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THE CARTHUSIANS  
UNDER  
KING HENRY THE EIGHTH

by

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The author of this work was the Rev. L. E. Whatmore, M.A., F.R.Hist.S., a Catholic secular priest of the diocese of Southwark and subsequently of that of Arundel and Brighton. He died aged 69 on 10 April 1982. He devoted much study to the English Catholic martyrs of the Reformation and in particular to the Carthusians among them. Thus he contributed the entries concerning the three Priors, John Houghton, Robert Lawrence and Augustine Webster, to the New Catholic Encyclopaedia (1967), authored the pamphlet BLESSED CARTHUSIAN MARTYRS published by the Office of the Vice-Postulation in London, and prepared the relevant documents for the *CAUSE OF THE CANONISATION OF THE BLESSED MARTYRS JOHN HOUGHTON* etc.: Official Presentation of Documents on Martyrdom and Cult, published by the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1968.

This volume, *THE CARTHUSIANS UNDER KING HENRY THE EIGHTH*, was written substantially in the 1940s, with some additions and corrections being made later. It has been thought best left as it is except to note that the three Carthusian Priors were among the forty martyrs of England and Wales canonised on 25 October 1970 by Pope Paul VI, as was also the subject of Chapter III, the Bridgettine Richard Reynolds. They are therefore entitled to the appellation "Saint".

May 1983

DOM HUGH GILBERT, O.S.B.  
PLUSCARDEN ABBEY

"Through what long heaviness, assayed in what strange fire,  
Have these white monks been brought into the way of peace,  
Despising the world's wisdom and the world's desire,  
Which from the body of this death brings no release?"

Oh beatific life! Who is there shall gainsay  
Your great refusal's victory, your little loss,  
Deserting vanity for the more perfect way,  
The sweeter service of the most dolorous cross."

(Ernest Dowson, *The Carthusians*).

## CHAPTER I

JOHN HOUGHTON: PRIOR OF THE  
LONDON CHARTERHOUSE

Blessed John Houghton was born in Essex of good and respectable parents who sent him to the University of Cambridge. The word "honestus" used to describe them probably ranks them with the minor gentry. But unlike the family of his fellow martyr, John Rochester (also from the same county) the Houghtons of Essex find no place in the pedigrees. In fact, the name in any records to do with the county is rather rare. A Richard de Houghton, gent. who was buried at Wormley, Herts, just over the border in 1549, owned property at Nazeing and at Waltham in Essex. By his will he desired to be buried in the church at Wormley between Edmund Houghton, his grandfather and Agnes, his late wife.<sup>1</sup> A Thomas Houghton whose will was proved the following year was buried "in the myddes of the quere" at High Ongar in the county of Essex.<sup>2</sup> These seem to exhaust the recorded and possible relatives.

Chauncy, the historian of the London Charterhouse, is in all respects a most faithful delineator of the martyr's life and character. Entering the community himself as a young novice towards the close of Houghton's priorate, he looked up to him as a spiritual father - one who would have been worthy of love and respect even without the halo of martyrdom.

A few words on this Maurice Chauncy, our principal source

<sup>1</sup>*Trans. Essex. Arch. Soc.*, New Ser. (1900) by J. C. Chal-  
lenor Smith, p. 52, 281.

<sup>2</sup>*Ib.*, p. 58.

for Houghton and the London Carthusians, are first necessary. It was universally thought, until the publication of Miss Margaret Thompson's valuable work<sup>3</sup> a few years ago, that he wrote his story of their sufferings under Henry VIII after flight to Bruges when the Charterhouse was finally dissolved. But from the latest version or recension of that work, which he himself wrote, it now transpires that several years elapsed before he left the Kingdom. This was probably in 1547, other Carthusians, as appears from the Privy Council Act of the 9th of June, having escaped about that time.

The account which Chauncy composed about February 1546 for the monks of the Charterhouse of Val de Grace at Bruges and its Prior, Peter Ruge van Hoorne (1544-55) was the first. Of the three manuscripts in existence the most complete is that in the former Imperial Library (Codex 9366b) in Vienna. It was edited by Fr. Van Ortrooy, a distinguished Jesuit scholar, in the *Analecta Bollandiana* for 1895.<sup>4</sup> The other MS., which is little more than an incomplete abridgement of the first, is in the Royal Library at the Hague, and has been printed in the same publication.<sup>5</sup> The original version has been recently discovered in the Guildhall library (MS 1231) by Mr. H. G. Richardson and edited by him.

Shortly after this, at the desire of his host, Chauncy wrote another version to be forwarded to John de Valognes, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse at the same time that he applied for permission to remain at Bruges. It is much more detailed than the first

<sup>3</sup>*The Carthusians in England* by E. M. Thompson (1930) p. 343.

<sup>4</sup>Brussels, p. 269-83.

<sup>5</sup>1887, p. 36-51.

one concerning the condition of the London Charterhouse previous to Houghton's martyrdom, and the note of penitence for his former lapse, which he had no need to repeat to his hosts in Belgium, is prominent. The first edition of this work came out at Mainz in 1550,<sup>6</sup> and it has been reprinted many times since. The last and most useful for practical purposes is that of Montreuil, edited by Dom Victor Doreau, Prior of the English Carthusians in 1888.

In 1564 Chauncy made another recension,<sup>7</sup> which was discovered by Van Ortrov in the Vatican archives. It is dedicated to Cardinal Moroni and is probably intended also as an appeal for financial aid for the exiled English Carthusians. It is briefer concerning events previous to the martyrdoms but tells us a little more of the restoration of the English Carthusians at Sheen, led by Chauncy himself, under Queen Mary. Only one new item is added to our knowledge of Blessed John Houghton, and that is the story of a disturbing incident that happened to him while on a visitation of the northern Charterhouse of Mountgrace.

The same tale, in slightly more detail, together with a fuller narration of the foundation of New Sheen, reappears in the fourth and final recension made by the author in 1570. This version, which is contained in a manuscript formerly in the famous Phillips collection (743) and which then came into the possession of the Rev. Bickerton Hudson, was first made use of in Miss Thompson's work; and has been recently printed for the first

<sup>6</sup>*Historia aliquot nostri saeculi martyrum*, ed. Vitus à Oulken & Guilielmus à Sittart (Mainz, 1850). For list of editions see Appendix I.

<sup>7</sup>*Analecta Bollandiana*, ed. Van Ortrov (1903) p. 51-75.

time.<sup>8</sup> It should be emphasized that only the second version, printed in the Mainz edition, was known to the two biographers of the Carthusian martyrs, Dom Lawrence Hendriks<sup>9</sup> and Dom Victor Doreau,<sup>10</sup> who wrote at an earlier date. This is on the whole not a serious defect, since it is the fullest of all; but it would be a mistake to regard these authors as being entirely without need of revision in the light of considerable additions to our knowledge made since.

Blessed John Houghton, then, was sent by his parents to the University of Cambridge, where he studied both Canon and Civil Law, taking his LL.B at some date not named. The degree was probably in Civil Law, since he was intended by his parents for the married state. A knowledge of Canon Law was demanded for this degree (lectures being attended for two years on this subject) so that Chauncy's way of speaking is entirely accurate. Nor need we understand from such words the taking of a Bachelor's degree in both faculties.

A valuable aid to chronology is supplied by the statement that Houghton at the time of his death was 48. He cannot, therefore, be identified with the John Houghton who, according to the Cambridge Grace Books, took his B.C.L. in 1497, though this has been suggested.<sup>11</sup> The period of study was seven or eight years, and this would involve his commencing at about two years old!

<sup>8</sup>*The Passion and Martyrdom of the Carthusian Fathers*, ed. with trans. by the Rev. G. W. S. Curtis (Church Hist. Soc. 1935).

<sup>9</sup>*The London Charterhouse* by Dom Lawrence Hendriks (1889).

<sup>10</sup>*Henri VIII et les Martyres de la Chartreuse de Londres* by Dom Victor Doreau. (Paris, 1890).

<sup>11</sup>*Additions and Corrections to Cooper's Athenae Cantabrigienses* (1913) p. 95.

He is far more likely to be one with the John Houghton who took the degree in 1506.<sup>12</sup> Born about 1486 or 7, he would have finished his course at an early but not improbable age, since students began their university career much earlier then. This suggestion has the added advantage of fitting in very closely with the later framework of Houghton's life, as supplied by Chauncy. He was twenty years in the Order as a professed monk (1515-1535). One year before that as a novice, a protracted postulancy, 4 years at home as a secular priest, and an interval between his quitting the University and ordination - all this brings us to a date well within the orbit of 1506.

During this seven or eight years' course a candidate was required to have read all the ordinary books of the Corpus twice, and the extraordinary books (the Digestum Novum and the Infortiatum) once. He was required to read cursorily one of these latter and also the Institutes. At the close of his period of studies he performed his solemn "entry" or opening lecture in the presence of the doctors. He then had to "oppose" and "respond" publicly in the schools, which probably means putting objections and then answering them in a public disputation. After the doctors had testified to his fitness, the candidate took an oath that he had fulfilled the prescribed forms. He was then admitted or licensed in the faculty by the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. A payment called "commons" and a number of

<sup>12</sup>The "grace" is as follows:-

"Conceditur Jhoanni Houghton ut forma sex annorum in iure civili stet sibi pro completa forma ad intrandum in eodem iure" (*Cambridge Grace Book Beta*, Pt. I, Vol. II, 1903, ed. for the Cambr. Antiq. Soc. by Miss Mary Bateson).

other fees were now made to university officials. "Inception" followed, the first act of it being called the "vespers," some sort of disputation, and the next day the "commencement," a public disputation which may have been more or less a matter of form. The day following the candidate delivered his solemn lecture of "inception" which completed his degree. He was now a "regent" or fully fledged Bachelor, and for a certain period he gave public lectures, presided over a school, and took his proper share in all disputations, masses, congregations and convocations that were part of the university routine, though this "regency" could, in fact, easily be dispensed with.<sup>13</sup>

Such was the course of training which Houghton had undergone at Cambridge when, some time in the early twenties, he returned to his Essex home. His parents immediately set about making arrangements for a suitable marriage and, like another of the Carthusian martyrs, Richard Bere, whose abbot uncle entertained matrimonial designs for him, he had to fight for the vocation he now had acquired. Leaving home secretly he went to live with a certain devout ecclesiastic (of name unknown) who trained him for the priesthood in his own house.

After ordination he returned to his parents, who readily forgave him and for four whole years he remained under their roof, living the life of a secular priest and edifying others. At the end of the time he presented himself to William Tynbygh, the Prior of the London Charterhouse. This would be about the years 1514-15. Nothing was done hastily, however, for it was after more than the usual one month's postulancy ("post diutinam

<sup>13</sup>For the degree process at Cambridge see the Introduction to *Cambridge Grace Book Alpha* (1897) by Stanley M. Leathes.

dilationem," says Chauncy) that he was received as a novice. The novitiate lasted one year. Then followed the solemn profession which bound him for ever to the Carthusian life. Blessed John Houghton was then twenty-nine years old, or thereabouts.

The historian of the London Charterhouse cannot have known his hero during these early years. But he learned much about his spiritual life from a fellow martyr, Blessed William Exmew, Houghton's confessor. He writes:<sup>14</sup> "There he spent twenty years of religious life in great austerity, in perfect humility, with admirable patience, in entire self abnegation. He was a most exact observer of the rules regarding solitude and silence, striving always to hide himself, and concealing most carefully any extraordinary graces with which he was favoured. He dreaded nothing more than to become known, and was ever desirous of being forgotten or deemed unworthy of special esteem."

Nevertheless, after seven hidden years he was singled out for the office of sacristan, which he then held for five, (c.1522-27). Though a burden to his love of retirement, it had its compensations. He was more bound to the Blessed Sacrament than ever, having the duty not only of preparing the altar but also of reciting all the canonical hours and even the Little Office of Our Lady (generally said in the cell) there. There were many opportunities, too, of helping others. That this devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was no mere religiosity is shewn by his conduct on one occasion. A sick monk had vomited the Sacred Host. The Vicar in the Prior's absence brought this to the sacristan's cell to be burned. They then contended as to who should commit it to the fire, and it was reserved for two days.

<sup>14</sup>As translated in *The London Charterhouse* (1889) p. 82.

Houghton in the meantime, fearing the idea of burning and on the other hand, dreading consuming, and having separated the host from the surrounding impurities as best he could and placed it in a chalice, first consulted a holy laybrother. After considerable prayer, the latter had a vision, in which he saw a large crowd, with candle in hand, proceed to the sacristy, and after adoration, go to a certain chest, open it and then disappear after some delay. In the morning he went to the sacristan and asked him whether the Blessed Sacrament was in such a place. On being told yes, he related the vision. Encouraged by this happening, Blessed John Houghton prepared forthwith for Mass. Not only did he feel no repugnance in consuming the sacred particle but "vere inebrians erat, in tantum, ut astantes hoc evidententer percipere potuerunt." All who were there could see that he was overcome by its delightful taste.

About 1527 Houghton was chosen to his own dismay by Prior Tynbygh as Procurator, which office he filled for three years. Seven chief offices of a Carthusian community may here be enumerated,<sup>15</sup> though their relative importance varies considerably. They are Prior, Vicar, and Procurator; the "Antiquior" who in the absence of the Prior, takes the Vicar's place; the Sacristan, the Novice Master and the "Coadjuutor" who looks after retreatants and guests. The duties of a Procurator frequently bring him outside the monastery precincts, for business matters are transacted by him. He also is the link between fathers and laybrothers. He presides over their chapter, corrects them, and says the daily mass for them.

<sup>15</sup>Art. *Carthusians* by Raymund Webster (Cath. Encyclopaedia) Vol. III.

According to the *Ephemerides* of the Chapter General, on the 27th of March, 1531,<sup>16</sup> Prior Tynbygh, an Irishman by birth, died, having lived "sixty years in the order in a praiseworthy manner." The word "laudabiliter" attached thus to a dead monk's obituary is a kind of Carthusian V.C. Prior John Batemanson, professed of Hinton, succeeded him. Having ventured to criticise some doubtful opinions of Erasmus, he drew down upon himself the epithet of "an ignorant wrangler." And he also among other learned works controverted the errors of Luther in a book published at Paris in 1538, of which there is a copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after he began to rule, about May, 1531, Houghton became Prior of the Charterhouse of Beauvale, Notts. This was an entirely new scene and activity which lasted barely six months, for on the death of Batemanson on November the 6th following, he was recalled to become Prior of London. The vote was unanimous. There is extant a letter, dated July the 22nd, from John, Prior of Beauvale to the Prior of London Charterhouse which, thinks Hendriks,<sup>18</sup> may have been written by him during this Beauvale period.

"Jesu, Maria.

Right honourable Father in Our Lord Jesus, Christ. I humbly recommend me to you with heartily desire of prosperity, please the same. And where it was that my predecessor in his time occupied certain books belonging to your place, as I am informed, with this bearer I

<sup>16</sup>Chauncy in error says 1529, in which year he retired.

<sup>17</sup>There are two John Batemansons, sometimes confused, e.g. by Brewer in *L & P Henry VIII* Vol. I (index). See *Henrici VI Angliae Regis Miracula Postuma*, ed. Fr. Grosjean, S.J., Bollandist (Brussels, 1935) p. 195.

<sup>18</sup>Original printed by him, p. 369. It is referred to in *Letters & Papers of Henry VIII*, Vol. viii, No. 611.

send to you V of the same, and if there be any more of the which I may have perfect knowledge, they shall be sent to you hereafter. If ye please to let me have the Diurnal I will give you money there for; for, as God knoweth, we have great need to such books, who keep you everlastingly to His pleasure.

From Bevall the XX<sup>i</sup> day of July,

Your orator JOHN,

Prior there."

The letter is addressed "... venerabili priori in Christo Priori domus ordinis Cartusiae prope London."

Unfortunately, the name of the London Prior at the head of the address is missing, and neither the surname of the sender nor the year is given in the letter. It is, therefore, not possible to identify it with certainty. But Houghton's authorship is favoured by the following reasons:-

- (i) The Christian name.
- (ii) The date, 22nd of July, which corresponds with the period of about six months during which he held the priorate of Beauvale.
- (iii) The marked interest in books and desire to acquire them for his monastery, which we shall have further evidence of later.

On the other hand, the somewhat business-like tone of the letter might suggest another writer, one who was not acquainted previously with the recipient. John Batemanson had previously been Prior of Hinton, but even so, he and Houghton had been for more than a year in the same house together.

The normal complement of a Charterhouse was a Prior and about twelve monks. That of London numbered thirty-two priests and eighteen brothers or "converses" and Houghton thus found himself in a position of considerably greater prominence and responsibility. This was increased when by the Chapter General of the

Order meeting at the Grande Chartreuse in the spring of 1532, he was chosen Provincial Visitor for England. This involved his making, in the company of the Assistant Visitor (Convisitator as he was called) an inspection every two years of all the houses in the province. His predecessor in this office had been John Jonbourne, Prior of Sheen, who resigned. On his resignation and the death of Batemanson, who had been Assistant Visitor, Houghton was elected the principal of the two visitors for the order in England.

It was whilst in this capacity Blessed John Houghton was on a visit to the Yorkshire Priory of Mountgrace, that a curious incident happened, which filled him with foreboding, and seemed in the light of after events, a presage of his future sufferings. It was about the time when several other happenings were disturbing the London Charterhouse. Their Prior, having arrived at Mountgrace weary and travel-stained, his garments, at his bidding, were washed by the laundry men and placed outside to dry. Later it was found that his clothes had been pulled down from their hangings and torn to pieces by crows, who for a time flocked around with horrible cries. The crows were unusually large. By contrast, the clothes of his fellow visitor were not touched. By custom the visitors were entitled to a new habit from every house to which they came.

Let us now consider more closely both the outward and the inward lineaments of the man. He was now about forty-six. "He was short, with a graceful figure and dignified appearance; his actions modest, his voice gentle," writes Chauncy of his personal appearance. And so loved by the community that "none were ever known to speak a word against him." Such an expression, born of a pardonable but pious exaggeration, couched in

the language of conventional hagiography, is not absolutely true. Even Houghton had his detractors, for there were one or two malcontents in the community, like Dom Thomas Salter, much given to speaking evil of his brethren before seculars; Dom George who "sighed for the flesh pots of Egypt" - and got them; Dom Nicholas Rawlins; and (though a vision redeems him) Dom John Darley. One of the brothers once laid violent hands on him. The Prior, instead of resisting, threw himself at his feet. Moved to still greater fury, the enraged religious rained on him insults and blows. When some of the monks rushed in to restrain him, and demanded prison as the rightful punishment for such frenzy, Blessed John Houghton, who had uttered no word of complaint, spoke up for him. Instead of blaming the man, he attributed the evil to the devil. He consented, however, for the example of others, that the delinquent should be confined some days to his cell.

The visiting of each monk in his cell was part of the Prior's regular duty. On such occasions, as he was accustomed to say, he left the prior behind him, and conversed familiarly. On one of these visits he made the following enigmatical remark: - "Brother, there are places within the precincts of your cell which, could they but speak, might tell you something." If he had had to rebuke or try any of those under him, he would visit him the next morning, lest sadness should grow in him, or, if he feared such familiarity might breed contempt, send another member of the community. He would even in certain circumstances, send presents,<sup>19</sup> if he thought this would encourage a waverer in the

<sup>19</sup>"Et tunc mittebat eis xeniola, considerans, quod per talia facilliter dormitionem acciperent juveniles mutationes, ac etiam ut animat et eos ad proficiendum in coepto itinere." (1550, ed. p. 60).



way of virtue. He would also carefully question each on his inward state, asking what were his favourite spiritual exercises and aspirations, and how they responded to God's inspirations and graces. Yet withal he was prudent and discreet, as if he were an angel. To those in spiritual dryness he would explain its meaning. He was like a burning flame. He consoled the tempted; he was not hard on those who had not yet prevailed.

Those who were in trial he consoled, having been tried himself. Those who were making progress he kept up to the mark, taking care to point out their faults. As there were no less than twenty monks in the convent under thirty years of age, these he did not hesitate to reprove by word and sometimes would test them by taking away what they most liked. His manner of speaking with the young - say, four or five years professed - was sterner than with the old - "alienum se eis demonstrando, durius-que loquendo et increpando, ne lenitate abutendo insolescerent."<sup>20</sup> He warned those in charge of novices<sup>21</sup> to be vigilant with those under their care.

With the older men when they needed correction, he dealt more mildly, since they were by reason of age and habit, more hardened in self will. But he would strive by various means to bring such a one to a true sense of his vocation as a monk. "If you were in the world," he might say, "good brother, you ought not to follow your own inclinations in everything: how much less here in the cloister? Do violence to yourself in order that, with the violent, you may obtain the Kingdom of Heaven." Or he would point out to them the importance of their

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.*, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Novice masters were not appointed in the Carthusian order till 1608.

example to the younger men:- "Your younger brethren have their eyes on you. Take care, or you will become for them a stumbling block."

No one was refused by him with animosity, though he did not give in to the requests of others easily. He refused them in such a manner that the hardness of some was mollified, while others departed the more glad that their own self will had been denied.

Whenever a brother became pompous or worldly in reading in public or in manner, he would be rebuked by Houghton as lacking in Carthusian simplicity. The desire to appear learned sprang from pride. Acting in the same spirit, he deprecated towards himself all marks of respect not customary in the order, such as the address "Lord Prior." He would point out that it was the proud Pharisees who loved to be called by men, "Rabbi." Even those customary, though insisted on, caused him no little confusion. He prayed God every day, he confessed, to accept them rather for the honour and glory of His Name.

Chauncy devotes considerable space to John Houghton's attitude to the Divine Office. In this he was strict, as also concerning the prescriptions of the order. He often discoursed on it in the Chapter House. Taking as his text one day the words from the 62nd chapter of Isaias: "Upon thy walls, oh Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen all the day and night, they shall never hold their peace," he urged the analogy between their duty and that of the monks. How else were they better employed than in choir, singing, with the unsleeping angels for companions, the praises of God? He quoted St. Bernard who considered all time given up to eating and drinking as wasted, asking if that was why they hurried. Some would spend the whole day discussing

secular matters. Why begrudge time devoted to the praises of God? Were they not all Carthusians who were bound to follow the more perfect way? He was known to leave his stall to bid the cantors sing less rapidly. The night office under Houghton's régime sometimes lasted till half past three in the morning.

The custom of chanting in a more brisk and subdued tone on a non-festal day never met with Houghton's approval; nor would he allow it to come in. If he heard them singing thus, he would tell them that he feared the love of God was growing tepid in their hearts. Had not God said He would vomit the lukewarm out of His mouth? He asked them not to make such distinction between a festal and a non-festal day, since no time was laid down by the Almighty for us to slacken in the love and service of God. Once he even left the church in shame and confusion (as he related next chapter) at the subdued singing.

He never took carelessness in the office well. One Sunday at Lauds, trusting to memory during the singing of the psalm *Confitemini*, one side of the choir extinguished the lights, and in consequence, coming to the verse *Dextera Domini fecit virtutem*, made a blunder. The Prior in chapter next morning after Prime admonished them. What have we done this night? he began. He reminded all of the privilege it was to sing continuously the praises of God with the holy angels. He spoke of the watchful service exacted so minutely by earthly potentates, the care with which servants sought to please their temporal masters, the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, the rejection of Cain's. This must not happen again. He ended by ordering the candles to be kept alight at Lauds in future; also if ever anyone had to sing alone, however well the passage might be known, he must have a light.

After the night office, Blessed John Houghton retired, not to a bed but to a bench, resting his head on a small cushion. For, though good to others, he was hard upon himself. Unless he felt sure of their robustness, he would not permit a monk to practise any austerities in addition to the rule. He strictly forbade them in any case to monks not more than two or three years in the order. To those who were able he recommended some, but in moderation. He himself never took advantage of the relaxation of the weekly fast on bread and water, which had come in since he had been procurator. Even on tiring visitations he kept to the normal diet of one fish, "cum uno pisce contentus." To suggestions of failing health and that he should treat himself more leniently, his reply was that it was a superior's duty to set a good example. If he were to grow remiss in regular observance, perhaps a general relaxation might ensue.

He was charity to all. Nearly every month he would go down on his knees and with tears ask the community's forgiveness. "Bear with me, my brethren," he would say, "I am become foolish for your sakes. You compel me. I do these things that you may be wise. Suffer me and accept me as foolish." He also preached at least once a month to them; and his sermons were not in vain. There was a spirit in his words.

Blessed John Houghton had one grace in abundance which he could not conceal - the gift of tears. It was especially evident at mass. Sometimes during reading in the refectory, moved by some spiritual passage, he would have to leave and retire to his cell. Sometimes the interior struggle which his soul was going through would be discernible in his countenance. At others, contemplation would betray itself when he was at prayer.

Rarely, if ever, declared his confessor, Blessed William Exmew often to Chauncy,<sup>22</sup> did the many material affairs of his office and the monastery or any vanities disturb his peace of soul or intrude upon his mind at prayer.

He was charitable to all, though in the carrying out of God's will he was vigilant and strict. If any bitterness was beginning to grow among any of the brethren, he would never rest until he had searched out what was the cause and cured it - either by sound advice or by correction. Unlike some superiors he did not close his eyes when trouble brewed, or leave it to others to attend to when his responsibility was involved, but instead, would sift out and judge. Thus clearly John Houghton had those many sided virtues which go to make up the saintly character, truly balanced by the spirit of wisdom and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps Chauncy sums up all that is necessary when he says that the Prior and his Vicar insisted that the convent should be governed according to the letter of the statutes in everything - "ut secundum glossam statutorum conventus dirigeretur in omnibus."

Petreius,<sup>23</sup> writing in 1609, includes Houghton among the Carthusian authors on somewhat slender grounds. He writes:- "Porro noster hic Houghtonius uti scriptionis laureolam promeruit (extat namque Epistolarum opus quod edidit)." This, no doubt, refers to a letter which he wrote to Dom Theodorick Loer, dated July the 1st, 1532. It is fortunately still extant. As the

<sup>22</sup>"ut pater vicarius sanctus Vuilhelmus ex Meuwe confessor ejus mihi crebro referebat."

<sup>23</sup>*Bibliotheca Cartusiana* (Cologne) by Theodore Petreius, p. 195.

original Latin is printed both in Hendriks<sup>24</sup> and Doreau,<sup>25</sup> two fairly diffused works, we will give a translation instead. John Houghton's correspondent was engaged on seeing his complete edition of the writings of Denis the Carthusian through the press. One volume had come out that year with a laudatory preface by Henry the Eighth.<sup>26</sup>

The martyr thus writes:-

"John Houghton to the Rev. Father Loer "a Stratis,"<sup>27</sup> Vicar of the Charterhouse in Cologne, health and best greetings.

You will wonder, perhaps, most worshipful father, what is the meaning of these letters, from some one unknown to you and sent from a distant country. But that you may quickly cease wondering, know that it is the most fragrant perfume of our illustrious father Denis which has now drawn these letters of mine to you (or rather, to him abiding with you). For he has so enchanted our heart by his most sacred writings and remains that we can do without him only with the greatest hardship.

For us, in truth, his honied and most holy works have a savour sweeter than almost any other sacred author (be it said without offence to all the rest) whom we have hitherto read; but so rare are his same works among us that we are quite unable in these parts to obtain our wishes, both to read and re-read them. For whenever any of them reach here, they are so snatched up by other religious and learned men that we can procure few, and must perforce remain hungry. Further, the Venerable Father Prior of Hinton in this province, who had just been at the Grande Chartreuse at our chapter

<sup>24</sup>Op. cit. p. 366-8.

<sup>25</sup>Op. cit. p. 407-9.

<sup>26</sup>On Loer's career see David & Gervase Mathew's *Reformation & the Contemplative Life* (1934) p. 146, p. 303-4.

<sup>27</sup>So addressed because he was born at Hoogstraeten in the province of Antwerp.

general, on his return was telling us that you, Father, had there promised him you would send him hither as many of the aforesaid works as he should want to buy. Encouraged by this news, I began to hope that I might shortly obtain my wish. To come to the point then, I ask, nay, I entreat you, Father, to be so good as to send me, though a stranger to you, at your earliest convenience all the works of our most holy father Denis ten times over, that is, ten volumes of every single work of his as yet printed. And besides those, send also, I beg you, twenty books of that small work we call *Of the Contempt of the World*, and the same of that small work which is entitled *The Ladder of Monks*. Do not doubt that in doing this you will merit exceedingly before God. And I beg you to send the price of all the above works singly and separately. And in part settlement of the same, accept from the bearer of this letter cash to the value of £6.13. 8. sterling, amounting with you, if I am not mistaken, to 52.....

And whatever pay balance remains, if you will ask the Venerable Father Prior of your house to be good enough to write it out for me, I wish much thanks as interest promise herewith to forward to him the same sum as soon as possible, when I have learned the amount. Or if he prefers (which I also would much prefer on account of risks on the journey) I will pay here whomsoever he shall be good enough to appoint me. In addition, for whatever pious works of the above-mentioned Reverend Father Denis shall happen to be printed hereafter, I promise that I will pay the price without delay, immediately I have learned the amount in writing from you. Lastly, do you also, most dear father, strenuously continue to fulfil what you have undertaken, that is, do not let the pains and devoted skill you have hitherto displayed towards bringing the same holy Denis of ours to press grow lukewarm, until we are privileged to see his last and every work: not doubting that you will receive from the Good Lord in heaven a heap of heavenly blessings. Would, indeed, that both you and I were favoured with as much money as we abound in pious good will towards the publication of all the said works. Then I would hope certainly that our "ecstatic Denis" would soon appear to men as a morning star, in shining splendour, expelling from the many hearts the darkness of heretical pravity; and quickly bring into the same hearts the true light of

faith, adorned with good works. But of this enough. Farewell in the bowels of the most Sweet Saviour, dearest father.

From our Charterhouse by London in England,  
the 23rd of July, 1532.

From your brother in Christ, John Houghton,  
unworthy prior there."

It is easy to see from this letter the martyr's zeal for good learning and books. The reply of the Vicar of Cologne is also preserved, and as it is little known, is printed in appendix. Blessed John Houghton himself never visited the Grande Chartreuse for the general chapter, for by the time that the four yearly term came round, (English priors because of distance were excused the yearly journey since 1417),<sup>28</sup> he was already dead. There do not appear to be any other literary remains of Blessed John Houghton,<sup>29</sup> though a book of sermons on insufficient authority is ascribed to him. From Loer's reply it would seem that the martyr's reputation was not entirely confined to England. He says that his virtues and praise his predecessor rightly, if he could, would envy, and that he is, in truth, "so studious and

<sup>28</sup>The decision of the Chapter General, at which John Maplestead, Prior of London was a Diffinitor runs as follows:- "Et concedimus Domibus Angliae, quod non teneantur venire ad Capitulum generale nisi anno bissextili, in quo veniat unus Visitatorum si commode fieri poterit, vel alius Prior nomine ipsorum, sub expensis Provinciae. In aliis autem singulis annis mittant literas Provinciae suae Prioribus sibi propinquioribus provinciae Picardiae remotioris, videlicet Brugis, Hollandiae, Gelriae vel Antwerpiae citra mare, qui expediunt sua negotia contribuendo vel satisfaciendo eisdem in expensis secundum eorum bonam discretionem." (*Lambeth MS 413, ex carta Capituli Generalis 1417*).

<sup>29</sup>E.g. Joseph Gillow in *Bibliography of English Catholics*, Vol. iii; Cooper also in *Athenae Cantabrigienses* (1858) Vol. I, citing Tanner's *Bibliotheca Britannica*.

observant of the good name of our order, of its learning and finally of its virtues that nothing could exceed it."

Before coming to the beginning of troubles, there are just one or two other features of Houghton's rule to be related. Though several of the monks had been well placed in the world, he would allow no concession to either superfluity or luxury. The clothes they wore were of rough texture and not in excess of the number allowed by the statutes. Pewter dishes were forbidden, treen ones alone being permitted.<sup>30</sup> The visitors later sent by Cromwell were unable to fabricate any charges against the community, though the purpose of the keys which the Carthusian carries by rule about him was inevitably misapprehended. So submissive were the monks to their superior that he complained that they laid upon him too great a burden, leaving too much to his judgment. Not more than two of any necessary thing was allowed save books only, which were more plentifully provided.

In 1533 (about the time of Houghton's journey to Mountgrace) a comet of extraordinary brilliance was seen in London. The community as a whole would not have taken so much notice of it had it not seemed to cast its fearful rays and sparks full on the monastery. A religious, returning from the night office, saw the beams glance off a lofty tree in the cemetery upon the belfry. Later in the year another alarming spectacle filled the house with dread. The Prior, being pressed with business, had left the church after the second nocturn of Matins. On his way out he entered the cemetery for a moment to offer up a prayer for his departed brethren, when he saw a large, blood-red globe, suspended in mid-air over the monastery. He fell on his knees

<sup>30</sup>Derived from *Letters & Papers* 1534, Vol. vii, No. 1047.

in horror. Another monk, returning from the night office about an hour after, also noticed it. Whatever be the explanation of these things, all looked upon them as presages of evil and united earnestly in prayer that they might instead be turned to good.

A third portent which is recorded of these days was a plague of insects, which in his last recension Maurice Chauncy describes minutely. There were two swarms. "In one group," he writes, "the flies were unsightly and very black, not unlike those which emerge from animal manure. In the other they were of divers colours and oblong, like those which are seen flying about in beds of reed."<sup>31</sup> They appeared in great quantities; now approaching, now retreating, now returning they seemed to cover the whole surface of the convent. More often and for longer periods they would settle on the church and cells.

Even the Charterhouse cannot have remained unaware of the political situation which, contemporaneous with these events, was troubling the minds of religious and thoughtful men. Their own bishop, Stokesley of London, may have been a temporizer, but not so the one member of the episcopate they would most look to - St. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Both he and several of the London Carthusians were Cambridge men. It is more than likely that he had visited the London Charterhouse. His biographer<sup>32</sup> relates that his belief in prayer was such that "talking on a time with a Carthusian, who much commended his zeal and diligent pains in compiling his book against Luther, he answered again saying, that he wished that time of writing had

<sup>31</sup>Trans. Curtis, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>32</sup>*The Life of Fisher* (Early English Text. Soc.) transcribed by Rev. Donald Bayne from MS Harleian 6382, 1921, Extra Series cxvii, p. 146.

been spent in prayer, thinking that prayer would have done more good and was of more merit." Moreover, of laymen and men of affairs, St. Thomas More was best known to them, having in his youth lived in the Charterhouse. There is no evidence that Elizabeth Barton, the 'Holy Maid of Kent' had ever had any contact with the London house, though she was held in great esteem by the Prior and the Carthusians of Sheen, their nearest neighbour.

All things considered, Houghton must have been not unprepared when royal commissioners presented themselves at the monastery in the spring of the year following, 1534. Their object was to demand from the Prior a formal consent to the Act of Succession, passed in July previous, and from the community. To this all were bound, when called upon, to swear an oath. The difficulty lay for a conscientious man not so much in acknowledging the change made, however unjustly, in the succession to the throne, but in denying the validity of the King's first marriage, upon which it was neither the right of the King of England nor of any other civil power to pronounce. The oath varied sometimes in form according to the person to whom it was presented.

The Prior replied that to interfere in the King's business was not his vocation nor that of his monks; nor could they have any concern in his matrimonial arrangements, provided they were not asked to give an opinion. The commissioners, not satisfied with this answer, insisted on a solemn and unequivocal oath both from him and the community that the marriage with Queen Catherine of Aragon was null, and that with Queen Anne lawful and good; and also to swear fealty to the succession. To this Houghton replied, that he simply could not understand how the former mar-

riage, solemnised according to the rites of the Church and so long unquestioned, could be thus annulled. The community, next assembled by order of the visitors, having heard their Prior's answer, adhered to it.

As a result of this stand, both Houghton and his Procurator, Blessed Humphrey Middlemore were lodged in the Tower. Here they remained a month, but eventually, yielding to the advice of certain learned ecclesiastics, (including their own diocesan) who told them that the succession was not a sufficient issue for which to lay down their lives, they agreed to take the oath with however, the reservation, "as far as it was lawful." Returning home, they advised the community also to do the same.

It is significant that the capitular act<sup>33</sup> attesting the submissions, drawn up by Rowland Lee, the Bishop of Lichfield, and Thomas Bedyll, Archdeacon of Cornwall, does not incorporate any form but merely records "the oaths and fealties" of the monks. These were given by Houghton and Middlemore with four others on May the 29th;<sup>34</sup> by the remainder of the community on the 6th of June. Even so, it was only after twice refusing that they yielded to the advice and entreaties of their Prior. "Our hour has not yet come, dear brothers," he counselled with prophetic words. "The very night that Father Procurator and I were released from prison, I dreamt that I was not to escape so soon, but that within a year I should be brought back to that very prison, and that there I should complete my course. So, though I have not much confidence in dreams, I think that something else will soon be proposed to us. Meanwhile, let us con-

<sup>33</sup>See Hendriks, p. 368-70.

<sup>34</sup>Chauncy erroneously says May 24th.

tinue to live together as long as we can do so without offending God by any unlawful concession." Moreover, Lee's return on the 6th of June was backed not by ecclesiastics but by Sir Thomas Kitson, Sheriff of the Tower, and a posse of constables who had orders to arrest any of the monks should any prove contumacious. "All things considered," Chauncy concludes, "the monks determined to follow the advice and exhortation of their holy Father. And thus we swore to the words of the King, under the condition, as far as it was lawful."

What was delayed was not removed. On February the 1st of the next year the Act of Supremacy declaring Henry Head of the Church without any saving clause was passed. The Prior now consulted Father Fewterer, the Confessor General of Syon, who encouraged him to die rather than accept the new act, though he failed ultimately to adhere to his own advice. Houghton's next step was to call to the Chapter House all the monks and speak to them very plainly of their danger. Each one of them might be faced with the alternative of accepting the new laws or death, an announcement which filled their hearts with dread. His heart was heavy indeed, he continued, especially on account of the younger monks, of whom there were so many in the monastery. Their lives, though virtuous and innocent, had never as yet been tried by any extraordinary temptation. What would become of them, cast upon the world where "evil communications corrupt good manners." For there were some of them, perhaps, not strong enough to resist the dangers of the world. "And what shall I say, dear brethren, and what shall I do, if I lose some of those whom God has entrusted to my care?"<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Presumably when Chauncy reports a long speech, he is giving the substance of it and not always the exact words.

To this the monks, many of whom were in tears, as with one voice replied:- "Let us die together in our integrity, and heaven and earth shall witness how unjustly we are cut off." But, as their Prior explained, it was not likely to be so simple as that. Their enemies were unlikely to present them with the opportunity of a common martyrdom. It seemed to him more probable, since several were of noble birth, that he and some of the older monks might be put to death; but they and the younger ones would be forced separately to return to the world they had renounced. If the trial were to fall on him alone, he would trust in God; if it came to all, he would pray that each man might have courage for the sacrifice.

Here he faltered, as though, Chauncy thought, he were undergoing some interior struggle. But he soon recovered and outlined his instructions. Three days were to be devoted to solemn prayer and special preparation, as if for death. On the first day all would make a general confession, to facilitate which he would grant faculties to every priest. The second was to be a day of reconciliation. On the third would be sung a votive mass of the Holy Ghost to obtain the grace for whatever sacrifice might be in store.

On the second day the Prior delivered a long sermon in the chapter house. He chose for text the opening verses of the 59th psalm, "Oh God, Thou has cast us off and hast destroyed us." He spoke of charity, of patience and fidelity to God even unto death. "It is better for us to suffer here a short punishment for our sins than hereafter to be reserved for the eternal pains of hell." Then, beginning with the senior monk, he knelt before each one, craving his forgiveness. All followed this request and example. Many tears were shed; but saddest of all was the

Prior himself, upon whom during the next few days all could read something of his inward trial.

On the last day during the mass "after the elevation of the Host, there came, as it were, a soft whisper of air, which some perceived with their bodily senses, while all experienced its sweet influence upon their hearts. The celebrant, the Prior himself, was so overcome by this manifestation of God's presence among them that for a long time he could not continue the service. The community remained stupefied, hearing the sound, but not knowing whence it came or whither it went, though all felt its marvellous effects upon their spirits, and their hearts rejoiced at the assurance that God was indeed with them." The brothers, it is also recorded, though separated by a rood screen from the altar, also shared in this heavenly sign.

An independent account of this favour is reported many years after by a correspondent of the biographer of St. John Fisher. "I think you heard," he writes, "as well as I that Father Reynolds (sic) and the other of his fellows of the Charterhouse, the day as I remember that the King's officers should come to dissolve the house, he as I think or some others being at mass; and about the Agnus, as well he as those that were present as also they that were absent, had such a joyful comfortable vision, as they were ravished with a marvellous heavenly joy, so that he that was at mass stayed a certain time, the water running down his cheeks for joy. Then after mass, they kneeling before the altar in their devout prayers, laying all the keys of their house upon the altar, for that they would not deliver them to the King's officers."<sup>36</sup> There are, of course, in this version, one or two anachronisms. The mass was not celebrated on the same day as

<sup>36</sup>*Vie de Fisher*, ed. Van Ortroij (Brussels, 1893) p. 53. From Arundel MS 152, f. 277-8 in the British Museum.

the dissolution of the Charterhouse, nor even on the day of the arrival of the commissioners, which was for a short time delayed. Nor is there any ground for the substitution of Houghton by Reynolds, who, though he shared in his martyrdom, was of a different house and order, being a Bridgettine.

At the next meeting in the Chapter House the Prior alluded to this favour and urged the monks to redouble their fervour. After which a pious dispute arose, he maintaining that this consolation was granted because of their merits, they attributing it to him. Each night now after the office, the religious prostrated themselves before the Blessed Sacrament, praying for the preservation of him and of their monastery. To John Houghton, however, these troubles appeared rather as a punishment for his own shortcomings, for the words of David were often on his lips: "It is I; I am he that has sinned, I have done wickedly; these that are the sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand, I beseech Thee, be turned against me."

In this manner, writes Froude, "with unobtrusive nobleness did these poor men prepare themselves for their end." And it was while they were thus engaged that they received a visit from two Priors of their order, Robert Lawrence of Beauvale and Augustine Webster of Axholme.

Chauncy's statement that at the time of his martyrdom Blessed John Houghton was only forty-eight years old is supported by an entry in the Register of Richard Fitzjames, Bishop of London, according to which he conferred the diaconate on John Batemanson, his predecessor as Prior of the London Charterhouse as late as Holy Saturday, 31 March 1510 in the chapel of Fulham Palace.



## CHAPTER II

*BLESSED ROBERT LAWRENCE AND BLESSED AUGUSTINE WEBSTER:  
TWO MARTYRS BY ACCIDENT*

Himself a professed monk of the London Charterhouse and successor to John Houghton as Prior of Beauvale, it was understandable enough that Robert Lawrence, a truly religious man and full of piety, says Chauncy, should have undertaken a special journey to London in order to consult him on religious issues. It was, however, more or less an accident, that two days after him, the community received another guest (he came on business) in the person of Blessed Augustine Webster.

Father Edward Keogh in his account of the two martyrs writes:<sup>1</sup> "Unfortunately no account of their lives previous to their martyrdom has come down to us." There are, however, one or two small details omitted from our histories which may be here incorporated. Wriothesley, a contemporary chronicler states<sup>2</sup> that Lawrence was "prior of a place in Lincolnshire, and sometime chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk now being." Unfortunately, he confuses the place of his priorate with that of his companion. But Axholme in Lincolnshire and Beauvale in Notts. being in neighbouring counties, on the whole, this does not seem a sufficient reason for rejecting the information that it was Lawrence who had been the Duke of Norfolk's chaplain. The number of chaplains in his household at Kenninghall in Norfolk in 1546 we know to have been six.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Lives of English Martyrs*, ed. Dom Bede Camm (1904) p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>*Chronicle*, ed. Hamilton (Camden Soc.) Vol. i, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>*Addenda to Letters & Papers of Henry VIII* (1932) Vol. ii, Pt. ii, No. 17B2.

It has been suggested<sup>4</sup> that the martyr was a member of the old Dorsetshire family of that name. The pedigree of Lawrence, as returned in the Visitation of the county in 1623, shows the name Robert going back for five successive generations.<sup>5</sup> It is, however, extremely bare, though of a Thomas Lawrence it is added that he "became a monk." There remains one other slight argument in favour of the theory that the martyr belonged to this family. We know that Sir Oliver Lawrence, who died on the 1st of January, 1559,<sup>6</sup> and was the seventh son of Sir Robert Lawrence, and in any case an exact contemporary both of the chronicler Wriothesley (who alone gives us this information about the Carthusians) married Anne, the sister to Thomas Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. Now, both the chronicler and the Earl were cousins, and, if the martyr belonged the family of Lawrence thus related to them by marriage, it becomes easier to understand why he alone of all contemporary writers should be in a position to supply this slight detail about his having been once ducal chaplain. On the other hand, discretion would counsel him to omit the distant relationship subsisting between himself and one who was officially a "traitor." There are, therefore, some grounds for believing that the martyr belonged to the knightly Dorsetshire family bearing his name..

A Robert Lawrence took the degree of Bachelor of Civil Law at Cambridge in 1508. The "grace" recording his "entry" is ex-

<sup>4</sup>Gillow, op. cit. Vol. IV, p. 159.

<sup>5</sup>*Visitation of Dorset for 1623* (Harleian Soc., Vol. xx, 1885) p. 63.

<sup>6</sup>*Machyn's Diary* (Camden Soc.) p. 370, p. 187A.

tant:-<sup>7</sup>

"Item conceditur Roberto Lawrans ut studium et forma unius anni in artibus et quinque annorum in iure ciuili et unius anni in iure canonico sufficient sibi ad intrandum in eodem iure."

That is all, so far as we know, that can be said or conjectured concerning his early history.

Within two days of him there came, as has been said, another visitor. From certain fragments of correspondence left to us by the sixteenth century biographer of Bishop Fisher, but which are printed in one edition of that life only, it appears that Webster had studied at Cambridge. Our biographer was for some reason, but quite understandably, interested especially in the Carthusian martyrs. He also had a friend at Cambridge upon whom he prevailed not only to search the registers for information concerning them but such other martyrs (besides Fisher) whom he thought to have been there. One letter asks: "Whether you remember any of the monks of the Charterhouse at the university in your time or no and what their names were?"<sup>8</sup> Another supplies a list of names of sufferers for the Catholic faith, returned by the correspondent with the best annotations that he, from a perusal of the university registers, which he likens to an Augean stable, could make. The names are eleven in all - Reynolds, Whiting, Makerell (Abbot of Barlings), Green, Greenwood, Clarke (a mistake for Griffith, Vicar of Wandsworth), Davy, Webster, Fetherston, Hale and Master, who was believed to have been executed with the "Holy Maid of Kent."

<sup>7</sup> *Cambridge Grace Book Gamma*, ed. W. G. Searle (1903) p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Van Ortroj, p. 48.

The inclusion of Webster's name in this questionnaire is a fair presumption in favour of his having gone to Cambridge, for of those on the list, viz: Whiting, Reynolds, Makerell, Hale, Fetherston and Master, we possess quite certain evidence that they were there. Nor is it disposed of because the reply of the correspondent, who was writing in the 1570's,<sup>9</sup> is very wide of the mark. He replies:- "Item Antonye Webster (but yours is August), monk, 8.D. 1531."<sup>10</sup> Having searched what records he could find, this is the only Webster he could supply. Of course the individual can in no circumstances be identified with the martyr chronologically. In any case his Christian name was not Anthony but Augustine, as was known by the author of the life.

It is still, however, wise to proceed on the assumption that the information of the biographer was right and to search for some traces of our martyr in the university records. This task has been rendered easier than in the sixteenth century by the publication of the *Cambridge Grace Books*. It is a help, too, for identification that, whereas the name of Webster is all too common, that of Augustine is less so.

Among those who took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1509-10 there occurs an Augustine Webster. Out of thirty-one B.A.'s of that year, he is nineteenth in order.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 1575 to be exact, for he mentions some books just bequeathed by Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, to St. Benet's College in that year.

<sup>10</sup> "Item conceditur Radulpho Barkar ut 9 termini in artibus cum duobus terminis autumpnalibus cum ordinariis sufficienter auditis et cum oppositionibus et responsionibus requisitis sufficient sibi ad respondendum questioni.

Item idem conceditur Augustino Webster." (*Gamma*, p. 77)

<sup>11</sup> *Beta*, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 247.

He next proceeded M.A. There are three notices in this connection, the last not without interest. There is mention of a dispensation granted to him *en route* - a matter of no special importance.<sup>12</sup> The degree process being fairly complicated, such "graces" were often passed absolving students from required acts. Among those who took the M.A. in 1513, or "incepted," Webster was last in order.<sup>13</sup> In the year previous, because of lack of means he was away from the university for two terms teaching grammar. This was, however, allowed to count towards his qualifications for taking the degree of M.A.<sup>14</sup> There is frequent mention about this same period of lack of means ("exhibitionis inopia") among members of the university. The word "exhibition" is still used at Oxford and Cambridge to denote an award granted to enable a student to pursue his studies there.

Such evidence as the preceding that Blessed Augustine Webster between 1507 and 1513 studied at Cambridge is rather supported by a letter from Archbishop Cranmer to Cromwell, written at the time of his condemnation. "Whereas the Prior of Axholme,"

<sup>12</sup>"Item conceditur magistro Webster ut responsio ad quam tenetur mutetur in variacionem in propria persona infra annum ita quod non obtineat dispensationem pro eadem variacione." (*Gamma*, p. 104).

<sup>13</sup>*Cambridge Grace Book Beta*, Vol. 3, Part 2. (ed. Mary Bateson) 1905, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>"In primis conceditur Augustino Webster in artibus bachalario ut septem termini in quibus ordinaria audivit per maiorem partem licet non secundum formam statuti et *duo termini in quibus abfuit in patria ob exhibitionis penuriam in quibus docuit grammaticam* cum tribus responsionibus vel duabus et una variacione in propria persona infra annum sufficiant sibi ad incipiendum in artibus." (*Gamma*, p. 103).

he writes, "named Webster, and Master Raynald, of Sion, are attainted of high treason for offending against the late statute made for suppressing the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, I marvel at both, as they are learned men, and Webster promised that he would never support that opinion. If there is no other offence alleged against them, it will much more tend to the conversion of others to convert their consciences by sincere doctrine, and so for them to publish it, than to suffer the penalty of the law. If they were sent to me I suppose I could do much in their behalf."<sup>15</sup>

There are two things to note about Cranmer's letter. First, the statement that both martyrs were learned men. This is quite in keeping with Webster's having had a university education. Secondly, it looks as though Cranmer was personally acquainted with both him and Reynolds. Reynolds we know for certain was at Cambridge, quitting the university in 1513, and, therefore, a contemporary of Cranmer who took his B.A. in 1511 and his M.A. in 1514. This also makes him an exact contemporary to Webster for the greater part of their Arts course, junior by one year. On the whole, then, it seems likely that Cranmer came to know both the martyrs because they had all three been at Cambridge together. There is evidence, too, that Webster and Cranmer had been on friendly terms with one another. There is extant a letter of the Archbishop, addressed to a person unknown, begging to favour the Prior of Axholme in his suite.<sup>16</sup> This cannot be a former Prior, for Cranmer was not consecrated to the See of Canterbury until 1532. The only information which Chauncy provides concerning Webster's earlier life is that he

<sup>15</sup>Hendriks, p. 149; 1534, No. 616.

<sup>16</sup>*Id.*, No. 753.

was originally a professed monk of Sheen.

From a manuscript at St. Hugh's Charterhouse,<sup>17</sup> containing extracts from the decrees of the Chapter General relating to the houses in England, it would appear that he became Prior of Axholme in 1531. An entry under this year says:-

"Priori Axholme non fit misericordia et committimus similiter visitatoribus provinciae ut in proxima visitatione, si expediens visum fuerit ipsi domui, facere eidem priori misericordiam et domui sive per electionem canonicam vel alias per provisionem providere."

This needs explanation. At the end of each year of office a Carthusian prior asks to be relieved. When this request is refused by the Chapter General, as happens in the majority of instances, the phrase used is "non fit misericordia," or, no relief is granted. In 1531 the Chapter, as the words above show, did not discharge the Prior of Axholme immediately, but did empower the two visitors, who in 1530-1 were John Jonbourn, Prior of Sheen and Batemanson of London, at their next visitation, if it should seem advisable, to do so. They must have decided a change was necessary; and the result was the choice of Blessed Augustine Webster, for as late as May the 4th, 1531, he was not yet elected. A letter is extant of that date, written by the Cistercian Abbot of Roche and thanking Robert, the Prior of Axholme for his kindness.<sup>18</sup>

The Isle of Axholme<sup>19</sup> consists of seven parishes and is the only part of Lincolnshire west of the Trent. Being bounded by

<sup>17</sup> Parkminster MS. B.77, compiled by Dom Palémon Bastin.

<sup>18</sup> *L & P*, 1531-2, Vol. vi.

<sup>19</sup> For some account of the district see *The Isle of Axholme* (Doncaster, 1815), by W. Peck and by W. B. Stonehouse (1839).

four rivers, the Trent, the Idle, the Bickersdyke and Don, it was called an island to which, indeed, it bore greater resemblance before the drainage by Vermuyden about 1626. "By Milwood Park side," writes Leland, "stood the right fair monastery of the Carthusians," founded about 1395 by Thomas Mowbray, Lord of the manor of Epworth, Earl of Nottingham and Earl Marshal of England. It was frequented also as a place of pilgrimage, and named the "Charterhouse of the Visitation of Our Lady." Epworth, which is close to the ruins of the monastery, was the birthplace of John Wesley.

The four years of Blessed Augustine Webster's priorate until rudely interrupted by political events appear to have been without incident, save for the death of a monk, Dom Richard who had held the offices of sacrist, procurator and vicar, and died in 1533 at the age of 103. Beauvale Priory, of which the ruins are inconspicuous, likewise had an uneventful history. It was founded by Sir Nicholas de Cantilupe, Lord of Ilkeston in Derbyshire in 1343.

The two Priors soon learned that the community of which they were the guests was in imminent danger, for the King had been informed of Houghton's preparations and was exceedingly angry. Their conduct on hearing this news was a model of brotherly friendship and loyalty. They decided to accompany Houghton on a visit to Cromwell, who had then been appointed, though a layman, the King's Vicar General in spiritual affairs. The object of the interview was to win, if possible, a form of oath more acceptable than that which was about to be tendered them. They were roughly received from the outset. Houghton, nevertheless, begged leave to put three questions to Cromwell and the two

doctors who were with him.<sup>20</sup> The first was to this effect. Since by the words, "And to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven", no doctors of the Church had ever understood anyone save St. Peter, the apostles, and the popes and bishops after them, how could the King, a layman, be head of the English Church? "You would make the King a priest, then?" was the Secretary's angry and somewhat inconsequential answer, and he commanded him to keep silence. The remaining two questions were never asked, and the three monks were immediately arrested and without further ceremony, hurried to the Tower.

It seems that Hendriks is mistaken when he says that the three priors were imprisoned "about the middle of April," (p. 139). It must have been at the beginning of the month, for in a document headed, "The Charges of certain prisoners in the Tower," they occur as having been there for five weeks.<sup>21</sup> As they were executed on May the 4th, their entry must be dated at least the beginning of April.

There is curiously no mention of Reynolds in this paper. Chauncy says that the day on which they did not return was a Tuesday.

<sup>20</sup>These were Dr. Fox, the King's Almoner, later Bishop of Hereford, Latimer, and another unnamed, according to a short tract, *De Crudeli Mactatione Diversorum*, prefaced to the 1st edition of Chauncy (p. X).

<sup>21</sup>John Houghton Prior of the Charterhouse of London.  
Austin Webster Prior of Axholme.  
Robert Laurans Prior of Bevall 5th weks after  
6s 8d 1e weke. Summa £5  
John Hale Vicar of Thistleworth for 5 wekys,  
after 6s 8d Summa 33s 4d."

(*Archaeologia*, 1st Series, 1817, Vol. xviii, p. 298, ed. Sir Henry Ellis.)

After two days, Houghton's two companions were brought from the Tower to Cromwell's presence at the "Rolls" where as Master of the Rolls he held his ordinary court. No doubt the words of John Houghton did not provide sufficient pretext for proceeding against them also without further questioning. The original minute of this examination in the Public Record Office runs as follows:-

"Interrogatory ministered by the Right Honourable Mr. Thomas Cromwell, Chief Secretary to the King's Highness unto Robert Lawrence, Prior of Beauvale, and Augustine Webster, Prior of Hexham (sic), and to either of them, with their answers to the same.

Whether they or either of them would be content obediently to obey the King's Highness as Supreme Head in earth under Christ of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, and him so to repute, take and accept; and to refuse all other potentate and powers, God's only power except, according to the<sup>22</sup> statute in that behalf made.

Robert Lawrence, Prior of Beauvale, answered to the said question, that he could not consent nor believe that the King's Highness is Supreme Head of the Church of England according to the statute in that behalf made.

Augustine Webster, Prior of Hexham, answered likewise to the said question, that he could not consent nor believe that the King's Highness is Supreme Head of the Church of England according to the statute in that behalf made."

The remainder, which is in Latin, states that the proceedings took place on the 20th of April, 1535, being present Thomas Cromwell, at his ordinary court at the Rolls, London. There were also present:- Foxe, Bishop of Winchester; John Bell and John Tregonwell, Doctors of Law; Thomas Bedyll; Richard Rich, the King's Solicitor, and Ralph Sadler; and John ap Rice, public notary, who attests the same.

<sup>22</sup>*L & P*. 1535, Vol. viii, No. 565; fully in Hendriks, p. 139-40.

A few days later when Cromwell and the royal commissioners visited the three Carthusians in the Tower, they had been joined by an ally. This was Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine, monk of the convent of Syon near Isleworth in Middlesex, a man of outstanding qualities both of intellect, person and character, of whose career previous to this encounter it now becomes necessary to speak.

## CHAPTER III

RICHARD REYNOLDS: 'ANGEL OF SYON'

Maurice Chauncy calls Reynolds a man "of angelic countenance and angelic life." Curiously, another man, a perfect stranger to Chauncy uses the same expression. He was an Italian, William Corvinus of Nuceria. Writing on July the 23rd, 1535, to Philip Montanus of his execution, he declares he was "a man with the countenance of an angel and an angelic spirit, as I found by his conversation when I was in England in the suite of Cardinal Campeggio."<sup>1</sup>

Nor can we omit the sweeping testimony of Cardinal Pole to the depth of his learning and virtues.<sup>2</sup> The Cardinal himself was a humanist of repute and spoke from personal acquaintance.

<sup>1</sup>L & P. 1535. viii, No. 1096. There is a portrait of Reynolds in Fr. Hazart's *Kerchelyche Historie* (1609, folio) reproduced in photo as No. 4 of J. H. Pollen's *Portraits of the English Martyrs* (1895).

<sup>2</sup>"Et hic facere non possum quin unum nominatim appellem, quem ego familiariter noram: ei Reginaldus erat nomen, qui et vitae sancitate cum praecipuis illorum est comparandus, qui exactiorem ad Christi nomen vivendi rationem profitentur, et quod in paucissimis ejus generis hominum reperitur, omnium liberalium artium cognitionem non vulgarem habebat, eamque ex ipsis haustam fontibus. Nam tres praecipuas linguas, quibus omnis liberalis doctrina continetur, probe callebat, et solus ex monachis Anglis callebat. Ad cujus sanctitatis pariter et doctrinae laudem in omne tempus confirmandam, et ad cumulum pietatis in Christum, et in te, O Patria, caritatis ostendendam, nihil deesse videbatur, nisi ut cum aliis heroibus suo tam necessariis tempore veritatis testimonium legationi sanguine suo daret (*De Unitate Ecclesiae*, Bk. III,) quoted in Canon R. W. Dixon's *History of the Church of England*, Vol. I (3rd ed. 1895) p. 266-7).

Reynolds was the only monk in England well versed in the three languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and, what was not common in men who followed the stricter rule of life, according to the discipline of Christ, he had an unusual knowledge of the liberal arts, drawn from these same sources. The height of his sanctity was shewn when with other heroes, he bore witness to the truth with his blood at a time when his country most needed it. The *Calendar of Letters and Papers* shew that the undercurrent of feeling against the execution of such a man was anything but weak. In the same year as his execution (August the 7th), Sir Richard Crowley, curate of Broughton in Oxfordshire was reported by one of his parishioners for saying that "the Bishop of Rochester, the father of Syon, and Sir Thomas More died for the true faith, and so would I if it were put to me."<sup>3</sup> And again on the 15th of the same month another priest, Sir Oliver Bromley of Exton was accused of never having preached against the Pope, alleging that his conscience would not allow him because "the Bishop of Rochester and the father of Syon suffered death for it."<sup>4</sup>

"In our own time," writes Fisher's biographer a generation later, "that famous learned father Mr. Richard Reynolds, doctor of divinity, a monk professed in Sion of the rule of St. Bridget and Mr. William Exmewe, a Carthusian professed in London, both which came out of Christ's College and suffered martyrdom in the time of King Henry the VIIIth."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the great value of this authority and that it has been universally followed,<sup>6</sup> we think he is mistaken in making

<sup>3</sup>*L & P* 1535, viii, Pt. II, Vol. IX, No. 46.

<sup>4</sup>*Ib.* No. 100.

<sup>5</sup>Van Ortrov, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>E.g. by Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigienses*, 1, 52, 3; Gaird-

Reynolds a member of Christ's College, and that for the following reasons. His name first appears in 1504 in the Grace books when he paid into the university chest a "caution" or pledge of two gold nobles that he would proceed to the acts preparatory to the degree of B.A.<sup>7</sup> This he took in 1506, being listed 22nd out of thirty-two.<sup>8</sup>

Now Christ's College was not founded until 1505, the year following Reynolds' entry into the university, so that we can immediately say that at least he did not commence there.

A few words concerning the Arts course at Cambridge during this time will give us a clearer idea of the life and formation of the martyr. Matriculation did not then exist, though there was a statute requiring every scholar to be entered under a certain master within fifteen days of coming into residence.

No fee was paid to the university until, about four years later, the candidate was admitted to the "question" and he made his first proof of university membership by paying a fee of 12d. During the four years he would have studied grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy - the seven liberal arts making up the mediaeval *trivium and quadrivium*. These subjects would have to be learned in certain standard authors, such as Priscian for grammar, Aristotle or Boethius or Cicero for rhetoric, Euclid for geometry, Ptolemy for astronomy and so on. Some attendance at lectures was required, those

<sup>6</sup> (cont'd) ner in *Diet. Nat. Biog.*; Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Pt. i KAILE-RYVES, p. 445, and the martyr's biographer, Dom Adam Hamilton in *The Angel of Syon* (1905) p. 21; etc.

<sup>7</sup>"Caucio Domini Reynold duo nobilia in auro" (*Beta*, Vol. ii Pt. 1., p. 199, 205).

<sup>8</sup>*Ib.* p. 216.

delivered in public by the regent masters being called "ordinaries," those delivered in a college being called "lectura aularis." Before taking the "question" the candidate was supposed to have been a *generalis sophista* for at least two years, which seems to have involved some attendance on the "determiners" in Lent (of which later) and the taking of some part in their disputations.

Once admitted to the question, the student was regarded as a commencing bachelor. He was now bound to proceed to another university act, that of "determining," within two years. This took place in Lent. A preparatory examination was held, lasting over four days in the week before Shrove Tuesday in which all regent masters of arts could take part, if they pleased. The first act was a solemn function in which the father of the college and a selected bachelor of senior standing took part. After that, the "determiners" stood in the schools on every lecture day for four weeks, each attended by one *sophista* with three questions of logic and philosophy which both had to argue against all comers. This continued till Thursday, after the fourth Sunday in Lent, from one o'clock till five in the afternoon. The proceedings ended with a solemn act, similar to the first.

In 1509 Blessed Richard Reynolds became M.A. In consideration of the two years spent at the university since his determination and one year away in continuous reading, together with three "responsions" according to the form of the statutes, he is allowed to "incept" in arts.<sup>9</sup> He is ranked fourth out of

<sup>9</sup>"Item conceditur domino Raynold ut forma duorum annorum post eius determinacionem cum continuo unius (anni) studio et cum frequentibus lecturis actualiter ac se lectis in patria cum tribus responsionibus secundum formam statuti sufficiant (sibi) pro completa forma ad incipiendum in artibus." (*Gamma*, p. 72).

eighteen in the list of M.A.'s.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to know what this order means. It is, perhaps, best to regard these lists as orders of seniority in which merit played some part, though not in the restricted sense of today.<sup>11</sup>

After a student had decided to continue to study for Master of Arts, he was expected to take part in the work of the university not only as a learner but as a teacher. He must read the *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle and both deliver and attend "cursory" lectures (it seems that less was expected of a "cursory" than an "ordinary" lecture.) There was probably a solemn opening one. Certain "oppositions" and "responsions" were required. When all forms had been complied with he was admitted to "incept" - which Reynolds did in 1509.

During the minimum period of three years which had to elapse since his "determination" he must also have heard his own master lecture on Aristotle and have attended certain public mathematical lectures delivered in the schools; and have acted as "opponent" publicly and as "respondent" to three masters in their disputations. To his fitness for "inception" five masters of arts should depose on oath of their own knowledge and seven of belief.

Thus approved by the regents, he received his license from the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor; and became Licentiate in Arts. On receipt of it he paid his *communa*, 20d. The first

<sup>10</sup>*Beta*, Vol. ii, Pt. i, p. 239.

<sup>11</sup>In the mathematical faculty the change from order of seniority to order of merit does not seem to have developed till the first half of the 18th century, according to Venn (*Grace Book Delta*, 1910, p. IX).

On the other hand there is record of examiners in the university as early as 1504 (*Gamma*, p. 10, 34).



act of inception was the "vespers," already described in connection with Blessed John Houghton, the next day the "commencement," and the following day every "incepting" master would deliver the solemn lecture of "inception" which completed his degree. He then became a regent master, in which capacity he was bound to preside over a school, that is to say, to deliver lectures on every lecture day and take his proper share in all the disputations, masses, congregations and convocations for the space of his regency. The length of time required for this seems to have been one year only. Apart from any stipend he might get from his college, he would receive a certain subsistence from the *collectae*, or fees paid by students. No master was allowed to read gratuitously since this would deprive his colleagues of their subsistence.

As a rule, a master of arts who intended to stay at the university would turn shortly after the completion of his regency to one of the higher faculties, such as Theology, Canon Law, Civil Law or Medicine. Reynolds turned to Theology. At the head of the Bachelors of Divinity for 1513 are found two names:-

"Magister Willemus Boynd  
Magister Raynold" -

to which is added a notice to the effect that both had now entered Syon, "nunc sunt fratres de Syon."<sup>12</sup>

A "grace" granting him leave to "oppose" earlier this same year is important, for it mentions that he was of St. Benet's College, so called because of its association with the neighbouring church of that name, and later incorporated with Corpus. He is allowed to oppose that year "notwithstanding whatever statutes," a concession granted him, perhaps, in view both of

<sup>12</sup>*Beta*, Vol. iii, Pt. ii (1905) ed. Mary Bateson, p. 15.

his intellectual eminence and also his proximate entry into religion:-

"Item conceditur magistro Raynold de collegio Benedicti (quod) possit opponere hoc anno nonobstantibus quibuscumque statutis."<sup>13</sup>

Now the reasons which militate against Blessed Richard Reynolds having ever been a member of Christ's College can now be stated more fully.

1. The only time that his college is definitely mentioned, as here (in 1513) he was a Fellow not of Christ's but of Corpus Christi.
2. He was up at Cambridge, as we have seen already, in 1504, before its foundation, so that he commenced his studies elsewhere as well as ended them.
3. There is to hand a very satisfactory explanation of the confusion. Another Richard Reynolds, Fellow of Christ's there certainly was, who died in 1521.<sup>14</sup>

Doubtless it is with this man that the martyr has been confused by the biographer. It is quite understandable that, not knowing of the namesake's death, which is to be concluded from the administration of his effects, granted the 14th of April, 1521, he assumed they were one.

The correspondent of the biographer at Cambridge was more fortunate in his necessarily random search in the university "couchers," as he calls them, in the following instance. He extracts an interesting "grace"<sup>15</sup> whereby it is granted Reynolds

<sup>13</sup>*Gamma*, p. 108.

<sup>14</sup>Confer *Biographical Register of Christ's College (1448-1665)* Vol. i, by John Peile. (1910) p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>"Item conceditur magistro Rynold ut responsio et forma habita sufficiat sibi pro gradu bachalariatus in theologia ita quod eius admissio stet pro pleno gradu eiusdem quia intendit breviter intrare religionem sic quod admittatur ante festum Barnabe non obstante statuto et quod habeat autoritatem predicandi per bullam papalem et quod non teneatur ad aliquos sermones

to complete his B.D. before St. Barnabas's Day (June the 11th) notwithstanding the statute, because before then he will have entered religion. He is also granted authority to preach by papal bull, and dispensed from certain scholastic acts and from residence still normally required, and from certain sermons. In recognition of his talents the university also chose him as one of the twelve university preachers of that year. His name stands third on the list, directly after the two proctors.<sup>16</sup>

We may conclude this account of a distinguished career by a brief note on the formalities required for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. Attendance at lectures on the Bible, on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, and at public disputations filled up much of this syllabus. Towards the close, leave is given to "oppose," a serious step extending over the chief part of an academical year, and which might involve taking part in no less than sixteen disputations. These and other forms fulfilled, the deposition of one master is required concerning the candidate's knowledge of his subject, and of all the others concerning his faith (*de credulitate*). The candidate is then a "formed" bachelor and is admitted to deliver a solemn entrance lecture on the *Sentences*, which completes the degree.

It must have been in the year 1512 that Reynolds made his petition to be admitted into the order of St. Bridget for,

<sup>15</sup> (cont'd) *ratione predicatorum nec ad aliquos actus scolasticos neque ad residenciam ratione gradus illius sic quod satisfaciat officiariis et quod possit habere litteras testimoniales gradus et conversacionis et autoritatis predicandi sigillatas sigillo communi.*" (Van Ortroy, p. 48; also *Gamma*, p. 107-8).

<sup>16</sup> *Beta*, Vol. ii, Pt. ii, p. 16.

strange as it may seem to Post-Tridentine ideas, a Bridgettine monk did not spend his year of novitiate in the cloister but under proper direction in the world.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, since the earliest age at which a monk could be admitted into the order was twenty-five, he cannot have been born later than 1488, being probably about the same age as John Houghton.

Apart from a routine of academic distinctions and the praise of others, there exists the *Catalogue of the Library of Syon*<sup>18</sup> contained in a manuscript in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to prove that as a scholar his range and reading was for those times singularly varied. Apart from a very brief reference by Dom Hamilton, it has been strangely neglected by writers on Reynolds.

Out of this library of 1421 titles, no less than ninety-five were presented by Reynolds himself. Manuscripts apart, he is the greatest single donor. The library was, of course, like all monastic libraries predominantly Latin. English books amount to but twenty-six, Greek half a dozen, French four, one of which, the History of France by the celebrated humanist, Robert Gaguin, Master-General of the Trinitarians, was presented by Reynolds. He also gave the Greek text of Aratus, the poet who is quoted by St. Paul in his discourse to the Athenians. We have no knowledge whether Richard had visited Italy. Books from the presses of many Italian towns - Brescia, Bologna, Venice, Fano, Cremona, Quare, Treviso, Florence, Careggio, Mantua, Modena, Vercelli, and Rome were part of his contribution. Among these was a work on Genealogies by Boccaccio, in Latin.

It is only necessary to select a few of the titles to see

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton, op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ed. Miss Mary Bateson (*Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, 1898) passim.

that the martyr was a man of wide tastes and culture. He had the earliest Latin-English dictionary, the *Promptorium Parvulorum*.<sup>19</sup> Law is represented by Budé's great edition of the Pandects of Justinian, published in 1508 at Paris, which marked an epoch in the study of Roman Law. He owned several Latin authors:- Statius, Ausonius, Manilius, Lucan, Columella, Cato, Varro, Pomponius Mela, Justin, Florus, Sextus Rufus; the tragedies of Seneca; the Nature of the Gods by Cicero. He was also interested in Ancient History, as is shown by a copy of Berossus, the Babylonian historian (Paris, 1510).

Of Greek poetry he was familiar with the *Iliad*, but only, apparently, in Latin translation; also with the *Hecuba* and the *Iphigenia* of Euripedes, which had been translated by Erasmus. Generally in each separate volume are bound together several works, so that a total of ninety-five is an underestimate of the number of books formerly owned by Richard Reynolds. Sometimes they are bound together without much arrangement. Thus some Roman histories are accompanied by a treatise of Pope Julius the 2nd on War, and the poet Homer by Rabanus Maurus, On the Praises of the Cross!

The monastery also obtained Gaza's translations of Aristotle from him; the complete works of Plato, translated by Marsilius Ficinus; and Hermolaus Barbarus' edition of Pliny's Natural History.

Being an eloquent preacher, it is not surprising that sermons formed a part of the martyr's library. These included

<sup>19</sup>Title means 'Storehouse for young scholars'. It was compiled by a Dominican Friar of King's Lynn c. 1440, published by Richard Pynson in 1499, and edited for the Camden Soc. in 1843 by Albert Way and for Early English Text Soc. in 1898 by A. L. Mayhew.

St. Bernadine of Siena and various collections for the different feasts and seasons of the year. He possessed one work at least of the following fathers:- St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, St. Ephrem, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Augustine, as well as of Tertullian, Lactantius, Cassian and Cassiodorus; copies of the rule and the lives of Saints Basil, Benedict, and Augustine, together with the Rule of St. Francis. Of Scholastics, works by St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert, Alexander of Hales and Jacques Gerson are among his benefactions.

Other works show that he did not neglect contemporaries. His library had included Dean Colet's famous sermon delivered to Convocation, published in 1511 by Pynson. Pico de Mirandula, that extraordinary Renaissance character, interested him as it did St. Thomas More, who wrote his life. Reynolds possessed the complete works. He also owned a treatise on Contemplation by the Majorcan mystic, Ramon Lull, and other books of an ascetical or mystical character, and even one on Dreams. Other items are a five-fold version of the Psalms and the Letters of St. Thomas of Canterbury; and works by those two learned Cardinals, Bessarion and Nicholas of Cusa.

Even such a partial selection as this from the library of Blessed Richard Reynolds shows that it is highly probable that he deserved his reputation for learning and that Cardinal Pole has not exaggerated it. Some years back there were only six volumes from the old Syon library known to be still in existence, but hope need not be given up that at some future time one may be discovered or identified which had belonged to him.

Efforts to determine the genealogy of the martyr have not been successful. Dom Adam Hamilton's findings on the point may be summarised as follows:-

1. Among those Catholics expressly excluded with Cardinal Pole and others from the pardon of Edward the VIth occur two men of the name of Thomas Reynolds. The first is described as "of Whitstable yeoman." The other has been conjecturally identified with Thomas Reynolds, Dean of Exeter who later died in prison under Elizabeth for his Catholic sympathies.
2. Assuming that the martyr and this last person may have been connected, it has been pointed out that the name of Richard is prominent in this family which was settled at Pinhoe in Devonshire. The grandfather, father and brother are so named. The brother Richard, who had six sons of some distinction, one of whom was a translator of the Douai Bible and another a strong Puritan, is styled by Antony Wood a "sufficient farmer."
3. Hamilton then shews how a great preponderance of Syon names are of Devon origin, owing in part, no doubt, to the large endowments it had in that county. Was Reynolds, he asks, of the Pinhoe family?

Such is all that can be conjectured - we use the word advisedly - in the present state of knowledge concerning his family, save that one of the nuns of Syon was named Editha Reynolds. She died on June the 28th, 1538, and was buried "prope gerras," that is, in all probability, near the railings which separated the choir from the body of the church,<sup>20</sup> according to the Syon obit book. May she have been a sister?

It becomes necessary here to explain very briefly the unusual constitution of the order founded by St. Birgitta of Sweden in 1346.<sup>21</sup> Its best known peculiarity was that the com-

<sup>20</sup>Hamilton in *The Poor Soul's Friend*, a publication of Syon Abbey (1905) p. 98.

<sup>21</sup>For some account see *The Story of the English Bridgettines* (1933) by John Rory Fletcher.

munity comprised both women and men, each living in separate enclosures. Syon Abbey, the only English representative, was founded by King Henry V near Isleworth on the north bank of the Thames on March the 3rd, 1415. It became one of the most influential convents in England and, indeed, a whole volume could be devoted to its history. The site is now occupied by Syon House, belonging to the Duke of Northumberland. The number of nuns was fixed by St. Bridget in each house at sixty; there were to be thirteen priests, four deacons and eight laybrothers. The Abbess was the superior of the monastery, but the spiritual concerns were in the hands of the brethren who, indeed, were intended for the direction in such matters of the sisters. The unique interest of Syon, now settled after many wanderings at South Brent, Devon, is that it is the only English religious community in existence that has maintained a continuous existence from the date of its foundation before the Reformation to the present day.

One letter exists from the hand of Richard Reynolds.<sup>22</sup> It is in Latin<sup>23</sup> and in a beautiful hand, encouraging a young scholar to persevere in his studies:-

"Greetings, Henry.

Your letter was delivered to me by which I was highly delighted, not only because it was evident from them that the affection you have conceived for me is firm and unchangeable, but also because I see how eager you are to advance in the knowledge of honest studies. This purpose of yours which you have no reason to regret

<sup>22</sup>Summarized in *L & P Henry VIII*, Vol. III, Pt. II (1519-23) No. 2062. Facsimile in *Blessed Richard Reynolds*, pub. Syon Abbey (1935) by Dom Ernest Graf; also *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*, 1939, June.

<sup>23</sup>Appendix V.

I, indeed, always encouraged in you during the time you lived with me, as you yourself know well, and I shall not cease to urge it hereafter, if my advice, zeal and prayers can help you. As to your request that I should write to Master J. Watson to persuade him to teach you Greek, there is no need, since it will not be long, so he writes to me, before he is coming to see us. Then we will deal with this matter much more easily "viva voce." Farewell, and so attend to your studies as not to neglect the service of God, from whom is all wisdom. In informing me of the good health of my friends, you have done me no small pleasure. May the Lord bless you. From Syon the 21st of February. Honour St. Catherine.

Richard Reginald." (Reynolds)

The St. Catherine whose devotion the writer appears to have been anxious to propagate was more probably the daughter of St. Bridget of Sweden than Catherine of Alexandria. Dr. Watson of the letter was later Master of Christ's College. The name of the young scholar, who was Henry Gold and who had been under Reynolds' care at Cambridge explains much. For he was the parson of Aldermary who in 1534 was executed with the "Holy Maid of Kent." Among the persons to whom some twenty years later he revealed one of the Maid's prophecies were one or two of the fathers of Syon, including Reynolds himself.<sup>24</sup> The prediction was that if the King married Anne Boleyn within one month, he should cease to reign in the sight of God. We know, too, that Elizabeth Barton paid at least one visit to Syon in the summer of 1533 not long before her arrest. And if William Roper in his life of Sir Thomas More is correct, it was through Richard Reynolds, no doubt influenced by Gold, that she made her first visit. Gold in a letter to Cromwell not long before his execution refers to "the firm credence that I and other religious persons of Syon, Sheen and Richmond, whom we esteemed virtuous

<sup>24</sup>L & P 1533.

and well learned, did give to her."<sup>25</sup> Thus already before the end of 1533, on account of this connection, Reynolds was already suspect. And quite apart from the affair, he held the strongest views of the King's matrimonial proceedings. John Leek, a cleric of Syon, deposed not long before their executions, that Reynolds and Hale, the Vicar of Isleworth, had had communication concerning the two daughters of the Queen's mother. Also that Reynolds shewed twelve months past that Queen Catherine was the true queen, and that Henry could not be Supreme Head of the Church. Another person named Mody in partial corroboration testified that Reynolds and Hale had said together that "the King's Grace had meddling with the Queen's mother."<sup>26</sup>

In justice to Henry it should be stated that when taxed by Sir George Throckmorton with the rumour of previous intercourse both with the mother and the elder sister of Anne, he replied, "Never with the mother."<sup>27</sup>

Sir Thomas More, too, judging from his own statement to Dr. Wilson, Vicar of Croydon and his own daughter had some secret reasons for not swearing to the validity of the King's marriage.

At some time not precisely known, there had been communication by letter between Bishop Fisher and three brethren of Syon, including Reynolds. The other two were Father Fewterer, his Confessor or superior and a monk deceased. This appears from a letter written by Bedyll to Cromwell after the execution. After visiting Syon, he thus writes:- "I had the Father Confes-

<sup>25</sup>L & P 1534, No. 138.

<sup>26</sup>L & P 1535, viii, 505 (2) ii.

<sup>27</sup>Confer a letter from Throckmorton to Henry, L & P 1537, xii, Pt. ii, 952.

essor alone in a very secret communication concerning certain letters of the said Master Fisher's, of which Father Reynold made mention in his examination, which the said Fisher promised the King's Grace that he never showed to any other man, neither would. The said Confessor hath confessed to me that the said Fisher sent to him, to the said Reynold, and to one other brother of theirs deceased, whose name I remember not, the copy of his said letters directed to the King's Grace, and the copy of the King's answer also; but he hath sworn to me upon his fidelity that the said copies tarried not with him but one night, and that none of his brethren saw the same, but those three afore-named. He hath acknowledged to me also that the said Fisher sent unto them with the said copies a book of his made in defence of the King's Grace's first marriage."

Whatever the truth of these distressful matters - perhaps owing to Henry's known connection with Anne Boleyn's elder sister - the charges against the martyr were not pressed.

It was through no idle gossip or ill will towards the King that Reynolds was drawn into expressing opinions concerning these dangerous matters then weighing upon men's consciences. The fathers of Syon heard confessions not only of the nuns but also of any of the laity who visited their church. Such a one was Sir George Throckmorton who was troubled by the passage of the Bill forbidding appeals to Rome in spiritual matters, then passing through Parliament.

He went first to Sir Thomas More, who said he was glad to hear he was so good a Catholic, and then to Bishop Fisher, who gave him a book, and then to Dr. Wilson. He came last of all (in confession) to Richard Reynolds and shewed him his conscience in all these causes, "who advised him to stick to his

opinion to the death, else he would surely be damned, and also not to hold his peace in Parliament even if he thought his speaking could not prevail." This, states the writer, was stronger than the opinion of the Bishop and Dr. Wilson, who allowed silence, but Reynolds said he did not know how he might encourage others in the House of Commons to do the same. It was these counsels that had blinded him, writes Sir George seven years later, making peace with the King; but he has now perceived his error by reading the New Testament and William Tyndale's Institution of a Christian Man.<sup>28</sup>

During his trial, in fact, Blessed Richard Reynolds declared that the statements laid to his charge were made only in confession, where he spoke his mind for discharge of his own conscience, "being compelled thereto."

<sup>28</sup>L & P 1537, xii, ii, No. 952.

## CHAPTER IV

THE VICAR OF ISLEWORTH:  
BLESSED JOHN HALE

In a letter written on April the 20th, 1535, a few days before his death, John Hale describes himself as "aged and oblivious." He must, therefore, have been considerably older than his companions. His home was possibly in Worcestershire, for shortly before he was attainted, he sold lands in this county, worth £3.13. 4. by the year, to John Packington for 100 marks. But the lands having been confiscated by the Crown before completion, the purchaser begs Cromwell to use his influence with the King that he may have the lands. The letter is dated at Hampton Lovet, August the 24th, 1535.<sup>1</sup>

The biographer of Fisher is correct in surmising that the martyr was at Cambridge, though he gains nothing by the reply<sup>2</sup> of his correspondent which refers to another of the name. Hale was at the time of his arrest still a Fellow of King's Hall (a foundation later absorbed in Trinity) and retained rooms there. This we learn from a letter written by Geoffrey Blyth, the Master to Cromwell, dated April the 30th, 1535.<sup>3</sup> He has, he says, duly sequestrated to the King's use such goods as Mr. John Hale, the King's prisoner, has in the College. Though he has the right to nominate another Fellow to take his place, he forbears doing so till he knows Cromwell's pleasure. He recom-

<sup>1</sup>L & P 1535, No. 171.

<sup>2</sup>"Item one Hayle B.D. et praedicator 1521."

<sup>3</sup>L & P, 1535, viii, No. 615.

mends, however, Geoffrey Bagot, who needs help through the death of his father.

Our Hale may be referred to in a letter from Nicholas Darlington, Fellow of St. John's to his friend Henry Gold. It is written from Louvain on the 16th of July, 1522.<sup>4</sup> Darlington asks Gold to convey greetings to "Doctorem Meytcalfe, comunem magistrum, Doctorem Watson, Magistros Burgen, Truslove, Hale, Arthur, Langforth, Brygyndyn, Cowper, Bayne, Rudde, Dudley."<sup>5</sup>

There was a John Hale who proceeded B.A. at Cambridge in 1479 and M.A. in 1483.<sup>6</sup> But the first sure date is 1505 when, on September the 11th, the martyr was appointed Rector of St. Dunstan's, Cranford, in Middlesex, by the gift of the Hospital of St. John and Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> according to the Register of Bishop Hill. On August the 13th, 1521, he exchanged it with Edward

<sup>4</sup>Printed in *Some Letters of Masters & Scholars 1500-30* by P. S. Allen (Eng. Hist. Rev.) 1907, Vol. XXII, No. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Doctor Watson was the friend of Erasmus, Fisher, and also of Reynolds, at this time Master of Christ's. Burgen is perhaps William Burgoyne, Master of Peterhouse. Truslove or Truslowe became chaplain to St. John Fisher and supplied the biographer with some of the details of his life. Hale may be our martyr or another. Thomas Arthur was Fellow of St. John's in 1518 and made Principal of St. Mary's Hostel in the same year. William Langforth was President of St. John's. John Bryganden was a Fellow of St. John's and Junior Proctor in 1524. He later opposed Latimer's preaching, as likewise did Bain and Rudde, also Fellows of St. John's. The Cowper mentioned is, perhaps, Robert Cowper, Fellow of Corpus Christi College and afterwards Principal of St. Mary's Hostel.

<sup>6</sup>*Grace Book Alpha*, p. 128, 169.

<sup>7</sup>Newcourt's *Novum Repertorium Paroeciale Londinense*, ed. Rev. Geo. Hennessy (1898) p. 133.

More, M.A. for Isleworth, the patrons being the Warden and Fellows of Winchester. During the interval he had become Bachelor of Law,<sup>8</sup> and is so called in the deed of exchange. He is incorrectly stated to have been Rector of Chelmsford in Essex<sup>9</sup> - either by confusion with Cranford, a not dissimilar name, or perhaps because another John Hale was Rector there in 1492.

The Vicar of Isleworth was tried by the same Commission and Jury and on the same days as the four monks. But the charge was somewhat different. He and John Feron, priest of Teddington, were condemned for violating not the Act of Supremacy but the Act of Succession, according to which any one who by writing or exterior act should do anything to the prejudice of the King's marriage, was guilty of High Treason.

The indictment declares that on different occasions between the 2nd and the 20th of May, 1534, and at subsequent times both at Isleworth and Syon, Feron and Hale engaged in treasonable conversations about the King and his marriage, when they were walking to and fro between both places. The upshot was that on the 20th of May Feron asked Hale: "Has no one written against the King's evil deeds?" To which he replied that there existed grounds for writing enough, and he then proceeded to enlarge upon the theme in the following words:-

"Syth (since) the realm of England was first a realm, was there never in it so great a robber and piller (pillager) of the Commonwealth read of nor heard of, as is our King. And not only we, that be of the spirituality, by his wrong be oppressed and robbed of our living as if we were his utter enemies, enemies unto

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 229 (Register Fitzjames).

<sup>9</sup>E.g. in *Lives of Eng. Martyrs*, ed. Camm, p. 17.

Christ, and guilty of his death, but also thus ungodly he doth handle innocents, and also highly learned and virtuous men, not only robbing them of their living, and spoiling them of their goods, but also thrusting them into perpetual prison, so that it is too great pity to hear, and more to be lamented than any good Christian man's ears may abide. And he doth the same, as by that mean he would revenge his own injuries and the injuries of Christian faith, by whose title in a marvellous fashion he boasteth himself, to be above and to excel all other Christian kings and princes; thereby being puffed with vain glory and pride. Where, of a truth, he is the most cruellest, capital heretic, defacer, and traitor under foot of Christ and of His Church, continually applying and minding to extinct the same.

And also the lay fee, sometimes the nobles and sometimes the commons, without difference, upon chance and displeasure grown, or of truth foresought and feigned he doth impoverish, destroy, and kill for none other intent but that he may enjoy and use his foul pleasures, and increase to himself great treasure and riches, enriching strangers, and pilling and robbing his own subjects, and making fair houses but most superfluous. Whose death I beseech God may be like to the death of the most wicked John, sometime King of this realm, or rather to be called a great tyran than a King, and that his death may not be much unlike to the end of that manqueller Richard, sometime usurper of this Imperial realm. And, if thou wilt deeply look upon his life, thou shalt find it more foul and stinking than a sow, wallowing and defiling herself in any filthy place, for how great soever he is, he is fully given to his foul pleasure of the flesh and other voluptuousness. And, look how many matrons be in Court, or given to marriage, these almost all, he hath violated so often, neglecting his duty to his wife, and offending the Holy Sacrament of matrimony, and now he hath taken to his wife of fornication this matron Anne, not only with the highest shame and undoing of himself, but also all this realm."

Here are three strands of thought in this outspoken speech:-

1. Henry's new title of Supreme Head of the Church is blasphemous and heretical and he is oppressing the Church.



2. Henry's marriage violates the Sacrament of Matrimony and is unlawful.

3. Henry is leading an immoral life, oppressing his subjects and leading his country astray, and it would be a good thing if he died.

Though Hale was condemned under the Act of Succession and not the Act of Supremacy, the King's new title, as the words above shew, was uppermost in his mind. As to how far this speech represents his exact words, however, is another matter. For the indictment goes on to say that afterwards, on the 10th March, 26 Henry 8, Feron wrote down in Latin these treacherous words spoken by Hale. By the old calendar, according to which the year began on March the 25th and not January the 1st, this was the March following or some ten months later.

The indictment continues:-

During the same conversation on May the 20th previous, Hale went on to say:-

"Until the King and the rulers of this realm be plucked by the pates, and brought, as we say, to the pot, shall we never live merrily in England, which I pray God may chance, and now shortly come to pass. Ireland is set against him, which will never shrink in their quarrel to die in it; and what think ye of Wales? Their noble and gentle Ap Ryce, so cruelly put to death, and he innocent, as they say, in the cause. I think not contrary but that they will join and take part with the Irish, and so invade our realm. If they do so, doubt ye not but they shall have aid and strength enough in England, for this is truth, three parts of England be against the King, as he shall find if he need; for, of truth, they go about to bring this realm into such miserable condition as is France, which the Commons see and perceive well enough, a sufficient cause of rebellion and insurrection in this realm. And truly, we of the Church shall never live merrily until that day come."

Hale's words about Ireland are a remarkable example of unconscious prophecy. But the question arises whether such opinions and expressions as were employed by him on this occasion were treasonable or not. It may be argued that to wish for an uprising to prevent further enslavement of the Church was a perfectly legitimate one, not only in the light of Christian principles, but also the political conceptions of the time. Such would have been the view of St. John Fisher, who told Chapuys that he would have welcomed an invasion of England by the Emperor on behalf of the Church. Nobles like the Earl of Northumberland, Lord Sandes, Lord Darcy and others, neither disaffected or abnormal, would not have been averse to such intervention, and so expressed themselves to the Ambassador. Professor Gairdner discusses these viewpoints in his introduction to the *Letters and Papers of 1535*, Vol. viii.

Besides Feron, there were three other men who were (reluctantly, let us hope) induced to supply evidence against him. One was John Leek, a priest of Syon, who also had conversations with Reynolds. He admitted that he had advised Hale not to go to Hounslow to take the oath renouncing the Pope,<sup>10</sup> and he himself never took it, though he was now content to accept it. Either Hale or Feron shewed him "the said slanderous bill" about half a year ago on the road between Syon and Isleworth, but till now he had concealed it. Presumably this was the English version of what Feron put into Latin.

Thirdly, Hale's own curate, John Mody deposed that Hale and Reynolds had conversation that the saying was, "the King's Grace had meddling with the Queen's mother."

On second examination<sup>11</sup> Leek remembered that it was not Hale

<sup>10</sup>*L & P*, 1535, 565, 2 (ii).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, (iii).

but Feron who shewed him the slanderous bill. Hale, however, had remarked that there was "ruffling toward in Ireland and that he would stand in stead of a man." Leek also heard one, Thomas Skidmore of Syon utter divers words.

To these conversations between Hale and the three, Skidmore was a fourth party. He deposed that the Vicar of Isleworth had called the King the "mouldwarp" prophesied by Merlin who should turn all things up; that he was cursed of God's own mouth; and that the marriage between him and Anne was unlawful. Hale in his turn deposed that Skidmore in his hearing had called the King a robber and "pillar" of the Commonwealth; while a layman, whom he does not name, had prophesied that the Pope would be in England before midsummer,<sup>12</sup> and so forth.

The letter which follows, written a few days before his execution, and here printed fully for the first time, an almost pitiful document, serves to throw some light on poor John Hale's state of mind as, broken by old age and unnerved by a recent accident, he awaited death.

About the beginning of November last the writer, while staying at Wingham in Kent, had fallen from his horse and broken his leg. This followed on several other falls. The result was that he was confined there until about Candlemas and his parishioners did not see him for several months. No sooner had he recovered from the broken leg than he fell into a "fervent ague". This caused some mental derangement and lack of memory from which he barely recovered. Hale substantially acknowledges the truth of the confessions entered against him by Feron, Leek, Skidmore, and by Mody, his curate. One or two other persons and circumstances are mentioned in the letter which, penitent though

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.* (V).

it is, is concerned almost entirely with a rehearsal of his regrets for personal gossip concerning the King's private life. Even here he had said no more than Reynolds had said and thought. He had, as may be seen from their own admissions, been no more outspoken about the King's misdeeds than his accusers themselves. Why, then, should this aged and pitiful figure have been singled out for execution while they, who had taken an equal part in these conversations, escaped? There can, we think, be only one conclusion - that while Hale was ready to express regret for his supposed personal slanders against the King he would not recognize him as Head of the Church. In which connection it is interesting also to note that the letter from the Master of King's Hall to Cromwell already referred to is in the original thus endorsed: "Geoffrey Blythe desyring one Maister Bagot to have the place of one Hale in his heresie atteynted." Only a persistence in his religious and Catholic opinions, especially in view of his contrite letter preserved, can explain why Hale was put to death and his companions spared. The more pathetically the human fear and weakness of John Hale is shewn the more forcefully is demonstrated the religious motive for which he died.

"... hus<sup>13</sup> saluator mundi Miserere mei Quia timor.

Right worshipfull Masters I dyd fall & hurte my legge at Wyngham at allowstye was twelvemonthes where I dyd contyne tyll a bowght Candemas next that ynshewyng & upon the Saturday after ashewensday next followyng I dyd fall yn to a fervent agew how loongg I dyd contyne ther yn wth dyurse residivacions the parishens of Istleworthe dothe know. In so moche that I toke my Jorney not throw hoole fyve wickes<sup>14</sup> or ther a bowghtes be foore Miallmas last & lost our lades Quarter yendyd at the Mid-somer be foore that by my syckenes at Istleworthe and was

<sup>13</sup>Torn; probably 'Ihus', for Jesus.

<sup>14</sup>Interlineated; 'wyk' struck through.

sycke at Wyngham yn the myallmes terme throw weknes of the which I had diuerse fallys with my horse by oon of the whiche falling on my backe I was diseasyd tyll the last Candellmas wherupon I was trowblyd yn my wyttes & by age also for item lacke of Memory. But now as well advisydly as I can with the helpe of my lord Jesus I shall shew all communycacions as nye as my wyttes wyll beere me where and with home I dyd talke & after what maner forme of *our* suffren lord the Kyngges grace I remembyr that a bowght a ij<sup>15</sup> yeres past or ther a bowghtes. The fellow of bristow shewd the professye of Marlyon not oonly to me but unto dyverse other of Syon for by my<sup>16</sup> trowthe Master Skydmor showyd to me also the saame profecy<sup>17</sup> with home I had dyverse tymes talkyng of the Kyngges grace concernyng the mariage & other behavioures of his bodily lust & oon tyme<sup>18</sup> remembyr that Cownsell the porter sayd that ow<sup>19</sup> suffreyn had a hort of Maydons over oon of his chambyres at farnam while he was with the oold lord of Wynchester<sup>20</sup> also I had wordes what of theyr<sup>21</sup> party & of myne dyverse tymes with skydmor with sir Thomas my priest with Master Leeke & oons I thinke<sup>22</sup> nyhand ij yeres a goon or ther a bowghtes of the actes of the parlyment maad a genst the men of the churche<sup>23</sup> with the Prior of hownslow whiche sayd to me<sup>24</sup> that he had a professye whiche he wold show to me at leyser<sup>25</sup> but after that we dyd nevyr speke to gethers of ony syche matters & that tyme we had no leys to comen moche for we mett not but at the New Ynne where

<sup>15</sup>'yee' struck through.

<sup>16</sup>Interlineated.

<sup>17</sup>'the same profecy' interlineated.

<sup>18</sup>'& oon tyme' bracketed.

<sup>19</sup>'f' struck through.

<sup>20</sup>Sentence from '& oon tyme' to 'Wynchester' bracketed by line at side and below.

<sup>21</sup>' ' struck through.

<sup>22</sup>'ny' struck through.

<sup>23</sup>'of the actes ... churche' interlineated.

<sup>24</sup>'at leyser' interlineated and smudged out.

<sup>25</sup>'at leyser' interlineated.

Master Yowngg Awnsam & his wiffe with other we dynyd to gethers also Skydmor dyd use to speke of yongg sir Rice & sayd that Walsmen & priestes wer soore dysdayned now a days. Now as toching Master ferne my wyttes wer soo trowbyd with syckenes that perfyghtly I doo not remember soo perfyght communycacion as he dothe rehearse. But by Master bydyls rehersall that Master Steward of Syon shuld tell me that yt was lykly to be determyd by parlyment that ther shuld no moore tythe Corne be maad I am remembryd of that saying wher opon yt ys lykly that Master ferne & I had farther communycacion thow yt bee not yn my remembrans be cause he went a way while I was syke loongg after & beyng agyd oblyviose<sup>26</sup> I dyd not see hym tyll he came to Master secretary at the Rolles. where we dyd meete mor over Master Waren oold surveyor & the Master of Asheford<sup>27</sup> yn kent some tyme<sup>28</sup> steward to the bisshope of Cantebury yn the churchyard of Istleworthe dyd speke of the hard statutes made & to be maad a genst the churche by whiche yt was lykly to be made I sayd to them that noo tythe Corne shuld be payd ony moore as a well lornyd man & fermore of a personage showyd me<sup>29</sup> item And fynally<sup>30</sup> I do Confesse that the fowre byllys by Master ferne Master Leeke Master Skydmor & sir Thomas Mody<sup>31</sup> browght yn a genst me bee true and that by syche maner of Seducyose weys I have melycyosly sclawndyred owr suffren lord the Kyngg & Qwyens graces & the Lordes & Masters of theyre most Honorable Cowncell wredchidly wher fore I aske all mighty god for gyvenes and lykewise owr sayd suffren lord kyng Henry the viijth owr suffren lady Qwyen, An, & all the Lordes & Masters of theyre most excellent Cownsell beyng vary sorowfull that ever I dyd soo offend theyr Maiestes & Lordes & Masters of ther sayd Moost Honorable Cownsell and soo I shall contynew sorowfull dewryng my Naturall lyffe whiche standythe only yn owre sayd suffren lord the Kyngges

<sup>26</sup>Interlineated.

<sup>27</sup>Interlineated; 'Atlesford' struck through.

<sup>28</sup>Interlineated.

<sup>29</sup>'as a well ... me' interlineated.

<sup>30</sup>'and finally' bracketed.

<sup>31</sup>Names bracketed.

wyll<sup>32</sup> home I beseche god preserve contynewally yn honowre & mayntayn all his wellwyllers amen and send all other lytle power amen. Mor over Master Skydmore dyd show<sup>33</sup> to me Yongg Master Kynges son by owr suffren lady the Qwyens sister whom the gwyens grace myght not suffer to be yn the Courte.

For the rest there is little to distinguish his case from those of Reynolds and the three Carthusians. The Vicar of Isleworth was arrested at the same time as the Carthusians and imprisoned for exactly the same time of five weeks, according to a bill of charges already quoted.<sup>34</sup> He was also tried on the same days. It is evident that, though technically charged under different Acts, the Government did not make much distinction between them. On their first appearance before the court on April the 28th, both he and Feron pleaded NOT GUILTY; but, after remand on the following day, they pleaded GUILTY.

The fact that Hale had withdrawn by his letter all expressions that might have been prompted by animosity towards the King makes the issue for which he died still more clear. It makes it more difficult to attribute his ultimate fate to any but a religious one.

In which connection it is of importance to note that all five men were at the scaffold offered pardon if they would acknowledge the Royal Supremacy. This is related by Chauncy. And it was no doubt because of such a refusal that the pardon which was granted to Feron, who had certainly gone quite as far in expressing himself against the King, was not granted to the aged Vicar of Isleworth. The same argument in a less forcible

<sup>32</sup>w' struck through.

<sup>33</sup>'Mor over ... show' bracketed.

<sup>34</sup>"John Hale Vicar of Thistleworth for Vth weeks, after 6s.8d. Summa 33s. 3d."

degree may be drawn from the immunity of the others. People who reported<sup>35</sup> the martyrdoms at the time made no distinction between the sufferers, who are all said to have met their death with "great constancy."<sup>36</sup> In Hale's mind, as appears from his own charge, the issue of Supreme Headship and the marriage could not be separated; but even if they could, it would still be true that the indissolubility of Christian marriage on which he was indicted was equally with the Supremacy of Peter a necessary article of the Catholic faith. These two doctrines and a sincere concern for the liberties of the Church which he saw being daily more and more oppressed were the dominating motives which led John Hale to speak with the language he did; just as hostility to all three was the dominating motive of his prosecutors.

The language in which he expressed himself against the King's actions may or may not have been excessive. For this the martyr himself expressed regret, no doubt, partly from fear of death and partly from compunction. For every Christian as he approaches death searches his conscience for any trace of bitterness, injury or ill-will he may harbour in his heart; and he may accuse himself over strictly. But in any case, the letter, apologetic though it is, most significantly contains no retraction concerning the King's unlawful marriage or the Supremacy issue. And it has yet to be maintained as an article of faith that such proceedings as those on which Henry had already embarked did not merit being called by their proper names. If Hale had called Henry a heretic it was only because he had al-

<sup>35</sup>So Chauncy and the Papal Nuncio on May the 17th (*L & P* 1535) viii, No. 726.

<sup>36</sup>Dr. Ortiz to the Empress, reporting Chapuys on May 31st, (*Ibid.*, No. 786).

ready proved himself so by setting the authority of the Supreme Pontiff at naught. And though there are times to be silent and times to speak, these are not principally for politicians or for worldly prudence to dictate. Henry II had done far less in injury of the Church than this King; and yet St. Thomas à Becket did not hesitate to oppose him. Nor has it as yet been brought against St. Anselm that he was outspoken and unsparing in his denunciation of Rufus' private vices.

Some of the 'pro's' and 'cons' of Blessed John Hale's case are excellently summed up by Dom Bede Camm,<sup>37</sup> from whose concluding words we cannot do better than quote:-

"Everyone, indeed, who can take a broad view of the circumstances of the case, must come to the conclusion that Hale really suffered for his religion."

Those who pass through the village of Wingham, which lies on the road from Canterbury to Deal, may observe on the right some half-timbered cottages of picturesque appearance. These, called Canons' Cottages, once formed part of the College of priests founded by Archbishop Peckham. Blessed John Hale was a canon here, having been collated to the prebend of Retling on 13 May 1531 by Archbishop Warham.<sup>38</sup> He retained this benefice until his attainder;<sup>39</sup> and was residing there not long before his death, as appears from the pitiful letter quoted above.

<sup>37</sup> *Lives of English Martyrs*, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Register of Abp Warham* (at Lambeth), f. 404 b.

<sup>39</sup> *Register of Abp Crommer*, f. 355 a.b.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRIAL AND MARTYRDOM OF FATHERS HOUGHTON, LAWRENCE, WEBSTER AND REYNOLDS

At what time Reynolds joined the other three prisoners cannot be stated exactly, but he was with them by April the 25th when Cromwell and the royal commissioners examined them again. His name now appears for the first time among the accused. Cromwell brought a copy of the Act of Supremacy and on the back of this document, which is still in the Record Office, the answers of the accused are summarized as follows:-

"*John Houghton* says that he cannot take the King, our Sovereign Lord to be Supreme Head of the Church of England afore the apostles of Christ's Church.

*Robert Lawrence* says that there is one Catholic Church and one Divine, of which the Bishop of Rome is the Head; therefore he cannot believe that the King is Supreme Head of the Church.

*Augustine Webster* says that he cannot take the King, our Sovereign Lord to be Supreme Head of the Church, but him that is by the Doctors of the Church taken Head of the Church, that is, the Bishop of Rome, as Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine affirm, and is made at the Council of Basil." (Bale).

*Richard Reynolds* says that he intends no malice to our Sovereign Lord the King, but he would spend his blood for"- (here the manuscript is defective) - ... "that he is Head of the Church that hath been this three hundred years, and not the King, our Sovereign Lord; and that he shall blame them that gave him such counsel. Also he says that he doth this as thousand thousand that be dead."<sup>1</sup>

Though each has his individual contribution to make, one and all testify to the same doctrine - the Church's headship.

<sup>1</sup> Abridged *L & P*, 1535, viii, 566. At length in Hendriks, p. 141.

Houghton cannot visualize Henry VIII as successor to the Apostles. Lawrence sees the Church one and undivided, with, therefore, only one head, and that the Bishop of Rome. Webster draws upon the Fathers and the most recent Council. Reynolds appeals to the consensus of Christian belief in the past.

Chauncy also preserves an account of this interview. Cromwell, with many others of the commissioners, came to the Tower to propose the oath that they should utterly renounce the Pope, and accept the King as Supreme Head of the Church. On their replying that they would agree on the insertion of one condition, he interrupted: "I will have no exception, as to whether the law of God allows it or not; ye shall affirm what I have said entirely, fully, in the sincerity of your hearts and upon your oath, and shall firmly adhere to it." The fathers answered that the Catholic Church had always held and taught otherwise. "I care nothing for your Church," he insisted, "will you consent or not?" They replied that they dared not from fear of God forsake or contradict the Catholic Church, of which St. Augustine had said he would not even believe the gospel unless the authority of the Church so taught him. They were then returned to their cells.

Chauncy dates this interview April 20th. This is the same day on which we have a record of only Lawrence and Webster being examined, yet he speaks of all four taking part. Moreover, the drift of the replies is more like the statements of the four fathers made on April 25th. Another objection against his date is that the interrogation of the 20th took place at the "Rolls" and not in the Tower. It seems best to conclude that he has mistaken the date. In any case, however, there were other interrogations. Dr. Thomas Starkey, who had been

chaplain to the Countess of Salisbury, the mother of Cardinal Pole, was sent by Cromwell especially to convert Reynolds. He adds also in the same letter to the Cardinal,<sup>2</sup> speaking of the others, that "divers" were sent to them by the King's command but, he complains, "they were so blinded and sturdy that they could neither see the truth in the cause nor give convenient obedience due to" (from?) "such persons as of themselves cannot see the truth ... affirming the same, by their blind, superstitious knowledge, to be the salvation of man of necessity, and that this superiority of the Pope was a sure truth and manifest of the law of God, and instituted by Christ as necessary to the conservation of the spiritual unity of this mystical body of Christ. In this blindness their superstitious minds were stabled."

He then goes on to speak of his interview with Reynolds. "In this opinion sturdily stood Reynolds, whom I have heard of you many times praised; who was so rooted therein that he would admit no reason to the contrary, though divers were sent to them in prison by the King's commandment to instruct them.... This is the truth, for by Mr. Secretary's license, I was admitted to hear Reynolds' reasons and confer such light as God had given me in the same cause with him, and found in him neither strong reason to maintain his purpose, nor great learning to defend it. I conferred with him gladly, for I was sorry to see a man of such fame, as he was here noted both for virtue and learning, should die in such a blind and superstitious opinion. But nothing could avail, but that he would, in that opinion, as a disobedient person to the King's laws, suffer his death with the others of the same mind."

<sup>2</sup>*L & P 1535, viii, 801.*

Meanwhile, a special commission of oyer and terminer had already been appointed to try the prisoners on April 23rd. The members of this commission were:-

Audley, the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Exeter, William Earl of Cumberland, the Earl of Wiltshire, Viscount Rochford his son, Sir Thomas *Cromwell*, Sir John *Fitzjames*, Sir John *Baldwin*, Sir Richard *Lister*, Sir John *Porte*, Sir John *Spelman*, Sir Walter *Luke*, Sir Antony *Fitzherbert*, Sir Thomas *Englefield* and Sir William *Shelley*.<sup>3</sup>

Those underlined were all law officers and any four of them were sufficient to form the *quorum*.

This and other documents relating to the trial in the Public Record Office are contained in the *Baga de Secretis* or secret bundle, consisting of membranes very irregularly arranged. The Justices' precept to the Sheriff of Middlesex for the return of a Grand Jury follows, with panel annexed. We do not know the names of the jury which was returned on Saturday, April the 24th for the 27th following. Then comes the Justices' precept to the Constable of the Tower to bring up his prisoners (two more were added, of whom later) on Wednesday the 27th of April following. This is endorsed with the reply of Sir Edmund Walsingham as Lieutenant of Sir William Kingston, Governor of the Tower.

The trial began in Westminster Hall the same day, as is also clear from the indictment. This, after setting forth the substance of the Act of Supremacy and also part of the Treason Act of November 1534, declares that Houghton, Webster, Lawrence and Reynolds, treacherously machinating and desiring to deprive

<sup>3</sup>*Third Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* Appendix II (1842) p. 237-9. Also *L & P 1535*, viii, No. 609.

the King of his title did, on the 26th April, the day before, in the Tower of London, openly declare: "The King, our Sovereign Lord, is not Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England." The Justices' order to the Sheriff for the return of the petty jury for the trial is also preserved, with panel annexed.

The prisoners, being brought to the bar by the Lieutenant, each pleaded NOT GUILTY. They were ordered to return the day following to hear the verdict and sentence, which was GUILTY. Judgment was given as usual in cases of high treason, with execution at Tyburn.

The trial lasted two days. This may have been caused by the hesitation, related by Chauncy, of the jury to condemn the monks. They spent a long time in consultation, it appearing impossible to pass judgment of death because they had not "maliciously" denied the statute. Cromwell, fearing acquittal, on the evening of the first day sent to enquire what verdict would be returned. Even a second message from him and the threat that, if the jury failed to return a verdict of guilty they themselves should die a traitor's death, failed immediately to overcome their hesitation. He, therefore, went in person, and this time by threats secured a promise that they would find against the accused.

Froude, overlooking the evidence that proceedings lasted two days, found Chauncy's story "internally improbable." But the record of the trial removes this doubt, for a delayed verdict such as he describes is quite in keeping with a two day trial. Moreover, Chauncy's narrative tallies with an old manuscript account in the British Museum, (Arundel MS. 152) which records these same doubts. The jury maintained that the defendants had not denied the Act "maliciously," having spoken only when ques-

tioned. But, "being overcome by threats," we are told, "they found them guilty, and had great thanks, but they were afterwards ashamed to show their faces, and some of them took great harm for it." In any case, however, the despatch of Eustace Chapuys, the Spanish Ambassador<sup>4</sup> to the Emperor is decisive concerning the two day duration of the trial. Writing after the execution he says: "Eight days ago the Duke of Norfolk sat in judgment on them as the King's representative, assisted by the Chancellor and Cromwell and the ordinary judges of the realm, and the Knights of the Garter who had been at the feast of St. George. The monks maintained their cause most virtuously. No one being able to conquer them in argument, they were at last told that, the statute being passed, they could not dispute it, and that if they could not alter their language, they were remanded till next day to hear the sentence. Next day, in the same presence, they were strongly exhorted to recant, and after a long discourse they were sentenced by lay judges and declared guilty of treason. Nothing was said about degrading them or changing their habits."

They were asked, before sentence, according to custom, whether they wished to state reasons (if any) why it should not be returned against them. Blessed Richard Reynolds, who seems by agreement to have acted as the spokesman, took up the defence, To the challenge of the Lord Chancellor Audley who inquired why he alone chose to persist in his opinion against the Act of Parliament, including so many great lords and bishops of the kingdom, he answered:- "I had indeed determined, in imitation of our Lord Jesus when He was before the court of Herod, to return no answer; but since you press me, and that I may satis-

<sup>4</sup>L & P 1535, viii, 566.

fy my own conscience and the consciences of those here present, I say that our belief is of greater weight and has far more abundant testimony in its behalf than yours. For instead of the few whom you bring forward out of the Parliament of this one kingdom, I have on my side the whole Christian world - except those of this kingdom; nay, I do not say of all this kingdom, for only the lesser part is with you. And were even the greater part of the kingdom to declare against me, it would not be because they so believe, but only by outwardly feigning it, for fear of loss of dignity and honour or for the hope of winning the royal favour."

Cromwell having commanded him to declare under pain of the law who they were that he was speaking of, Reynolds answered: "All good men in the kingdom." Proceeding, he said: "As for the witness of the ancient Fathers, I have on my side the General Councils, and all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church for fifteen hundred years, and especially Saints Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory. And I am well assured that when his most Serene Majesty shall have known the truth of this, he will be offended beyond measure with certain bishops who have given him this counsel."

Thereupon Reynolds was commanded to say no more, but merely to answer the charge of having *maliciously* persuaded many to be rebellious against the king and his Parliament. To this Reynolds replied: "I tell you first of all, that if I were here arraigned before God's own tribunal, it would be made clear that never to living man have I declared an opinion of my own maliciously, against the king or anyone (in authority); save when to clear my conscience I spoke of it in confession, being compelled thereto. I was indeed grieved to learn that his Majesty had



fallen into so grave an error, but I said so to none, except as I have declared. And had I not then declared what I believe, I would say it openly now, seeing that I am bound to it by God and my conscience, and in so doing neither my Sovereign nor anyone else may rightly take offence." At this point he was told to hold his peace. Thereupon he said: "Since you will not let me say more, judge me according to your law." When told the verdict he merely observed in a firm voice: "This is the judgment of the world."

After sentence had been pronounced Reynolds asked for a two days' stay of sentence in order that he might have time to prepare his soul for God. On being told that this was beyond the power of the judges and depended on the king's clemency, he repeated verse thirteen of the 26th psalm: *Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium*: I trust to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. This able defence has been justly described by Professor James Gairdner as "singularly calm and argumentative."

A version<sup>5</sup> agreeing very closely with Chauncy is contained in a tract on the martyrdoms, surviving in a modern Italian copy. There is only one addition over and above some verbal variations of no importance. After hearing sentence, it is related Reynolds said with the greatest constancy: "This is of the things of this world." He then prayed the judges to obtain for him two or three days respite, since he had been eight days "come irregular" into the Tower of London, to prepare his con-

<sup>5</sup>Entitled, *Anglia, Mors Monachi unius S. Brigittae, trium Carthusianorum et unius presbyteri saecularis in Anglia, 1535*. 3 pages, Trans. Hendriks, p. 147-8, summarized *L & P 1535*, viii, 661.

science and die like a good religious. They replied that this rested with the King. He then said: "I hope to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living" - as above. By the phrase "come irregular" the martyr probably meant that owing to his captivity he had not been able to lead the normal religious life.

The mention of eight days in the Tower confirms our correction that he joined the three Carthusians later than is usually stated.

It is likely that during the trial, Reynolds acted as the spokesman, though all four had largely concerted together the matter of their defence. It will have been noticed that Reynolds' reference to the Fathers and Councils is taken directly from Webster's earlier argument. Chauncy mentions later that notes were taken by Houghton of the answers made by the martyrs during their interrogations,<sup>6</sup> and brought by one of the guards to the Charterhouse to Blessed William Exmew, who gave them to Chauncy. Thus there is every reason, therefore, to accept as accurate the narration of Chauncy, since it comes from the hand of John Houghton himself. It should be noted that his story of the trial is not contained in the body of his narrative but in a postscript to it, under the title of *De Divi Reginaldi Theologi Martyris*, which appears in the edition of 1550.

It was the morning of May the 4th, 1535, when another prisoner, St. Thomas More, talking to his daughter Margaret, was attracted by the preparations of death in the court outside. The five men (increased by the addition of a secular priest, Blessed John Hale, Vicar of Isleworth) were strapped on hurdles

<sup>6</sup>"in suo pugillari propria manu conscripsit" - (*Anales Bollandiana*, 1903, p. 65).

two by two, except one, who was alone.<sup>7</sup> As he was the last to die, we may presume this one to have been Richard Reynolds. St. Thomas More from his window in the same grim prison saw them go. "Lo, dost thou not see, Meg," he cried, "that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their death as bridegrooms to their marriage?" And then he began to compare their past penances and straightened lives with his own in humble depreciation of himself and praise of them - which will ever be remembered.

Arrived at Tyburn (the joltings and discomforts of the three-mile journey are described by Chauncy), John Houghton was the first to suffer. After embracing the executioner who craved his pardon in the customary manner, he was asked whether he would not, even now, save his life by submitting to the King's Laws. In another version it is said that the offer of pardon was presented by one of the King's counsellors, that is, if he would accept the Supremacy.<sup>8</sup> He replied in terms as follows:-<sup>9</sup>

"I call Almighty God to witness, and I beseech all here present to attest for me on the Dreadful Day of Judgment that, being about to die in public, I declare that I have refused to comply with the will of His Majesty the King, not from obstinacy, malice, or a rebellious spirit, but solely for fear of offending the supreme Majesty of God. Our holy Mother the Church has decreed and enjoined otherwise than the King and Parliament have decreed. I am therefore bound in conscience and am ready and willing to suffer every kind of torture rather than deny a doctrine of the Church. Pray for me and have mercy on my brethren, of whom I have been the unworthy Prior."

<sup>7</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana* (1903) p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Analecta Bollandiana*, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> Hendriks, p. 152-3.

He then asked for time to pray and recited the 30th Psalm, which begins: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded," and ends: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth."<sup>10</sup> Only we can hardly doubt that he prayed in Latin.

The full penalty for treason was now carried out. Being cut down from the gallows while fully conscious, the martyr was heard to say "in a most sweet voice" as the executioner groped with the knife for his heart, "Oh most Holy Jesus, have mercy upon me in this hour." A young man stood in that crowd named Anthony Rescius, a German, who knew the martyr and afterwards became a Dominican friar and Suffragan to the Bishop of Würzburg (1567-83). As the executioner found his heart he heard him say: "Good Jesu! What will ye do with my heart?"<sup>11</sup> The hair shirt

<sup>10</sup> Doreau, p. 175-6, note.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Weisser in his edition of Chauncy (Würzburg, 1608) on p. 4 of the dedicatory epistle to the Archduke Maximilian first relates this circumstance: "Ioanni quidem Houthono, Priori Cartusiae Londinensis, Martyrum nostrorum Antesignano, nobis hic in Eremo nostra; Illustriss ac Reverendiss. Praesulis ac Principis nostri Wirceburgensis, tertius ab hoc, qui nunc ei muneri praeest, Referendissimus Suffraganeus Antonius Rescius, ex ordine Praedicatorum, testimonium dedit amplissimum; etiam priusquam pro Catholica unitate ac veritate tuenda, Martyrum Collegio iungeretur, vitam sanctissimam transegisse; Noverat enim eum familiariter, et dum excarnificaretur, astiterat, suisque oculis viderat, et auribus hauserat, generosissimi pectoris immortalitate dignam vocem, qua Carnifici, viscera ferro scrutanti, et castissimum cor, cruenta (p. 5) manu, revellenti, dixit: Bone IESU, quid corde meo facies? sive Tyranno eiusque Ministris insultans; sive exultans abrupte corde, in IESU salutari suo, et cum Davide Paeana extremum, ac moriturus canens: Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum."

which he wore increased the martyr's sufferings, for the executioner, not being allowed to remove it, dealt many blows before he could make an incision.<sup>12</sup>

To Webster and his companions the same offer of pardon was extended and refused. "And as in the soul they swerved not from the truth," writes Dom Maurice, "so no pallor was seen in their faces, no trembling in their speech, no fear of death in any outward sign. Strengthened by the spirit of truth, for whose sake they went to their death agony, they were as cheerful as ever they were when in fullness of health and security."

There yet remained Blessed Richard Reynolds. Whether because he was alone on the hurdle or from design, he was compelled to witness the execution of the others. "It is believed that one saw the others' execution fully carried out before he died," says the paper in the Vatican Archives. "It was a pitiful and strange spectacle, for certainly it is a long time since men have been known to suffer death with greater constancy. In their behaviour, look, colour and speech, no sign of human weakness was observed, and" (they showed) "great faith and firmness while the execution was taking place. They preached and they exhorted the nobles and the bystanders to do good, and to live honestly, and to serve the King well and faithfully, and to pay him obedience in all things except in those that are contrary to the honour of God and of His Church, for the Scripture says that it is more necessary to obey God than men. They protested that they had never been disobedient in anything except this. In what they had said and done, they had spoken and protested against His Majesty's orders, as contrary to the holy Gospel. For this reason they also accepted death, and said that God was

<sup>12</sup>L & P, xiv, 200 (Cardinal Pole writing to Charles V in 1539).

giving them a great grace in making them die to uphold this truth, and that in good reason the King could not be Supreme Head of the Church of England."<sup>13</sup>

A deep impression that day was made by the conduct of Reynolds. As he stood awaiting his turn, he encouraged and even joked with the others. "Which Reynolds," writes the correspondent of the biographer of Bishop Fisher (Arundel MS. 152, p. 227), "being the last that was executed, and seeing them cruelly quartered, and their bowels taken out, preached unto them and comforted them, promising them a heavenly banquet and supper for their sharp breakfast taken patiently for their Master's sake. He never changed colour nor was disquieted, and then in the end lastly went to die manfully himself."

Another witness of the spectacle, who "had observed most attentively all that took place", related to Cardinal Pole afterwards how, as the martyr put his neck within the halter, he seemed rather to be putting on a regal chain than an instrument of death, such was the alacrity manifested in his countenance.<sup>14</sup> From this last pulpit he exhorted the people always to pray for the King lest he, who was like Solomon in wisdom and goodness when he began to reign, might through women fall away at the end. So far Chauncy. Thus ended the life of one of whom one may say in the words of Cardinal Pole who knew him: "O Blessed man! truly worthy of the fullest confidence of thee, my country!"

Two unusual features were observed by sympathizers about

<sup>13</sup>Trans. *Lives of English Martyrs*, p. 25-6 by Fr. Richard Stanton and Dom Bede Camm.

<sup>14</sup>Hamilton, p. 77-8.

the morning's proceedings. First, the five men were executed in their religious habits, which was then unprecedented. Secondly, there were present, as the Spanish Ambassador next day reported, a large number of spectators connected with the court, including the King's natural son, the Earl of Richmond, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Wiltshire, Anne Boleyn's father, his son, Viscount Rochford, and many others. They were stationed quite near the sufferers. "People say," Chapuys continues, "that the King himself would have liked to see the butchery, which is very probable, seeing that nearly all the Court, even those of the Privy Chamber were there - his principal chamberlain, Norres, bringing with him 40 horses; and it is thought that the King was of the number of five who came thither accoutred and mounted like Borderers with vizors before their faces. That of the Duke of Norfolk's brother got detached, which has caused a great stir, together with the fact that while the 5 thus habited were speaking, all those of the Court went away." The rumour of the King's presence, however, was unfounded, as Chapuys afterwards admits, for the King was reported to have been very angry with the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Wiltshire for not replying to Prior Houghton, "who made a very fine sermon."<sup>16</sup>

Reactions on the Continent were all unfavourable, for men's mouths were not stopped as they were in England. On May the 17th the Papal Nuncio, the Bishop of Faenza wrote to Signor Ambrogio, the Pope's secretary of it.<sup>17</sup> "The whole city," he reports, "is displeased, as they were of exemplary and holy life."

<sup>15</sup> *L & P*, 1535, Vol. viii, No. 666.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.* 751.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.* 726.

Dr. Ortiz, the imperial ambassador in Rome repeats a letter, writing to the Empress, in which Chapuys had already informed him concerning the martyrdoms - of how there died "three Carthusians, a monk of Monte Sion of the Order of St. Bridget, a very learned man, and another priest, who could not acknowledge the King as supreme spiritual head, but only the Pope. They died with great constancy, and with much blame of the judges who condemned them. Without any degradation, they were dragged in their habits to the great grief of the people."<sup>18</sup>

Feelings in Rome are reported by Henry's agent there, Sir Gregory da Casale, dated 1st of June. A copy of a letter which the French ambassador had received was read in the Consistory. Casale writes:- "They are full of pity for the monks; they make a great deal of the matter and report that they gave most wise and holy answers to the King's Council, and the kind of death is explained as most cruel. There was great talk in Rome on the subject, and some even of the Cardinals said they envied such a death, and wished they belonged to the band. To those who related this to me, I replied that if they really wished such a death, they might go to England and imitate the folly of the monks." "As regards the execution of the monks," he adds in cipher, "it is Frenchmen especially who are surprised at it."<sup>19</sup>

At Venice too, great indignation was expressed. "You wished to know," writes Edmund Harvel to Starkey, the royal chaplain, "the judgment here of the death of the monks in England. It was considered to be extreme cruelty, and all Venice was in

<sup>18</sup> *Ib.* 786.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.* *State Papers*, vii, 605; *L & P* 1535, viii, 807; Hendriks, p. 160-1.

great murmuration to hear it. They spoke long time of the business, to my great displeasure, for the defaming of our nation; with the vehementest words they could use. They are persuaded of the dead men's honesty and virtue, and that their opinion conformed to that of the rest of Christendom. They consider their execution as against all honest laws of God and men, and as *novum atque inauditum*. I never saw Italians break out so vehemently at anything; it seemed so strange, and so much against their stomach."<sup>20</sup>

In order to strike terror into the brethren of the Charterhouse, an arm of their late Prior was nailed over the gate. It is probable also that a limb of Richard Reynolds was affixed to Syon. In all their subsequent wanderings, the community carried with them a beautifully carved pinnacle<sup>21</sup> from the gatehouse of their abbey. It needs a strong motive for the nuns to have carried this heavy object about with them in their many wanderings. A contemporary record states that the heads of some of the monks were "set on London Bridge and the rest upon all the gates of London and on the Charterhouse gate."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup>*Ib.* (L & P) No. 874.

<sup>21</sup>For a photo of this 15 cent. capital see Hamilton, p. 85.

<sup>22</sup>Commonplace book of Richard Hilles (Art. by Froude in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1858).

## CHAPTER VI

### BLESSED HUMPHREY MIDDLEMORE: MARTYR OF BIRMINGHAM?

There is a part of Warwickshire which may be called the "Middlemore country," though Edgbaston, their principal seat for four hundred years has now been swallowed up by the growth of the city of Birmingham. The earliest known ancestor of the house was, according to the pedigree of 1569 and 1619, a John de Middlemore. They resided at Mapleborough in the parish of Studley until his grandson, Thomas Middlemore by marriage with Isabella, the daughter of Sir Henry Edgbaston, made Edgbaston Hall from henceforth their residence. Richard Middlemore, the grandson of this Henry, has been suggested as the father of the martyr by the learned compiler of the family history.<sup>1</sup> He married Margery Throckmorton of Coughton Hall, who, after the death of her husband some time before the year 1503, took a solemn vow of chastity which could be taken by widows. By will, dated August the 14th, 1530, she left legacies to St. Chad's cathedral, Lichfield, St. Peter's altar at Harborne, the chapel at Moseley, and also a sum of money to John Baker, "my priest" to sing mass in the church of Edgbaston one year for her soul. The will of her husband mentions other children (unnamed) beside his son and heir, who is known to us.

It may here be asked on what grounds Blessed Humphrey is assigned to this family at all? Conjecture alone in the present state of the evidence must suffice, but the arguments such as they are amount to this:-

<sup>1</sup>W. P. Phillimore in *Some Account of the Family of Middlemore*. (1901).

memory of the Rev. James Finch, the last of the English Carthusian monks. He died March 3, 1821, aged 72". There remains one other member of the small community of Sheen Anglorum whose death the latest historian, Dom Andrew Gray of Parkminster has been so far unable to trace. This was Dom Joseph Brooks, said to have been an American from Maryland, who was with the English Carthusians in 1777.

The troubles of the French Revolution drove many of the clergy to these shores. Among them were eight Carthusians from Gaillon, near Rouen. Through the generosity of Lord Arundell a house called the 'Priory' was lent to them at Coomb near Shaftesbury and here they settled. On the tower of the old church at Donhead St. Mary is a memorial tablet to the Prior, Dom Anselm Guillemet, "banished from his country for religion", who died on 21 April 1798 in the eighty-fourth year of his age and the fifty-fifth of his religious profession. Another member of this community was Dom Antoine Latarre, who was living at the Grande Chartreuse in October 1833 and who warmly welcomed some English visitors and spoke with gratitude of the kindness of the Arundell family during his exile (*Catholic Magazine* January 1835).

## APPENDIX I

The following is a list of the different editions of Chauncy's second and best known recension. All except (f) are noted by Miss Thompson:-

- (a) *Historia aliquot nostri saeculi martyrum*, ed. Vitus à Dulken & Guilielmus à Sittart (Mainz, 1550).
- (b) *Illustria Ecclesiae Trophaea*, ed. Erasmus Vendius (Munich, 1573) in which is included a reprint of the above.
- (c) *Historia aliquot* ... with a preface by Theolonius, Bishop of Evora (Burgos, 1583)
- (d) *Vitae ac Martyrii Cartusianorum aliquot*, ed. by Francis Turriano (Milan, 1606)
- (e) *Commentariolus de Vitae ratione et Martyrio octodecim Cartusianorum*, ed. Arnold Havensius, (Ghent, 1608).
- (f) The same editor also reprinted it with his account of the Carthusian martyrs of Ruremonde, dedicated to Fr. Antonio de Backer (Brussels, 1608).
- (g) *Innocentia et Constantia Victrix*, ed. Simon Weisser (Würzburg, 1608).
- (h) *Historia aliquot Martyrum*, ed. Dom Victor Doreau (London & Montreuil, 1888) a reprint of 1550.

This was translated under the title *History of the Sufferings of Eighteen Carthusians in England* (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1890).

Miss Thompson mentions two manuscripts of Chauncy's work in England: one in the University Library, Cambridge (MS. ff iv. 23) formerly owned by the Rev. John Moore, Bishop of Norwich and then of Ely: two, British Museum MS. Lansdowne 1199 ff 143 sq. a seventeenth century copy of Van Dulken. Also in the library of Dijon is a manuscript of 296 pages, dedicated to Le Tellier,

Secretary of State, entitled *Le triomphe de la foy en la mort des religieux de la Chartreuse de Londres*, of seventeenth century date, according to *Catalogue Générale des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques de France*, (Tome V) (Paris, 1889) p. 160.

For a later discussion of the various versions and editions of Chauncy see Professor D. Knowles's *Religious Orders in England*, Vol. III, p. 22.

## APPENDIX II

The reply of Fr. Theodoric Loer, Vicar of the Charterhouse of Cologne to Blessed John Houghton, September 15, 1532. From *D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia*, Vol. I. (Monstrolii (Montreuil) 1896) p. LXXIV.

Venerabili ac religioso Patri D. Joanni Houghton, Cartusianae domus prope Londinum in Anglia Priori vigilantissimo dignissimoque, F. Theodoricus Loer a Stratis, ejusdem sacri Ordinis apud Coloniam et monachus et Vicarius. S.P.D.

Quantum ex tuis litteris hauserim voluptatem, Pater Venerande, verbis consequi non possum. Primum quidem, quod post eximium illum virum, in omnium scientiam virtute praestantem, Joannem Batmansonum antecessorem tuum hac luce defunctum (qui impense Dionysio favebat), te sacer ille tuus conventus sibi praefecit in Priorem: cujus virtutibus ac laudi, jure is qui te praecessit, si posset, invideret. Quippe qui Ordinis nostri censuram, qui litteras, qui denique virtutes adeo colis et observas omnes, ut nihil supra. Taceo autem loco non infimo censendum, quod meum Dionysium tanti facis, ut si angelicae illi tuae Angliae notus non esset, per te solum posset satis juxta merita praedicari. Quare quum sciam Angliam illam universam tot doctissimis viris refertam, qui omnes Dionysium percipiunt, vel propter illos, si alius esset nemo, nullus mihi erit labor gravis. Jam vero tu ultro currentem invitas. Quid dicam? Puto jam nobis in te, quod Isaac usu venerat, accidisse: nempe quod adeo in te sumus consolati, ut luctus quem ex antecessoris morte incidimus, novo gaudeo obliteraretur.

Accessit hinc aliud mihi gaudium, quod quam hactenus navavi operam in evulgandis Dionysii operibus, merito non poenitere me debeat, sentientem adeo doctis gratam Dionysii lectionem: potissime quum ad hanc provinciam, qua ante nos non pauci celeberrimi viri fuere deterriti, nil adeo me pertraxit, ut obedientiae studium, honor Dei, zelusque animarum, et ut eruditis juxta ac piis servirem. Quorum aliquod an sim assecutus, plane nescio, nisi quod doctorum tot litterae, tot monita Superiorum me assidue confortant, ne operi coepto subtraham vires.

Petis subinde in epistola tua Dionysii Vitam, petis omnes Dionysii libros tibi mitti. Nihil magis cupio quam ut id fiat. Utinam hunc diem vivam, quo Dionysii opera omnia videam typis excusa. Edita sunt jam operum ejus nonnulla, at nihil ad ea quae hucusque latent. Vincit typographos, vincit praelia, quorum non minus sex aut septem in studiosorum piorumque gratiam Dionysio excudendo occupantur, vincit denique marsupium nostrum operum Dionysii multitudo. Et quum omnia rei magnitudine pene succumbant, animus mihi permanet invictus, quo tuo ac aliquot piorum suffragio fretus non desinam ante (nisi me vita deficiat) quam Dionysii omnia opera dederim in lucem. Ceterum ut tuo satisfaciam desiderio, omnes Dionysii tibi libros mitto: haud quidem, ut tu desideras, typis excusos planeque editos, sed nomina sola, nudosque titulos librorum: ut quos amas desideres ardentius, hocque librorum ejus elencho videas quid habeas desiderare. Magna certe industria, magna vigilantia, nec minori labore conatus sum operum Dionysii catalogum comportare, at in dies librorum ejus copia major administratur, quos Dionysii esse, et phrasis et pietas ejus in Deum singularis, et (quod his certius est) manus ejus, qua omnes quos elucubravit scripsit, indicant. Nihilominus tamen adhuc non exstare dolemus plures, quos certissime Dionysio scimus auctore prodiisse. Quorundam vero, quos in luce dedimus, titulos minus Latinos mutavimus, subscribendo integras exordiorum sententias, ne sub Dionysii nomine etiam aliena prodeant, et etiam ut curioso huic saeculo nonnihil servire videamur. Nihil enim vel in hac vel in alia quacumque re laboris industriae Dionysio nostro deerit ex parte nostra, quod in ejus laudem possit desiderari. Tuum quoque posthac erit nihil intentatum linquere, quod in ejus possit, quem amas, frugem accedere. Vale, Pater multum dilecte, et (quod soles) perge promovere Dionysium illum tuum juxta ac meum. Vicarium tuum Guillelmum Exmew, reliquosque omnes istic Dionysii ac nostros amicos, potissime autem Venerabilem et integerrimum Patrem Priorem de Henton Convisitatorem, nostris verbis saluta. Iterum vale. Ex Cartusia Coloniensi, ipsa die octavarum Nativitatis gloriosissimae Virginis Mariae. Anno 1532.

In the Blackburn Public Library is a Carthusian *Diurnale* which may well have been handled by one of the Carthusian martyrs. In the margin of one page is written

take heede  
whom thou  
dost truste  
either brother  
or father

The librarian supplies the following bibliographical description:

HORAE DIURNAE.

In Latin, on vellum, 138 x 100 mm., 156 ff., 26 lines to a page in a small Gothic hand. Century XIV/XV. Western English. Old brown leather binding on oak boards, with leather thongs and brass clasps. In very poor condition, worm eaten. Entries in the Calendar, relating to Walter Mawny, founder of Charterhouse, d. 1372, indicate that the MS might have belonged to Charterhouse. Written on the loose fly-leaf are a number of names of former owners and also at the top, Charterhouse, London. The MS was given to the library by Mr. Sudworth, a retired schoolmaster, after it was found in Bank Top Primary School, Blackburn.