relationship which her martyrdom eschewed" (Monta 15). Foxe concludes his narration of the wife of Prest's martyrdom "by returning her--textually, at least--to her husband" (Monta 14).

Foxe's silence on Askew's estrangement compared to his endorsement of the wife of Prest's might point to Foxe believing that Askew extensively demonstrated and articulated her devotion to God which justified her leaving her papist husband. Foxe may have felt that the wife of Prest needed further assistance in confirming her devotion to God since she was not as learned as Askew. Foxe states that the wife "was of such simplicity and without learning," but yet could "recite to you the names of all the bookes of the Bible" (1570: 2291). The wife of Prest does not recite scriptural passages during her examination like Askew; the wife refers to passages from the Bible but does not name the book from which she cites. As well, her story is short and not as developed as Askew's, which might have required Foxe to intervene by adding more narratorial passages so as to assert and justify her martyrdom.

Unlike his shaping of the wife of Prest's marital situation, Foxe's treatment of Askew's estrangement from her husband is not a concern for him when it comes to the legitimacy and authority of her spiritual virginity and martyrdom. Foxe's representation of the wife of Prest leaving her husband aligns with Jacobus's and Caxton's representations of married martyrs. In the legend of St Elizabeth, Jacobus explains that her

husband is worthy of praise, for although he was concerned with a great number of affairs, he was yet devout in the service of God; and since he could not personally see to these matters, he provided his wife with the means of attending to all that regarded God's honour and the salvation of his soul. (681)

Caxton feels the need to inform his readers of St Pauline's husband's death and spin the abandonment of her children positively in terms of her dedication to Jesus Christ. He writes that "thamerous desyre that she had to Jhesu cryst surmounted the loue that she had to her chyldren" (370-371). Similar to Foxe explaining the wife of Prest's marital status, Jacobus and Caxton address the marital situations of their married martyrs, as if anticipating questions from their readers regarding whether these women were subject to the authority of fathers or husbands and whether these women acted according to prescribed female values. Foxe, Jacobus, and Caxton provide explanations for these heroines' transgressive behaviours. As for Askew, Foxe's silence conveys his belief that her account of her examinations

sufficiently communicates her martyrdom and her leadership in promoting reform beliefs, which trump her estrangement from her husband.

Overall, Foxe's representations of female martyrs in the *Acts* are similar to his representation of Askew in that he draws on typical conventional medieval hagiographical conventions to fashion them as martyrs. As shown above with the wife of Prest, Foxe does not summarize the responses of his female martyrs during their examinations, thus allowing them to speak, which facilitates in presenting them as forthright and rhetorically skilful. The wife of Prest's responses to the Bishop's questions regarding the bread cause the Bishop to ask "in what scholes haue you bene brought vp?" (1570: 2290). The wife states, "I have vpon the Sondayes visited the Sermons, and there haue I learned suche thinges, as are so fixed in my brest, that death shall not separate them (1570: 2290). According to Foxe, the wife of Prest also impressed "the wife of one Walter Rauley" with her speaking skills when she came to visit her in prison. Foxe writes that Rauley's wife had "neuer heard a woman (of such simplicity to see to) talke so godly, so perfectly, so sincerely, and so earnestly" (1570: 2291).

The martyr Alice Driver (d. 1558) also demonstrates intellectual competence, as well as confidence, in defending herself during her examination as presented in Foxe's *Acts*. Driver arrives at her examination "wyth a smyling countenance" causing the examiner Doctor Spencer to ask suspiciously "why woman, doest thou laugh vs to scorne?" (1563: 1751). Driver immediately situates herself in a position of power compared to her examiner who feels that Driver is

ridiculing him and the other examiners. When asked by the Chancellor why she was incarcerated, Driver responds “Wherfore? I thinke I nede not tell you. for ye knowe it better then I” (1563: 1751). As discussed in Chapter One, such humour in martyr legends are meant to make the examiners appear intellectually inferior compared to the heroine. Similar to Askew, Driver continues to control the examination by choosing when to respond and when to remain silent. She remains silent when asked by the Chancellor if she believes in transubstantiation. A priest demands that Driver answer the Chancellor’s question. In her response, Driver conveys the importance placed on Scripture by the Reformation movement: “Sir, said she, pardon me though I make you no a[n]swer. for I ca[n]ot tel what you mean therby: for in al my lyfe, I neuer heard nor red of any such sacrament in all the scripture” (1563: 1752). She asks the Chancellor what is a sacrament and he answers that it is a sign. She then responds: “You haue sayd the truth syr . . . It is a signe in dede I must nedes graunt it: and therefore seing it is a signe, it cannot bee the thinge signified also. Thus farre we doo agre. For I haue graunted your own saying” (1752). By becoming an examiner in her own examination, as did Askew, Driver has the Chancellor admit indirectly to the reform belief that the bread upon consecration is only a sign.

Foxe also represents the martyr Joyce Lewes (d. 1557) as thoroughly capable of debating with her examiners. Foxe presents her as a gentlewoman, like Askew and such medieval martyrs as Katherine and Margaret. According to Foxe,

Mastres Ioice Lewis a ge[n]tle woma[n] born, was delicatly
 brought vp in the pleasurs of the world, hauing delight in gay
 apparel, & such like folishnes, With the which follies the most part
 of the ge[n]tle folkes of Engla[n]d were then and are yet
 infect. (1563: 1700)

Lewes's conversion results from hearing about the death of Laurence Sanders whom "she knewe feared god" (1563: 1700). Foxe writes that "when she perceiued it was because he refused to receiue the masse, she began to be troubled in conscience and waxed very vnquiet" (1563: 1700). Doubting the practices and beliefs of the traditional church, Lewes undertakes an education in reform beliefs from her neighbour John Glover. Foxe writes that Lewes began to despise the Mass having learned that it was "euil & abhominable" (1563: 1700). When forced by her husband to go to Mass, Lewes "turned her back" on the holy water "and shewed her self to be displeased with their blasphemous holy wather, iniurious to the bloud of Chirste" (1563: 1700). By turning her back on the traditional church, Lewes would also turn her back on her well-to-do lifestyle, just as the affluent medieval martyrs gave up their secular lifestyles for their religious convictions. Lewes is incarcerated and examined by the bishop, who asks her why she does not believe in the Mass or receive the sacraments. According to Foxe, Lewes responded, "I finde not these things in gods word which you so vrge and magnify as things moste nedefull for mens saluation" (1701). Similar to Driver's response on why she opposes transubstantiation, Lewes's statement articulates the

importance of Scripture in determining church practices. Foxe ends Lewes's story having her heroically confront death like the medieval martyrs. According to Foxe, "When the fyre was sette vpon her, she neither strugled nor sturred, but lifted vp her hands towards God beinge dead very spedely" (1563: 1701-1702).

Foxe also concludes Askew's text with a conventional hagiographical ending. He speaks of her sacrifice in choosing to die for Christ: "She beyng borne of such stock and kynred, that she might have lyved in great wealth and prosperity, if she would rather have folowed the world then Christ" (191). Foxe describes her death at the stake with John Lasselles, John Adams, and Nicolas Belenian. He writes,

For albeit that of them selves they were strong and stout menne, yet through the example and praier of her, thei being the more boldned, receyved occasion of more greater comferte, in that so painfull and doolefull kynde of death, not only beholdynge her invincible constancie, but also oftentimes stirred up through her perswasions, they did set apart all kynde of feare. (192)

Askew's unwavering commitment to her faith and her courageous acceptance of her death helps the men face their own death, thus furthering their martyrdoms. Foxe excludes from his description the discussion of the miracle of the thunder clap that Bale spoke of in his conclusion, but it is featured in the woodcut found in the 1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions of the *Acts*. Foxe's Protestant values would have him exclude any discussions of miracles said to have occurred at

Askew's death in his edition of her examinations because of their association with medieval saints' cults and the Catholic religion. If Foxe were included in the decision-making regarding the inclusion of the woodcuts in the editions, it is possible that he overlooked the visual image of thunder in the Askew woodcut; or he might have allowed it so as to give the day of Askew's burning a much more dramatic appearance, making it look stormy and bleak. The woodcut's representation of the day would extend Foxe's representation of the historical period as a turbulent one in which reformers were being violently killed.

The medieval hagiographical conventions of courageously facing death, and being articulate, forthright and rhetorically competent assist Foxe in presenting these female women as reform martyrs. They embody the attributes of godly women who bear witness to the reform faith and are exemplars for Foxe's readers. Foxe's inclusion of Askew and other reform-minded women in his *Acts and Monuments* specifically reveals to his readers the role women played in bringing about religious change in England. Incorporating the word "Acts" in his title implicitly links his history of the reform church, which he casts as the true Christian church, to the Acts of the Apostles that details the creation and development of the Christian church by divinely appointed individuals who were prepared for their mission by Christ. Similar to the Acts of the Apostles, Foxe's text records the development of the reform church through the actions of elect representatives of Christ. Askew and the other women featured in the *Acts* are reform examples of the women featured in the Acts of the Apostles. The New

Testament book of Acts contains stories of women's devotion to Christ and their "leadership roles in the nascent church" (Levine 1).⁵⁸ Just as Foxe's *Acts* begins with a celebration of Queen Elizabeth in the Preface, the Acts of the Apostles, after Christ's ascension, begins with a celebration of women in Peter's reiteration of the prophet Joel's "exultant message" (Levine 1) that "youre daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2.[17]). The book of Acts includes the "disciple named Tabitha" who "was full of good workes and almes dedes, which she dyd" (Act 9.[36]); Rhoda the exuberant slave girl who greets Peter (Acts 12.13-16); and Lydia, the purple cloth seller who, as mentioned in Chapter One, converts to Christianity (Acts 16. 14-15). Similarly, Foxe's text presents the religious battles fought by, and the expressions of devotion of, historical *mulier fortis* reformers and martyrs such as the wife of Prest, Alice Driver, and Joyce Lewes who were condemned as heretics and were burned at the stake during Queen Mary's reign.

Foxe compiled these martyrs' stories for an intended audience that he hoped would include the Queen, as well as "his fellow scholars, and the unregenerate papists" (Loades, "The Early Reception"). In 1571, the Church of England instituted that a copy of the *Acts and Monuments* be placed "in all cathedral churches, and in the homes of senior and cathedral clergy" (Loades, "The Early Reception"). As for a lay audience for the *Acts*, probably only the wealthy owned copies since it was a fairly expensive text due to its size. Loades

⁵⁸Amy-Jill Levine notes that "Acts can also be classified as a systemic dismantling of any authority women in the early church may have had: the prophesying daughters are silenced; widows become victims in need of rescue by the male leaders of the church; the mission and expansion of the church becomes the paradigm for colonialist practices; slaves-especially female slaves are portrayed as annoying at best; the chain of command is restricted to men" (1).

argues that the affluent members of Elizabethan society knew the text, “and most of them embraced its message. Below that level, opinion formers of all kinds, clergy, schoolteachers and community leaders, had also absorbed its meaning” (“The Early Reception”). Foxe’s portrayal of Askew provides these readers with a not so distant story of a gentlewoman who stood up for her reform beliefs and values which assisted in the establishment of the Protestant church in England.

Foxe’s representation of Askew as an influential contributor to the establishment of the Protestant church in England resembles the medieval representations of female martyrs in Jacobus’s and Caxton’s texts who defend Christian beliefs against their pagan authorities. I will now discuss the similarities between Foxe’s representation of Askew as a martyr and John Capgrave’s *Life of Saint Katherine*. Foxe’s fashioning of Askew resembles Capgrave’s portrayal of St Katherine in that Foxe and Capgrave allow the heroines to articulate their own thoughts and to defend themselves, which results in the representation of the women as learned and rhetorically skilful, characteristics that are assigned to the medieval martyr, as noted above. Similarities between Katherine and Askew support my argument that Foxe’s shaping of Askew relies on late medieval hagiographical representation and the *mulier fortis* tradition.

III. John Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine*: Hearing the Female Voice

Foxe's edition of the *Examinations* shares characteristics with Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine* in that both texts represent their heroines using traditional conventions from stories about exceptional women. Both Katherine and Askew choose to be independent of men: Katherine refuses to marry whereas Askew refuses to acknowledge her marriage. Both women are examined twice by a panel of men, demanding that they change their beliefs and adopt those of the established religion. Because of these resemblances, Foxe may have modeled his representation of a female martyr on Capgrave's depiction of St Katherine since he chooses not to include his friend Bale's commentary in his edition of Askew's text. Instead, Askew's voice narrates the accounts of her examinations with minimal narrative interruptions from Foxe. He allows Askew's voice to be heard like that of Katherine's during her examinations. This section of the chapter will explore the connections between Foxe's and Capgrave's representations of their female martyrs to show how they would appeal to their respective readers. These connections will reveal further how Foxe's Protestant martyrology uses as a foundation literary techniques associated with the traditional religion and its literature in order to showcase its own martyrs.

The legend of St Katherine is set in fourth-century Alexandria. The first narratives of her passion and her representation in art are from the ninth century (Winstead, Introduction 2). According to Karen Winstead, "a full account of her passion was not composed until the eleventh century" (Introduction 2). In the

thirteenth century, details of her life prior to her confrontation with the pagan emperor Maxentius were expanded on and included in her legend. Katherine's textual presence continued into the fifteenth century with Osbern Bokenham and Capgrave writing her story for late medieval audiences.

Capgrave's occupations as an Augustinian friar, theologian, and historian contributed to his interest in writing *The Life of Saint Katherine* and other legends. Educated at Oxford, Capgrave's hagiographical narratives also include the lives of St Norbert, St Augustine, and St Gilbert. Capgrave is considered to be "the most learned of all English Augustinian friars" and a prolific writer (Lucas). He wrote not only legends but Latin commentaries on the Bible, other theological texts, a history of the world, biographies, and a guide for travelers to Rome entitled *Solace of Pilgrimes*.⁵⁹ His legends, the travel guide, and his history of the world (*Abbreuiacion of Cronicles*) were the only prose texts that he wrote in the vernacular; the Norbert and Katherine legends were written in English verse.

Capgrave's version of the *Life of Saint Katherine* is believed to be "the longest and most intricate Katherine legend written during the Middle Ages, either in Latin or in any vernacular" (Winstead, Introduction 3). It includes elaborate descriptions of Katherine's birth, adolescence, and early adult years, giving readers a complete account of her life as Queen of Alexandria. The legend's conflict begins with the death of the Katherine's father, from whom she inherits

⁵⁹ See Seymour 219-235.

the crown and the kingdom. He has provided her with an extensive education in the seven liberal arts, preparing her to rule Alexandria upon his death.

Such an education would not normally have been accorded to women during that time. Nicholas Orme explains that literacy had its beginnings in the seventh century as “a fairly restricted and difficult skill” (*Medieval Schools* 46). During that period, literacy belonged to male ecclesiastical members. However, literacy would “become (at least in English) an easier and more widely achieved one for both sexes” by the tenth and eleventh centuries with the development of local churches and the increase in monasteries and abbeys, which educated parishioners and male and female recruits (*Medieval Schools* 36, 38-39, 46). Orme provides the example of Alfred, King of Wessex, from the ninth century who was intent on raising the standard of education during his reign. He had his daughter educated and encouraged reading and writing in English and in Latin (Orme, *Medieval Schools* 35). Alfred created monasteries to provide educational instruction to girls, as well as to boys (Orme, *Medieval Schools* 35); senior nuns would undertake the instruction of girls (Orme, *Medieval Schools* 24). As discussed in Chapter Two, St Hild is an example of one senior nun who was well educated and whose monastery functioned as a school that educated men and women. Women were also educated in the home. Orme explains that

The home must have been a common place for learning to read, perhaps more common than schools. The only tools required were simple tablets and prayer-books that wealthy adults would own or

could acquire, and the role of teacher could be undertaken by anyone who was literate: a parent, an older sibling, and in a large household a chaplain, clerk, or governess. (Orme, *Medieval Schools* 60)

From the twelfth century, across Europe, we have examples of learned women such as Heloise and Hildegard of Bingen. Abbess Heloise, who was tutored by Peter Abelard, was “the most learned woman in the France of her time, versed in Hebrew and Greek as well as the Latin classics” (Levitan xi). Hildegard of Bingen was “an abbess, a spiritual counselor, and a physician as well as a theologian” (Newman xviii). Taught to read and write in Latin, Hildegard was a prolific writer of letters, books, poetry and music. During the early modern period, we have examples of educated women that include not only Askew, but Margaret Roper, Katherine Parr, and Elizabeth I.

Upon her father’s death, Katherine is examined by her barons who demand that she marry, which would provide Alexandria with a king and lessen female authority over the territories. She refuses for various reasons which will be discussed below. During the examination she describes to the barons her idea of the perfect mate whose description sounds very much like Christ. Following the first examination, Katherine experiences a mystical marriage with Christ and converts to Christianity. Her legend continues with her empire being taken over by Maxentius, who organizes a second examination of Katherine where she is brought before fifty philosophers to debate the validity of Christianity in contrast

to pagan beliefs. If Katherine loses the theological debate and does not renounce Christianity, Maxentius will have her killed. To Maxentius's dismay, Katherine wins the debate resulting in the philosophers converting to Christianity. Maxentius demands that a machine consisting of four wheels, nails, and sharp protrusions be built for Katherine's torture and death. However, when Katherine sees the machine she prays to God, who sends an angel to destroy it. Katherine is beheaded and milk flows from her neck as she dies.

Within Katherine's hagiographical narrative, Capgrave and other hagiographers present a martyr who was deemed a special intercessor and was appropriated by many factions of society. She was the patron saint

of young girls, of students (and hence the clergy), especially philosophers and apologists, of nurses (because milk instead of blood flowed from her severed head), and of craftsmen whose work was based on the wheel, such as wheelwrights, spinners, and millers. (Farmer, "Catherine")

During the medieval period, Katherine was also included as one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a group of saints to whom individuals prayed for their extraordinary wishes. People believed that if they prayed to St Katherine she would protect them from sudden death.

Katherine's examinations convey an articulate educated woman who successfully silences her interrogators. Capgrave's *Life* advances this representation more than any other St Katherine text because his narrator plays a

minimal role in Books II and IV, allowing Katherine to speak directly to her interrogators and to develop her arguments through extended speeches. Readers hear what Katherine has to say in contrast to being told what was said from the male narrator's perspective. In contrast, Jacobus's representation of Katherine in *Legenda aurea* presents a fairly silent virgin martyr since the narrator describes most of Katherine's thoughts and recounts her speeches. Of particular interest in comparing Capgrave's and Jacobus's Katherine legends is the fact that the *Legenda aurea* does not include the Marriage Parliament, thus eliminating the initial presentation of Katherine's voice and her dissent from the wishes of her male barons. Without this section, the legend presents a virgin martyr dedicated to Christianity without the pagan history or the refusal to abide by patriarchal social values that promote the institution of marriage. There is no transgressive female rebel opposing what is expected of her.

The readers of the *Legenda aurea* first hear Katherine speak after she has just witnessed Christians being killed. Katherine concedes her inferiority to Emperor Maxentius while requesting that he convert to Christianity: "I offer thee greeting, Emperor, not only of deference for thy rank, but also that I may reason with thee, and persuade thee to acknowledge the Creator of the heavens, and to renounce the worship of false gods!" (709). Katherine's first spoken words draw attention to her eloquence, one of the possible medieval hagiographical characteristics of a female martyr as discussed above. For instance, the legends of Lucy, Agnes, and Christina are several examples of saints' lives that feature the

heroine speaking articulately and persuasively. Katherine continues to speak during her attempts to convert Maxentius and then again to him immediately before her debate with the fifty philosophers. She confronts Maxentius, asking, “By what justice didst thou set fifty orators against one maiden, promising them rewards, while thou compellest me to fight without hope of guerdon? But my reward shall be my Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the hope and crown of those who fight for Him!” (711). Katherine acknowledges the inequity of the examination, but she will not acquiesce to any authority that does not manifest Christian values. Her speech confronts the social hierarchy but would be sanctioned by medieval readers since her agenda promotes Christianity.

Similar to Jacobus’s version of the life of St Katherine, the account of Katherine in John Mirk’s fourteenth-century *Festial* does not include the Marriage Parliament. But where Jacobus permits Katherine to speak several lines that communicate her steadfast Christian faith, Mirk does not have Katherine speak at all. Instead, the narrator speaks for Katherine during the debate with the philosophers. Her female voice is noticeably quiet when compared to Jacobus’s version of the legend. Mirk’s male narrator takes center stage recounting Katherine’s story. A reason for keeping Katherine silent may stem from Mirk’s agenda for *Festial*. In the prologue he writes that he hopes his text will

helpe of suche mene clerkus as I am myselff I haue draw this treti
sewyng owt of *Legenda Aurea* wyth more addyng to, so he that
hathe lust to study therin he shal fynde redy of alle the principale

festis of the 3ere a short sermon nedful for hym to techy[n] and
othur for to lerne. And for this treati speketh alle of festis I wolle
pray that it be call a *Festial*, the wyche begynnyth the forme
Sunday of the Aduent in worshcup of God [and] of all [the] seyntis
that ben wryten therin. (3)

Mirk's version of St Katherine's life would be much easier to recite for the priest, as well as to hear by the audience, during the Mass if the narrator gave a précis of the events in his own voice and from his own perspective.

Capgrave's version is published after Mirk's *Festial* and is a pastiche of its predecessors. Capgrave's narrator plays a predominant role in telling Katherine's story, similar to the role of the narrators in *Legenda aurea* and *Festial*. But he follows Jacobus's lead by having Katherine speak, allowing the heroine to voice her own perspective on the events happening to her and the demands made upon her. The narrator introduces to his readers the female protagonist who has the characteristics of the traditional virgin martyr, characteristics that include captivating beauty, steadfast faith, and esteemed nobility. In the Marriage Parliament he also presents a woman with overwhelming determination to make her own decisions and lead her own life. The Marriage Parliament begins with one of the barons chosen to represent their collective concerns to Katherine. He makes a request of her: "Ye must now leve youre stody and youre bokys / And tak youre solace be feldys and be brokys. . . . / And eke youre puple that ye a husbond have, / A real lorde wech may us alle defende" (II.125-126, 134-135). The

baron's appeal broadcasts the essential demands of Katherine's kingdom: she is to stop reading and studying immediately so that she can marry. The demand underpins her society's fear that it would be left without a successor to the throne if Katherine were to die. Without an heir, the country is susceptible to invasion by other countries and enemy forces. The pressure for a monarch to marry in order to secure succession was a commonplace and was also discussed in Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale." A representative from Marquis Walter's kingdom makes the following appeal to him:

Delivere us out of all this bisy drede,
 And taak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake!
 For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,
 That thurge your deeth your lyne sholde slake,
 And that a straunge successour sholde take
 Youre heritage, O, wo were us alyve!
 Wherfor we pray you hastily to wyve. (134-140)

Queen Elizabeth also faced pressure to marry in order to "settle the succession" by "bearing an heir to the throne" (J. King, "Queen Elizabeth I" 33). In 1559, the House of Commons formally requested in a petition that Elizabeth marry for the "common good" of the country; however, Elizabeth remained unmarried (J. King, "Queen Elizabeth I" 33).

To encourage Katherine to wed, several of her barons advance the argument that women cannot rule effectively because they lack physical strength.

Clarus, Prince of Capados, asserts that “a woman is not strong enow” to rule if there were to be a war (II.342). He states, “Thow ye be fayre and wyse, yet want ye / Bodyly strength wer-with ye schuld oppresse / Thoo wykkyd dedys which reygne now ful ryve” (II.364-366). Katherine responds to his argument, claiming that he is trying to mislead her since there have been no wars since her birth. Sir Ananye continues Clarus’s argument that having a virgin queen rule places the country under threat of invasion or a schism within the country. He states, “It is full perlyous . . . to be a mayde / And eke a qween. Ye may be full sone afrayde / If any rysyng or ony scisme were sterde” (II.452-454). Sir Ananye’s statement conveys that the country needs a male leader to head its military so as to demonstrate indestructible strength to its enemies. Katherine refuses to be swayed by these arguments. Instead, she tells them to be concerned about having one man rule the country:

A man alone, be he nevyr so wyse
 Ne eke so strong, he may no more, iwys,
 But evyn as I may. His puple shal be nyse
 And eke evele tetched; the powere is not his
 To amend alone all that is amys:
 His lordes must help to his governayle
 And elles his labour it wil lytyl avayle. (II.491-497)

Katherine believes that effective rule consists of a king listening to his governors for sage advice, which is how she plans to govern her realm.

Realizing that these arguments, predicated on fear of war, invasion, and dissension are not persuading Katherine, the baron Sir Hercules attempts a different tack. He explains that she must marry because of the excessive amount of travel that is required to rule all of Alexandria's territories. He states that Alexandria's ruler

mote nedes be a man
 Whech schal, wil, and eke that may and can,
 Do al this labour both in flesch and gost,
 Ryde and seyle, labour to se his lande,
 Sumtyme here, sumtyme at Famagost.

Thus shal he governe the lond, the see, the sand. (II.594-599)

Sir Hercules emphasizes that, unlike a man, a woman is unable to maintain such a rigorous schedule. To encourage Katherine to accept his argument he reminds her that when her husband is away ruling the country, she would have time to read "youre bokes in youre hand / And stody youre fille" (II.600-601). Sir Hercules appeals to Katherine's love of reading and learning even though Sir Ananye has previously cursed her education, stating that

He that taute you fyrst this scole, I pray
 He mote be hangyd--I trow he is worthy:
 He hath yow browte and put in sweche aray
 That myrth and joye ye late hem slyde forby!
 Evyr at bokes ye sytte, knele, and lye. (II.470-474).

Katherine is not convinced, but informs Sir Hercules that even a man cannot be in two places at once, and, although she is a woman, she will still be able to attend to her territories.

Sir Ananye's and Sir Hercules's statements draw attention to the Marriage Parliament's second issue: the education of women. The barons collectively demand that she stop learning. The clerk's initial statement for her to put down her books and "tak youre solace be feldys and be brokys" draws attention to society's view that connects women to nature. Alison Jaggar asserts that

The long western philosophical tradition equates women and the "the feminine" with nature, men and "the masculine" with culture. The tradition has been explicitly misogynistic. Women have been seen as closer to animals, both because they lacked reason and because the functioning of their bodies has been thought to commit them to the repetitive biological reproduction of the species. (96)

Marriage will situate Katherine in the world of "nature" where she is expected to bear children, removing her from the male world of education which focuses on the mind and a man's capacity for reason. Clarus tries to persuade Katherine to marry by reminding her of her reproductive duty to the kingdom:

It wyll become yow full welle to be a wyffe,
Myn owne lady, and ye wold enclyne ther-too
To bryng forthe frute eythere on or too--
It schuld plese us thow that ye had twelve!

It schuld plese your modyr and eke youreselve. (II.346-350).

Clarus also appeals to Katherine's familial obligation to her mother, whom he claims will be pleased if her daughter were to become a mother. Clarus draws on the patriarchal assumption that every woman desires to be a mother, encouraging Katherine to have not just one child but possibly twelve. Katherine informs her barons that she has chosen a different life for herself from the one that they have set out for her. She refuses to stop learning and chooses not to marry at this time. Instead, she asserts that she will rule her country, read her books, and have her independence. Katherine's stipulations on how she will live her life display typical characteristics of the medieval virgin martyr: well educated, forthright and eloquent.

Katherine's desire not to marry despite her family's insistence speaks to a high level of self-empowerment and freedom. Katherine will wait until she meets someone worthy of her. She describes her "perfect" husband:

Above all lordes he must be withoute pere,
Whom he wyll to spylle or elles to save;
He must be stable and nevyr turn ne wave

Fro noo purpos that he set him on. (II.1403-1406).

Saints' lives often portray the saint being pressured into marriage by their fathers, other family members, and their oppressors. By contrast, as Emma Lipton's research demonstrates, medieval women "often had considerable freedom to choose a husband and to arrange the marriage contract" (139). Sacramental

marriage was based on the mutual love and agreement to be married between two individuals because they conferred the sacrament of marriage on each other. The love shared between the consenting individuals “was both the sign and substance of God’s grace” (Lipton 2). Marriages did not require church sanctification, sexual consummation, or parental approval (Witte 28). Any marriage that was formed under duress from a threat of violence, fear, or deception was deemed invalid (Witte 26). In their study of medieval sermons on marriage, Rüdiger Schnell and Andrew Shields find that the discourse on marriage was rooted in love, reciprocity and respect. Marriages like those experienced by Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, which demonstrate an “incompatibility between love and marriage,” belonged “in the literature of satire and complaint; and in such literature neither love nor marriage was taken seriously or sympathetically” (Kelly 333).

Katherine’s description of the perfect husband foreshadows her mystical marriage and conversion to Christianity in Book III. It is the impetus for her debate with the fifty philosophers in Book IV, another moment in the *Life* that displays Katherine’s autonomy, education, and eloquence. The second debate also presents Katherine’s theological education since her marriage to Christ. Combining this new learning with her previous education, Katherine’s rhetorical acumen converts the fifty interrogators to Christianity resulting in their martyrdom. She begins the examination notifying the philosophers that she has stopped her study of the Greek *auctours*. She states, “I hafe a lessoun mech trewere to susteyne / And more directe to know creature” (IV.1340-1341).

Katherine believes Christianity to be factual in contrast to the writings associated with the Greek gods. She proceeds to educate the philosophers on the illegitimacy of their gods, the validity of the Holy Trinity, and the miracles performed by Christ. Katherine's learning prepared her to debate with and preach to her male interrogators. One philosopher remarks that Katherine's knowledge is unmatched: "For in this worlde in cunnyng stand sche sole" (IV.1642).

Capgrave's decision to allow Katherine to speak her words rather than have the narrator summarize them produces a representation of a virgin martyr who is learned, assertive and courageous. Anke Bernau contends that such a representation of St Katherine is different from other representations of virgin martyrs because of her "scholarly eloquence and educated defiance with which she confronts, confounds, and converts her opponents" ("A Christian *Corpus*" 109). Katherine's own voice speaks her beliefs and defends her. Medieval readers of Katherine's life lived in a period in which the female voice carried little or no authority outside the home. It was "a culture that equated women's speech, particularly in public, with 'unnatural sexuality'" (Bernau, "A Christian *Corpus*" 111).

As discussed in Chapter One, women were forbidden from preaching because it was believed to be a male occupation. The clergy, who tried to maintain a monopoly on interpreting the Bible, and were protective of the "interpretative community" in order to exclude "amateurs" from the tradition of Biblical interpretation, also believed that "female preaching would lead to the sexual

arousal of the audience” (Price 166). Alcuin Blamires points to biblical prophetesses as precedents of women preachers and as justification for medieval women preaching (*The Case* 171). Deborah, Miriam, Anna, and Huldah from the Old Testament, and the apostle Philip’s four virginal daughters from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 21.8-9 were prophetesses. The Gospel of Luke records Anna as a prophetess who “departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers nyght & daye” (Luke 2.[37]). According to Blamires, Mary Magdalene was seen as a preacher because she followed Christ and was then chosen by him to inform the apostles of his resurrection (*The Case* 191). Jacobus records St Cecilia preaching to her husband’s brother Tiburtius, which results in his conversion: “she began to expound to him the coming of the Son of God, and to show him in how many ways His Passion was fitting” (692). In Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the Wife of Bath, the Prioress, the Second Nun, St Cecilia in “The Second Nun’s Tale,” and Dame Prudence in “The Tale of Melibee” preach in a sense. In her prologue, the Wife of Bath references the Bible to substantiate her opinions on marriage. To justify her remarriages after the deaths of her husbands, she cites St Paul:

For thanne th’apostle seith that I am free

To wedde, a Goddes half, where it lyketh me.

He seith that to be wedded is no synne:

Bet is to be wedded than to brynne. (49-52)

The Pardoner interrupts the Wife's tale and calls her "a noble prechour" (165) since her discussion of marriage has now influenced him not to marry. Blamires identifies the Wife as "a woman aping preaching techniques" ("The Wife" 230). The Prioress's and Second Nun's tales include prayers that respectively invoke God and the Virgin Mary. Since these three women are speaking to their fellow pilgrims, their references to the Bible and their public praying in the prologues to their tales simulate preaching as the pilgrims listening attentively. In "The Tale of Melibee" Prudence "preaches" to her husband, advising him as to why he should forgive his enemies who broke into their house. Prudence and other female "teachers" in *The Canterbury Tales* underscore a woman's authority in the home where she educates, guides, and counsels family members.

Unorthodox religious movements such as the Cathars, Waldensians, and the Lollards "offered women outlets for religious activity that were not to be found in the established church" such as reading and speaking of the Bible (Aston 49). As already discussed, Lollard women read and discussed the Bible (Aston 49); those who occupied leading roles in the movement were generally wealthy women who capitalized on their social influence (McSheffery 108). Despite such knowledge of the Bible and authority, there is no extant evidence that any Lollard woman performed the duties of a priest (Aston 49).

Margery Kempe was accused of being a Lollard because of her speaking of the Bible in public. During her interrogation by the Archbishop of York, Henry Bowet, on the Articles of the Faith, Margery, with the help of God, is able "to

answer well and truly and readily without any great study so that he might not blame her” (Kempe 92). The Archbishop confirms to the clerks that Margery’s statements are orthodox. He demands that she agree not to “teach nor challenge the people” in his diocese. Margery refuses, stating, “for I shall speak of God and reprove those who swear great oaths wheresoever I go, unto the time that the pope and holy church have ordained that no man shall be so hardy to speak of God, for God almighty forbids not, sir, that we shall speak of him” (93). Margery substantiates her statement by referring to the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus is speaking to a crowd and a woman calls out to him, “Happy is the wombe that bare the, and the pappes which gaue the sucke” (Luke 11.[27]). Jesus responds, “Yee, happy are they that heare the worde of God and kepe it” (Luke 11.[28]). Although Margery cannot read, her knowledge of the Bible stems from “her friendship with certain priests and friars who read books to her and discuss them with her afterwards” (Le Saux 55).

These examples of women speaking the word of God illustrate that medieval women were not silent. They, along with the medieval representation of St Katherine, belonged to the long and established tradition of the *mulier fortis*. These women are learned, strong, devout and determined Christian women. It is this tradition that informs Foxe’s representation of Askew as a Christian martyr which shares similarities with Capgrave’s representation of Katherine. Both heroines undergo two separate examinations in which they must defend themselves against panels comprised solely of men. These examinations offer the

female martyr the opportunity to display her eloquence using her own voice in a male-dominated forum. Foxe had to choose whether to incorporate Bale's commentary, include his own, or let the text stand alone with minimal narrator interruptions. Foxe chose the latter and by doing so his representation of Askew resembles Capgrave's Katherine.

No other version of Katherine's legend allows readers to hear as much of Katherine's voice as does Capgrave's text. Osbern Bokenham included Katherine's *vita* in his *Legends of Holy Women* (c. 1447), which was published after Capgrave's *Life*. Bokenham's version does not include the Marriage Parliament. In his prologue, Bokenham writes that he does not include details of Katherine's life before her conversion and directs those readers interested in them to consult Capgrave's text: "But whoever wants to know and wishes to be informed in the matter, must acquire the book by my spiritual father, Master John Capgrave, and there the reader will see, in skillfully rhymed ballade stanzas, everything that my ignorance omits" (126). Bokenham also edits Katherine's examination before the fifty philosophers. Paul Price argues that Bokenham downplays Katherine's intellectual abilities so as to represent her as displaying "simple, common piety" (165). Bokenham makes these changes because her intelligence and preaching are "threatening or dangerous in a way that she is not" for other *Katherine* editors who present her intelligence as divinely inspired (Price 166). Price contends that Bokenham understood Katherine's preaching to point to Lollardy, which, it was believed by traditionalists, encouraged women to preach

and read the Bible.⁶⁰ For Foxe, Lollardy produced such heroes as John Oldcastle. Sixteenth-century reformers viewed the Lollard movement as “proto-Protestant” (Gregory, *Salvation* 178). Foxe’s *Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum*, his first martyrology, was, in essence, dedicated to “the English Lollards” (Pettegree 281). Foxe’s appreciation for Lollardy might have contributed to his preference for Capgrave’s *vita* of Katherine over Bokenham’s version since Capgrave has Katherine publicly defending her beliefs. Foxe might have understood Capgrave’s shaping of Katherine as also demonstrating characteristics associated with Lollard women, those being the reading of, and the conversing on, devotional material and the Bible. As well, Bokenham’s exclusion of Katherine’s examinations might also have influenced Foxe since the inclusion of examination accounts in the *Acts* play an integral role in Foxe’s representation of martyrs. Examination accounts present the martyr communicating reform beliefs and verifying for readers her or his steadfast devotion to Christ and to the Reformation movement.

Several of Askew’s individual interrogations with her examiners recall the issues central to Katherine’s Marriage Parliament: educating women and marriage. These issues found in the *Examinations* have been previously discussed in Chapter One as well as in this chapter. However, the marriage topic requires further discussion specifically with respect to how Foxe deals with it and how his handling of it resembles Capgrave’s treatment of Katherine’s desire to wait for the

⁶⁰ See also Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs* 15.

perfect spouse. Askew's decision not to discuss her marriage functions as her own Marriage Parliament, with Foxe following Capgrave in allowing Askew to speak for herself. Although the passage is fairly brief, when we compare Foxe's treatment of it to Bale's we see that Foxe permits Askew to handle the questioning on her own with no narratorial commentary. Askew refuses to answer any of their questions, even when the interrogators state that these questions come from King Henry. Askew's response that she does not want to speak about Master Kyme conveys her independence from him and her decision to live without a husband, similar to Katherine. Askew displays for Foxe's readers her courage in confronting her interrogators.

Foxe's silence during Askew's interrogations intensifies the drama between Askew and the interrogators, creating an image of a lone woman battling her oppressors. Askew's dialogues with Bishop Bonner, Richard Rich, and Thomas Wriothesely, who are cast as her respective Maxentiuses, present an intelligent woman who can avoid immediate condemnation by rhetorically circumventing their questions. In her exchange with Bonner, who is trying to get her to admit that she does not believe in transubstantiation, Askew skillfully and intelligently avoids doing so. Askew does not state in her own words any beliefs that are contrary to Scripture. According to Askew, she "had nought to say" despite Bonner's repeated requests that she "shoulde utter all thinges that burdened [her] conscience" (171). When Bonner compares himself to a surgeon who will "minister help" unburdening Askew's conscience, she responds that her

“conscience was clere in all thinges” (171). Askew refuses to respond in any manner that will incriminate her. For each accusation of heresy that Bonner puts forward, Askew states, “I never spake such wordes” (171) or “I never sayde so” (172). Askew denies Bonner’s accusations that she spoke heretical beliefs and either provides a response that is not heretical or refuses to answer the question. For example, when Bonner asks her if she said “that the mass was superstitious, wicked, and no better then Idolatry” (172), Askew responds that “I sayde not so,” and questions Bonner if “we should rather beleve in private masses than in the healthsome death of the dere son of god” (172). Askew does not answer whether she believes the mass is idolatry but transforms the question into a comparison between private masses and Christ’s death. Bonner’s response, “What an answer was that?” displays his confusion (173). He expects her to respond yes or no to his question, not to enter into a discussion on private masses for the dead. Askew’s response to Bonner’s question alludes to the reform belief that purgatory was not scripturally valid, but a creation of the Roman Catholic Church that funneled more money to its priests producing what Diarmaid MacCulloch refers to as a “soul-prayer industry” (*The Reformation* 15).

Askew frustrates Bonner to the extent that he loses his composure, signaling to readers that Askew has won the debate. Bonner flies “into his Chambre in a great fury” after Askew adds the word “Catholick” to her recantation (178). Askew’s cousin Christopher Brittain convinces Bonner to understand Askew’s word change in the recantation as a sign of her “weake

womans wit” (178). Brittain flatters Bonner, convincing him that he should not compare Askew’s inferior intelligence to “his Lordshippes verye greate wisdome” despite Askew having averted each of his questions (178). Askew is saved from the fires in the first examination because of her cousin’s insinuation that men are intellectually superior to women.

Bonner’s frustration is reminiscent of Maxentius’s anger at his inability to convince Katherine to renounce Christianity, which leads to her death. In Askew’s second examination, Rich, Wriothsesly, and Baker also become frustrated when Askew refuses to provide them the names of women reformers. As discussed, they place her on the rack. When this does not work, she is then condemned to death. Foxe’s silence during Askew’s narration of these events cultivates a connection between his readers and Askew. Even though Foxe is the editor, his “waiting in the wings” approach to telling Askew’s story allows the reader to develop a relationship with the female protagonist. Askew’s first-person point of view draws her readers into *her* experiences just as Katherine does with her reading audience. Foxe’s and Capgrave’s narrations do not interfere with Askew’s and Katherine’s voices, which further the development of their personalities.

Askew’s and Katherine’s dialogues with their examiners display them as noble Christian heroines who are successful in their intellectual and theological debates with men, men who have agendas to destroy them. Readers are attracted to their stories because Askew and Katherine demonstrate strength and courage. As noted above, Askew’s story appeared in “A Ballad of Anne Askew” from the

late sixteenth- or early-seventeenth century. In the ballad, Askew, the speaker, talks about being deceived by “a Gardner” (18), who represents Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester. Askew tells of how

this proud Gardner seing me so blinde,
 he thought on me to worke his will:
 And flattered me with words so kind,
 to have me continue in blindnesse still. (21-24)

The ballad, which castigates the Catholic church, ends with Askew giving her soul to God before she valiantly faces being burned at the stake. Askew’s voice is heard, as well, in Thomas Bentley’s *Monument of Matrones* in “The praier of Anne Askew the Martyr, before her death” (214). In the prayer, Askew petitions God to forgive those who inflict harm on her. Askew’s story engages Protestant readers during Elizabeth’s reign because it displays the hardships endured for their religious faith, a faith that they can now practice without persecution. Similarly, Capgrave’s *Katherine* attracted the attention of women in East Anglia in the 1440s, “who were avid readers and patrons” (Winstead, Introduction 7). Winstead argues that Katherine’s relationship with Christ and her desire to maintain authority of her kingdom addressed the concerns of the “provincial” wife who wished to see “her absent husband” and who worried “over the safety of her household and property during dangerous times” (Introduction 7).

Capgrave and Foxe produce courageous heroines who experience success each time they are able to silence a male examiner. Rather than being silenced

themselves, Askew and Katherine turn the social hierarchy upside down by silencing men. Their voices articulate their agencies, which are a result of their education, their class, and their membership in religious reform communities that authorize their identities as devout religious women. Their female voices transcend the normative voice of their gender because they are heard by men in authority.

There are two selves created in Askew's and Katherine's voices: "the exemplary [self] and the participatory self" (Linton, "Plural" 138). Askew's and Katherine's exemplary selves are metaphors of the ideal female Christian martyr. However, their use of the pronoun "I" in their respective speeches produces participatory selves, which are "aligned with fellow dissenters in their resistance to religious persecution" (Linton, "Plural" 139). Their voices metonymically represent the voices advocating for religious reform in their reading audiences. Askew's and Katherine's voices are individual but yet collective as they articulate issues and concerns that address those of medieval and early modern reformers.

As well, Askew's and Katherine's voices communicate the multiple voices of their subject positions. These voices speak the ideologies that create their represented selves that include female, queen, reformer, martyr, writer, wife, daughter, and mother. We hear the ideologies that result from demands for religious reform and from the culturally constructed prescribed gender rules for female behavior. Significantly, we also witness the influence that society places on the juridical examination process in determining one's membership in the

society proper and thus one's fate. The examinations display the power and the authority assigned to society's political, judicial, and religious institutions and factions, and to the individuals who operate and control them. Askew's and Katherine's voices disclose the communities to which they belong and how their identities have been shaped to reflect the collective beliefs of these groups. During their examinations, Askew's and Katherine's voices collide with the voices of state and religious control, a collision in which they can choose to either acquiesce to the intimidating and violent power or stand firm against it. By maintaining and continuing to voice their beliefs, and to persevere through torture, the examination process fashions Askew and Katherine into female martyrs.

Foxe's representation of Askew illustrates his conflicted position of wanting to represent Askew as a Protestant female but having to employ medieval hagiographical conventions associated with representing martyrs of the traditional church to do so. He distances himself from Bale's edition that relies on such medieval hagiographical *topoi* as the cult fascination with relics and miracles. However, he depends on characteristics associated with martyrs found in medieval legends to explain to his readers that Askew's beliefs and behaviours align with the heroes of the Protestant church. Foxe's decision to allow Askew and other female martyrs to speak their own words lends authenticity to his text. Askew's ordeal is told from the perspective of a female experiencing persecution at the time in which it is happening. Capgrave's text is an exemplar for Foxe in allowing

the *mulier fortis* voice to tell her side of the story in contrast to the male narrator acting as a mediator by informing the audience of how she felt and what she may have said.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I investigated the representation of Anne Askew and argued that the conventions found in medieval hagiographies, Marian devotion, and histories held meaning for Askew, Bale, and John Foxe in fashioning Askew as a reform martyr. These conventions convey the beliefs and the practices shared by the medieval church and the reformed church. By employing these conventions, Askew and her editors assist in reinforcing them in the sixteenth century, demonstrating the continuities in creating textual representation between the medieval and early modern periods. The reform martyr resembles the conventional representation of the martyr associated with the traditional church, displaying the same characteristics of learning, piety, endurance, and steadfast devotion. The reform martyr experiences the same trajectory of events: conflict, examination, resistance, and death. However, to differentiate between the medieval representation of the martyr and the early modern representation of the reform martyr, reform martyrologists have their celebrated hero voice religious beliefs that conflict with traditional religious doctrine. The representation of Askew during her examinations, her torture scene, and her death has her behaving similarly to the representations of such martyrs as St Stephen and St Katherine during their confrontations with their oppressors. However, Askew is set apart from the medieval representation of martyrs by her unorthodox views on transubstantiation, the Mass and reading the Bible.

Bale's representation of himself as an ecclesiastical historian is also grounded in representations from the past in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, the Venerable Bede, Matthew of Paris, and Robert Fabyan. Bale relies on their works to provide him with examples of how to present Askew as a martyr and himself as a historian. His commentary on Askew's examinations supplements their histories. Bale continues the project of documenting the Christian church's history, presenting the reform church as the true church and memorializing its martyrs.

Bale's and Foxe's representations of Askew also participate in the *mulier fortis* tradition in which she portrays the resolute, learned, and devout woman. Bale's and Foxe's representations of her as a strong independent woman matching wits with her male interrogators, of her determining when she will speak and when she will remain silent, and of her enduring violent brutality are dramatic and compelling. Bale furthers his representation of Askew as a martyr and *mulier fortis* by employing characteristics associated with medieval Marian devotion, which underscores his reform heroine's knowledge of Scripture and her godliness.

The construction of Askew as a strong, educated, and devout woman appeals to later historians and writers who are captivated by her story. In the late sixteenth century, Raphael Holinshed mentions Askew in his *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577) (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xxxviii).⁶¹

⁶¹ For the historical texts that either mention Askew's name or feature her examinations see Beilin, Introduction, Askew xviii-xlii.

Holinshed's brief discussion of Askew focuses on her release from prison in June 1545, stating that on

The thirteenth of Iune Robert Luken seruant to sir Humfrie Browne on the iustices of the kings Bench, Anne Askew gentlewoman, otherwise called Anne Kime, wife to one Kime, a gentleman of Lincolneshire, and Ione Sautereie, wife of Iohn Sautereie of London, were arreigned in the Guildhall of London, for speaking against the sacrament of the altar (as they tearmed it) contrarie to the statute of the six articles: but because no witsesse appeared against the women, nor against Luken, one onelie excepted, who was thought to accuse him rather of malice, than otherwise, they were by twelue honest substantiall men of the citie (sworne to passe vpon their indictments) cleerelie acquitted and discharged.

(847)

Holinshed's excerpt of Askew's story presents her as being wrongfully charged and subsequently released since there were no witnesses to her heresy.

Holinshed's passage emphasizes Bale's and Foxe's message that Askew was not guilty of heresy. For Bale and Foxe, she was only speaking of what she had learned from reading Scripture. John Stow also makes reference to Askew in *The Annales; or, A General Chronicle of England* (Beilin, Introduction, Askew xxxviii). Stowe's discussion of Askew is restricted to her being burned at the stake. He writes that on

The 16 of Julie were burned in Smithfield for the Sacrament, Anne Askew alias Keime, Iohn Lassels, Nicholas Otorden priest, I. Adlam tailor, and doctor Shaxton sometime Byshop of Salisburie preached at the same fire, & there recanted, perswading them to doe [the] like, but they would not. (592)

Stowe's mentioning of Askew's death underscores her martyrdom in her refusal to recant and save her life.

The representations of Askew as a martyr and Bale as a historian address the issue of literary periodization. Both representations are created during the Reformation and incorporate features associated with representations from past periods. These representations encourage us to view the early modern literary period as an extension, or continuation, of the medieval period in which aspects of its writing, such as the textual representation of the martyr, rely on those conventions found in representations from the medieval period. Askew's and Bale's respective representations exist because they are endowed with characteristics from the past, making the representations familiar and intelligible to the reform reader. Timothy Hampton explains that "Past and present are linked through a relationship of similitude" since "the theory of history as repetition" is based on the narrative that events and behaviours repeat themselves over time (9). The repetition of characteristics in the representations of Askew and Bale demonstrate that the boundary between the medieval and the early modern is

fluid, allowing Askew, Bale, and Foxe to take what they need from the past to create representations for themselves in their present.

The portrayal of Askew as a martyr and her account of her examinations have a literary and cultural longevity that has surfaced periodically since her death. Her examinations and her martyrdom embody the political and cultural features of the Reformation period in which they were created, but they were, and are, also used to reflect the concerns of future periods. As Beilin notes, “Askew’s *Examinations* have been widely read, edited, and interpreted, reappearing in various forms, and gradually gathering embellishments and alterations to suit the views and purposes of each reader” (Introduction, Askew, xxxix). For instance, in the seventeenth century Bathsua Reginald Makin refers to Askew in *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion* (1673), a treatise on the learning and piety of exceptional women. She writes that “Mrs. Anne Askew, a person famous for learning and piety, so seasoned the Queen and ladies at Court, by her precepts and examples, and after sealed her profession with her blood, that the seed of reformation seemed to be sowed by her hand” (134). Makin presents Askew as an exemplar for all women because of her education and piety. Makin claims that Askew educated Katherine Parr and her ladies on spiritual matters. She hyperbolically attributes the Reformation to Askew’s religious devotion, her writing and her death.

Askew’s involvement with Parr and a group of prominent English women has been hypothesized as contributing to her death along with her heretical views.

As mentioned, in her second examination the interrogator Richard Rich questions her on her female friends, hoping to receive incriminating information on other reform women and the queen. Religious conservatives were worried that Henry VIII's deteriorating health would result in him dying and that the powerful reform-motivated Privy Council would take control of the government upon his death. John King argues that religious conservatives such as Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, interrogated Askew because of her connections to the queen, whom he wanted to expose as a heretic. King claims that "Gardiner's alleged plot centered upon an effort to expose the queen and her associates as supporters of the condemned heretic, Anne Askew" (*English Reformation* 153).⁶²

In the examination, Askew provides the names of the Duchess of Suffolk (Catherine Brandon), the Countess of Sussex (Anne Radcliffe), the Countess of Hertford (Anne Stanhope), Lady Joan Denny, and the "ladye Fizwylyams" (122n866-867). These women were reform sympathizers and in "Katherine Parr's circle" (122n866). Of particular significance, the Countess of Hertford was married to Edward Seymour, who, upon Edward VI's ascension to the throne, became "lord protector of the realm and governor of the king's person" (Beer). Askew's "ladye Fizwylyam" was possibly married to William Fitzwilliam, a member of the reform-minded Privy Council (122n867). Askew's connections with these women locate her within a distinguished group of women identified with the queen who would be its leader because of her regal position.

⁶² In *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe includes an episode in which Gardiner tries to convince Henry VIII that his wife Katherine Parr is a heretic (1570: 1425).

We do not know how Askew figured within the group, but her membership demonstrates that she was involved with an influential reform community.

Askew's relationship with the queen and her gentlewomen is featured today in a popular television series and a video sharing website. *The Tudors*, a joint Canadian and Irish produced television program, is a historical fiction based upon the life of King Henry VIII. The series, in its final season's penultimate episode, includes Anne Askew ("Secrets of the Heart"). Her name is first mentioned in a scene in which Bishop Stephen Gardiner interrupts Henry, Katherine and her sister while they are eating to ask permission "to arrest and interrogate a known heretic and Protestant called Anne Askew for fear that she has friends here at court." Katherine and her sister exchange nervous glances intimating that they are the individuals to whom Gardiner refers. The episode continues with a depiction of Askew, dressed in expensive clothing to draw attention to her gentlewoman status, preaching from a church pulpit. In her written text of the examination, Askew infers that she has not gone "into the pulpitt and preache[d]" since she has the Bishop's Chancellor confirm that he has never seen a woman do so (30). The television representation of Askew preaching from a pulpit is probably for the benefit of some viewers who might associate preaching to be done solely in a church in front of a congregation. The writers of the episode incorporate some of Askew's statements from her written account of her examinations for her television preaching, such as "I had rather to reade fyve lynes in the Bible, than to hear fyve masses in the temple" (21). The television

representation of Askew preaching centers on her telling listeners to obtain proof for themselves regarding transubstantiation because if they were to leave bread in a box for three months it would become moldy; thus, the bread cannot have been changed in substance into the body of Christ.

Askew is arrested in the church and brought for examination before Stephen Gardiner. She informs her examiners “I preach the word of God,” a statement not found in her written account, but conveys an over-simplified defense of reformist activities. The television representation of the examination focuses on the interrogators urging Askew to confirm that she has a relationship with the queen and to name the ladies with whom she associates. The defiant and outspoken Askew of the *Examinations* is nowhere to be seen in the episode. Rather, Askew is fairly silent. The episode portrays Askew as a feminine woman, with long tousled hair that falls over her shoulders. Her eyes are glassy as if she is about to cry and she hyperventilates; she appears to be afraid of her fate. When Askew is placed on the rack, she does not speak any of the statements from the latter examination’s written depiction of the torture; she does not respond to the examiners’ questions.

The television representation of Askew’s burning has Lady Hertford paying the executioner to place a small satchel of gunpowder around Askew’s neck so that her suffering will end quickly once the fire is lit. Askew, pale and lifeless, is brought to the stake in a chair carried by four guards. When she is lifted from the chair she wails in pain. She does not, as Bale asserts in his commentary,

“desyreth God to forgeve her enemyes as Christ desyred hym in the tyme of hys passyon,” or “desyreth their hartes to be opened, that they maye trulye beleve and be saved” (148). Askew is tied to the stake, looks toward Lady Hertford upon receiving the gunpowder, and then up to the sky. She begins to cry hysterically as the flames travel up the stake and begin to engulf and burn her body. We continue to hear her cry until the gunpowder ignites and the fire fills the screen. Askew is burned by herself. John Lassels and the other two gentlemen martyred with her are not in the scene.

The television representation of Askew is similar to de Worde’s treatment of Margery Kempe in his excerpt from her *Book*. Gone is the rhetorically skilful and intelligent Askew who questions and confounds male authority. Instead, we are left with a representation of a woman who is silent and afraid. However, the television representation of Askew concurs with the sixteenth-century representation, presenting her as a steadfast devout woman who does not recant nor give the names of her female friends. The changes made to the representation of Askew by the television production result in an “Askew-light” version for a twenty-first century audience. We are encouraged to feel empathy and sympathy for a woman who acquiesces in the power of her male authorities and accepts her punishment, and whose torture and death are graphically displayed on the screen.

Askew’s text and the representation of her as a martyr draw our attention because they present a heroine facing an insurmountable situation that ends in a spectacular finish. Lacey Baldwin Smith explains that

The principle of inverse optics operates when viewing martyrs: the more distant they are, the more attractive they appear. Nothing becomes them so splendidly as the glory of their demise, and invariably their lives are recounted backwards--a celebration of death, rarely an understanding of life--and narrated in terms of the heroic perspective of the small voice of conviction pitted against an ocean of bigotry. (14-15)

We are fascinated by David and Goliath narratives of the little man (or woman) battling the oppressive giant. The representation of Askew is an example of such a narrative. Her torture scene from *The Tudors* is on YouTube, a video sharing website, and has had, to date, over 82,000 views. I question whether this significant viewership figure is an accurate indication of interest in Anne Askew; or, if the figure reflects those who missed the original airing of the episode; or, if the figure represents our society's prurient interest in graphic displays of violence.

The sixteenth-century representation, as well as the twenty-first century representation, of Askew as a martyr demonstrates representation to be a matrix consisting of historical, cultural, religious, and political discourses that coalesce to produce Askew the subject. The representations shaped by Askew, Bale, and Foxe are grounded in medieval hagiography, Marian devotion, and medieval histories, and reveal that representation is a negotiation of the past with the present.

Representation is produced and yet constrained by discourses that are rooted in history. Representation is also a product from the period in which it emerges.

Askew's and her editors' representations of her as a martyr provide us with a view of the religious and political situation of the sixteenth century. They also provide us with a view of the sixteenth-century understanding of the medieval period since the representation depends on both periods in order to have currency for its creators and consumers.

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