

ABSTRACT

The “Pearl of York” Playing Host: the Life of St. Margaret Clitherow, Martyr

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St. Margaret Clitherow, the “Pearl of York,” was arrested in 1586 for illegally harboring Catholic priests in her home. She was put to death later that same year when she refused to proclaim either her guilt or innocence before the court. Her faithfulness to the Catholic Church is a testament to the spirit of the Elizabethan recusant movement. It is also the basis, in this thesis, for a discussion of the relationship between martyrdom and hospitality. In this thesis, I demonstrate that Clitherow’s actions demonstrate the way in which the martyr, in making a positive witness for what is true and orthodox, establishes the walls of the Church. Thus the martyr makes those within the Church able to welcome the stranger while maintaining the fullness of their corporate identity.

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THE “PEARL OF YORK” PLAYING HOST:
THE LIFE OF ST. MARGARET CLITHEROW, MARTYR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
EPIGRAPH	vi
PREFACE	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Suggesting a Relationship Between Martyrdom and Hospitality	
CHAPTER TWO	23
The Life of Margaret Clitherow, Setting the Stage for Her Martyrdom	
CHAPTER THREE	45
Saint Margaret Clitherow Becoming the “Pearl of York”	
CHAPTER FOUR	65
Concluding Remarks on the Martyrdom and Hospitality of Saint Margaret Clitherow	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75

*Dedicated to my grandmother,
Bernice Pitman Watson (18 June 1927 – 26 March 2013)*

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*

PREFACE

At very few colleges or universities could a twenty-first century American Protestant student choose to write about the life of a sixteenth-century English Catholic saint and not receive more than a few confused stares. Baylor is one such university, and I feel privileged to have been able to spend the last academic year living with Saint Margaret Clitherow, reading and writing about her life in the context of a broader discussion of martyrdom and hospitality.

However gracious the Baylor community has been to my choice of thesis topic, it remains a fact that Saint Margaret Clitherow, the “Pearl of York,” is a relatively obscure figure unknown to many outside of her native England, and indeed the city of York itself. My own introduction to her was accidental, though serendipitous, and the trajectory of the development of this thesis is nothing if not serpentine.

Saint Margaret Clitherow numbers amongst the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, a group of men and women executed on grounds of treason between the years 1535 and 1679 in England. Although many of them had begun to be venerated as saints shortly after their deaths, Pope Paul VI collectively canonized them on 25 October 1970. At present they are celebrated on 4 May. In England Margaret is often celebrated on 30 August, a day which she shares with two other female recusant martyrs. All of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales were in some way (as either priests or laymen) involved in the recusant cause in England during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I. Recusants were those who refused to attend the services of the established church,

believing them to be heretical: recusancy was punishable by law, and was looked on as a treacherous act. The north of England was particularly loyal to the Catholic faith, and city of York in particular had a large recusant population. After her martyrdom, Margaret would become a heroic figure in this community, and indeed, her severed hand can still be seen and venerated at the Bar Convent in York, and her home in the Shambles has become a place of pilgrimage.

The notion of hospitality has been continually present in my thoughts for the last two years, and when it came time to choose a thesis topic, it seemed like an obvious choice. Of course, hospitality itself is a broadly used term, and would necessarily need to be brought into concert with another term (“hospitality and...”) in order to sufficiently narrow my field of inquiry. I created a long list of “hospitality and...” formulations, with the ‘and’ ranging from food to art to, at last, martyrdom. A line from Saint Robert Southwell’s poem *The Burning Babe* inspired this last suggestion. The poem is an Ignatian meditation in verse on the nativity of the Christ Child, who is enveloped in flames fed by his own tears and laments that none approach him for warmth on this hoary night. He further cries:

My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;
The fuel justice layeth on, and mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men’s defiled souls,
For which, as not on fire I am to work them to their good,
So I will melt into a bath and wash them in my blood.

The image of the Christ welcoming those who persecute him into his Church in turn spawned thoughts of what this might resemble for a martyr, and it occurred to me that not

only is the blood of the martyrs the life of the Church, but their willingness unto death, too, establishes the boundaries of orthodoxy and gives the Church its sense of self. It further seemed to me that it is only within the context of such a sense that the Church can practice hospitality, and so the driving notion behind this thesis was born.

At its inception, this thesis was intended to give a biographical overview of three English saints of the same period, paying special attention to the writings of two of these, and to then discuss all of the material in light of a tentatively offered relationship between martyrdom and hospitality. The saints in question were Edmund Campion and the aforementioned Robert Southwell (both Jesuits), and Margaret Clitherow. Soon, however, I came to the realization that the wealth of resources available in chronicling the lives of the two men would be an impediment to the progress of the thesis, and that the number of writings executed by either of the Jesuit saints would overwhelm the project entirely. Thus, Saint Margaret Clitherow, with no writings to her name and only four substantial biographies available, was chosen.

I have lived with Saint Margaret Clitherow's words and actions in my mind for nearly nine months now, and I have yet to grow weary of her story. She was a woman of remarkable courage, but of quick wit and prudence, too. It is my hope that this thesis will present her not only a figure in a story, and not only as an illustrative character, but as the friend that she has become to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe much gratitude to my thesis director, Dr. Michael Foley, for his meticulous edits, his patience, his guidance, and his willingness to let me take this project and “follow my bliss,” making it my own.

Likewise, Dr. Ralph Wood, who introduced me to the world of the Elizabethan Catholic martyrs and whose writings on tolerance and hospitality are heavily cited in this text, is one to whom I sense myself now and forever indebted.

I have been privileged to write this thesis in an exceptional community of friends who have offered their thoughts and encouragements and prayers over the course of the last year. Many thanks to Anna, Joy, and Emily for offering me a place in their home, a meal, a cup of coffee, and a hearty laugh. You each have my gratitude individually and uniquely, but you have it also as the community that you are together, and into which you have grafted me. Thank you to Amy for speaking words of peace at times and in ways that can only be explained by an attention to the workings of Providence, and to Laura for many a happy pancake breakfast and the warmth of those mornings. Of course, a word of thanks four years in the making is due to Hannah, whose friendship is a boon of comfort to which I return in times of sadness, and which is at all times a joy. Finally, thank you to Grant for being precisely who you are and for sharing with me your patient attention, gentle encouragement, and thoughtful conversation.

I owe this thesis, pervaded as it is by thoughts and images that have been growing in my mind since I was a freshman, to my family and especially to my parents and

grandparents. Thank you Meme and Dada for your care and curiosity, for loving me enough to ask questions about my sixteenth-century saint, and for being examples of hospitality to me in ways theoretical and domestic, each according to your gifts. Thank you Pops, for your wisdom and love of Christ, which blesses and humbles me all at the same time, reminding me of how little I know or understand while showing me the beauty of true faithfulness lived out over a whole long lifetime. You and Gam's continuing prayers and petitions on my behalf have no doubt carried me through more storms than I am yet aware.

CHAPTER ONE

Suggesting A Relationship Between Martyrdom and Hospitality

The aim and goal of this thesis is not to prove the existence of a relationship between martyrdom and the practice of hospitality, and then to read the life of Saint Margaret Clitherow in light of that pre-established relationship.¹ Rather, it is to tentatively suggest that such a relationship might exist, and that Margaret Clitherow's life stands as an excellent example of how it has been translated into virtuous action. This being the case, the intent of the first chapter of this thesis is to lay the groundwork for the suggestion that a particular conception of martyrdom and the willingness to martyrdom is essential to the practice of Christian hospitality. It seems thus apparent that I must first define my terms of 'martyrdom' and 'hospitality,' granting attention not only to their common usage, but also to the ways in which the terms as well as the concepts appear in the Scriptures and tradition. I will also briefly survey the ways in which both topics are being treated in current scholarship. Having defined my terms, I will proceed to give an abbreviated treatment of the instances in which the two ideas have been discussed as being essential or even related to one another, before proposing the relationship I believe exists between the two.

¹ Standardized spelling was not in common usage at this point, so it is not unusual to see Margaret's name and surname spelled in a variety of different ways. The most common variant is "Margarett Clitheroe," but for the sake of clarity, she will be referred to as "Margaret Clitherow" throughout the body of this thesis. This choice of spelling is in keeping with the tradition upheld by current scholarship surrounding this Saint.

I. *Martyrem non facit poena, sed causa*: Martyrdom Defined as Positive Witness²

Although turning immediately to the dictionary for the definition of any term used in such a manner as ‘martyr’ or ‘martyrdom’ is often specious at best, here the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides what proves to be a telling definition for a ‘martyr’: “A person who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce faith in Christ or obedience to his teachings, a Christian way of life, or adherence to a law or tenet of the Church.”³ The emphasis here is on the *refusal* of the person in question, or their *resistance* to persecution. In light of these connotations, martyrdom becomes primarily reactionary: a martyr is one who chooses *to* in order *to not*. This seems to stand at some distance from the etymological origins of the word, as well as what these origins indicate about the concept behind the term.

According to the *OED*, the term ‘martyr’ first entered English usage in the Venerable Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, which scholars believe was completed in 731. ‘Martyr’ has been consistently used, however, since the second or third century, when it

² A simple web-based search of the words “martyr” or “martyrdom” reveals a growing interest in Islamic conceptions of martyrdom, as well as the relationship between the act of martyrdom and human psychology. These issues will not be touched upon in this thesis. The intent here is not to delve into anything beyond a summary description of how we might conceivably return to a definition of “martyrdom” as a *positive witness*, the very definition that the writers of the New Testament Scriptures and early Church fathers held.

The words of St. Augustine cited here are taken from his epistles (89.2). “*Martyrem non facit poena, sed causa*” (“It is the reason why, not the suffering, that makes the martyr.”) is reflective not only of injunctions against seeking martyrdom which the Church Fathers pronounced, but also of the belief that the essence of martyrdom is derived not from the death of the martyr, but rather from the faithful witness they bore, even unto an obedient death.

³ “martyr, n.”. *OED Online*. September 2012. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114474?rskey=XwnGHM&result=1&isAdvanced=true> (accessed October 21, 2012).

appeared in post-classical Latin as a translation of the Hellenistic Greek *μάρτυρ*, itself a derivation of the Classical Greek *μάρτυς* (*martus*), meaning “witness.”⁴

The word *μάρτυς* is employed around thirty-four times in the New Testament, but despite this frequency, its usage rarely extends beyond its juridical or simple meaning of “witness.” Additionally, in the King James Version it is only thrice translated as “martyr.” The first instance is in Acts 22:20, in which Saint Luke writes, “And when the blood of thy martyr [*μάρτυς*] was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”⁵ The author of Revelation writes, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan’s seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr [*μάρτυς*], who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth,” and, “... I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs [*μάρτυροι*] of Jesus: and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration.”⁶ In all three of these instances, the term *μάρτυς* is translated as “martyr” instead of “witness,” as in the rest of the New Testament. In all three instances, the passage refers to a witness who has died as a result of his profession of faith. The translator’s choice of “martyr” rather than “witness,” though by no means incorrect, might seem to suggest to the modern reader that the focus of the writer’s attention is on the death of the figure in question. This, however, is not the case. Rather, the focus remains on the act of witnessing, while the diction is indicative of the way in which that witness was exercised. The martyr’s death alone does

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Acts 22:20 (KJV)

⁶ Revelation 2:13, 17:6 (KJV)

not constitute a martyrdom, but is made into one by virtue of the fact that it is borne as a witness to his faith in Christ and as a testament of love for him.

Accordingly, the definition I propose here is not new or revolutionary in any way: as with many concepts and constructs in this thesis, I seek not something new, but a return to what seems to be a truer and more functional definition.

II. Re-Understanding the Notion of Christian Hospitality

The term “hospitality,” like “martyrdom,” is in common usage today in secular as well as Christian contexts. This diversity of usages has resulted in a confusing assortment of meanings to which “hospitality” could be applied. It is thus necessary that, before beginning any discussion of the dynamics of Christian hospitality, we must tease out what exactly it is.⁷ Elizabeth Newman proposes that the best way to proceed towards a definition is to explain first what Christian hospitality is *not*, thereby drawing parallels to apophatic theology. She identifies the advantages of this approach, writing that:

By eliminating false possibilities, negative theology can provide much needed correctives to the ways our speech might distort God. In a similar vein, by saying what Christian hospitality is not, we can begin to see what a more faithful hospitality really is.⁸

⁷ I do not mean to suggest that the use of the word “hospitality” in secular contexts may be held wholly responsible for the confusion surrounding what the term means: certainly, its use in Christian contexts has been no more clear and free from confusion. Instead, I hope to suggest to the reader that the meanings of “hospitality” which he has learnt in almost any context are likely to be at least somewhat of a departure from the definition I desire to propose here.

⁸ Elizabeth Newman. *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 19.

She divides this written process of negative definition into four sections, each one corresponding to a different, misappropriated use of the term “hospitality.” This negative approach is an effective method for approaching a definition of hospitality, if for no other reason than it dispels many of the commonly held definitions of “hospitality,” suggesting that the common usage of the term is at a distance from its original and more faithful meaning. The apophatic approach adopted by Newman clears the land of the semantics of hospitality so that we might rediscover the richness of the soil of tradition. As suggested in the section above, this thesis seeks to return to definitions held in the past rather than submitting to the meanings currently attributed to terms. Accordingly, in the case of the definition of “hospitality,” a rehearsal of Newman’s argument could hardly be more profitable.

The first wrongly held notion that Newman confronts is the understanding of hospitality as practice alone, especially as a single action performed by an individual rather than as an instance of participation in a tradition.⁹ Indeed, if hospitality is taken as something apart from tradition, it cannot be spoken of as “Christian hospitality,” nor can it really be submitted as the subject of an academic discussion. Accordingly, Newman asserts that in any given practice (here, the practice of offering hospitality) we are participating in something much larger than ourselves. She further goes on to explain that the implications of hospitality being treated as a Christian practice are that its *telos* must necessarily be communion with God, and that holiness must be the standard of excellence by which we judge its exercise.¹⁰ Yet Newman is not content with leaving hospitality in

⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰ Ibid., 20.

the category of practice: she also emphatically asserts that it resides, too, in the realm of theory. That is to say, she does not hold that hospitality is something done, but is also something that ought to be pondered, and which can be altered as a practice by the ways in which men think about it. She bases this claim partly on the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, in which he criticizes his opponent Eunomius for ignoring Christian practices in favor of theological ideas, and partly on the writings of Stanley Hauerwas, who conversely claims that if one wants to learn the practice of prayer, one ought to learn how to bend the body: “Learning the gesture and posture of prayer is inseparable from *learning to pray*.”¹¹ Newman summarizes the argument inherent in these claims: “Practices ought to be understood, then, not only as ways of corporate doing but also as ways of knowing,” and, “Such a claim challenges the sharp distinction often made between theory and practice, or knowing and doing.”¹² The theory of theory she propounds is adopted from William H. Poteat who, she explains, objects to any rigid distinction between theory and practice on the basis that: “For beings like ourselves whose ‘practices’ and ‘theories’ derive their *telos* and their form, with equal radicality, from the logos implicated in our mindbodies.”¹³ Accordingly, theories cannot be seen as opposed to or segregated from practice: they are timescapes, “ways of being in space and time, ways that can induce certain disclosures.”¹⁴ Newman concludes this discussion of

¹¹ *Against Eunomius*, written 381; *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between*, published 1988.

¹² Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 21.

¹³ Newman helpfully adds in her notes that, “Poteat uses *mindbody* to undermine all the ways we might be tempted to think in a ‘disincarnate’ way; ‘mindbody’ reminds us that all our thinking and doing comes from our incarnate places in the world.”

the conceptions of hospitality as practice and theory by asserting, “We ought therefore to see Christian hospitality as both a practice and a theory. As a practice, it is a complex and corporate *activity* done across time that aims for certain goods – communion with God and others. As a theory, it is a *way of being* in space and time.”¹⁵ Thus she presents hospitality as having both purpose and discernable meaning, moving it beyond the limitations to which it would be held if considered only as an insolated activity performed by individuals.

Newman, having affirmed that hospitality lies in the categories of both theory and practice, begins her treatment of what hospitality is not, starting with what she calls “sentimental hospitality.” She defines this as the kind of hospitality that, in the words of Henry Nouwen, conjures images of “tea parties, bland conversation and a general atmosphere of coziness.”¹⁶ This is implicitly presented as being a far cry from the true hospitality of the Christian tradition, even though it retains the appellation of the ancient Christian practice. Newman cites Rodney Clapp’s assertion that, “Believing we have nothing distinctive to offer to ‘our modern (or postmodern), democratic, capitalistic world,’ the church simply ‘hangs on’ to Christian language but refuses to live out a genuine alternative.”¹⁷ Accordingly, even though the word “hospitality” may belong to the Christian tradition, one cannot therefore assume that the concept brought to mind by

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

the images cited above is the hospitality entailed by faithful living. Indeed, “a sentimental hospitality lacks substance.”¹⁸

Flannery O’Connor’s short story, “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” provides an excellent example of sentimental hospitality in the form of the story’s central character, the unnamed grandmother. O’Connor writes of how she readies herself for a vacation to Florida with her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. In contrast with their casual attire, the grandmother wears a dress and hat, thinking, “In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady.”¹⁹ As Newman points out, she is a model of good Southern manners, of a brand of social hospitality that, in focusing on proper attire and comportment, is complexly aware of its appearance to others. That she embodies this social hospitality, however, does not prevent the grandmother from being a liar, even to her own family, nor does it induce her to be aware of injustices in the world around her.²⁰ This conception of hospitality as a preoccupation with appearances coincides with the grandmother’s self-blindness and inability to be honest. Reinhard Hütter, as Newman points out, states that hospitality (conceived thusly) and honoring the truth seem to be fundamentally opposed to one another: “to be

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Flannery O’Connor. “A Good Man is Hard to Find” in *Collected Works: Wise Blood ; A Good Man Is Hard to Find ; The Violent Bear It Away ; Everything That Rises Must Converge ; Stories and Occasional Prose ; Letters* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1988).

²⁰ Newman’s analysis of O’Connor’s is quite helpful, though too detailed to rehearse here in full. Sufficient to say that the example she gives of the grandmother’s dishonesty is the tall-tale she tells her son regarding the hidden treasure in an old plantation house, and as an example of her blindness to injustice, Newman cites the grandmother’s response to seeing a little black child with no britches on: “Oh look at the cute little pickaninny! ... If I could paint, I’d paint that picture.” For Newman’s full explanation, see *Untamed Hospitality* pages 23-24.

concerned for truth is to be inhospitable, and to be hospitable means being ‘mushy’ on matters of truth.”²¹ Newman’s insightful commentary is of great help: “It is precisely hospitality without truth that causes us to reduce hospitality to a bland niceness,” and in such hospitality, God becomes “simply a therapeutic nice guy who asks only that we be nice too.”²² This equation of hospitality as mere niceness is turned on its head in O’Connor’s story, when the grandmother undergoes a radical conversion in the last moments of her life. Knowing full well that the Misfit could kill her, she reaches out and touches him – quite the opposite of the flattery (“I know you’re a good man. You don’t look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!”) to which she had previously submitted him.²³

His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother’s head cleared for an instant. She saw the man’s face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, “Why you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children!” She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest.²⁴

In “one of O’Connor’s best lines,” the Misfit recognizes the depth of the grandmother’s gesture: “She would have been a good woman... if it had been someone there to shoot her every minute of her life.”²⁵ The Misfit’s use of “good” in reference to her ultimate

²¹ “Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, published 2002.

²² Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 24. I would argue that this the most prevalent and most dangerous of all misconceptions about the notion of hospitality.

²³ O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” in *Collected Works*, 147.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁵ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 25.

acknowledgement that the criminal is not just a misfit, but one of her own children is indicative of the weight of her gesture: in reaching out to such a man as him, the grandmother demonstrates a hospitality that is not *nice*, but *good*. Indeed, a *good* man is hard to find. Accordingly, although her action is of negative social import, it is virtuous, indicating that O'Connor's vision of hospitality, in which Newman shares²⁶ is that hospitality cannot be limited to mere niceness and adherence to social protocol, but is in fact a moral practice which may sometimes propel the one who practices it to defy social mores in favor of virtuous action.

The second phase of Newman's deconstruction of commonly held notions about hospitality deals with the privatization of hospitality. As she rightly points out, hospitality has often been associated with the work of women in the home; this was especially the case in earlier generations. This concept of hospitality is what is so often featured on the covers of magazines such as *Southern Living*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Real Simple*, and others. Its focus is, as in the case of sentimental hospitality, on appearances: the appearance of a well-kept home, a well-appointed table, and polite conversation.²⁶ As Newman points out, we ought to be somewhat wary of being overly critical of these things; as they constitute a significant part of a personal formation or set of values learnt at home. Indeed, I would make the case that there is a not insignificant good in valuing a beautiful home or a delicious meal, and that polite conversation can often be a very useful tool.²⁷ Newman's argument, however, does not oppose any of

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁷ For more on the value of such things, please see Edith Schaeffer's wonderful book, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking: Creative Ideas for Enriching Everyday Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971). Schaeffer, co-founder with her

these things on their own, but contests the belief that any of these images or practices is how we ought to conceive of hospitality *in toto*. She makes her argument on the grounds that not only does this conception of “hospitality” rely too heavily on appearances (and therefore may willingly deceive in order to maintain them), but it also relegates hospitality entirely to the private sphere. The consequences are that:

Once the practice of hospitality gets located in a sphere, it easily legitimizes a public space where hospitality seems not to belong. Then hospitality is not a way of life...but a mode of private entertainment.²⁸

Again, Newman does not claim that private entertainment is wrong: it simply ought not be confused with *Christian* hospitality. If the two are taken as being the same, they will serve only to reinforce the secularization she claims has taken over the public sphere: “The location of a key Christian practice in the private home space parallels and reflects the privatization of religion more broadly.”²⁹ Newman, along with others, claims that this privatization of religion is the product of a preoccupation with appearances, especially religious ones, which has resulted in a “religion of civility... the social choreography of tolerance.”³⁰ The difficulty with relegating religious convictions to the private sphere is that they simply do not belong there, for “the faith of the Church is as

husband of L’Abri, provides a beautifully-articulated explanation of how a good meal in a well-kept home may serve to create an environment of hospitality which, in turn, enriches one’s spiritual life.

²⁸ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 27. Later in this chapter, I will more fully articulate the difficulties of tolerance and propose how these might be resolved by seeking hospitality instead.

much *visible* as invisible.” Besides this, as Newman reminds us, Christ often offended or upset his listeners – this says nothing, however, about the truth of his message.³¹

In the final section of her analysis, Newman rejects “the equation of hospitality with inclusivity and diversity.” In our culture this confusion is commonplace and unrecognized. We seek “diversity for diversity’s sake,” and calling diversity into question is seen as being inhospitable. “To be hospitable, this position assumes, is to be inclusive. Indeed, inclusivity is identified with the very heart of the gospel.”³² Newman acknowledges the difficulty her readers might have in seeing this identification of hospitality with inclusivity as a distortion: after all, the New Testament is interspersed with instances of Christ dining with tax collectors, welcoming outcasts, and generally defending and including the excluded. Indeed, it might initially appear that the gospel *is* centered on an ethos of inclusivity. This reading of the New Testament, however, misses a key point which Newman quickly identifies: Jesus’ inclusivity was not without expectations. She turns to the *Pericope Adulterae* as the most obvious and useful example, recalling that although Christ did defend the woman caught in adultery, he did not do so without then demanding something of her. He says to those that would stone her, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” thus reminding them of their own sinful condition; he then, however, says to the woman herself, “Go and sin no more.”³³ As Newman explains, “[Christ] loves and accepts her but also calls her to

³¹ Ibid., 27.

³² Ibid., 30.

³³ John 7:53-8:11 (KJV).

a different way of life.”³⁴ Accordingly, we know that hospitality cannot be limited to mere inclusivity: the hospitality of Christ carries with it limitations and demands. Though the language of limitation and obligation is increasingly characterized as negative, these strictures upheld by Christ are divine laws, and holy limitations: thus they are necessarily good.

As in previous sections, Newman does not cut short her analysis with a simple assessment of why hospitality is not identical with inclusivity, and continues to pursue the matter, asking and answering the question of why the conflation of the two might be dangerous. The difficulty of why hospitality and inclusivity cannot be equated is admittedly not obvious, for it deals in the internal good of the theory and practice of hospitality. As explained above, the *telos* of hospitality, like all Christian practices, is communion with God, and Scripture recognizes that diversity may play a role in this: 1 Corinthians 12 acknowledges the vast array of gifts God has granted to His children, and the metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ is telling in this way. However, it is understood that the Church is not to embrace diversity for its own sake: the purpose of providential diversity is to feed the vibrant life of the Body of Christ. Accordingly, inclusivity can be said to serve the *telos* of hospitality, but there is no room for confusion of the two ideas.

When unqualified inclusivity is taken as a good unto itself, it does not further the cause of the Church in the world or draw men into deeper communion with God. Instead, it bows down to a consumerist mentality in which we find diversity attractive because of

³⁴ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 31.

the multiplicity of options it trots out before us.³⁵ A near-boundless array of options might appear to be a good, especially given that we have been endowed with the great good of free will. The trouble, however, is that in a consumerist mentality, there is no real rhyme or reason to choosing one thing over the other. All choices are equally good by virtue of being choices. This blatantly ignores the moral value of certain options over others, as well as the long-held Christian notion that an individual is only truly free when choosing the good.³⁶ Newman cites Stanley Fish on this point, referencing his writings on “boutique multiculturalism,” in which the “boutique multiculturalist” celebrates the fact that we may dress or worship differently because he believes that:

Our primary identity is really our universal identity as human beings, more fundamental than any particular identity. The boutique multiculturalist therefore cannot really take seriously the particularity of a given culture or tradition but sees these as mere differences.³⁷

The attitude of the “boutique multiculturalist” effectively negates the seriousness of religious conscience, of the differences between faiths: “[Stanley] Fish notes the irony of ‘welcoming diversity’ as it is currently invoked: in the name of diversity, difference becomes *mere* difference, or, we could say, simply one more lifestyle choice.”³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁶ More could be said here about the paradoxical notion of freedom in the Christian tradition, but it would not be of any great use. Sufficient to say that, beginning with Augustine, we see the development of the notion that the human person is only truly free when bound to the will of God rather than the will of the flesh, for he can then act according to his truest desires, which will always be towards the end of serving and growing in communion with God.

³⁷ Ibid., 32.

³⁸ Ibid., 32.

III. Review of the Literature

Comparatively little has been written on the relationship between the concepts of martyrdom and hospitality. Perhaps this poverty of sources is due to the fact that many authors have understood the relationship to be self-evident, especially given the way in which instances of hospitality (no less in reality than in works of literature) have culminated in death – in particular death for the sake of a cause. Of all the authors I have encountered, Ralph Wood has come the closest to drawing out in explicit terms the relationship between martyrdom and hospitality, yet even his treatment of the subject relies on certain assumptions which I would like to flesh out, and stops short of developing a complete explanation of how martyrdom permits the practice of hospitality. In achieving this task, I have found Elizabeth Newman's book, extensively cited above, to be quite instructive. Additionally, Ralph Wood's analyses of the stories of Flannery O'Connor, as well as of G. K. Chesterton's *The Ball and the Cross* as presented in class lectures and in his most recent book, *Chesterton: The Nightmare Goodness of God*, have fundamentally shaped the way in which I conceive of hospitality: as a result, his thought is heavily present in the following section.

IV. Establishing a Tentative Relationship Between Martyrdom and Hospitality

As stated above, the purpose of this chapter is not to prove the existence of any relationship between martyrdom and hospitality in such a way as to be able to use it as a lens through which to read the life of Margaret Clitherow. I seek only to establish a tentative relationship, the grounds for which I propose to explore further in the life of this

English Saint. Accordingly, this section sets forth to identify this tentative relationship and to explore its implications using the writings cited above.

In the concluding section of her analysis of modern distortions of the notion of hospitality, Elizabeth Newman sums up where these distortions have left us. She titles the section “Homeless Hospitality,” and opens it with Henry Nouwen’s comment that “we can offer hospitality only when we have a place or home from which to extend it.”³⁹ As a result of our modern misconceptions about hospitality, however, we have been left homeless. This is a curious claim, as our home ought to be the church, a thing rooted and established in time, yet also eternal. Yet the church has not always been and is not now entirely obedient to the traditions that it has been handed. This disobedience is exemplified in the case of the understanding and practice of hospitality, both of which have equally well been distorted in the church as elsewhere. The question then arises: “How do we regain our home? How do we once again become obedient to the beliefs and traditions which we have inherited?”

In order to answer this question adequately, it is necessary to acknowledge the nature of what it is to have a home, and to come to terms with what a home is. A home is characterized by the exclusivity of the family unit, and it declares that some people belong within, and others without.⁴⁰ Accordingly, having a home means belonging to a

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁰ My intention is to approach the definition of home as a matter of common sense, not as a sociological phenomenon. Accordingly, I will not belabor the point of how we might define family, except to say that its definition ought not be limited to its strictest sense. Rather it may be extended to communities of persons who engage in life together in such a way that the unit they form necessarily results in the exclusion of others. I would also draw attention to the fact that we routinely acknowledge the normalcy and goodness of this exclusion.

group of other people, and belonging amongst them in a self-contained corps. In its most concrete sense, having a home means sharing a living space, a house, with a defined group of other people. A house must necessarily have walls to be a house, and this on a very basic, functional level. However, these walls also symbolize the exclusivity of the home, the fact that not everyone can or *should* belong within. In our consideration of the church as a home, this in turn raises a second question: “What are the walls of the church? And how are they built and maintained over time?”

In *The Ball and the Cross*, G.K. Chesterton presents the reader with a curious situation: two men attempting to fight to the death over a religious matter while the authorities do everything in their power to stop the would-be duelers. One of the men, Evan MacIan, is a thoroughgoing Roman Catholic. The other, Turnbull, is the editor of *The Atheist*, a small, private newspaper. Their skirmish originated from a provocative statement put forth by Turnbull that the Blessed Virgin is no more holy than any of the other women who, in the genealogies of the gods of antiquity, were impregnated by gods disguised in the forms of men.⁴¹ While it would be unjustifiable to suggest that the entirety of Chesterton’s purpose in writing this excellent novel was to denigrate the notion of tolerance, he certainly makes a vivid condemnation of it in the plot and dialogue of the text. Over the course of the novel, as the two battling men attempt to escape the reach of authorities for long enough to be able to fight one another, they begin to form a rather unlikely friendship, which is acknowledged and solidified by the end of the narrative. As Ralph Wood points out, however, this friendship in no way suggests that MacIan and Turnbull’s religious beliefs are complementary. Simply because they

⁴¹ G.K. Chesterton. *The Ball and the Cross*, (London: Dover Publications, 1995), 20.

show one another hospitality does not indicate that their religious differences have been set aside – indeed, the definition of hospitality offered above does not allow for such an action – for “Chesterton never splits differences.”⁴² Rather than causing the walls that stand between Maclan and Turnbull to fall away, Chesterton repeatedly emphasizes their presence by the two men’s continued desire to fight one another. He understands that it is precisely because of these walls that the two men are able to form the friendship that they do, for if they had nothing to fight about, they would lose their essential identities – that is to say, their religious (or irreligious) identities – and would consequently lack the personhood necessary to be a friend, whether passively or actively.⁴³

The building and maintenance of walls between persons or groups of persons may seem deeply uncharitable. Indeed, in some instances it may be an act of hatred, and this must be acknowledged: in our own not-too-distant past many “polite” and “civilized” Americans were in favor of racial segregation, and today, the unborn are being cut off from the rest of humankind simply by virtue of still being *in utero*. These are walls established because of accidents of birth, external qualities of persons which, while not unimportant, are not as essential to their identity as other factors are or ought to be: religious convictions in particular. Religious identity is the most fundamental of all

⁴² Ralph Wood. *Chesterton: the Nightmare Goodness of God*, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 150.

⁴³ At one turn in the novel, Maclan and Turnbull believe that they have arrived in France, and Turnbull delivers the following exuberant speech: “France at least... in which these things are thought about and fought about. France, where reason and religion clash in one continual tournament. France, above all, where men understand the pride and passion which have plucked our blades from their scabbards. Here, at least, we shall not be chased and spied on by sickly parsons and greasy policemen, because we wish to put our lives on the game. Courage, my friend, we have come to the country of honor.” (Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross*, 90)

personal identities, and it cannot be reduced to a mere accident of circumstance or of birth. Our religious convictions must fundamentally shape the way in which we see ourselves, the world, and the relation between the two. In keeping with this, when these convictions are fully acknowledged, they naturally establish walls, and these are, in some way, markers of charity, not of a lack thereof.

Indeed, Chesterton even asserts that these ideological walls allow us to love one another well, as is asserted in *The Ball and the Cross*. Maclan and Turnbull, in the course of their mad running about, encounter a slough of interesting and problematic characters, but the Tolstoyan whom they encounter is perhaps the most appropriate example to cite here. He urges the two men to cease trying to fight, explaining that there must be some perfectly peaceful and bloodless way to resolve their conflict. His speech to the two men is worth quoting to some length here:

Well, well... let us get back to the point. Now Tolstoy has shown that force is no remedy; so you see the position in which I am placed. I am doing my best to stop what I am sure you won't mind my calling this really useless violence, this really quite wrong violence of yours. But it's against my principles to call in the police against you, because the police are still on a lower moral plane, so to speak, because, in short, the police undoubtedly sometimes employ force. Tolstoy has shown that violence merely breeds violence in the person towards whom it is used, whereas Love, on the other hand, breeds Love. So you see how I am placed. I am reduced to Love in order to stop you. I am obliged to use Love.⁴⁴

The way in which the Tolstoyan of *The Ball and the Cross* conceptualizes "love" is telling, and comes close to being a rephrasing of the notion of hospitality as inclusivity. He holds that to love is not to commit violence, not to raise a ruckus over a word so as to maintain peace, and to proclaim blindly that our differences are not nearly so important

⁴⁴ Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross*, 42-43.

as we make them out to be.⁴⁵ Wood describes this “love” as “wickedly saccharine,” a most appropriate phrase for a love that is rooted not in hope for redemption, but in apathetic contentment with the world as it already is.⁴⁶ MacIan and Turnbull recognize the wickedness of the Tolstoyan’s saccharine love as well, and their dialogue immediately following the incident is, again, worth quoting at length:

“Well, that man was an angel,” said MacIan.

“I didn’t know they were as bad as that,” answered Turnbull.

“We know that devils sometimes quote Scripture and counterfeit good,” replied the mystic. “Why should not angels sometimes come to show us the black abyss of evil on whose brink we stand. If that man had not tried to stop us... I might... I might have stopped.”

“I know what you mean,” said Turnbull, grimly.

“But then he came,” broke out MacIan, “and my soul said to me: ‘Give up fighting, and you will become like That. Give up vows and dogmas, and fixed things, and you may grow like That. You may learn, also, that fog of false philosophy. You may grow fond of that mire of crawling, cowardly morals, and you may come to think a blow bad, because it hurts, and not because it humiliates. You may come to think murder wrong, because it is violent, and not because it is unjust.’ Oh, you blasphemer of the good, and hour ago I almost loved you! But do not fear for me now. I have heard the word Love pronounced in *his* intonation; and I know exactly what it means. On guard!”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross*, 42.

⁴⁶ Wood, *Chesterton*, 143.

In the initial pages of the novel, Chesterton writes of Turnbull’s excitement at MacIan having smashed his window: “Year after year went by, and year after year the death of God in a shop in Ludgate became a less and less important occurrence. All the forward men of his age discouraged Turnbull... Year after year went by, and at last a man came who treated Mr. Turnbull’s secularist shop with a real respect and seriousness. He was a young man in a grey plaid, and he smashed the window.” Later, when MacIan challenges Turnbull to a duel: “A great light like dawn came into Mr. Turnbull’s face. Behind his red hair and beard he turned deadly pale with pleasure. Here, after twenty lone years of useless toil, he had his reward. Some one was angry with the paper.” (Chesterton, 14-16)

⁴⁷ Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross*, 44.

What the reader of *The Ball and the Cross* sees in the Tolstoyan is hospitality defined as inclusivity, and it comes at the expense of having to deny the value of religious belief, and, consequently, of human reason (for it is by reason that we understand that in which we have faith). As Wood writes, loving and hating our enemies must be a deeply genuine action because they are made in the *imago Dei* and must therefore be taken as seriously as possible.⁴⁸ The Tolstoyan ignores this basic fact in his determination to advocate for peace at all costs. Accordingly, it is only when we approach one another in full recognition of each person as having been made in the image and likeness of God, and consequently holding convictions of utmost importance, that it is possible to love one another well. Thus, the building and maintenance of walls or boundaries is not a constraint upon charity but a servant of love. Chesterton's famous image of orthodoxy as the walls around a playground is telling here, for were it not for those walls, the children on the playground would not be so safe and could not, therefore, play so freely. In the same way, it is not possible to love another person well and to be attentive to their ideas (however antagonistic they may be to us) unless we are quite certain of our own. Accordingly, it is only because of MacIlan's certainty regarding his faith and the Church that he is able to extend hospitality to and befriend Turnbull, from whom he might otherwise have fled.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Wood, *Chesterton*, 138-139.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 142. Wood writes at length on two principal dangers of hospitality, both of which are worth referencing, but do not warrant further discussion here. The first is that, in practicing hospitality, one must engage opponents so genuinely that they can not only recognize themselves in our representation of their most basic convictions, but that we are also susceptible to conversion to their faith. Secondly, we must demonstrate the case of Christianity so persuasively that we help to create the possibility of their conversion, as well. (Wood, *Chesterton*, 132)

Perhaps the most compelling argument in favor of the building and maintenance of walls in the service of hospitality is seen in the model of the church. The most clear vision of hospitality available to the believer is in worship, an act into which we are invited by God to participate in His divine life. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Communion, in which hospitality is extended in a symbolically powerful way. It cannot be ignored, however, that all are not invited to partake: only those who profess the Christian faith may receive the Eucharist. Accordingly, only those who are orthodox in their faith are able to participate in the full life of the church. The boundaries of what is considered orthodox are established in the creeds of the church, as well as in its traditions, for which the martyrs are a positive witness, proclaiming with their obedience the truth of the creeds. Accordingly, the witness of the martyrs helps to establish the bounds of orthodoxy, and consequently, to build and maintain the walls of the church, returning us to our home.

CHAPTER TWO

The Life of Margaret Clitherow, Setting the Stage for Her Martyrdom

Having laid the ground for a tentative relationship between martyrdom and hospitality in the previous chapter, the second chapter of this thesis provides a redacted version of the life of Saint Margaret Clitherow from her childhood up until to the point of her trial and martyrdom.

Here I endeavor to provide an overview of the major events of Margaret Clitherow's life up to her final arrest and martyrdom as well as to integrate pertinent details from the point of her conversion onward. Owing to her status as an illiterate butcher's wife of little worldly consequence, there is a noticeable lack of primary source material available to her biographer other than the *True Report* of her life redacted by Fr. John Mush, her confessor.⁵⁰ As a consequence, this chapter relies heavily on modern biographical sketches of Saint Margaret Clitherow, including Sigrid Undset's well-known

⁵⁰ There is some debate surrounding the validity of Fr. John Mush's *True Report* as a representation of the circumstances, actions, intentions, and words of Margaret Clitherow. Lake and Questier, however, offer a brief, but effective apology for their integration of his text into their research and redaction: "There is a sense, of course, that the only reason we know very much about Clitherow is indeed because Mush decided to memorialize her. Also, his account is deeply polemical and most of its facts cannot be verified by reference to other sources. At the same time, the fact that Mush resorted to the circulation of a polemically inflected defence of his patron so soon after her death itself allows us to ask and, in some cases, to answer questions about what was going on in York in the 1580s and how Clitherow came to be caught up in the series of events that led to her execution. So closely was Mush's narrative of Clitherow's life related to those events that it would have been pointless for him to resort to pure invention in what was not just a celebration of her but also a barbed attack of her critics and enemies. Thus, while we do not contest that, for example, Mush resorts, here and there, to literary archetypes in his account of her, we argue that he did not simply invent her." (Lake and Questier, 7)

Stages on the Road, Katharine Longley's authoritative hagiography, and Peter Lake and Michael Questier's *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom, and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England*.⁵¹

I. Birth and Childhood

We do not know the exact date of birth of Margaret Clitherow (née Middleton), but we can easily estimate that it was around 1553: records indicate that she was about eighteen years old at the time of her marriage to John Clitherow in 1571.⁵² Her family was an especially prosperous one: her father, Thomas Middleton, was a waxchandler and well-respected citizen of York. As with most families of their stature, the Middletons had capitulated when, with the Second Act of Supremacy (passed in 1559), Elizabeth I made Protestantism the established religion of England.⁵³ It is interesting to note that the Middletons' conversion was likely made for purely political reasons: Margaret's mother, Jane, came from a long line of devout Catholics (her uncle was a priest). Thomas's heritage is not known to us, but his will, which beseeches his servants to pray for his soul, might prove an interesting indication of the depth of his allegiance to the Protestant church.⁵⁴ When Thomas died in 1567, he left his wife with five children and an

⁵¹ Undset's *Stages on The Road* is a compendium of saints' lives, all written at different points in the Norwegian author's career. This volume includes a biographical sketch of Saint Robert Southwell, a Jesuit priest martyred in England in 1595.

⁵² Katharine Longley. *Margaret Clitherow*. (Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, 1986), 6.

⁵³ The First Act of Supremacy, passed by Henry VIII in 1534, was repealed in 1554 by Mary I, his Catholic daughter. In 1559, Elizabeth reinstated Church of England as the established religion and declared herself its Supreme Governor.

impressive sum of money. Only four months after Thomas's death, Jane remarried, this time to Henry May, a man thirty years her junior whom she had, according to some accounts, "[taken] from the beggar's staff."⁵⁵ As a consequence of Jane's wealth, May was able to become an innkeeper and thus rise to prominence in the affairs of York. Indeed, his rise to political importance was impressive, and its consequences will be addressed later in this chapter.

Little else is known of Margaret's childhood and adolescence other than the fact that Henry May's appearance in the household caused no small disturbance. Her father, long suffering from gout, was by all accounts a peaceable head of the household and a faithful husband. Henry May was young and ambitious, eager to use the connections of his new family in order to establish himself amongst York's elite. Furthermore, Margaret's confessor, Fr. John Mush, suggested that, Margaret, "to [whose] beautiful and gracious soul God gave... a body with comely face and beauty correspondent," had become subject to undue and unwanted attention on the part of Henry May.⁵⁶ Of course, it is impossible to validate or definitively reject this suggestion but, as with May's political aspirations, the implications of any such attentions would become a point of note during Margaret's trial, especially with regard to the accusations of adultery leveled against her.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6. As Longley later points out, "Thomas Middleton's requests for prayer derive from a continuing belief in Purgatory, where the soul's purification and release might be hastened by the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary in the Mass and by the intercession of the saints. All this had... been swept away; a truly Protestant will contains no request for prayers."

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 23.

II. Marriage and Conversion

Like most women of her epoch, Margaret was not taught to read or write, but was schooled instead only in those areas of household management that would she would need once married. In any case, she was to marry John Clitherow, a butcher, on 1 July 1571 at the age of eighteen, and despite her lack of formal education, she proved to be a most excellent housewife. She bore her husband three children, named Henry, Anne, and William.⁵⁷ The city of York was heavily stratified and well organized in the fashion of many cities of its age. Butchery was widely regarded as the most clannish of all the trades, with all of the butchers living in a quarter of York called ‘the Shambles,’ in which intermarriage between households was common, if not expected. Margaret was therefore an anomaly as a young woman of the upper class, accustomed to the surroundings of a bustling inn, and not at all familiar with the gore and sawdust of the butchers’ neighborhood.⁵⁸

Like Margaret at the time of their wedding, John Clitherow was a Protestant, no more committed to the cause than many men and women in the conservative North of England, and in fact perhaps less so. Sigrid Undset explains: “The Clitherow family had not conformed so unconditionally to the new religion – there is mention of a son who was a priest – but Margaret’s bridegroom had yielded, outwardly at any rate, and passed as a Protestant.”⁵⁹ She goes on to suggest, “It may be that at times in any case he had in his

⁵⁷ William was born in prison while Margaret was being held there on charges of assisting Marian priests.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁹ Sigrid Undset, “Margaret Clitherow” in *Stages on the Road*, 188.

heart more sympathy for the old Faith.”⁶⁰ Regardless of John’s own inclinations, Margaret converted to the Catholic faith in 1574, only three years into their marriage. As a result of her illiteracy, Margaret left nothing by way of autobiographical writing, and so the responsibility of chronicling her life fell to her confessor, John Mush. Of her conversion to Catholicism, he wrote:

Two or three years at the most after her marriage, when she heard first of the Catholic faith and the Church (for before she frequented the heretical service, not suspecting there had been any other true way to serve God), she became as desirous to learn the Christian duty in truth and sincerity; as she had learned before to serve only the world vainly; and, after a little consideration, finding no substance, truth, not Christian comfort in the ministers of the new gospel, nor in their doctrine itself; *and hearing also many priests and lay people to suffer for the defence of the ancient Catholic faith (which is known to have been the faith of all England, common with all the Christian world many hundred years since the world was first delivered from idolatry and paganism)*, she carefully employed herself to know plainly the same, and to become a lively member of the Church, wherein this faith had been taught and preached.⁶¹

As Katharine Longley reminds her reader in her biography of Margaret Clitherow, Mush is likely to have underestimated Margaret’s age: in the passage above, he suggests that she was raised with no knowledge of Catholicism whatsoever (“She frequented the heretical service, not suspecting there had been any other true way to serve God”), but this is unlikely. Margaret was born around the time of the Catholic Queen Mary I’s accession to the throne, and so would have attended Mass as a small child, at least until the Second Act of Supremacy was passed into law in 1559.⁶² Thus, it is probable that she

⁶⁰ Ibid., 188.

⁶¹ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom, and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 33.

was aware of Catholic Church, but did not fully understand the religious situation in England until such a time as she was exposed to Catholicism firsthand at a sufficiently mature age.

Additionally, the 1570s were the beginning of a period of marked resistance within the English Catholic community. Though there had always been individuals or small groups who resisted the order to conform to the official church, many Catholics in the 1570s began to distance themselves from the established church in a new and more radical way.⁶³ Certain students of the English Catholic cause under Elizabeth (Lake and Questier mention John Aveling, historian and sometime Catholic priest) suggest that this rebirth of non-conformist (and recusant) sentiment grew out of the arrival of seminarist clergy from the Continent. There is little evidence to support this claim, however, and it thus seems more likely that the high number of clergy present in York during this period were refugees from Oxford and Cambridge. Regardless of the cause, this movement amongst York's Catholics surely did not go unnoticed by Margaret, and it is not unlikely that this resurgent spirit of non-conformism in part is what brought Catholicism to the fore in her thoughts.

It is also, of course, interesting to note that one of the determining factors that Mush cites in Margaret Clitherow's conversion to Catholicism is her awareness of the suffering of the priests and lay martyrs, as well as the understanding that Catholicism was not a foreign element in England, but was rather her own inheritance, her "true religion" and the source of much of her ancient identity. Mush did, admittedly, have a certain

⁶² Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 15.

⁶³ Lake and Questier, *Margaret Clitherow*, 13.

advantage of hindsight in his biographical task, and it may have been that he superimposed upon Margaret's conversion her appreciation of the English Catholic martyrs. By this point, however, some hundred or more Catholics had already been martyred for the faith in England, and many of their deaths had been widely publicized within the recusant community. Furthermore, Margaret Clitherow's words and actions at her trial, as well as her eventual martyrdom in fact suggest that she was, at least in part, attracted to the Church by virtue of the radical love shown to her – and to Christ through her service – by the martyrs.

Despite Margaret's conversion, her husband John remained both her spouse and a Protestant. He was undoubtedly aware of his wife's conversion, but whether or not he knew the nature of her ensuing illicit activities is unlikely. (She would often lie to her husband, giving an innocuous reason for why she ought to leave the house when, in fact, she had arranged to meet with a priest.) Although it is unlikely that he remained wholly ignorant of his wife's conversion or illicit activities (for example, the harboring of priests), he did not, as some husbands of non-conformist wives did, report her to the authorities or attempt to force her into submission in any way. Nonetheless, when she endeavored to install a "priest's hole," she chose to do so in the house of a neighbor, perhaps in order to avoid her husband's detection.

Although John Clitherow was by no means unique in his response to his wife's Catholicism, he was, by some standards, set apart in his deference toward her choice. Fr. Mush's *True Report* of Margaret Clitherow's life paints her husband in an unflattering light, suggesting that he was exceedingly unsympathetic to his wife's non-conformity; yet in the first few years after her conversion, he remained willing to bear the financial

burden of her unwillingness to attend the religious services of the Official Church.⁶⁴

Recusants from 1559 onward were fined for nonattendance at services of the established church at a rate of twelve shillings, and later an overwhelming twenty pounds, each month. Records indicate that John Clitherow regularly paid the fines incurred by his wife and never sought aid in attempting to persuade her to conform.

III. Margaret's Recusancy Brought to Attention

Although Catholics in the north of England were not united in their response to the Second Act of Supremacy, nor the purging of Marian priests, there was nonetheless a sufficiently high number of recusants that, in 1570 (at the order of Edmund Grindal, the newly appointed archbishop of York), a tribunal was formed with the intent of discovering and extirpating priests, and of determining those laypersons who had been offering them hospitality and protection.⁶⁵ Margaret was evidently able to evade any alarming degree of notice until 1576, when her name first appeared on a register of those persons suspected of recusancy. This list, sent to the Council in the north, described her

⁶⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁵ Although the different responses of Catholics in northern England form an interesting body of observations that are to varying degrees relevant to a telling of Margaret Clitherow's life, they are outside of the scope of this thesis and neither add nor detract from its principal argument save in one regard: it would be a serious oversimplification to assume that all English Catholics who did not wholly conform to the New Religion were equally as ardent or as faithful as the "Pearl of York." This difference of approach, however, is characteristic of the true martyr as a person who, set apart even from those who offer silent opposition, makes a positive and radical witness of faith.

For more information on the varieties of northern English Catholic response to the Acts of Conformity (especially within York), see Peter Lake and Michael Questier's *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom, and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).

as one who “cometh not to the church, for what cause we cannot learn, for she is now great with child, and could not come before us.”⁶⁶

In 1577, however, Margaret and her husband were brought before the Archbishop of York (now Edwin Sandys), the Dean, the Chancellor of York Minster, and other officials. John was asked whether he would urge his wife to conform and attend church, and he replied that while he would endeavor to convince her to do so, he would not pay the forfeits levied against him for his wife’s nonconformity – though he would later capitulate and do so. Fr. Mush describes this hearing as Margaret’s first public conflict with heretics, and explains that from this point on, “she never feared nor once shrunk at any worldly affliction or pain sustained for the Catholic faith and her conscience.”⁶⁷

Following this public hearing, Margaret was imprisoned in York Castle, where she was held from 2 August 1577 until 9 February 1578, when she was released on bond with orders not to consort with “disobedient persons,” and to return on 8 April of the same year.⁶⁸ On the appointed day, further bonds were taken, and she was permitted to remain at home until 26 June, with the understanding that she would not leave her house unless it was to attend church services, and that such attendance, if neglected, would continue to be levied with a fine. Suddenly, in June 1578, Margaret was excused from

⁶⁶ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 58. The “Council in the north” cited here was an administrative body established by Edward IV in 1472. Its purpose was simply to govern the area at large.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁸ Katharine Longley notes that though the Clitherows were brought forward for hearing with several other couples composed of a recusant wife and conformist husband, not all of the women in question were imprisoned in the same place. Those held in York Castle (as Margaret Clitherow was) were thought to be especially dangerous due to their ability to influence others and potentially win them to the Catholic faith.

returning to prison until October, at which time her husband once again paid thirty shillings in fines (two shillings for each week of his wife's nonattendance at church) and took out a new bond.

Margaret would retain her freedom until 3 October 1580 (with her husband regularly paying bonds and fines), when she was again ordered to appear before the High Commission of York and, true to form, refused to apostatize and conform. She was held in York Castle for nearly five months, until 24 April 1581, when she was released that she might give birth to her son, William.⁶⁹ Although the prison experience was hardly a glad one in many respects, Margaret thought of it as a "happy and profitable school," in which she learned patience and the many disciplines of long periods of time spent in solitude.⁷⁰ She was additionally subjected to routine visits from Protestant divines (most notably Edmund Bunney) who attempted to argue and persuade. They found in her, however, a remarkably inflexible interlocutor, for she would only reply, "that whatsoever the Catholic Church taught and believed, that she firmly believed."⁷¹ Thus, "the Spirit of God wrought so graciously in her that all troubles, persecutions, and cruelty practised against her for her Catholic religion and conscience' sake daily increased more and more the constancy of her faith."⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁰ Undset, "Margaret Clitherow" in *Stages on the Road*, 193.

⁷¹ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 62.

⁷² Ibid., 62. Longley quotes John Mush extensively on this point, describing in moving detail the various ways in which Margaret's faith was cultivated and strengthened.

IV. Margaret in Her House

Prison was a radical change of environment for Margaret. While in society, she could neither safely confess nor practice her faith, but in prison she was frequently able to partake of the sacrament of Confession, to pray with her coreligionists, and to hear Mass said by imprisoned priests.⁷³

Upon her first release from prison in 1578, Margaret, presumably having become accustomed to the luxury of being able to hear Mass said as frequently as it was in York Castle, took up the task of building a priest's "hole" or room adjacent to her house. Why she chose not to build it in her own home remains unknown, but when her house was searched in 1586, the authorities indeed found a small chamber in the upper rooms of her neighbor's house, connected to her own home by a hidden passage.⁷⁴ This small room was filled with vestments, linens, vessels, and plate, all of which were purchased with the allowance given to Margaret by her husband, who evidently remained ignorant of their use.

The aforementioned "priest's hole" that Margaret Clitherow had built was installed with the intention of enabling her to give hospitality covertly to the outlawed priests who roamed throughout England, seeking to aid their flock by administering the Sacraments:

⁷³ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁴ As Katharine Longley points out, the identity of this neighbor remains unknown, but it is likely to have been either William Calvert (brother-in-law to John Clitherow) or Michael Mudd (brother or uncle to John Clitherow's first wife, Matilda). Both men were evidently converted to Catholicism by Margaret's efforts, though both also returned to conformity in 1580, when a second wave of recusants was brought before the High Commission.

What kind of men were they? Young noblemen and peasant lads who faced death for the faith they had been taught at their mother's knees; young sons of the new well-to-do middle class who had studied theology in the Protestant universities with the result that they became Catholics; clergymen of the new established church who already possessed a Protestant benefice when they received the call to tend and serve a scattered flock, with no home and no hope of other reward than martyrdom. They travelled secretly all over the country, comforted the dying, reconciled the apostates, strengthened the terrified – in some hidden chamber of a Catholic home they said Mass before daybreak, administering the Sacrament to the little band of hungry souls who furtively met there. There was always the danger that a Judas might be among them...⁷⁵

It is not unlikely that Margaret Clitherow hosted many of the priests who would later be hanged, drawn, and quartered at York's Tyburn, the main place of execution within the city.⁷⁶ She knew, too, the dangers that she risked incurring upon herself and her household by these actions. Yet, she said:

I will not be afraid to serve God, and do well. This is a war and trial in Christ's Church, and therefore I cannot do my duty without peril and dangers, yet by God's grace I will not be slacker for them. If God's priests dare venture themselves to my house, I will never refuse them.⁷⁷

The "priest's hole" she installed formed a part of her endeavor to be faithful to this commitment, and indeed, as Lake and Questier point out, her very home became "a

⁷⁵ Undset, "Margaret Clitherow" in *Stages on the Road*, 191.

⁷⁶ The 'Tyburn' mentioned here should not be confused with London's Tyburn prison, in which a great many priests were also submitted to an agonizing death by hanging and being drawn and quartered. The Tyburn of York is an area to the south of the city which has, since the fourteenth century, been in use as a place of execution. In both instances, however, the name of Tyburn has become synonymous with capital punishment in England.

⁷⁷ John Mush. "A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs. Margaret Clitherow" in *The troubles of our Catholic forefathers related by themselves*, edited by John Morris. (London: Burnes and Oates, 1877), 387.

priest's house, a Mass centre and a Catholic school... all presided over by the recusant wife of a conforming member of the Church of England.”⁷⁸

As a result of the vagrancies of these priests, Margaret Clitherow and others had to go for stretches of a time (varying in length) without being able to receive the Sacraments. As one might only expect from so saintly a woman, however, even privation of the most precious of gifts did not shake her confidence, and she was known to wake before the rest of her household, praying in the hidden chapel in solitude for an hour each morning.⁷⁹ On occasion, Margaret Clitherow would also make trips in the night to the York execution grounds where numerous Catholics had already been put to death. There she would pray that, likewise unto the holiness of these unsung martyrs, that she, too, might be given leave to serve Christ and his Church in this way.

By 1581, when Margaret was released from prison for the second time, the measures taken against Catholics had become more virulent still, owing in large part to the influx of priests (especially Jesuits) from the Continent.⁸⁰ These new measures, in

⁷⁸ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 40.

⁷⁹ Undset, “Margaret Clitherow” in *Stages on the Road*, 193.

⁸⁰ Shortly after separating from the Roman Church in 1534, Henry VIII dissolved the seminaries in much the same fashion as the monasteries, leaving Catholics to go abroad (secretly) for training. Thus, by the 1560s and 1570s, it was common practice for English Catholics to travel to the Continent in search of a seminary education. Dr. William Allen, however, saw that there was a need for an English seminary designed to train priests for return to England that they might administer the Sacraments in secret and thus keep the faith alive. This “English Mission” brought about, in large part, the founding in 1568 of the English College, which was connected to the already-present University at Douai in what was then the Spanish Netherlands (now northern France, on the border with Belgium). In 1574, the first group of seminary priests left Douai for England, and two years later, a second English College was founded in Rome.

This new influx of priests brought with it a new wave of persecution for England's Catholic community: in 1581, Parliament passed the “Act against Jesuits,

both their stringency and their condemnation of Catholics as “traitors,” unofficially reinstated the informant state that had prevailed under Henry VIII. The informant, as well as freeing himself from suspicion, was promised recompense in the form of one-third of the recusancy fines.⁸¹ Katharine Longley explains the prevalence of informants, as well as the weight of their threat:

The Catholic laity, upon whose loyalty and material support the seminary priests were entirely dependent, were continually harassed. ‘Officers, sergeants, pursuivants, factors, favourites and intelligencers, in every county and shire’ were ready to spy upon, report and arrest Catholics and to search their houses. Catholics became the prey of every petty criminal, and of apostates from their own ranks as well.⁸²

Amongst the ranks of known informants in York was Henry May, Margaret’s stepfather. In 1581, he was on the political rise in York, and it was in January of that same year that, along with twenty others, he came before the High Commission with a list of recusants gathered as part of the process of their (including twenty-five new names). On this list, he is given as the first ‘gentleman’ responsible. In March of 1581, he was made both Alderman and Justice of the Peace, granting him both heightened civic standing and responsibility in the expunging of recusants from York.⁸³

Seminary Priests, and other such like Disobedient Persons,” designed to “retain the Queen’s Majesty’s subjects in their due obedience.” Amongst other things, this new act explained that any person reconciling another to the See of Rome, and any person reconciled, should be punished as a traitor, and that saying Mass was to be punished with a fine of 200 marks, that hearing Mass was to be punished with a fine of 100 marks, and that in both cases, the offendant was to be imprisoned for the length of a year.

⁸¹ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 72.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 72.

Perhaps as a consequence of her stepfather's new position, and certainly in response to the increasingly harsh measures against Catholics as well as the recent arrest of her co-religionist, Mrs. Vavasour (whose home had become the principal Mass center in York, and who had harbored priests as notable as Edmund Campion), Margaret felt that she was no longer able to have her home be a gathering place for Catholics, as this would almost certainly attract an excess of negative attention. Consequently, she prepared a location in another part of York as a place where Mass could be said when her own home was thought to be under too great a degree of scrutiny. She could not join her fellow recusants there, however, without attracting too much attention, and so it was that John Mush asked her why she would choose a location so far removed from her home when her inability to visit there would be so distressing to her. She replied, "My heart is with you, and I trust you remember me when I am toiling in the world. And though I cannot come as I desire, yet it doth me good and much comforteth me that I know I have you here, and that God is in any way served by my means."⁸⁴

V. Margaret Comes to the Attention of the Law

Although Margaret Clitherow was a notorious recusant in the York community by this point, she had thus far avoided being seen attending Mass or consorting publicly with the outlaw priests. On 8 March 1583, however, she was again arrested on recusancy charges, to which she plead 'not guilty.' She was held in York Castle, and released on bonds several months later.

⁸⁴ Undset, "Margaret Clitherow" in *Stages on the Road*, 194.

Undoubtedly, it was Margaret Clitherow's actions in the winter of 1584 that brought about, with such swiftness, her final arrest and trial, for it was in the late months of that year that she sent her son, Henry, abroad.⁸⁵ Mush recounts: "Without the knowledge of her husband [she sent] her eldest son into France for virtuous education and learning, hoping one day to see him a priest, which she most strongly desired."⁸⁶ Not only was Margaret's expressed desire to see her son become a priest condemned, but her very action of sending him abroad for his education would become illegal in March of 1585, when the Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests, and other such like Disobedient Persons was passed. This Act, eagerly passed by Parliament in the wake of the Throckmorton plot, banished all Jesuits and seminary priests from Her Majesty's realms, granting them forty days to secure passage into exile.⁸⁷ If any priest were discovered to be remaining in England after that period, he would be tried for treason, with his priesthood "received beyond the seas" cited as evidence. Furthermore, all English students in foreign seminaries were ordered to return within the space of six months, and any parent who sent their child abroad for seminary study would be fined one hundred pounds.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 103.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 103. Margaret would have been gratified in this desire had she lived more than two years longer: the son in question, Henry, did in fact take Holy Orders (he was only twelve at the time that he was sent to France), as did her younger son William, and her daughter Anne.

⁸⁷ The Throckmorton plot (1583) was an attempt to assassinate Elizabeth I and place the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne. It is so named because its instigator and principal actor was Sir Francis Throckmorton, who confessed under torture.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 104.

Katharine Longley posits that it is here that Henry May's story rejoins, with tragic consequences, that of Margaret Clitherow. It was around this period, in 1585, that Margaret's stepfather was in a position to be designated Lord Mayor of the City of York, succeeding the Puritan Andrew Trewe. Henry May was an obvious choice for the mayoralty in York, as his socio-economic standing was sound, and his record displayed nothing but a sense of loyalty to the Crown and to the established church. After the death of his wife Jane (Margaret's mother) in June of 1585, her property passed to her offspring in accordance with the terms of Thomas Middleton's will. Thus, Margaret Clitherow, notorious Catholic and hostess of Marian priests, became in large part the owner of the inn on which Henry May's income and status depended.⁸⁹ This affiliation was humiliating to May, for it did more than jeopardize his reputation: it also put his property holdings at risk, for if Margaret were imprisoned and hanged for the harboring of priests, her entire property would be confiscated by the State. Thus, Henry May risked losing everything. Katharine Longley carefully assesses the difficulties of the situation in which Henry May found himself: if she were to be arrested, tried, and executed, this would be a great shame to him, and might thus serve as a deterrent to the ambitious May in taking any action against his stepdaughter. On the other hand, "were not her recusancy and the sending of her son, his godson, abroad for education, likely to impede his own advancement? Might not the Councillors think he had himself been protecting her?"⁹⁰

Longley notes that May probably had serious doubts regarding his stepdaughter's ability to resist apostatizing if she were placed under sufficient duress. Indeed, he likely

⁸⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 107.

thought it was the case that she simply had not been subject to a significant enough amount of pressure, and that if he struck at the providential moment, she might yet be persuaded to abandon her recusancy:

But so many possible agents were involved in the attacks upon recusants, that she might be arrested at some unexpected moment, without his knowledge. Would it not be more politic to be involved himself, to be ready, nay, eager to see her house searched?... Surely, enough evidence would be found to bring her into very serious trouble. Then he would have the glory of persuading her to conform. Her apostasy would be a great blow to the Catholic resistance movement... How pleased the Lord President would be!⁹¹

In November of 1585, the first execution in England on the grounds of harboring priests took place in York: Marmaduke Bowes was arrested and tried on the witness of a young Catholic man who had acted as schoolmaster in his house. Bowes's death evidently caused a sensation in the York community, and Fr. Mush recounts that it left "most men murmuring that this honest gentleman's life should be thus shamefully taken away."⁹² Surely Bowes' death indicates the seriousness with which the Council in the north approached the issue of recusancy, as well as the degree to which it was committed to enforcing the Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests, and other such like Disobedient Persons: the political climate was steadily becoming more perilous for Margaret.

On 15 January 1586, Henry May was elected Lord Mayor of the city of York, and in the first days of February, the seals of office were delivered to him, thus instating him to the position he had so long coveted. Only one month later, on 9 March 1586, John Clitherow was ordered to appear before the Council and to give account of his son's

⁹¹ Ibid., 107-108. The 'Lord President' mentioned here is the President of the Council in the north, who was Henry Hastings, the Third Earl of Huntingdon, at the time.

⁹² Ibid., 109.

disappearance from England. On the 10th he was ordered to return once more. Having recounted the whole affair to Margaret, she began to fear that the Council and the Sheriffs of York would use her husband's absence from their home as an opportunity to search the house. Fr. Mush recites her prayer of that morning: "I pray God they intend no falsehood, and now, whilst they have him, make my house to be searched. They pick quarrels at me... and they never will cease until they have me again, but God's will be done."⁹³

As Margaret feared, the Sheriffs of York, together with their men, went to her house in the afternoon of the 10th of March. Longley notes a variety of interesting circumstances regarding the search of Margaret's home. Chief amongst these are the fact that John Clitherow had been summoned before the Council on the previous day, and that the home had not been searched in his absence then. This could have been intended to act as a warning to Margaret and her household, giving them time to hide vestments and plate. Furthermore, the search was carried out in the afternoon (according to Fr. Mush), and Pope Pius V, in 1566, had forbidden Mass to be said after midday. Thus, it seems that the searchers were not intent on discovering a priest in the act of saying Mass (in which case *he* would have become the principal focus of the legal proceedings), nor were they looking to maximize the amount of evidence they could bring against Margaret and her household.⁹⁴ Longley summarizes:

The intention evidently was to ensure that Margaret Clitherow, who had previously appeared before the High Commission and the Justices of the Peace in the company of a small but determined band of obstinate recusants, should now appear along and unsupported before the full pomp of the law... Once more her enemies intended, as Fr. Mush says, "by

⁹³ Ibid., 113.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 114.

terror and violence to weaken her strength, to abate her courage, and to infringe her constancy.”⁹⁵

As a result of being warned of the search that would take place on 10 March by her husband’s absence from the home, Margaret and her household were able to prepare for the arrival of the Sheriffs: when the men arrived, they found both mistress and servants going about their daily work and engaging in no suspicious activity at all. Furthermore, upon searching (indeed, Fr. Mush suggests that they ransacked the home), they found no evidence to suggest that Margaret or any members of her household were guilty of any crime whatsoever.⁹⁶ However, unwilling to walk away from the home without their prize, the Sheriffs and their men set about interrogating the children of the Clitherow household, notably one whom Fr. Mush calls the “Flemish Boy.” This child’s relation to Margaret or John is uncertain, but he had been living with them for some time and receiving instruction alongside William, their son. He was additionally privy to the secrets kept by the household, for upon being stripped naked and threatened with a cruel whipping, he divulged the location of the priest’s hole, whereupon the searchers discovered that it had only recently been vacated (as evidenced by morsels of food that had been left behind), and that it still contained “books and church stuff,” precisely the evidence which they sought.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., 115.

⁹⁶ Fr. Mush insists on how well-hidden the priest’s hole was. (At the time of the search, it had been newly vacated of a priest and his travelling companion.)

⁹⁷ Ibid., 116.

CHAPTER THREE

Saint Margaret Clitherow Becoming the “Pearl of York”

Her home having been searched on 10 March 1586, Margaret Clitherow was arrested that same afternoon. This chapter gives a detailed account of her arrest, trial, and martyrdom, relying once again on the eyewitness account of Fr. John Mush for much of the narrative of her life, as well as on Katharine Longley’s hagiography for a useful and insightful analysis.

This chapter, though it covers only a relatively brief period of her life, is in some sense a definitive account of the character of Margaret Clitherow, for it is a retelling of the most vital points of her life, in which her faith was perhaps most sorely tried and out of which she emerged triumphant in death. Indeed, the fifteen days between her final arrest and her execution are given thirty pages within John Mush’s eighty-page *True Account*, indicating the overwhelming importance of her final fortnight.

Within these pages, it is my desire not only to give a detailed vision of our Saint’s trial and martyrdom, but to impress upon the reader the importance of her noncompliance in such a way as to draw out the singularity of her position and the immensity of her holiness and fortitude, those attributes which earned her the title of the “Pearl of York.”

I. Final Arrest

Though the searchers of Margaret’s house initially found nothing incriminating, the testimony of the “Flemish Boy” mentioned by Fr. Mush provided them with the

evidence needed to take Margaret into custody for the final time. Margaret was initially sent to the Manor, and it was there that she was being held at the time that rumors began circulating that the “Flemish Boy” had given evidence against her and her household. So worrying did the rumors surrounding her fate become that a messenger was sent to her at the Manor to say that the “Flemish Boy” had testified that she had been harboring two priests in her home: Fr. Francis Ingleby of Rheims and Fr. John Mush of Rome. In accordance with this evidence, it was likely that she would be hanged, as was the order of the new law.⁹⁸ Longley posits that the messenger was sent to Margaret to cast her into fear and doubt, but as Fr. Mush’s retelling indicates, the effect was quite the opposite. She said to him, “I would I had some good thing to give you for these good news. Hold, take this fig, for I have nothing better.”⁹⁹ For four days Margaret waited to be delivered to the judges, and in the course of this period, she prepared herself with fasting and prayer for what she was sure would be a death sentence leveled against her. Her constant companion was Anne Tesh, a fellow recusant woman with whom she was imprisoned, and who had also been arrested on evidence given by the “Flemish Boy,” who reported that she had heard Mass said in the Clitherows’ home.¹⁰⁰ Shortly before being called

⁹⁸ “An Act Against Jesuits, Seminary Priests, and Other Such Like Disobedient Persons,” 1584.

⁹⁹ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ Lake and Questier, *Margaret Clitherow*, 114. Although Anne Tesh was arrested on the same evidence as Margaret Clitherow, her fate was significantly different. Brought to trial, Mistress Anne expected to become, like her friend, a martyr. Indeed, the prosecution was vying for her execution, but the “Flemish Boy,” previously ready to report that he had known Anne to hear Mass in the Clitherow home, blanched and was unable to speak. Taking matters into their own hands, the prosecution railed against the woman, claiming that she, too, had harbored priests in her home. (There is no evidence that this was the case.) The jury, however, refused to yield the requisite verdict, and

before the judges' seat, however, Margaret said, "Yet, before I go, I will make all my brethren and sisters on the other side of the hall merry." Then, in a gesture of sympathy with her imprisoned co-religionists and "Looking forth of a window towards them... she made a gallows on her fingers, and pleasantly laughed at them."¹⁰¹

II. Trial

Margaret Clitherow was finally called before the judges (Misters Clinch and Rhodes) on 14 March 1586, a Monday. The charges leveled against her, according to the testimony of Fr. Mush, were that she had "harboured and maintained Jesuit and Seminary priests, traitors to the Queen's Majesty and her laws, and that she had [heard] Mass, and such like."¹⁰² Judge Clinch asked her to give account of her guilt, to which her response was delivered "mildly with a bold and smiling confidence: I know of no offence whereof I should confess myself guilty." When she was then reminded that, having harbored Jesuits and priests, she had harbored enemies to the Queen and traitors, her reply came, "I never knew nor have harbored any such persons, or maintained those which are not the Queen's friends. God defend I should."¹⁰³ This dialogue continued for several more

instead of being sentenced to death on grounds of treason, Anne was instead fined one hundred pounds for hearing Mass.

¹⁰¹ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 119. As in the case of Margaret's own surname, "Clinch" may alternately have been spelled "Clench." The spelling used by John Mush in his *True Report* is maintained in the body of this thesis.

¹⁰² Mush, *True Report*, 413.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 413. Margaret's argument is reminiscent of Chesterton's et al. that Catholics ought to be considered the most loyal of subjects, for provided that their monarch not stray from the path of virtue in his pronouncements, they are compelled by the Church to be loyal to him.

minutes as the judges continued to insist that Margaret, having broken the law (“offended the statutes”) was needful of a trial, while she maintained that if she must be tried, none but God and the consciences of the Judges would try her.¹⁰⁴ Mush notes that at this, “the judge” (presumably Clinch) objected, and explained that since she was thought to have broken the law, she must be tried by a jury, and not by the judges alone.¹⁰⁵ Although this moment in Mush’s text initially seems to be of little consequence, the reason for its inclusion in his narrative later becomes apparent.

According to Fr. Mush, Margaret remained astonishingly composed throughout this ordeal, and the responses she grants in his narrative are clever and calm. Intending to agitate her and perhaps to lead her to flounder in questioning, the judges ordered that chalices, plate, vestments, and “pictures” be brought forth. Thereupon two “lewd fellows” (jesters) donned the vestments and began to gallivant in front of the bench, holding up “singing breads” and taunting Margaret: “Behold thy gods in whom thou believest.”¹⁰⁶ When asked how she liked the vestments, she replied, “I like them well, if they were on their backs that know to use them to God’s honor, as they were made.”¹⁰⁷ Then, asked to state her beliefs, she gave an incontrovertible answer: “I believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; in these Three Persons and One God I fully believe, and that by the passion, death, and merits of Christ Jesu I must be

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 413.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 413.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 413. Longley notes, quite helpfully, that “singing breads” are unconsecrated hosts.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 413.

saved.”¹⁰⁸ “You say well,” Clinch was forced to reply. It had become clear that Margaret would not comply with their desires, nor be overcome by their tactics of manipulation: she would neither become flustered, nor admit to any wrongdoing, nor even concede that there were grounds for a trial. This last item was by far the most troubling to the judges, for as Katharine Longley notes, “unless the defendant gave the formal answer and agreed to be tried ‘by God and the country’ the case could not be heard.”¹⁰⁹ The alternative to being tried by the country, as Clinch then reminded the Saint, was to be tried by order of law: this would undoubtedly have less favorable consequences for, as he thought, she needed not fear a trial by country because of the slenderness of the evidence brought against her, and the fact that it was all delivered by a child.¹¹⁰ Still Margaret refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the charges against her, and thus to be tried “by God and the country.”

Seizing the opportunity to change tactics, the judges asked Margaret whether or not her husband had been complicit in her illegal activities. Margaret’s response was subtly brilliant: “God knoweth I could never yet get my husband in that good case that he were worthy to know or come in place where they were to serve God.”¹¹¹ Again, the judges were thwarted by the quick thinking and steadfastness of this butcher’s wife, to whom Clinch then pronounced, “We must proceed by law against you, which will

¹⁰⁸ Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 126.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

condemn you to a sharp death for want of trial.”¹¹² Ever cheerful, Margaret accepted this threat with thanks to God, not asking in what her “sharp death” would consist. Even as she stood calmly before the Bench, the judges and others present hurled insults at her, claiming that she had harbored priests not for her faith, but for whoredom, an accusation that her own stepfather, Henry May, would adopt and propagate following her death.

Although her appearance before the Assizes on 14 March 1586 undoubtedly sealed what would later be revealed to be her fate, Margaret was not officially sentenced on this date. Instead, she was taken away from court to “John Trewe’s house on the bridge, where she was shut up in a close parlor.”¹¹³ There, she prayed upon her knees, awaiting a second summons before the Assizes.

The summons arrived the following morning, around eight o’clock. Brought before the Assizes, Margaret was once again asked by Clinch whether or not she would consent to be tried by the country: “We see nothing why you should refuse; here be but small witness against you, and the country will consider your case.” Margaret’s response indicates that she understood full well the tenuousness of the evidence brought against her by the court: “Indeed, I think you have no witnesses against me but children, which with an apple and a rod you may make say what you will.”¹¹⁴ Though, indeed, the court had only the evidence of the “Flemish Boy” upon which to rely in bringing Margaret to

¹¹² Ibid., 127.

¹¹³ Ibid., 128. Longley explains that “John Trewe’s house” was also known as the New Counter, a prison constructed on the Ouse Bridge in York. Mrs. Vavasour, fellow recusant and good friend of Margaret Clitherow, had already spent four years in this prison by the time of Margaret’s brief stay there, and it is likely that Fr. Mush used her testimony in reconstructing the narrative of Saint Margaret Clitherow’s last days.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 132.

trial, there was no doubt in the minds of the judges as to her having harbored priests in her home. They made this explicit to her, and she agreed that indeed she had played hostess to a number of priests, but maintained that they had come only to do good to herself and to others (arguably her persecutors included).¹¹⁵ Thus, all uncertainty regarding her actually having had priests in her home was dispelled: this was not tantamount to a confession, nor to a testimony either. She had not declared herself guilty or innocent of a crime, for she still refused to accept the validity of the crime of which she was being accused.

Pressing the issue Judge Clinch again asked, “What say you? Will you put yourself to the country, yea or no?” to which the Saint replied, “I see no cause why I should do so in this matter: I refer my cause only to God and your own consciences. Do what you think good.”¹¹⁶ Though the gathered assembly accused her of folly and obstinacy, saying that if she were to put herself to the mercy of the country, she would surely not be found guilty (given that the only witness against her was a child) she still maintained that the country could not try her for any real crime. Thereupon, Judge Clinch finally said, “Well, ... we must pronounce a sentence against you, Mercy lieth in our hands, in the country’s also, if you put your trial to them; otherwise you must have the law.”¹¹⁷

At this point in her trial, an interesting and surprising turn of events occurred which is well worth recounting here. The Puritan preacher, John Wiggington (formerly

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 132.

¹¹⁶ Mush, *True Report*, 416.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 416.

ridiculed by Fr. Mush) spoke up and, addressing Judge Clinch, said, “My lord, take heed what you do. You sit here to do justice; this woman’s case is touching life and death, – you ought not, either by God’s laws or man’s to judge her to die upon the slender witness of a boy.” Judge Clinch, in an overt assertion of his authority, replied, “I may do it by law.” “By what law?” quoth Wiggington. ‘By the Queen’s law,’ said the judge.” Then came Wiggington’s arresting reply: “That may well be... but you cannot do it by God’s law.”¹¹⁸

Judge Clinch, “yet so desirous to shift the thorn out of his own conscience and into the whole country, and falsely thinking that if the jury found her guilty his hand should be clear from her blood, said again, ‘Good woman, I pray you put yourself to the country’.” Still Margaret refused.¹¹⁹ By this time the court had grown restless and impatient, and Rhodes, speaking apparently on behalf of all, said, “Why stand we all the day about this naughty, willful woman. Let us despatch her.” Judge Clinch conceded, and pronounced her sentence:

You must return from whence you came, and there, in the lowest part of the prison, be stripped naked, laid down, your back upon the ground, and as much weight laid upon you as you are able to bear, and so to continue three days without meat or drink, except a little barley bread and puddle water, and the third day to be pressed to death, your hands and feet tied to posts, and a sharp stone under your back.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 416.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 416.

¹²⁰ Lake and Questier helpfully comment: “Clench was articulating the medieval sanction of *peine forte et dure*, reserved for those who refused to enter a plea to a felony charge. Whereas, in theory, this procedure was supposed to allow three full days for the accused to change his or her mind, by the sixteenth century it was in effect merely another method of execution, one of the considerable range of horrific punishments available under the law.” Amongst the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, Saint

Margaret's response, even in the face of this terrible pronouncement, was calm: "If this judgment be according to your conscience, I pray God send you better judgment before Him. I thank God heartily for this."¹²¹

III. Delay of Execution by Claims of Pregnancy

The reader will note that this sentence was pronounced on 15 March 1586, yet Margaret was not put to death for another ten days, on 25 March. Shortly following her sentencing, a rumor came to the attention of Judge Clinch which threw questions of the timing her execution into chaos. Shortly before her arrest, Margaret had divulged to one of her friends or acquaintances that she thought she might be pregnant. If she were indeed with child, she could not be executed forthwith. Under English law, a pregnant woman could only be executed after being delivered of her child, and women suspected of being pregnant were given a reprieve of twenty weeks, at the minimum.

When news of this rumor reached Judge Clinch, he did not hesitate in halting her execution, despite significant protests from his fellows on the Bench.¹²² Additionally, the news that Margaret might be pregnant required that she be examined by a "jury of matrons," a group of women who would be trusted to establish the validity of the rumor. The group ought to have been composed of twelve women, all undoubtedly strangers to Margaret and accustomed to dealing with the criminal class. In a display of mercy and perhaps out of respect for her elevated social status, Judge Clinch ordered that instead a

Margaret Clitherow is unique in having perished in this truly horrific way. (Lake and Questier, *Margaret Clitherow*, 91)

¹²¹ Ibid., 416-417.

¹²² Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 139-140.

group of four women, all known to Margaret, be sent to establish whether or not she was pregnant.¹²³ They returned to Judge Clinch the next day, saying that “she was with child as far as they could perceive or gather by her own words.” The following day, Margaret herself was asked whether or not she thought she was pregnant, and her response was significantly less certain than that of her friends:

She said she knew not certainly, and would not for all the world take it on her conscience either that she was with child or that she was not, but if she were it was very young, and as she thought rather she was than otherwise.¹²⁴

Clinch took her testimony to be sufficient evidence in favor of delaying her execution, but his partners on the bench were unmoved, and demanded that she not have “the benefit of her belly.” After some discussion, Clinch maintained that she ought be given the “benefit of *venter*,” which granted the aforementioned minimum twenty weeks stay of execution to any woman at all likely to be pregnant.¹²⁵

The degree to which Clinch’s partners on the bench desired to see the woman put to death is evident in Fr. Mush’s narration of the ensuing conversation. Mr. Hurlestone, one of the men present, declared:

She is the only woman in the north parts, and if she be suffered to live, there will be more of her order without any fear of law. And therefore, my lord, consider with yourself. . . and let her have law according to judgement passed, for I will take it upon my conscience that she is not with child.¹²⁶

¹²³ Ibid., 140.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 140.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 140-141.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 141.

At this point, Judge Clinch passes out of Margaret's story, for, "thinking to wash his hands with Pilate," he handed her case over to the Council, asking only that they delay her execution until the following Friday.¹²⁷

Over the course of the following days, Margaret's friends and members of her family attempted to convince her to state her pregnancy more definitively, but she refused to do so, remembering that she had been deceived in this regard previously. They pressed especially the grief which her death would certainly cause her family. Longley reminds her reader of John Clitherow's words upon learning of his wife's condemnation: "Alas! will they kill my wife? Let them take all I have and save her, for she is the best wife in all England, and the best Catholic also."¹²⁸ Nevertheless, Margaret steadfastly maintained that she did not know whether or not she was pregnant. Fr. Mush's testimony reveals that her steadfastness was directly related to her desire to bear witness in her martyrdom.¹²⁹ He writes,

The martyr, after her judgment, with much prayer and fasting prepared herself to die, fearing still that she was not worthy to suffer such a death for God His sake. In this time she sent word to her ghostly Father, desiring him to pray earnestly for her, for it was the heaviest cross that ever came to her, that she feared she should escape death.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ibid., 141.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 142.

¹²⁹ Fr. Mush reminds his readers of how little Margaret thought herself worthy to undergo the trials of martyrdom by recounting one of her prayers: "I pray God his will may be done, and I have that which he seeth most fit for me. But I see not in myself any worthiness of martyrdom; yet, if it be his will, I pray him that I may be constant and persevere to the end." (Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 143)

¹³⁰ Mush, *True Report*, 420.

Should her martyrdom have been postponed even for the minimum of twenty weeks given to pregnant woman set to die, this might have caused a scandal within the community of York, with some accusing her of falsifying her pregnancy or even of becoming pregnant by some illicit means in order to delay her death. Furthermore, it is not wholly unlikely that she feared that if her execution were delayed, it might be remanded entirely, causing a yet greater scandal and depriving her of the Sacraments indefinitely, a far greater suffering than the ending of her own life.

IV. Visits in Prison

Over the course of the next days, Margaret was visited in her cell by a number of men, all of whom attempted to move her, by questions, to confess her guilt. Chief amongst these men in the writings of Fr. Mush is Edmund Bunney, sometime Sub-Dean of York and later an itinerant preacher. Bunney asked Margaret why she would not consent to be tried by the country:

Wherein you show yourself wilful in seeking your own death contrary to God's law, and damnable to your own soul, as making yourself guilty of your own death without trial, forcing the law to proceed by order, which could not be abridged in such a case; where otherwise, upon trial, you might have been saved upon so simple evidence, yet notwithstanding it was well known and proved that you maintained and harbored traitors, contrary to the Queen Majesty's laws.¹³¹

Margaret's reply, quoted in each of the biographies cited here, stands out as a singular moment in the long confession of faith in which her martyrdom consists:

I am a woman, and not skillful in the temporal laws. If I have offended, I ask God mercy, and I know not whether I have offended against them or

¹³¹ Ibid., 421.

no; but in my conscience I have not. As for traitors, I never kept nor harboured any in my house.¹³²

Then, returning to the question of her alleged pregnancy, her interrogators asked her to confirm whether she was with child, and again she refused to give a definitive answer. Finally, they asked why she refused to conform to the established church, which to their thinking had so many testimonies to support its cause. Thereupon they cited many passages of Scripture in an attempt to convince Margaret of the legitimacy of their Church.

The martyr answered, “I am not aminded to your Church, God defend I should, for I have been within the Catholic faith twelve years, I thank God; and if I should now fear or faint, all that I have done heretofore were in vain, and I wish rather to die.”¹³³

Interestingly, it is only at this point in their interrogation that Margaret’s questioners turned to the question of religion in earnest. Previously, whether in her cell or in court, their questions had been focused primarily on ascertaining her political allegiances or on determining that she understood her own guilt. Here, however, only a few days before her death and after much previous questioning, they began to probe the depths of her steadfast faithfulness to the Catholic Church. Mr. Pease, an “arrogant heretic” and companion of Edmund Bunney in Margaret’s cell, asked, “Then what is the Church? You know it not: you have been led away by blind guides, making you believe in stocks and stones, and tradition of men contrary to the word of the Lord.”¹³⁴ Margaret replied

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

that the Church is the place wherein the true Word of God is preached, which Christ left to his Apostles and to their successors, who administer the Seven Sacraments that the Church has “always observed, the Doctors preached, and the Martyrs and Confessors witnessed.”¹³⁵

Bunney and his companions plainly refused to listen to the words of the Saint and followed her simple confession of faith with a series of exegetical readings of Scripture (“God knoweth to what end,” adds Fr. Mush). Margaret’s following speech, quoted here in its entirety, is a testament to the strength of her faith and the hope she found therein. It is also, however, an indication of the unique awareness she possessed of her situation and of what she might ultimately bear witness to in her martyrdom:

I beseech you trouble me not; I am no divine, neither can answer you to these hard questions. I am according to the Queen’s Majesty’s laws to die, and my spirit is very willing, although my flesh may repine. I say, as I have said heretofore, my desire is to die a member of the Catholic Church. My cause is God’s, and it is a great comfort for me to die in His quarrel: flesh is frail, but I trust in my Lord Jesu, that He will give me strength to bear all troubles and torments which shall be laid upon me for His sake.¹³⁶

Fr. Mush notes that, following Margaret’s speech, Pease railed a while longer. Eventually all departed, leaving Margaret once again to her prayerful solitude.

Over the course of the following week, Margaret was visited by a constant stream of preachers, kinfolk, and city officials, all of whom sought to persuade her, in some way or another, to show herself the mercy of confessing guilt or, better still, apostatizing. Amongst these was Wiggington, the Puritan minister who had spoken in her defense at

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 422.

the trial, when he asserted that though Margaret might be condemned by the queen's law, she could not however be condemned by the law of God. In her cell in John Trewe's house, however, Wiggington urged Margaret to reconsider her position, saying, "Possibly you think you shall have martyrdom, but you are foully deceived, for it cometh but one way. Not death, but the cause of death make a martyr."¹³⁷ He pointed even to the martyrs made under Mary I, and explained that surely both these Protestants *and* the Catholics whose lives were currently being sacrificed could not be called martyrs: only one true Church could exist, so only one constituency could be made martyrs. Wiggington's interrogation continued with explanations of why the teachings of the Catholic Church on the Sacraments were fallacious, but Margaret's response did not vary: she was faithful to the teachings of the Church, and would be even unto death.

The constancy of her faith was brought into question the following day when she was visited once again by the odious Bunney, who expressed that he found her much changed in her demeanor, and not so conformable as she had been. Her response forms the anchoring point of all of her statements in prison as regards the teachings of the Church:

I marvel you charge me thus: have you found me since the first time I came to prison in any other mind than I am now? Have I not always answered you, that whatsoever the Catholic Church teacheth and believeth, the same I firmly believe? Neither do I shrink any jot from any article thereof, and I trust in my Lord God never to do.¹³⁸

Bunney's visit was followed by a call from yet another preacher called Harwood who, like others before him, attempted to persuade Margaret to submit to the wishes of the

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 424-425.

Council and to be tried by the country. When she again refused, Harwood accused her of willing her own death, to which she strenuously objected: “I die not desperately nor willingly procure mine own death: for not being found guilty of such crimes as were laid against me, and yet condemned to die, I could but rejoice; my cause also being God’s quarrel.”¹³⁹

Margaret’s rejoicing in her death was brought to its climax when, two days before her martyrdom, the sheriffs arrived to inform her of the day appointed for her execution. Upon their departure, Margaret knelt in thanks to God and asked that others pray for her also, for though her spirit was altogether willing, she felt keenly the frailty of her flesh. Presently the horror of death left her, and she began to prepare for her martyrdom.

V. Martyrdom

During Margaret’s imprisonment, we are told that she received “water pottage, rye bread, and small ale” as her only nourishment, and that in the two days before her execution she took no food at all.¹⁴⁰ The cell she occupied in John Trewe’s house was shared with a Mr. and Mrs. Yoward, Protestants being held on charges of debt. Although Fr. Mush writes disparagingly of Mr. Yoward, the kindness that his wife would show to Margaret in her last hours earned her the priest’s esteem. The night prior to her death, Margaret did much to prepare herself to face martyrdom: she asked especially whether she might have some woman to keep her company and to reassure her in the face of the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 426. The crimes of which Margaret was not found guilty were, to her understanding, the harboring of traitors.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 429.

weakness of her flesh. The jailer had already departed for the night, and so Margaret had recourse only to Mrs. Yoward, who sat with her until nearly midnight, whereupon the latter went to sleep. She woke, however, at twelve o'clock to see Margaret take off her garments and set them aside, clothing herself again in only a linen habit "like an alb," which she had made while in prison.¹⁴¹ The martyr knelt upon the floor of her cell until three o'clock, then laid on the stones by the fireplace for some part of an hour. Afterward she at last went to her bed, from which she rose at six o'clock and prepared herself for the arrival of the sheriffs who would come two hours later. In the intervening period, Margaret requested that Mrs. Yoward be present at her execution, but Mrs. Yoward refused, citing the cruelty of her death as being too great a thing to which to bear witness. She did, however, offer to procure some friends to lay extra weight upon the martyr, that she might die more swiftly. Margaret refused this offer made in kindness, for she by no means wanted to procure anyone to be guilty of her blood and death.¹⁴²

The sheriffs arrived at eight o'clock, and having anticipated their arrival, Margaret had gathered her linen shift, trimmed with inkle strings with which to bind her hands. She left the prison joyfully and "went cheerfully to her marriage, as she called it."¹⁴³ Barefoot and barelegged, Margaret distributed alms as she passed through the surprisingly large crowd until one of the sheriffs, commanded her to hurry on her way. "The martyr answered merrily, 'Good Master Sheriff, let me deal my poor alms before I

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 430.

¹⁴³ Inkle strings are a form of coarsely woven ribbon, typically used for straps or belts.

now go, for my time is but short.’ They marveled to see her joyful countenance,” writes Fr. Mush.¹⁴⁴

Arriving at the tollbooth where she was set to die, Margaret knelt and prayed, but her petitions were interrupted by those present: two sheriffs of York (Fawcett and Gibson), a minister called Frost, and eight beggars (four women and four men) hired to complete the execution, which was additionally witnessed by a small crowd of diverse onlookers. These tormentors asked that they might pray with her and she with them, saying ‘amen’ to one another’s prayers. Margaret flatly refused. They then asked that she pray for Her Majesty the Queen, which Margaret did in due course, first praying for the Catholic Church, the Pope, Cardinals, and Fathers, and then for all Christian princes. She offered especial prayers for Elizabeth, Queen of England, “that God turn her to the Catholic faith, and that after this mortal life she may receive the blessed joys of heaven. For I wish as much good... to her majesty’s soul as to mine own.” Those present objected to her supplication, and Sheriff Fawcett reminded her that she was to die for treason. Margaret’s reply: “No, no, Mr. Sheriff, I die for the love of my Lord Jesu.”¹⁴⁵

Sheriff Fawcett ordered that Margaret be stripped naked, as her judgment had dictated. She, along with the other women present, begged that he might spare her this indignity, but Fawcett refused as Sheriff Gibson watched from a corner of the room, weeping at the cruelty of the act. Finally Fawcett allowed that only women might undress the martyr while the men would turn away, averting their eyes. Undressed, Margaret lay on the ground with her hands covering her face, and the door was placed

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 430.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 431.

over her body.¹⁴⁶ Fawcett refused that she should cover her face and insisted that her hands be instead bound. Interestingly, while Margaret attempted to keep her hands together in a gesture of prayer, Fawcett desired that they be separated. They were bound to two posts, “so that her body and her arms made a perfect cross.”¹⁴⁷

Margaret was asked a final time whether or not she would beg the Queen’s forgiveness, or her husband’s, but she said only, “If ever I have offended him, but for my conscience, I ask him forgiveness.” Thereupon they began to lay stones atop the door, prompting her to cry out, “Jesu! Jesu! Have mercy upon me!”¹⁴⁸ These were her last words, and she began to die within minutes. After a quarter of an hour, a stone no larger than a man’s fist was wedged underneath her back, and a further weight of seven or eight hundred pounds placed on her. This weight, “breaking her ribs, caused them to burst forth from the skin.”¹⁴⁹ Fr. Mush writes:

Thus most victoriously this gracious martyr overcame all her enemies, passing [from] this mortal life with marvelous triumph into the peaceable city of God, there to receive a worthy crown of endless immortality and joy.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ The door alluded to here was used as a board upon which to lay the weight intended to crush the martyr.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 432.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 432.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Reading of the Life of Margaret Clitherow Through the Lens of the Relationship Between Martyrdom and Hospitality

Admittedly, Saint Margaret Clitherow, though an interesting character in and of herself, forms an odd choice for the subject of a thesis written by a twenty-first century American Protestant. Little was written about her in her own time, and even since her canonization on 25 October 1970, she has played little more than an accessory role in writings on the period of English history in which she lived. Saint Margaret's life nonetheless forms an interesting illustration for the tentative relationship between martyrdom and hospitality as explained in the first chapter of this work.

This chapter serves as a moment of connection between the relationship suggested in the first chapter and various elements of Saint Margaret Clitherow's life. It is divided into five sections: three attend to her role as a witness, while two explore the ways in which her witness enabled her to extend hospitality. There are many more connections that could be made than are detailed in this chapter. I have attempted, however, to limit myself to those that I consider most essential so as not to reduce Margaret to a mere illustration, but instead to present her as an exemplar, speaking to us even now.

I. Introduction to the Chapter

The relationship between martyrdom and hospitality offered in the first chapter of this thesis suggests that the role of the martyr is to make a *positive witness* in favor of the

dictates, unity, and orthodoxy of the Church. In so doing, the martyr establishes the boundaries of the Church, helping to declare its identity and the identity of its people. Framed in somewhat more stringent terms, the martyr may play a role in expressing who and what is *in* the Church, and who and what is *out* of the Church. When it is persons in question, and not merely the points of doctrine held by such persons, this seems like a move towards exclusivity and condemnation. In some sense, this is true. The martyr, however, also helps to establish the identity of the Church in such a way and to such an extent that those within the Church are then able to reach out in love and in hospitality to the “other,” bidding him or her to come closer and enter into dialogue *without the Church losing its identity*.

Margaret Clitherow’s life offers the opportunity to make a number of observations about the intersections between martyrdom and hospitality. Some are related to the circumstances in which her martyrdom was carried out, some to her own identity as a woman, and some to her actions as recounted by her biographers. I have divided these into two sections: first, the ways in which she made a positive witness for the Catholic Church, and second, the ways in which she was thereby able to extend hospitality.

II. Margaret Clitherow Making Witness as a Woman

Three women number amongst the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, of whom Saint Margaret is one. These women’s stories, as well as those of countless other unknown women of the period, form an interesting portrait of recusant life from a female perspective.

Margaret is presented as having been, by all accounts, a dutiful wife to John Clitherow. She bore him three children, managed their home well, and came herself from a family of good standing, thus ameliorating the status of the clan into which she wed. John's exclamation upon hearing that the date of her execution had been set – "Alas! will they kill my wife? Let them take all I have and save her, for she is the best wife in all England, and the best Catholic also." – reflects the love he had for his wife, and his willingness to pay the fines for her recusancy demonstrates a level of respect not necessarily to be anticipated from a man in his position.¹⁵¹ Margaret, too, seems to have had a good deal of love and respect for the man she married before her conversion, even though he did not follow her to the Church of Rome. At intermittent moments during her trial and questioning in jail she was asked whether she had given any thought at all to the fate of her husband and children. She was accused of unforgivable cruelty towards them, yet she maintained that never would she willingly do her husband harm, and that her only regret was that he had not followed her on the road to conversion.

Initially, the contrast between this dutiful, beloved, and loving wife and the woman who cheerfully walked to the Tyburn seems stark. Yet, after some thought, a comprehensive and cohesive picture of Margaret Clitherow begins to emerge. Margaret, like many wives in her position, took on the role of household manager while her husband tended to his business. Consequently, she was responsible for the care and keeping of her servants as well as her children: in fact, all who lived within her home were under her physical and spiritual care. Thus, she forsook neither her femininity nor her obedience to her husband in converting to Catholicism, and later in harboring priests.

¹⁵¹ Mush, *True Report*, 142.

Rather, she fulfilled her role as mother and keeper of the home to an extraordinary degree, attending to the wellbeing of her children and others even at the risk of her own life.

III. Margaret Clitherow Making Witness at Her Trial

The number of pages devoted by Fr. Mush to Margaret Clitherow's trial does much to suggest the importance of the few hours she spent before the York Lent Assizes. Although the time she was before the court was scarce, it is from this encounter that Fr. Mush gleaned much of the dialogue attributed to the Saint.

Its brevity notwithstanding, Margaret's exchange with Judge Clinch regarding her beliefs is in fact a grounding moment in her witness of faith. His question of what she held to be true was followed by a swift and sure reply: "I believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; in these Three Persons and One God I fully believe, and that by the passion, death, and merits of Christ Jesu I must be saved."¹⁵² As suggested before, there was nothing objectionable in this statement, and nothing that Judge Clinch could hold out against her as hinting at her guilt. She did not rail against the Protestant church in making this affirmation, but only quietly stated the firm foundation of her faith in the understanding that the fullness of its truth was preached only in one place: the Church of Rome. Thus she assured that her martyrdom could not and would not be read simply as a witness made in favor of one or another of several Christian sects, but one made on behalf of the church entire *in* the Catholic Church.

¹⁵² Longley, *Margaret Clitherow*, 126.

Furthermore, Margaret makes witness by subverting the accusations leveled against her by the Assizes. Confronted with the accusation that she is being tried on charges of treason for having harbored Catholic priests in her home, she again and again insists, “I know of no offence whereof I should confess myself guilty,” a brief claim which nonetheless carries with it weighty implications.¹⁵³ Not only do Margaret’s words carry with them the understanding that she believed herself to be innocent of treachery, but they also reveal her belief that whatever charge was being laid against her was invalid as well as false: not only was she not guilty of harboring traitors against Her Majesty, but to suggest that playing host to priests was to be harboring traitors was plainly nonsensical. By making witness in this fashion, too, Margaret declared that her martyrdom was being made even for the good of her own countrymen and her queen, for indeed, to harbor priests was to bring life rather than death to England.

IV. Margaret Clitherow Playing Host in Her Home

Margaret’s role as host in her own home is, in some sense, obvious. Not only did she act as hostess to her children and to her servants, but also to the “Flemish Boy” and, of course, to the priests for whom she was willing to risk so much. Her hospitality is in this regard plain to see: she welcomed them into her home, giving them food and shelter, keeping them safe and caring for their souls. Yet, one character is forgotten in this schema: her husband John.

It is strange to think – but from the writings of Fr. Mush almost certainly true – that John Clitherow was somewhat of an outsider in his own home. Not only was

¹⁵³ Mush, *True Report*, 413.

Margaret responsible for the quotidian affairs of the household, but she was also the spiritual voice, making the Clitherow home a notably Catholic one. John, not being Catholic, stands at the periphery of family and household, yet he is not denied as her husband. Indeed, Margaret claimed to have committed no offenses against him other than that of being Catholic, and the two seem to have had great love and respect for one another. When asked whether or not John knew of her illicit activities, her response is that, “God knows I could never yet get my husband in that good case that he were worthy to know or come in the place where they were to serve God.”¹⁵⁴ This response by no means suggests disdain on her part, nor anger either: instead it seems to indicate her sadness and frustration that she could never welcome him into the presence of her hidden priests, nor stand with him and hear Mass said. Furthermore, in not revealing to her husband her illicit activities, Margaret preserved John’s safety and the safety of their home. Thus, Margaret’s actions, even prior to her martyrdom, indicate hospitality towards the “other” in the form of her husband. Had she, upon her conversion, turned her back to John, or had she been willing to sacrifice the safety of their home for her freedom to publicly witness to her Catholic faith, he would no doubt have not said in the same sentence that she was “the best wife in all England, and the best Catholic also,” nor would he have wept so bitterly at the news of her death. Ultimately, however, it is her martyrdom that confirms her desire to see her husband join in with the Church: she died in so small part that there might still be a Church into which he might enter.

¹⁵⁴ Lake and Questier, *Margaret Clitherow*, 21.

V. Margaret Clitherow Playing Host in Her Prayer

In the final hours of Margaret's life, as she stood in the room in which she would die, she was tormented by heretics who asked her to pray with them, and to pray for Elizabeth I, their queen. Margaret refused to acquiesce to the first of these requests, saying, "I will not pray with you, and you shall not pray with me; neither will I say Amen to your prayers, nor shall you to mine."¹⁵⁵ Although some will point to Margaret's refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of her tormentor's prayers as a reason to deny that she shows them hospitality, it remains that the persons in question were taunting her, and that she had consented to pray with them, it would have been tantamount to apostasy in many regards. Furthermore, and most importantly for the reflections of this thesis, it was by refusing to pray with them (and thus by maintaining her own Catholic identity) that Margaret aided in retaining the corporate identity of the Church in such a way that they might be welcomed, one day, into a Church whole and entire, not into a Church fragmented and so lost to itself that no true welcome could be offered.

Margaret's refusal to pray with her tormentors, of course, is coupled in Fr. Mush's narrative with a willingness to pray for Elizabeth I at their request: a demand they no doubt expected to see refused. However, by refusing to pray with them, and yet consenting to pray for the Queen, Margaret affirmed that her martyrdom was not one of refusal, but one of positive witness: in asserting the identity of the Catholic Church, and in participating in the maintenance of its boundaries, she was able to pray for the conversion of her persecutors and for their monarch, and to hope for her to see the

¹⁵⁵ Mush, *True Report*, 430.

“blessed joys of heaven.”¹⁵⁶ This, not the passivity of tolerance that would flatten the distinctions between the politically driven faith of her tormentors and the firmness of her own faith, was a demonstration of true hospitality: the establishment of a home into which one might (one day) welcome strangers.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In *The Ball and the Cross*, MacIan and Turnbull are confronted by each other’s naïveté and ignorance, and though Turnbull becomes agitated at times, MacIan’s impassioned speech on the fundamental reality of the Church far surpasses anything said by his atheist counterpart:

The Church is not a thing like the Anathæum Club... If the Anathæum Club lost all its members, the Anathæum Club would dissolve and cease to exist. But when we belong to the Church we belong to something which is outside all of us; which is outside everything you talk about, outside the Cardinals and the Pope. They belong to it, but it does not belong to them. If we all fell dead suddenly, the Church would still somehow exist in God. Confound it all, don’t you see that I am more sure of its existence than I am of my own existence? And yet you ask me to trust my temperament, my own temperament, which can be turned upside down by two bottles of claret or an attack of the jaundice. You ask me to trust that when it softens towards you and not to trust the thing which I believe to be outside myself and more real than the blood in my body.¹⁵⁷

MacIan himself is not a martyr, but his sentiments regarding the permanence of the Church might well be ascribed to Saint Margaret Clitherow, as well. Her words and actions throughout the ordeals of her trial and martyrdom reveal are a witness to her love of Christ’s Bride as well as to her belief in its necessity as the principal actor in God’s

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross*, 38.

redemptory mission for the world. Her persecutors at times issued condemnations against her which were framed in the language of orthodoxy and heresy, but on the whole, their attacks were personally or politically – not spiritually – driven. Henry May's actions against his stepdaughter, which were carried out in the hope of personal advancement alone, were brought to fruition in the charges of treason leveled against Margaret. Her recusancy was seen as an act of disloyalty, not as a declaration of heresy: she posed a threat to the "common good," to the set order of things, and to peaceable life in the city of York. Yet, it was not her intention to oppose any of these. Rather her intention was to bear witness to Christ and to offer her love to him by the sacrifice of her own life.

The martyrdom that Saint Margaret Clitherow received is marked by her gender, her unrelenting belief in the invalidity of the charges brought against her, and by her strict separation in belief and in prayer from her Protestant contemporaries. All of these distinctive elements are bound together, however, in the way in which her martyrdom and willingness to martyrdom enabled her – and would enable others – to extend hospitality to those outside of the faith. As a woman and a mother, her willingness to martyrdom enabled Margaret to employ her defined role in the home as a means to extend hospitality to her servants, children, husband and others. When brought to court, her refusal to be tried "by God and by the country" retained the conviction that the life of the Church was not intimately linked to the affairs of Elizabeth I's state, and that its vitality, in any case, superseded in importance whatever temporal laws might be in place. Furthermore, it implied that Saint Margaret Clitherow's own martyrdom, being not the result of any real crime, was in fact a gift to her countrymen and to her Queen, for in aiding to maintain the

identity of the Church as the true home of the faith, it extended an invitation to come home. This invitation was strongly reissued in Saint Margaret Clitherow's prayer for Her Majesty, which she made apart from the prayers of her tormentors at the place of execution. Like MacIan, she refused to trust in the things of the world, but placed her identity and her very life in the hands of Christ's Church that by her martyrdom she might purchase a home for her children and for her countrymen.

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