

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

約翰福克斯在於維多利亞中期伯明罕宗教改革主義之影響

計畫類別：個別型計畫

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Report on NSC project : The Role of John Foxe in Birmingham's Mid-Victorian Reformationism September 2004-2005.

Dr. Vivienne Westbrook

This project was stimulated by the British Academy John Foxe on-line project which was originally set up in order to produce a searchable electronic edition of *The Acts and Monuments*, better known as 'The Book of Martyrs'. Access to four electronic editions of this text has created widespread scholarly interest in the creation and impact of 'The Book of Martyrs' not only on sixteenth century culture, but on that of subsequent centuries.

I had been approached by the British Academy Foxe Project directors to write several articles and international conference papers on a range of issues pertaining to this text, but it was only when I began to consider the impact of Foxe on the nineteenth century that I realized the importance of my contribution to Foxe studies. My NSC project set out to explore the way in which Foxe's book was used in mid-Victorian Britain to remind the nation of its Protestant identity in response to encroaching Roman Catholicism.

Although the project has the potential to become a major book-length study of nineteenth-century memorialization, for the purpose of this project I focused on one area, Birmingham, and the activities of the British Protestant Association there. Using the resources of the British Library, Manchester University Library, Cambridge University Library and Birmingham's Central and University libraries between September 2004 and 2005, I developed an awareness of the complexity of the role of memorialization in the formation and reformation of national identity in the nineteenth century and the role of Reformation texts themselves within that process. Not surprisingly, most of the material pertaining to the Birmingham Protestant Association was located in the Birmingham libraries. I was able to get copies of all of Thomas Aston's published lectures and read through all of the surviving copies of the *Birmingham Protestant Record*, of which he was the editor. I had access to the Cromwell Hall archive, which is uncatalogued and therefore requires painstaking searches through the boxes item by item. Whilst much of the material was peripheral to the focus of my project, I did unearth some important

manuscript documents pertaining to the changing nature of Birmingham's Protestant identity at the close of the nineteenth century. Whilst in Birmingham I was also able to conduct a site report of the locations, statues and buildings that were referred to in the archive. Although Birmingham underwent enormous changes during the twentieth century some of the buildings and, of course, memorials, are still in situ. I had hoped to trace the lantern slides that Mr. Aston used for his Foxe lectures in nineteenth-century Birmingham schoolrooms but they are stored in the basement of Birmingham Central Library, uncatalogued among an estimated ten thousand other slides. Although permission was initially refused, I am confident that I will be able to gain access to this slide archive eventually, and find the Foxe slides. I traced the edition of Foxe's book from which the slides were made and consulted it in the Cambridge UL. I established that they were nineteenth-century illustrations and not reproductions of the sixteenth-century woodcuts. At the UL I was also able to consult the volumes of the *British Magazine* pertaining to the nineteenth-century controversy concerning the reprinting of Foxe's sixteenth-century text for a nineteenth-century readership. Manchester University Library and the British Library were invaluable resources for secondary materials pertaining to religious controversy during the period.

I had hoped to publish this project as a chapter in a book edited by Dr. David Loades for Ashgate Press. In the event Dr. Loades was unable to raise the subvention necessary to pursue his intended edition. Instead, I have assembled a team of internationally renowned academics working in the areas of Art History, Bibliography, Ecclesiastical History, Reformation and Nineteenth-century Literature and History to contribute to a book for Cambridge University Press. I and Dr. Peter Nockles will edit the volume and my chapter will, of course, be included.

I will be using the material that I have collected from the libraries for a course that I am teaching this semester at National Taiwan University entitled 'Flaming Martyrs: the politics of burning in Marian England'. The current world expert on John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs', Dr. Thomas Freeman, may join me in Taiwan later in the semester to demonstrate the British Academy John Foxe on-line database and to share his expertise with the students taking my course. There is a great deal more research that needs to be conducted in order to extend the study into a book, but this is my next goal.