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The Unsuccessful Inquisition in Tudor England

Abstract

The Spanish Inquisition was tasked with finding heretics and either returning them to their faith or punishing them for their unfaithfulness. This institution lasted for hundreds of years and prosecuted thousands of cases across the Iberian Peninsula. When Mary Tudor took the throne, she instituted her own, smaller inquisition in her attempts to return her people to the Catholic faith. Yet while the Spanish Inquisition was a secretive organization, the trials and arrests in England were far more public and accessible. Much of the methodology and questioning processes were similar, yet Mary's Inquisition met great resistance and died with her after only a few years. Martyrs were created from the "poor souls" trapped and killed by Bloody Mary and Bloody Bishop Bonner. Secrecy was the Spanish Inquisition's main weapon and advantage, and Mary's Inquisition could not and did not succeed without it.

Keywords

Tudor England, Spanish Inquisition, Mary Tudor, religion, Catholicism, Bloody Mary

The Unsuccessful Inquisition in Tudor England

By Sarah Dell

The Spanish Inquisition has been irrevocably entwined with its reputation for overzealousness and plentiful methods of torture. Yet, the secrecy of the Spanish Inquisition was its most potent of weapons. Those who were arrested for heresy were often ignorant of what they would encounter during their imprisonment, and if they were lucky enough to be released, they were sworn to secrecy so that future victims would be just as unprepared as they were. Those who vanished and then reappeared as confirmed heretics were assumed to be rightfully guilty because the public had no way of knowing the process by which the court came to their decision. The fear that came from ignorance, combined with societal obedience to the Crown, helped to keep many Spanish commoners cowed. That conditioned behavior of obedience, coupled with the common belief that, as citizens, they were doing their Christian duty by reporting their neighbors for heresy, minimized disputes and left even fewer martyrs to rally behind.

In England, a similar hunt for heretics was taking place without the benefit of secrecy. Prisoners were able to contact the outside world, and those who survived were able to publish accounts about the time they spent incarcerated. This lack of secrecy allowed for the creation and accumulation of martyrs and sympathetic figures who were able to sway public opinion and frustrate the Counter-Reformation in England in the sixteenth century. The Inquisitional Courts of Spain in the sixteenth century and the tribunals deciding cases of heresy in England were fundamentally similar; the greatest difference and a key aspect of the Spanish Inquisition's success, was its policy of secrecy.

Both the Spanish Inquisition and the English Reformation have proven over the centuries to be popular topics both for scholars and popular fiction writers. Immediately after Napoleon invaded Spain and abolished the Inquisition, former Inquisition secretary Juan Llorente started compiling his book, *A Critical History of the Inquisition of Spain*. For the first time, records and testimonies from the inner workings of the Inquisition Courts were made available to government officials and other non-clergy members.¹ Subsequent research has delved into the records left behind to study individual cases like *Lucrecia's Dreams* by Richard Kagan, which

¹ Juan Antonio Llorente, *A Critical History of the Inquisition of Spain* (Williamstown, MA: John Liburne Company, 1967).

studies a female prophetess damned by the inquisition for heretical prophecies². The documents have also been used to study trends and create general histories such as Henry Kamen's *The Spanish Inquisition*.³ Statistics, and myths, and any number of other aspects of the Inquisition have also been studied and analyzed.

King Henry VIII of England and his children Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I have also commanded significant attention in the historiography of the Reformation. Scholarly literature is abundant regarding any aspect of the lives and public policies of these famous and infamous monarchs of England. Some of the more controversial events during the Tudor period were the religious disputes springing from the consequences of the English Reformation. Elizabethan era historian and writer John Foxe recorded the trials and tribulations of Protestants burned throughout history, but focused on cases in England and Scotland during the turbulent years of the English Reformation. He published his recordings under the title *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perilous days touching matters of the Church*, a work more commonly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Mr. Foxe is not the author of all or even most of the work, but rather he spearheaded a project to collect evidence and manuscripts and incorporated them into a single volume archive four times the size of the Bible.⁴ His work has been challenged over the centuries for its historical veracity. Yet, even in his lifetime, Foxe published more than one edition to correct errors and incorporate new evidence, and he verbally attested to the purity of intent in recording the events.⁵ Jasper Ridley, believing that Foxe's martyrs have been forgotten by modern society, published *Bloody Mary's Martyrs* in 2001, relying heavily upon Foxe's information integrated with other sources to reinforce Foxe's narrative.⁶

² Richard L. Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1990).

³ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New Haven: Yale University, 1997).

⁴ Benedict S. Robinson, "Neither Acts nor Monuments," *English Literary Renaissance* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 3-4.

⁵ Foxe has been criticized as a reliable historical source in large part to the very biased language in favor of the Protestant plight in England during Mary I's reign. Despite the language however, the inherent facts and events appear to be accurate. Many in the field of Tudor history like David Loades, Jasper Ridley, John Edwards, and others do utilize and quote Foxe to enhance their own arguments in their various works. These include but are not restricted to: *Mary I England's Catholic Queen and A Spanish Inquisition? The Repression of Protestantism Under Mary Tudor* by John Edwards, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs* by Jasper Ridley, and *Mary Tudor: A Life and The Reign of Mary Tudor* by David Loades. Foxe's defense can be found in, Robinson, "Neither Acts nor Monuments," 8. John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs* (New York: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1870).

⁶ Jasper Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2001), 229.

Yet, scholarship comparing the Spanish Inquisition and the Counter Reformation in England is far less common. Short snippets of information in various works on the phenomenon in England may connect an aspect like the spectacle of a Spanish *auto-de-fé* to an English burning, but these comparisons generally seem like afterthoughts. John Edwards wrote an article, “A Spanish Inquisition? The Repression of Protestantism Under Mary Tudor,” that compares heresy legislation of the time of Queen Mary I to the tribunals of the Inquisition. He found points of law and goals that are significantly different as to discredit the theory that Mary’s husband, Philip II of Spain, brought Spanish Inquisitional techniques to England during Mary’s reign.⁷ I will attempt to demonstrate that though there are some significant differences, the process for the identification, arrest, interrogation, and disposal of heretics was not dissimilar except for the aura of secrecy that surrounded the Spanish Inquisition. That secrecy was the primary strength of the Spanish Inquisition, and the lack thereof in the English Reformation and Counter-Reformation was crippling to the objectives of each movement.

Origins and Procedure of the Spanish Inquisition

In 1478, Monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain asked Pope Sixtus IV for the dispensation to form an inquisition to investigate the rumored problem of new Christian converts from Judaism not being true to their new faith.⁸ Spain had once been a land of three religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—but, with the rise of Christian rule over the nation, Judaism and Islam became less acceptable. Jews and Muslims found their opportunities for employment and societal freedom limited. Societal opposition to these religions escalated in the thirteenth century, resulting in increased conversion to Christianity.⁹ As those who converted prospered with their new freedoms and opportunities, many people questioned the veracity and legitimacy of their conversions. Rumors and accusations continued, and drove Isabella to petition the Pope to establish an inquisition in her Kingdom of Castile.

⁷ Edwards, “Spanish Inquisition? The Repression of Protestantism Under Mary Tudor,” *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 2000.

⁸ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition* 44.

⁹ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 14.

In 1492, all Jews were ordered to leave the boundaries of the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon.¹⁰ This only left two legitimate options for Spanish Jews: convert to Christianity, or move to a more tolerant nation. This ultimatum created a new *converso* class of forced converts who were often suspected of insincere conversion and secret continuations of Jewish practices.¹¹ These suspected *judaizers*, or Christians who practiced Judaism in secret, were the primary targets in the early years of what has become known as the Spanish Inquisition. The inaccurate definition of Jewish religious practices versus cultural practices led to the denunciation, arrest, and execution of thousands of *conversos*. *Moriscos*, or Muslim converts, and other heretics raised as Christians would also become targets of the Inquisition over its three hundred year duration.

The large number of suspected heretics and the long life of the Inquisition led to a methodization of Inquisition protocol and the formation of the *Suprema*. The *Suprema* was, “a separate council for the increasingly important affairs of the Inquisition.”¹² The *Suprema* had authority and ultimate decision-making over all other Inquisition tribunals. Other individual tribunals were set up across the country and were relatively autonomous, following the guidance of the inquisitors in each area. Individual inquisitors utilized differing degrees of severity regarding sentencing and varying methodologies, but general trends and basic laws governed them all, enabling rather similar procedures. The people working for the Inquisition were technically working for the Catholic Church; yet, in this particular instance, they were under royal control. According to the Papal Bull that authorized the Inquisition, “Powers of appointment and dismissal were granted to the Spanish crown.”¹³ Payment and regulation fell to the Spanish Crown to control, and the Inquisition effectively became another branch of the Spanish government.

Once the tribunals were established in towns across the nation, a suspect would either come to the Inquisition voluntarily, most likely in an attempt to show true repentance, or be accused by someone in their community. Any goods and belongings would be seized in

¹⁰ Llorente, *A Critical History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 54.

¹¹ *Converso*- New Christian converted from Judaism or descendent of a former Jew.

¹² Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 48.

¹³ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 44.

accordance with canon law.¹⁴ The goods and income of the suspected heretic would be sequestrated and catalogued to pay for their imprisonment and any sentenced penance. The arrested would then be told to confess their sins without knowing of what they were accused. The confessions would be compared to any evidence brought forth by witnesses and informants, and if “there existed significant discrepancies between the defendant’s claims and those of the prosecution’s witnesses, the accused may be tortured in an attempt to learn the truth about his or her activities.”¹⁵ The accused would also generally be asked about accomplices who had also participated in heretical acts. After torture, anything that was confessed would be ratified to ensure the torture did not merely bring out nonsense, and the heretic would be charged and sentenced.¹⁶ Oftentimes, the formal sentencing would be in the form of the public *auto-de-fé*, a spectacle for the public to hear the sentencing of heretics condemned to be burnt later in the day outside the main city by secular authorities.

The atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition have been documented extensively as a result of the records left behind by a highly organized bureaucratic system. The three hundred and fifty year duration of the Spanish Inquisition, combined with how recently it was officially destroyed— July 15, 1834— undoubtedly enabled rumor and speculation to effectively paint the Spanish Inquisition as the height of human capacity for cruelty.¹⁷ However, England also saw religious tumult in its history. The English Reformation swept through the nation, starting with King Henry VIII. During his and his children’s reigns, a battle for the religious identity of England ensued. One generation was raised to be strictly Catholic and the next was required to believe in Protestantism. This resulted in heretical casualties as Englishmen’s religious identities were subjected to the whims of the reigning Tudor monarchs.

Beginnings of the Reformation in England

Prior to and during a large portion of the reign of King Henry VIII, England was a dutiful Catholic nation that recognized the overarching power of the Pope in Rome. Henry was married to the Spanish Princess Catherine, the daughter of the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella of

¹⁴ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 149.

¹⁵ Gretchen D. Starr-LeBeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2003), 164.

¹⁶ Starr-LeBeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin*, 165.

¹⁷ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 304-5.

Castile and Aragon and the founders of the modern Spanish Inquisition. Henry had not shown any inclination toward converting to the Protestant movements in Germany. However, several years into his marriage, Henry's only legitimate child was a daughter, Princess Mary, and he became concerned that he would never have a legitimate male heir.¹⁸ He began investigating options to set aside Catherine for a younger wife. The practice of setting aside a barren or older wife was not unusual, and dated back through the Middle Ages; all that was necessary was a papal dispensation.¹⁹ Unfortunately for Henry, the pope was reluctant to act against Catherine because her wealthy Spanish family was terribly influential in Europe and important to Rome, (her nephew was the Holy Roman Emperor as well as the King of Spain). As H. Maynard Smith and countless others have observed, "it was not so easy to get rid of a princess of Aragon."²⁰

Henry began the process of discarding Catherine honorably in 1527. By 1533, he banished Catherine, declared their daughter a bastard, and married a woman named Anne Boleyn and crowned her Queen of England.²¹ In order for Henry to facilitate his divorce, he found it necessary to separate England from Papal law and subjugated canon law to English common law. He accomplished this by 1534 with the Act of Royal Supremacy, which extended royal authority completely over the Church of England with Henry at its head.²² Therefore criticism of Henry's actions was seen as both blasphemy and treason. As this duality progressed, it proved impossible to keep heresy cases secret in a system not designed for secrecy. Yet even early successful cases under Henry, that managed to keep a modicum of secrecy, were incapable of suppressing all details of heresy trials as with the trials of Elizabeth Barton.

Heresy Under King Henry VIII

Elizabeth Barton, also known as the Nun of Kent, took a hardline stance against the divorce proceedings and spoke out through her prophecies to help guide the Church righteously. She had several influential followers including John Fisher, one of Queen Catherine of Aragon's leading supporters. "Such was her reputation that she even obtained audiences with [Cardinal

¹⁸ Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, British History In Perspective (Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 1993), 7.

¹⁹ Rex, *Henry VIII and the English*, 7.

²⁰ H. Maynard Smith, *Henry VIII and the Reformation* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 22.

²¹ Smith, *Henry VIII and the Reformation*, xv.

²² Smith, *Henry VIII and the Reformation*, 62.

and Lord Chancellor] Wolsey and the king,” English Christianity scholar Richard Rex notes. Her prophecies warned Henry that “if he put away Catherine he would cease to be King within six months.”²³ She did not elaborate regarding his supposed downfall, nor is it evident she planned to act upon what could be interpreted as a threat. She appears to have merely taken Catherine’s side in the great matter of the King’s divorce and used her influence to attempt to chide Henry into acting honorably. However, Henry did not take the unfavorable news well, and Elizabeth was arrested, interrogated, and forced to publically recant all of her prophecies in November 1533.²⁴

Elizabeth made the mistake of believing that the King felt obeisance to Christianity to be above his duties as the leader of the nation. It appears she felt that he could be returned to the faith and his wife if he was but told to do so by a religious authority such as her visions from God. Elizabeth underestimated his devotion to his path of change. The Pope excommunicated Henry in September 1533, yet he continued on his path where he determined ecclesiastical right and wrong. He never forgot Elizabeth Barton, and she and her associates were prosecuted for heresy against the Church of England, which was also high treason against the Crown. She was executed on April 20, 1534 by hanging and beheading. Elizabeth suffered the loss of her reputation as a holy woman touched by God with prophetic visions and was thus silenced forever. Her story could not become a rallying cry because she was seen as a traitor and a disgraced holy woman who admitted to her falsehoods albeit, likely under duress. Any sympathy that could have been gained by the general public knowing the circumstances of her imprisonment and interrogation was effectively stunted as the methodology to ensure that Elizabeth recanted was not public knowledge. Henry was successful in silencing Elizabeth and retaining his and the Crown’s reputation while at the same time destroying hers. His daughter Mary would not prove as fortunate in suppressing the records of her courts.

This type of prophetic prodding demonstrated by Elizabeth is not dissimilar to events that occurred in Spain at that time. It also has roots going back to Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Bridget of Sweden, for whom, “The dominant theme was the reform of the church, which was

²³ Rex, *Henry VIII and the English*, 19.

²⁴ Diane Watt, "Reconstructing the Word: The Political Prophecies of Elizabeth Barton (1506-1534)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1997): 136.

accused of corruption and immorality.”²⁵ In England, as well as in Spain, when the prophetess strayed too far from saintly business and became too political and too pointed, she became a danger to the crown.²⁶ Elizabeth was arrested, not because she had the gift of prophecy, but because she became too enmeshed in the political world instead of remaining in the ecclesiastical one. Her same fall from grace and the ruination of reputation she experienced befell several women in Spain’s history, including one girl who fell several decades after the Nun of Kent named Lucrecia.

Lucrecia lived in Madrid in the late 1500s. She was from an average family and worked in the nearby palace of Philip II. She started having strange and dangerous prophetic dreams about the state of Spain. With the help of some interested members of the clergy, Doctor Alonso de Mendoza and Fray Lucas de Allende, her dreams were recorded and analyzed. In true prophetic fashion, many aspects of her dreams were symbolic or allegorical but she managed to convince many of their veracity.

Her dreams, benign enough at the outset, turned increasingly political. They became critical of King Philip’s fiscal policies and guidance of the nation, including a prediction of the end of the monarchy at God’s hands during Philip’s reign. She even predicted the destruction of the Spanish Armada during a conflict with the English in 1588.²⁷ These doomsday prophecies convinced authorities that Lucrecia “was using her dreams to foment opposition to the king.”²⁸ Lucrecia was now a political opponent actively predicting the fall of the empire. She and her believers were then denounced to the Inquisition. Lucrecia was threatening secular authority yet ecclesiastic authority was charged with silencing her. The subsequent investigations and imprisonment lasted for years effectively dissuading many of Lucrecia’s supporters. She was discredited and branded a seditious heretic, but allowed to live. Her sentence was “one hundred lashes, banishment from Madrid, and two years’ seclusion in a religious house.”²⁹ She served her sentence in a hospital for beggars and those infected with contagious skin diseases. She disappears from the historical record after her placement, never to rise from historical obscurity again. She did not die as an example as Elizabeth Barton did, but she was ruined, discredited,

²⁵ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 86.

²⁶ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 86-7.

²⁷ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 74.

²⁸ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 119.

²⁹ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 155.

and cast away where she could do no more harm. Mendoza and Allende were discouraged from aiding her again, and both were sentenced with terms of seclusion.³⁰

Lucrecia may not have been killed, but as in the case of Elizabeth, the charge of heresy was a successful method of ridding the nation of political threats, and discredited the women to the extent that their followers would never again take up their cause. The results of Elizabeth Barton's case are very similar to many results of the Spanish Inquisitorial courts in that her character was denounced and her reputation was destroyed. For whatever reason, the information regarding her trial and any evidence against her was not made public, and thus, the results were assumed to be valid. It would not remain so circumspect, as the large paper trail of the trial of Anne Askew, another woman charged with heresy during the reign of Henry VIII exhibits.

Anne Askew was a noblewoman from Lincolnshire who moved to London to preach and spread Protestant ideas. Among those ideas was her disbelief in transubstantiation, or the turning of wine and wafer into the physical blood and body of Christ. She was not a silent or secret Protestant, but a proselytizing one believed to have influential friends in the highest circles at King Henry VIII's court, supposedly including ladies from Queen Katherine Parr's household. She was arrested and examined in 1545 and in 1546 before being burned as a heretic.³¹

Anne was arrested for the first time in 1545, and interrogations began with the Bishop of London's Chancellor and the Lord Mayor of London. Anne's charges of heresy were not a strictly ecclesiastical matter, as exhibited by the fact that both lay lawmen and religious leaders participated in her *quest*, an official commission that would hold a heresy hearing and decide Anne's fate.³² Anne was questioned about her many sayings and assertions disparaging the idea that access to God can only be through an intermediary priest, and that priests have the power to change wine and bread into the blood and body of Christ. Henry may have broken from Rome, but Anne's very divergent ideas were still not tolerated. She was asked to explain the charges brought against her, whether they were true recountings or false accusations, and her reasoning for such utterances.

³⁰ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 153-8.

³¹ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 267-71.

³² Anne Askew and John Bale, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. Elaine V. Beilin, *Women Writers in English 1350-1850* (New York: Oxford University, 1996), xvi.

The men of the quest were concerned with several egregious accusations and were focused on determining their veracity. First, she was asked if she believed “that the sacrament hangynge over the aultre was the verye bodye of Christ reallye.”³³In other words: did she believe that the sacrament was truly the body of Christ? To this she did not answer, but in turn questioned the inquisitor to explain how the church could venerate Saint Stephen, who preached against God living in a temple, against God being a part of an inanimate object yet believe that the sacrament was truly a part of God. She argues with clear evidence that she had read the Bible and interpreted it beyond what a priest would teach.

Additionally, Anne was told to answer a charge brought by a woman who had heard her speak: “Secondly he sayd that there was a woman, which ded testyfy, that I shuld reade, how God was not in temples made with handes.” Anne later recalled that she “shewed hym the vii. And the xvii chapter of the Apostles actes, what Steven and Paule had sayd therin.”³⁴ She answered the charge brought against her and continued to justify her beliefs and sayings with evidence from the Bible. At times, she would be accused of saying things she claims no connection to, including a rather famous quote attributed to Anne Askew yet Anne denies ever saying:

Besydes thys my lorde mayre layed one thyng unto my charge, which was never spoken of me, but of them. And that was whether a mouse eatynge the hoste, received God or no? Thys question ded I never aske, but in dede they asked it of me, whereunto I made them no answer, but smyled.³⁵

Anne wisely did not provide opportunity to endanger herself by agreeing with something the quest obviously had issues with; trivializing transubstantiation by posing the question, “If a mouse ate the consecrated host would receive God?” The disbelief in transubstantiation is a common Protestant belief, yet not one of Henry’s new church. If Anne admitted to disbelief in transubstantiation, she would have declared her more radical beliefs. She denied all culpability, but refused to speak against herself. Her confession was still highly sought after as is evidenced

³³ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, 20

³⁴ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 20-1.

³⁵ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 27.

by the numerous entreaties to hear her confession even after her cousin had come to bail her out and take her home:

...my lorde of London sent for me, at one of the clocke, hys houre beyng appointed at thre. And as I came before hym, he sayd, he was verye sorye of my trouble, and desyred to knowe my opynyon in soche matters as were layed against me. He requyred me also in anye wyse , boldelye to utter the secretes of my harte, byddyng me not to feare in anye point. For what so ever I ded saye within hys house no man shuld hurte me for it. I answered. For so moche as your Lodeshypp appointed iii. Of the clocke, and my fryndes shall not come tyll that houre, I desyre yow to pardon me of gevyng answere tyll they come.³⁶

At this point the mayor of London, knowing she had family and counsel coming to talk about bail, desired to appeal to Anne's sense of Christian obedience to force a confession. Anne wisely refused to endanger herself. After more interviews, Anne was convinced to sign a recantation of sorts by the Bishop of London, Bishop Edmund Bonner. She swore an oath proclaiming her devotion to the Church ending with, "I Anne Askewe do believe all maner thynges contained in the faythe of the Catholyck churche."³⁷ She added "Catholyck" to the oath presented to her which caused delays, yet she was released on bail a few days later.³⁸

She was then rearrested in 1546 for her continued divergent beliefs about the sacrament and due to the fear that her beliefs found sympathetic ears. It was believed that many of those listeners came from the higher circles of the Court and reaching into the Queen Katherine's household. Anne was again questioned as to her beliefs, but, more importantly, who her friends were, who believed as she did, and who helped pay for the betterment of her imprisonment:

Then they sayd, that there were diverse gentylwomen, that gave me moneye. But I knewe not their names...I answered that there was a man in a blewe coate, which delivered me, x, shylynges, and sayd that my ladye of Hertforde sent it me. And an other in a violet coate ded geve me viii. Shylynges, and sayd that my ladye Denny sent it me. Whether it were true or no, I can not tell. For I am not suer who sent it me, but as the men ded saye.³⁹

³⁶ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 40-1.

³⁷ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 62.

³⁸ Adding Catholyck to her oath bound King Henry's Anglican Church to the Catholic one. In a sense Anne was asserting that there was no difference between the two. It could be seen as asserting that her actions were those of a true Protestant, not the renamed Catholic religion Henry was propagating while at the same time saving herself from a heretic's fate. The passage can be found in Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 62-3.

³⁹ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 125.

Anne did not lie, but she did not indicate that she knew the ladies before they helped her. For all she knew they could have merely been demonstrating Christian charity. This answer was unacceptable to her investigators, because Lady Hertford was Prince Edward's aunt on his mother's side, and a prominent noblewoman at court. If Anne Askew had friends as high as the Prince's household, her influence may have spread further to Queen Katherine Parr. Anne was questioned about her accomplices, yet she refused to accuse or involve others. Anne's interrogators could not break her faith or her resolve to protect her fellow believers, "Anne...is represented as having done nothing to conceal her own religious beliefs; she is said to have been tortured to inculcate others."⁴⁰ If ties from Anne to the Queen were found, Queen Katherine could have been accused of heresy as well. Given Henry's reputation of discarding his wives, Katherine would have been in grave danger. On the other hand, searching for accomplices or familiars is sensible when trying to stamp out heresy, and a common direction of Inquisitorial questioning. In Spain, interrogation with the intent of discovering accomplices could keep a person in jail even after they have confessed all they know or have done, like in the case of Maria Gonzalez.

During Maria's trial in Ciudad Real in 1511-1513, she confessed to the crime of being a Judaizing *converso* and was sentenced to "perpetual prison." Her case was reopened in order to find her accomplices or Judaizing sect. She continued to profess that she, "had no more to say or confess, whether about herself or other people, besides what she had already stated and confessed before the lord inquisitors."⁴¹ For her "recalcitrance," the inquisitors felt the need to admonish her further: "we find that we must order Maria Gonzalez put to the question of torture, which may be given and continued at our will until she speaks the truth and perseveres in it according to the law."⁴² During torture, Maria confessed knowledge of a ring of women in her acquaintance who were still secretly practicing Jewish traditions. She confessed in order to stop the torture session, and under further investigation, her confession proved false. She gave specific information and details that were easily revealed to be untrue when corroborated with

⁴⁰ James Heath, *Torture and English Law: An Administrative and Legal History from the Plantagenets to the Stuarts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982), 67.

⁴¹ "Document 6 Inquisition Trial of Maria Gonzalez, Wife of Pedro de Villarreal. Ciudad Real, 1511-1513.," trans. LuAnne Homza, in *The Spanish Inquisition 1478-1614*, ed. Lu Ann Homza (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 51.

⁴² "Document 6 Inquisition Trial," in *The Spanish Inquisition 1478-1614*, 55.

testimonies gathered from other suspects. Maria was then charged “for having falsely confessed and being impenitent.”⁴³ She was relaxed, or given, to the secular courts to be burned.

Thus, the threat of free accomplices of someone viewed as dangerous could understandably be a terrifying concept. In the case of Anne Askew, her accomplices and friends were believed to have great influence in court, especially over the upbringing of the Prince of Wales. Under these circumstances, it was deemed necessary by Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and his eventual successor Richard Rich to torture Anne on the rack for more information:

Then they ded put me on the racke, bycause I confessed no ladyes nor gentyllwomen to be of my opnyon, and theron they kepte me a longe tyme. And bycause I laye styll and ded not crye, my lorde Chauncellour and master Ryche, toke peynes to racke me their owne handes, tyll I was nygh dead.⁴⁴

Her recalcitrance and silence during the torture session seems to have cemented her fate as a heretic, and her refusal to recant finalized her sentence of burning at the stake. However, “The day of her execution being appointed, she was brought to Smithfield in a chair, because she could not go on her feet from the cruel effects of the torments.”⁴⁵ The brave woman who had held out through her limbs being pulled from their sockets was carried so ignobly to the stake. The spectators saw her mangled body and they heard that despite the obvious pain she was in she outlasted her torturers by not confessing. The crowd was then free to form their own opinion of the young lady being burnt, and many would admire her for her courage and fortitude.

Anne was investigated by a court composed of both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. She was interrogated for an ecclesiastical crime, yet the eyes of the Crown were very interested. As the Church and State now shared a common leader, the jurisdiction lines between the two blurred. Anne was tried in an ecclesiastic court, yet her heresy would be an offense to the head of the Church, the monarch, and thus could also technically be declared as treason. This trend started with Henry VIII and continued through England’s history.⁴⁶ Though Anne was but a commoner preacher, she supposedly had ties to royalty. This made her very decidedly a political target, and could arguably explain why she was rearrested and tortured for refusing to stop preaching the Protestant faith. Anne was expected to repent and confess when questioned, and

⁴³ "Document 6 Inquisition Trial," in *The Spanish Inquisition 1478-1614*, 60.

⁴⁴ Askew and Bale, *The Examinations of Anne*, 127.

⁴⁵ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 276.

⁴⁶ John Edwards, *Mary I England's Catholic Queen* (New Haven: Yale University, 2011), 259.

was tortured when she refused to confess about any followers or supporters she might have. She was declared a heretic to the public and sentenced to a public burning. The particulars of her investigation bear many similarities to Inquisition investigations, except for one notable difference: Anne was able to write down her experiences and get them to John Bale, a fellow Protestant, who then published her writings with his commentary. John Foxe also added her story to his *Book of Martyrs*. During the Spanish Inquisition, no one involved could talk about any aspect of their time after they were arrested and imprisoned.⁴⁷ This secrecy policy inhibited future suspects from being better prepared for the investigations, and effectively hid any of the internal aspects of declaring heresy. Once a person was arrested, they would not reemerge for months and only then to silently participate in an *auto-de-fé*, or a public sentencing spectacle, proclaiming their guilt for heretical views and actions. There was no method to ascertain the actual actions that occurred during the months or years of investigation. The public was left to assume that there was strong evidence of heresy and thus just cause for damning someone's soul for all eternity by burning them as a heretic. Anne's very public account of her interrogations and treatment clearly illustrates a divergence from Spanish convention.

Anne wrote of her interactions with her jailors, investigators, and torturers, and sent her manuscript to fellow Protestant John Bale, who then used her work to proclaim her martyr status to the English public. The public would hear the sentence, but now, could also read of the process and decide for themselves whether the young lady deserved to be burnt, based on her testimony. There was, of course, opportunity for Anne to exaggerate or lie in her testimony, but most of the flowery and passionate prose seems to come from Bale's separated commentary and not Askew's more prosaic retelling. Her matter-of-fact recounting most likely influenced readers to believe she truly was merely a devout woman loyal to her faith even when faced by treacherous and mean-spirited Papists determined to break her spirit. The very fact that she underwent such horrific torture that it left her permanently damaged could speak to the strength of her spirit and soul, thus making her a symbol others of her faith could aspire to. Anne wrote poems of her time in prison, and others commemorated her in song. If they truly believed, they could endure what this young lady had endured for her faith. Anne would remain a symbol until

⁴⁷ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 182.

the Counter-Reformation would provide the Protestant community with hundreds more who would be killed by the ruler whom history would remember as Bloody Mary Tudor.

In 1547, King Henry died, and Prince Edward became King Edward VI of England. He was educated in the atmosphere of the new religion his father had fostered, what would become known as Anglicanism.⁴⁸ His reign was one of tolerance toward the new religion, and a continuance of the path his father had set. Edward's reign only lasted six years, but those years had great impact on the growth and strength of Protestantism in England. This development greatly vexed Mary when she became queen.

Mary's Attempted Counter Reformation in England

Queen Mary I of England was raised a devout Catholic during a time period when both of her parents were also devoutly Catholic. Though her father broke with Rome, Mary stuck to her pious roots, and when she became queen in 1553, she was determined to save the souls of her people from the New Faith plague sweeping through her country. Mary "shared the general view that the most desirable outcome was to persuade 'heretics' to recant, repent and then return to the true church. If they refused to do so, their deaths should be exemplary for the edification of the wider public."⁴⁹ She believed that the uneducated public had been influenced by high-ranking heretic Protestants during Henry VIII's and Edward VI's reigns and that her people would gladly return to the true faith if the rabble-rousers were dispatched or returned to the fold.

Mary I began her reign in 1553 by arresting the major Protestant religious leaders who gained power during Henry's and Edward's reigns. Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, who was instrumental in completing the divorce between Mary's parents, and bishops Ridley, Hooper, and others were arrested and replaced by devout Catholics. Prominent Protestant leaders like John Rodgers and Hugh Latimer also were arrested to halt their corrupting influence. These people who had been vocal in their beliefs, and who were actively working for the Protestant cause during Henry's and Edward's reigns, were the first to fall. Though many were arrested in 1553, Mary's marriage to Prince Philip of Spain in 1554 delayed the executions until January

⁴⁸ Rex, *Henry VIII and the English*, 169.

⁴⁹ Judith M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 198.

1555.⁵⁰ The Lord Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner, presided over hearings to sentence Rogers, Hooper, Rowland Taylor, and other influential and prominent Protestants. They were accused of denying Papal Supremacy over the Church and the issue of transubstantiation, among other offences.

The investigations shared many qualities with the Spanish Inquisition, so much so that it has been claimed by historians that Philip transplanted Inquisition methodology to England.⁵¹ The goals were similar, in that both wanted to cleanse Christianity of Protestant influence and restore the dominance of Catholicism. Both relied upon community members and neighbors informing on suspected heretics.⁵² The interrogation styles also proved similar, as both were designed to prove innocence, rather than guilt. Also, both ended in public denunciation of the heretic and a public execution by burning. This common Catholic practice of dealing with heretics may have its roots in the bible verse John 15:6, which says “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.”

When Rogers, a preacher at St. Paul’s Cathedral, was questioned about the legitimacy of the Pope as the head of the Church, he replied, “I know no other head but Christ of his catholic Church, neither will I acknowledge the Bishop of Rome to have any more authority than any other bishop hath by the Word of God.”⁵³ Rogers argued that Christ was the head of the Church, and the Pope was not able to supersede the Word of God. Rogers and the others defended their religious positions, while maintaining that they had not broken any English laws by marrying and preaching the Protestant faith. Rogers was accused of inciting a riot at Paul’s Cross Church, his former pulpit, during a Catholic mass. Rogers vehemently denied the accusations and claimed instead he had attempted to calm the crowd, but the people could not be calmed.⁵⁴

Yet, theological debate and protestations of innocence were not enough to escape the condemnations of heresy. However, there was an opportunity to escape the stake. Typically “the Protestants were found guilty of heresy on all charges, but were told that the Queen would grant

⁵⁰ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs* 57-8.

⁵¹ John Edwards, "The Spanish Inquisition Refashioned: the Experience of Mary I's England and the Valladolid Tribunal 1559," *Hispanic Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (February 2012): 41.

⁵² Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 181.; Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 199.

⁵³ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 316.

⁵⁴ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 47-8.

them a pardon if they would recant and repent.”⁵⁵ Some who were a part of the tribunal did recant and, after they completed a penance, were pardoned. Rogers, Hooper, Rowland Taylor, and many other prominent Protestants did not recant and thus were sentenced to burn. Rogers burned at Smithfield February 4, 1555.⁵⁶ He was known as the *protomartyr*, or first martyr of Mary’s reign.⁵⁷ Rogers’ case was unique because a dove flew over the flames as he was dying. Many appeared to take the presence of the dove to be the Holy Spirit, which had come to take Rogers’ soul to heaven.⁵⁸ The protomartyr, not Mary or the investigators themselves, appeared to have divine approbation. Many later suspects who were convicted in London in the following years would be burned at Smithfield.

Burnings were popular events in England. Some of the crowd might have been supporters of the convicted person, but many others were just there for an interesting day. They can be compared to the *autos-de-fé* in Spain in terms of turnout and spectator appeal. But while the *auto-de-fé* merely sentenced and humiliated those convicted before relaxing the heretic to the secular courts to carry out the sentence, English burnings proclaimed the guilt of those convicted, and burned the person as part of the public spectacle.⁵⁹ Great crowds watched as the heretic was set aflame, and the circumstances of that horrific death had the power to influence the spectators’ opinions of those condemned, as in the case of George Marsh.

George Marsh was a priest ordained under Edward VI sent to preach in Leicestershire under Lawrence Saunders. Saunders was arrested in 1553, and Marsh fled to his family in Lancashire where the Earl of Derby arrested him. He sent Marsh to Chester to be interrogated. He was offered the chance to recant, but refused and was burned in April 1555. Chester is located in northern England, close to Catholic Scotland, and so “he could not expect much sympathy in the Catholic north, though even here there were secret Protestants who admired and pitied him.”⁶⁰ While imprisoned, he was met with hostility; and when he asked Bishop Cotes to pray for him, the Bishop scornfully replied, “I will no more pray for thee than I would for a

⁵⁵ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 62.

⁵⁶ Edwards, "Spanish Inquisition?," 64.

⁵⁷ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 65.

⁵⁸ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 67.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *Mary I*, 265.

⁶⁰ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 85.

dog.”⁶¹ Marsh met with very little sympathy and even fewer who understood or agreed with his religious ideology.

Marsh was fastened to the stake with a jar of tar hung above his head, the purpose to which is unknown, except to cause further pain and suffering. The faggots of wood, were too far away from Marsh and it was a very windy day, ensuring that Marsh was not going to see a quick death,

The fire being unskillfully made, and the wind driving it to and fro, he suffered great agony in his death, which nevertheless, he bore with Christian patience. When he had been a long time tormented in the fire without moving, having his flesh so broiled and puffed up, that they who stood before him supposed he had been dead, he suddenly spread abroad his arms, saying, ‘Father of heaven, have mercy upon me!’⁶²

Marsh died with dignity and courage. Those Protestants who watched proclaimed him “a martyr, and [he had] died marvelously patient.”⁶³ No matter what the spectators felt about his religious identity, they could respect and admire his courage and fortitude. After Marsh was proclaimed dead, Bishop Cotes felt it imperative to counter the positive impression of Marsh the Martyr with a special sermon reminding the community that Marsh died a heretic. Cotes died a year later of syphilis and some said that it was God’s punishment for burning George Marsh.⁶⁴

Many other martyrs became symbols of hope and fortitude for their followers. Thomas Haukes was a gentleman in the household of Lord Oxford, who later denounced Haukes as a heretic. The courts condemned him to burn, but before his execution, he talked to his followers and friends regarding the burning itself, “[promising] his friends to show a disregard of pain, he agreed that, God helping him, he would, during his agonies, lift up his hands above his head towards heaven.”⁶⁵ During his execution in 1555, Haukes remembered his promise, and though his fingers were burnt away and his skin thoroughly blackened, he held his hands up high as a signal that it was bearable. He gave his followers hope by overcoming the fear the grisly executions were meant to instill.

⁶¹ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 495.

⁶² Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 496.

⁶³ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 496.

⁶⁴ Ridley, *Bloody Mary’s Martyrs*, 87.

⁶⁵ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 518.

Other martyrs managed to give hope in the form of literature after they were arrested. Robert Smith wrote poems to his Protestant friends and followers to encourage them to remain true to their faith. After he was arrested, he continued to produce poetry, which his friends received and distributed. The arrested suspected heretics were prisoners, and as a general policy for prisoners, communications were supposed to be limited. However, this policy was not terribly well enforced, as David Loades observed;

...such strictness was never sustained because very few of the gaolers and others who were immediately responsibly for their safe-keeping bore them any ill-will. As a result letters, tracts of instruction, and pious exhortation flowed out from the prisons to encourage the steadfast and support the wavering, while the leaders corresponded amongst themselves...⁶⁶

Prisoners were not supposed to have unlimited access to the outside world, yet literature and letters found their way across England from prison to prison, plotting, sharing hope, and offering symbols of courage.

The burnings, such as those of George Marsh and Robert Smith, not only had the power to influence spectators favorably toward specific brave heretics, but also to convert people to Protestantism. Instead of scaring the populace into obedience, the atrocities of the burnings could have inspired otherwise devout Catholics to take up the Protestant faith. George Tankerville converted from Catholicism to Protestantism after witnessing the atrocities of Mary's counter-reformation. Tankerville remained a steadfast Catholic even through the Protestant reign of Edward VI. But, under a Catholic queen, Tankerville began reading the common English Bible and was arrested for heresy by Bishop Bonner in London. As a formerly devout Catholic, he was entreated to recant, but he refused. He burned in 1555.⁶⁷

Eventually, public backlash against the burnings of admired men and women necessitated investigators to become craftier when arresting suspects, as in the case of Vicar Robert Samuel. Robert Samuel was one of the priests who married while it was legal during the reign of Edward VI. He was popular with many of his parishioners, and many were Protestant. Mary ended the practice of clerical marriage in England, and told those who had married they were required to set aside their wives if they desired to retain their positions; "The priests were told that if they

⁶⁶ D. M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979), 165-6.

⁶⁷ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 103.

separated from their wives and agreed never to speak to them or to their children again, they could do penance in a public ceremony and continue in their benefices.”⁶⁸ Samuel refused to set aside his wife, and many of his congregation supported him. He was discovered hiding his wife and was marked for arrest. Foxe recounts, “They captured him in the night, because they durst not do it in the day-time, for fear of trouble and tumult.”⁶⁹ Many in Samuel’s town supported him and his wife, and Master Forster, the local authority, was afraid he might be rebuffed if they attempted to take Samuel in broad daylight. That would be an unacceptable blow to his authority, so Master Forster circumvented that issue by attacking at night.

As the burnings continued, it became clear that not everyone in the realm supported Mary’s crusade. Faith, reassuring literature, and the bravery of those sent to burn managed to reach the public and sway their opinion away from obedience to the Crown to their own sympathies. The realm was not blindly returning to Catholicism as Mary expected, so sermons, speeches, and literature were all utilized to argue against the heretical Protestants. Beyond the church pulpit, pamphlets directed at the public were meant to reinforce Mary’s position. One of the most famous was *A Godlye Treatise concerning the Masse, for the Instructyon of the simple and Unlearned People*, published in 1555.⁷⁰ It insisted that the martyrs were instead criminals, “by iuste [just] laws cast and condemned to burne for their obstinate heresie.”⁷¹ It continued to defame all Protestants as drunkards, lacking charity, and traitors to the Crown as well as the Church. A man by the name of Miles Hogarde also wrote *The Displaying of the Protestants*, which was in the same vein as *A Godlye Treaties*. He also defamed famous Protestant martyrs like Anne Askew, and ridiculed any followers who believed in them by arguing that they were duped by the second-hand stories of bravery and courage. It is difficult to say how influential Hogarde’s writings were or how much direct impact they had on the Protestant cause. However, as Christianity scholar Eamon Duffy observes, “something more was needed in the battle for hearts and minds than Hogarde’s rough humor or the more structured polemic of the *Treatise on the Masse*.”⁷² In his opinion, the propaganda techniques Mary’s regime employed were inadequate to completely sway the minds of the people. Two years into Mary’s Protestant

⁶⁸ Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs*, 58.

⁶⁹ Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, 568.

⁷⁰ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 172.

⁷¹ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 172.

⁷² Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 177.

Inquisition, many people of the realm were not fully behind the prosecution of Protestants, nor were they afraid or intimidated. Understanding what was going on, hearing the stories of those who fell, and offering support allowed the Protestants and their supporters to fight back and persevere through a very dangerous time in their history that ended with Mary's death.

Mary died after only five years on the throne. The persecution of Protestants ended with her death, but prior to her demise there was no indication of the investigations slowing. Yet, there was growing opposition to the investigation and executions. In Spain, the Inquisition managed to run for over three hundred and fifty years. This institution endured for so long in large part because it was run intelligently. It generally did not allow for the creation of martyrs because it isolated those accused and sealed all records of their trials. Evidence was presented at their *auto-de-fé* declaring their obvious heresy. If the matter was more complicated, the *auto* could be private and the person never heard from again. Famous or influential figures, like Lucrecia, and others like her, were more difficult to deal with as they would be missed if they simply disappeared. They often were discredited and their followers also paid a price that would discourage them from continued association. A few notable exceptions were royal secretary to King Philip II Antonio Perez and Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli, an Amerindian in New Spain.

Antonio Perez was the royal secretary and friend to King Philip II. Due to factional hostilities, his machinations at court were denounced as "corruption and malfeasance."⁷³ He was exiled from Madrid and fired from all offices he held in the court. In 1590 he was arrested by the Inquisition in his native Aragon, but crowds rioted in the streets to protest his arrest.⁷⁴ It was obvious that Perez was not arrested by the Inquisition because he was a heretic, but because he was a political problem that needed to be silenced. Perez escaped abroad where he could not cause great harm, and wrote about his mistreatments.⁷⁵ Perez had been greatly influential and immensely popular. He was simply too renowned a person for even the Inquisition to make disappear.

⁷³ Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, 89.

⁷⁴ Kelly J. Fitzmaurice, *Antonio Perez* (Humphrey, United Kingdom: Oxford University, 1922), 49.

⁷⁵ Fitzmaurice, *Antonio Perez*, 59-63.

Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli was caught by the Inquisition tribunal established in New Spain in the New World. He was executed November 30, 1539.⁷⁶ Don Carlos was a converted native nobleman in current day Mexico. The backlash to the execution of not only a nobleman, but someone so new to the faith resulted in the removal of the Inquisitor General responsible for his condemnation. Subsequently, this principle emerged: recently converted natives were exempt from Inquisitorial scrutiny as they must have time to learn their new religion before they could truly rebel against it. It is estimated that “75 to 80 percent of New Spain’s population was thus exempt from inquisitorial jurisdiction.”⁷⁷ This is one of very few cases in which public opinion and public backlash managed to sway Inquisitorial influence. If more cases had greater exposure to the public, Don Carlos’s case may not have been an exception.

The Spanish Inquisition and Mary Tudor’s Protestant inquisitions had similar goals: make the subjects of their realm loyal to the Catholic faith and eliminate those who were not. They had similar methods of discovering such undesirables, through obedient denunciation by their peers, neighbors, family, and familiars. They also had similar styles of interrogation to prompt confession, and a symbolic public execution style. Yet, there were fundamental differences between these inquisitions that explain in part how the Spanish Inquisition could last over three hundred and fifty years with little irreparable backlash, while Mary’s investigations failed to capture the obedience of many of her subjects.

Many aspects of the Spanish Inquisition were a secret affair. Mary’s process was comparatively open with letters crisscrossing England even after the accused were arrested. Knowledge of the proceedings and investigative path were available and utilized to counter-propagandize for the Protestant benefit. Ill-defined or unfair legal procedure combined with spectacle of the burnings bred bad press for the Catholic cause, and courageous martyrs became symbols of hope and resistance. Thus, the secrecy policies of the Spanish Inquisition stunted many avenues of resistance before they could form, creating a more efficient and smoother system of disposing of heretics.

⁷⁶ Jacqueline Holler, "More Sins than the Queen of England," in *Women in the Inquisition*, ed. Mary E. Giles (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1999), 211.

⁷⁷ Holler, "More Sins than the Queen," in *Women in the Inquisition*, 212.

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