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“Of Blessed Memory”: The Recasting of Elizabeth I as England’s  
Protestant Patron Saint, 1603–1645

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# “Of Blessed Memory”: The Recasting of Elizabeth I as England’s Protestant Patron Saint, 1603–1645

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So Great ELIZA, England’s brightest Sun,  
The World’s Renown and everlasting Lamp,  
Admits not here the least Comparison;  
Whose Glories, do the Greatest Princes damp.  
    That ever Specter swai’d or Crown did wear,  
    Within the Verge of either Hemisphere.  
Thous English Goddess, Empress of our Sex,  
O Thou whose Name still reigns in all our hearts,  
To whom are due, our ever-vowed Respects!<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Diana Primrose in her hagiographical work, *A Chaine of Pearle* (London: John Dawson, 1630), close to thirty years after the death of Elizabeth I, describing her as the greatest of monarchs. Primrose asserted that Elizabeth was a better monarch than any male monarch who had ever lived. Even in memory, Primrose suggested that Elizabeth I reigned supreme and cast light to guide the present and future of England. This was quite a reversal from

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<sup>1</sup> Spellings have been modernized by the author where it did not interfere with the meter or meaning of the text. Minimal modern punctuation has been added. Titles of documents, however, have been left with their original spellings. Diana Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle. Or, A Memoriall of the Peerles Graces, and Heroick Vertues of Queene Elizabeth, of Glorious Memory* (London: [John Dawson] for Thomas Paine, 1630), A3<sup>v</sup>.

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Elizabeth I's final years. During Elizabeth I's lifetime, many Protestants felt that her reforms did not go nearly far enough in ridding the Church of England of popish elements. The Nicodemite conformity during the Marian years of Elizabeth I and some of her trusted advisors, particularly William Cecil (1520–1598), were occasionally objects of open criticism by Puritans.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth I's final years were overshadowed by fears of a contested succession, leading to division and factionalism within the court.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, a series of volcanic eruptions on the other side of the world in conjunction with the already cooling climate during the Little Ice Age led to bitterly cold winters in the 1590s. This, in turn, contributed to a series of poor harvests, a deadly outbreak of the plague, and low real wages. To some contemporaries, it seemed that nature and God had turned against England and Europe and brought on the eschaton.<sup>4</sup> Many of the English looked forward to James I's accession with relief and hope. The disjunction that ensued after Elizabeth I's death was captured in Thomas Dekker's *The Wonderfull Yeare* (London: Thomas Creede, 1603) in which "Upon Thursday, it was treason to cry God save king James king of England, and upon Friday high treason not to cry so."<sup>5</sup> In Dekker's depictions, tears over Elizabeth I's death morphed quickly into shouts of joy over the smooth ascension of James I.

Yet, shortly after her death, the popularity of Elizabeth I was resurrected, and her idealized memory proceeded to have an incredibly active afterlife. A physician even invoked the authority of her name to sell a pamphlet on cures for the plague and treatments

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Harkins, "Elizabethan Puritanism and the Politics of Memory in Post-Marian England," *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 899–919, doi:10.1017/S0018246X14000417.

<sup>3</sup> For a history of criticizing the queen during her lifetime and especially after it became clear that she could have no children, see Julia M. Walker, ed., *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Parker, "History and Climate: The Crisis of the 1590s Reconsidered," in *Climate Change and Cultural Transition in Europe*, eds. Claus Leggewie and Franz Mauelshagen (Boston: Brill, 2018), 119–55.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Dekker, 1603. *The Wonderfull Yeare. Wherein is Shewed the Picture Of London, Lying Sicke of the Plague* (London: Thomas Creede, 1603), C1<sup>v</sup>.

for pregnant women.<sup>6</sup> After her death, some English who were disgruntled with her successors utilized a reimagined Elizabeth as an exemplar of the ideal monarch and used this to recast Elizabeth I in contrast with her male successors and to critique their failings. In this process, they, like Elizabeth's portraitists during her lifetime, drew on common tropes that were utilized in medieval hagiography and redeployed by Protestant martyrologists. Elizabethan hagiographers appropriated these tropes in their depiction of Elizabeth I.

This recasting occurred during a time of heightened cultural and religious anxiety as Jesuit missionaries entered England and threatened to upend the religious and political order. The continued erratic and cooler temperatures than normal contributed to a feeling of instability that further strained the political, economic, and social structure. This article explores the casting of Elizabeth I as England's new patron saint – a Brigid of Kildare or Margaret of Scotland – during this turbulent milieu and argues that Elizabeth I was presented by her hagiographers as a virtuous celibate, and most importantly, Protestant saint, divinely protected, surrounded by miraculous events, and tasked with a mission to bring Protestantism to England. Roy Strong has noted nascent efforts in Nicholas Hillard's depictions of Elizabeth I in the 1580s to sanctify her and highlighted the similarity between the 1580s practice of wearing jewelry containing symbols associated with Elizabeth I or images of her to the Roman Catholic practice of wearing images of saints.<sup>7</sup> Strong, among others, argued that a Cult of the Virgin Queen was created in the later years of her rule to replace the Cult of the Virgin Mary. Subsequent scholars have problematized the view of a cult of the Virgin Queen during her lifetime and the

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<sup>6</sup> *Queen Elizabeths Closset of Physical Secrets, With certain approved Medicines taken out of a Manuscript found at the dissolution of one of our English Abbies: and supplied with the Child-bearers Cabinet, and Perservative against the Plague and Small Pox* (London: Will. Sheares Junior, at the Blue-Bible in Bedford-Street in Covent-Garden, 1656).

<sup>7</sup> Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 109–10, 121.

ability of Elizabeth I to control the use of her image.<sup>8</sup> While this article is informed by these debates, it focuses instead on examining how she was depicted after her death while recognizing that some of those who created her posthumous image were also involved in the creation of her image during her lifetime.

To be a saint, one had to be dead. This was one of the many problems with representing Elizabeth as an elevated being during her lifetime. Yet after her death, her image was more malleable with no living and aging individual to contradict the imagined Elizabeth. Although Elizabeth I was consistently cast as exceptional, this article furthermore argues that some of her Protestant hagiographers, like their fifteen-century predecessors, presented her as an imitable saint to their audience. This had significant implications for views of women's religious speech.

Scholars have contended that between 1560 and 1640, there was increased social anxiety due to fears of an inverted world where unruly women threatened to overturn patriarchy. Consequently, in order to "right the world," there was a concerted attempt to have men reassert their patriarchal power.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, there were some men who depicted Elizabeth I as the great Protestant reformer of England and a model of correct behavior. This article suggests that by doing so, these men presented women, not men, as the key players in fixing society and religion – even women who did not abide by gender norms or adhere always to a patriarchal system. It further argues that by hearing sermons, seeing plays, and reading literature about Elizabeth I, a few women utilized this example that contradicted typical conduct literature, which adjured women to be silent, chaste, and obedient. This article reinforces

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<sup>8</sup> For a problematization of the viewpoint that veneration of Elizabeth I supplanted the cult of the Virgin Mary during her lifetime, see Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 7, 10, 235–41. For a discussion of the difficulty of Elizabeth in controlling her own representation, see Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins, eds., "Introduction," in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I* (Manchester University Press, 2007), 1–16.

<sup>9</sup> Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560–1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

arguments by scholars, like Jessica Murphy, that at least some early modern English recognized that strictly following the behavior promulgated in conduct literature when men behaved badly could be problematic, if not dangerous, for society. Silence was not always golden.<sup>10</sup> Early modern English women were confronted in a variety of genres, beyond just conduct literature, with the exemplar of a woman – Elizabeth I – who was far from silent in public and was powerful. The men extolling Elizabeth I in such literature may have meant her to be an example to men in authority rather than women, but by presenting Elizabeth I as an exemplar with a God-given mission of Reformation, they, nonetheless, communicated the message that women could be religious authorities and speak with authority outside the confines of their own homes, inspiring women in the mid to late seventeenth century to act on that image.

#### THE MAKING OF A PROTESTANT SAINT

Elizabeth I's image was highly contested. Her successor, the Scottish James I, recognized the problems of having a popular, native English monarch's memory loom large over him. Elizabeth's elaborate and very expensive funeral slowed James' arrival in England and his coronation. Yet, this did not mean that James was not actively involved and supportive of the funeral's opulent display of national grief. Instead, Jennifer Woodward argues that James utilized the opportunity to promote a smooth transfer of power and encourage assurance that his reign would be one of continuity and cohesion with his predecessor's.<sup>11</sup> In the most turbulent years of the Reformation, funeral effigies for nobles had come into question and fallen into disuse due to the similarity between effigies and images of saints. For Elizabeth's funeral, the use of a funeral effigy was revived as was the canopy which was like

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<sup>10</sup> Jessica C. Murphy, *Virtuous Necessity: Conduct Literature and the Making of the Virtuous Woman in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Glenn D. Burger, *Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570–1625* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 97–101.

the one used in a Corpus Christi processions.<sup>12</sup> Protestant England was careful to avoid any accusations of committing idolatry, thereby, violating the second of the Ten Commandments, but Elizabethan authorities willingly appropriated elements of pre-Reformation saint veneration that did not involve kneeling before an image to create an experience of English mourning.

In a very carefully orchestrated piece of stagecraft, after securely positioned on the throne, James I arranged for Elizabeth I to be moved and buried next to Mary I, her sister whose dynastic and religious interests clashed so much with Elizabeth's in life, rather than in Henry VII's vault. The dual monument for Elizabeth I and her sister, although expensive, was visibly smaller than that dedicated to his mother Mary, Queen of Scots and placed in the Lady's Chapel, thereby, marginalizing them and legitimizing James' own mother, and, by extension, his right of succession to the English throne.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Julia M. Walker argues that the painting *Elizabeth with Time and Death* from 1622 was another way for Elizabeth I's Stuart successors to downplay her victory over the Spanish Armada and emphasize instead her mortality and frailty. The portrait in its mimicry of the Armada portrait depicts death, not the Spanish, as her ultimate enemy. In doing so, the Stuart kings sought to dismiss any hagiographical view of Elizabeth I and replace it with the view of a queen acting outside her gender role, lonely, powerless, withered, and dead.<sup>14</sup> Despite Stuart attempts to bury Elizabeth I once and for all, her memory proved difficult to eclipse, and popular memory diverged sharply from the official Stuart narrative.

Art historians have noted a significant shift in artistic representations of Elizabeth I in the 1570s, when it became increasingly obvious that she would not produce an heir. She and royal courtiers with a vested interest in supporting the monarchy cultivated the image of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen, timeless and ageless, a

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<sup>12</sup> Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 106–15.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46–7; Julia M. Walker, *The Elizabeth Icon, 1603–2003* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 13–16.

<sup>14</sup> Julia M. Walker, "Bones of Contention: Posthumous Images of Elizabeth and Stuart Politics," in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 252–76.

symbol of the state itself rather than a representation of her natural body.<sup>15</sup> David Davis notes that as she aged painters increasingly depicted her “as an Empress and a saintly figure.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, even within her own lifetime, retaining control of that depiction proved notoriously difficult for the government.<sup>17</sup> After her death, this picture of Elizabeth I did not disappear, and, if anything, was amplified. Echoing the Ditchley portrait of Queen Elizabeth I by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger and the Rainbow portrait, *The Life and Death of Queen Elizabeth, From the Wombe to the Tombe, from Her Birth to Her Buriall* contained an illustration of Elizabeth I with two lace wings behind her – visually transforming Elizabeth I into an angel, a saint, or a goddess.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the Ditchley portrait, Elizabeth I still looked youthful. Her crown was topped by a cross and encircled her head in a halo. In her hands, Elizabeth I held a scepter and orb. Overall, the image presented Elizabeth I, who the author claimed was by “all-beloved, admired, and renowned,” as powerful yet saintly and angelic.<sup>19</sup>

An engraving of Elizabeth I published in 1623 similarly depicted her with elaborate period lace wings. Elizabeth I’s head was topped with a crown, surrounded by stars forming a halo around her head. In recognition of her death, Elizabeth I was encompassed

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<sup>15</sup> Emilia Olechnowicz, “The Queen’s Two Faces: The Portraiture of Elizabeth I of England,” in *Premodern Rulership and Contemporary Political Power: The King’s Body Never Dies*, eds. Karolina Mroziewicz and Aleksander Sroczyński (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 217–46.

<sup>16</sup> David Davis, “‘The Vayle of Eternall Memorie’: Contesting Representations of Queen Elizabeth in English Woodcuts,” *Word & Image* 27, no. 1 (2011): 73, DOI: 10.1080/0266281003794192.

<sup>17</sup> Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 89–90; Louis A. Montrose, “Idols of the Queen: Policy, Gender, and the Picturing of Elizabeth I,” *Representations* 68, no. 1 (1999): 108–10; Olechnowicz, “The Queen’s Two Faces,” 240–41; for an in-depth discussion of the complex artistic decisions and transformations in creating a popular image of the queen, also see Davis, “‘The Vayle of Eternall Memorie,’” 65–76; for a counterpoint that government sanctioned medals were relatively subdued at the end of her life, see William Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe, 1300–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 145.

<sup>18</sup> For an extended discussion of the symbolism of the Ditchley and Rainbow portrait, the similarities in portraiture of the queen with that of Roman goddess, and subsequent copies of the Ditchley portrait de-aging Elizabeth I, see Strong, *Gloriana*, 126, 128, 135–41, 157–61.

<sup>19</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth, From the Wombe to the Tombe, from Her Birth to her Buriall* (London: Iohn Okes, 1639), A2<sup>r</sup>.



by clouds. Elizabeth I's face was stern, but her skin was firm reflecting an Elizabeth still in the prime of life, not aged. She was bedecked with jewels and feathers – an opulent image of power and wealth.<sup>20</sup> By placing a halo of stars around her head as well as seating her amongst the clouds, the image mimicked the iconography and musicology of the Virgin Mary, who had long been associated with a star, for example, in the hymn “Ave maris stella.” Some theologians and artists also equated the Virgin Mary with the woman in Revelation 12 who gives birth to a son who as prophesied will rule all nations and wears a crown of 12 stars.<sup>21</sup> Although the illustration mimicked imagery utilized in the Ditchley and Rainbow portraits, the timing of the publication of this illustration, equating Elizabeth I with the apocalyptic Revelation woman, is significant. Between 1621 to 1625, there was a series of catastrophic weather events that resulted in failed harvests, widespread poverty, and starvation, culminating in a major outbreak of the plague in 1625. Apocalyptic concerns, therefore, would not be far from the minds of those who viewed the illustration.<sup>22</sup> The hagiographical image of Elizabeth I with the trappings of wealth contrasted sharply with the environmental and economic troubles of 1623 and could incite longing for the return of such a queen. The image proved popular and was utilized as an illustration in Abraham Darcie's translation of William Camden's *Annales* in 1625 and 1630.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the imagery in the illustration evoked association of Elizabeth I with the

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<sup>20</sup> John Davies, *Lo Here Her Type Who was of Latt, the Propp of Belgia* (London: n.p., 1623).

<sup>21</sup> Depictions of the Virgin Mary as the woman of Revelation 12 with stars encircling her head include *The Madonna of Humility with Saints Mark and John* by Lorenzo Veneziano, *The Immaculate Conception* by Diego Velázquez, and *The Coronation of the Virgin* by Guido Reni. All are located at the National Gallery, London.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change, and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 327.

<sup>23</sup> See the unnumbered opening pages of William Camden, *Annales. The True and Royall History of the Famous Empresse Elizabeth, Queene of England France and Ireland &c. True Faith's Defendresse of Diuine Renoune and Happy Memory* (London: [George Purslowe, Humphrey Lownes, and Miles Flesher] for Benjamin Fisher and are to be souled at the Talbot in Pater Noster Rowe, 1625); William Camden, *The Historie of the Life and Reigne of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queene of England* (London: Benjamin Fisher in Aldersgate Streete, at the Signe of the Talbot, 1630).

Virgin Mary.<sup>24</sup> Even if her Stuart successors downplayed her legacy, in the hands of popular illustrators, Elizabeth I became a saint. Environmental upheaval further contributed to this posthumous fashioning.

Rhetorically, as well as pictorially, eulogists portrayed Elizabeth I in death as a saint by borrowing tropes drawn from medieval hagiography and applying them to Elizabeth I's life. Karen A. Winstead has argued that even prior to the Reformation, hagiographers domesticated saints making them more palatable to political authorities, less outspoken and defiant towards men in authority, less centered around supernatural signs, and, thereby, more imitable by the audience reading saints' stories. As Winstead noted, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563) served as Protestant hagiography. Genelle Gertz has contended that Anne Askew's (1521–1546) incredibly popular martyrdom narrative drew on medieval hagiographical precedent, and her story continued to be promulgated throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Memory of medieval hagiography did not completely die in Post-Reformation England, but instead, in continuation with fifteenth-century practice, continued to present a tamer type of saint.<sup>26</sup> Late medieval hagiography cast a long shadow on Protestant England.

Apologists during her lifetime cultivated the similarities between the Virgin Queen and the Virgin Mary, whether it was to transfer allegiances from Roman Catholicism and the Virgin Mary to the Protestant kingdom and queen, or to bolster her legitimacy and depict her as a divinely appointed monarch.<sup>27</sup> Carole Levin

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<sup>24</sup> For use of a star as a symbol of the Virgin Mary, see Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125–26.

<sup>25</sup> Genelle Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 77–106; for a seventeenth-century publication history of Anne Askew, see Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 41–3.

<sup>26</sup> Karen A. Winstead, *Fifteenth-Century Lives: Writing Sainthood in England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2020), 7–8, 125–46, 160.

<sup>27</sup> For a fuller discussion on Elizabeth I as the second Virgin Mary during her lifetime, see Peter McClure and Robin Headlam Wells, "Elizabeth I as a Second Virgin Mary," *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 1 (March 1990): 38–70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24412521>; Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 28; Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*

suggests that when Elizabeth continued the practice of touching the king's evil, she was not merely continuing a royal practice revitalized by her grandfather but also legitimizing her rule. She was drawing on the long precedent of medieval female virgin saints, like Saint Uncumber and Saint Frideswide.<sup>28</sup> This connection between Elizabeth I and medieval female virgin saints did not disappear upon her demise and was amplified after her death, not diminished. Many English churches in the early seventeenth century displayed memorials to Elizabeth's memory, filling a place possibly left vacant by the removal of altars and images to female saints.<sup>29</sup> Christopher Lever's poem *Queene Elizabeths Teares* (1607) followed the pattern of these church memorials claiming that Elizabeth I was now "Among the number of those holy Saints / . . . Who like the beauty of the fairest Star, / In beauteous name exceeds all other far: / And but we do except the Virgin-mother."<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth I's birth was imbued with religious significance and utilized to tie her directly to the Virgin Mary. In *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth* (London: John Okes, 1639), the anonymous author created essentially a hagiography to canonize Elizabeth I as saint. Written over thirty years after Elizabeth's death, the author, nonetheless, closely connected Elizabeth I with the Virgin Mary by highlighting first the name of Elizabeth I's mother which is the same as the Virgin Mary's – Anne. He presented Elizabeth I's birth as a divine gift, writing that God himself saw "this Kingdom's misery, / And made fair Anne to fruitful to bring forth / A daughter better than the Kingdom's worth."<sup>31</sup> Her birth occurred on Sunday, the eve of

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(Wallop, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 16, 114, 125–8. For a problematization of this view, see Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen*, 7, 10, 235–41.

<sup>28</sup> Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 18–22.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, *The Elizabeth Icon*, 36–48.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Lever, *Queene Elizabeths Teares: Or, Her Resolute Bearing the Christian Crosse Inflicted on Her by the Persecuting Hands of Steuen Gardner Bishop of Winchester, in the Bloodie Time of Queene Marie* (London: V.S. for Mathew Lowmes, 1607), B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth, from the Wombe to the Tombe, from her Birth to her Buriall Verse. The Many and Mighty Dnagers, and Miraculous Deliverances of the All-beloved, Admired, and Renowned Queene Elizabeth, of England, &c* (London: John Okes, 1639), A4<sup>v</sup>.

the Virgin Mary's birth, and her death occurred on the eve of the Annunciation, thereby, making Elizabeth I the second Virgin Mary. As with any good saint's *vita*, the author, after extolling the virtues of the young saint, then turned to a period of great persecution presenting Mary I's reign as akin to the Decian or Diocletian Persecution with flames and blood consuming the land "And many hundreds did to Ashes turn."<sup>32</sup>

Canonizing a saint required miracles to be associated with them, which the author ascribed to Elizabeth. Despite multiple murder attempts, a fire in her chamber, attempts to marry her off to a foreign prince, a deadly illness, and the constant threat of execution for her religion, Elizabeth I, in the pages of the *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, was miraculously protected and emerged from these trials still an innocent virgin. According to the narrative, "But still the All-seeing eye of providence, / Did guide and guard her spotless innocence."<sup>33</sup> George Downame, a less dramatic writer, echoed the same refrain that she "who Antichrist cursed, Christ blessed" and had preserved from the machinations of popes.<sup>34</sup> Like the Virgin Mary, Saint Lucy, and Saint Agatha, hagiographers represented Elizabeth I's virginity as protected by God.

The first part of Thomas Heywood's extremely popular *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (London: Thomas Purfoot for Nathaniel Butter, 1605), similarly portrayed Elizabeth I during Mary I's reign and her imprisonment in the Tower of London in the mode of a late medieval virgin saint. Again, only divine intervention preserved her as "a Virgine," and she only narrowly avoided the fate of martyrdom that beset so many earlier female virgin saints.<sup>35</sup> Given that his play or at least a variation of it was performed well into Charles II's reign, it was highly influential in

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<sup>32</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, A6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, A7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> George Downame, *A Treatise Concerning Antichrist, Divided into Two Bookes, the Former Proving That the Pope Is an Antichrist, the Latter, Maintaining the Same Assertion Against All the Obiections of Robert Bellarmine, Iesuit and Cardinall of the Church of Rome* (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1603), N1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know No Bodie* (London: Thomas Purfoot for Nathaniel Butter, 1605), B4<sup>v</sup>.

creating the memory of Elizabeth I. Although Heywood drew extensively from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* for the first part of the play, Heywood added extra scenes, not taken from Foxe, to depict Elizabeth I as even more sanctified and her enemies more villainous.<sup>36</sup> In a scene not included in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Elizabeth I was depicted as following the example of late medieval holy women by making and distributing goods for the poor even while in the midst of being persecuted and in need herself.<sup>37</sup> Much like Saint Dorothy who according to legend was brought roses and fruit by a supernatural child, in *If You Know Not Me*, Elizabeth's I mere presence was so attractive that a young boy risked a beating from the constable to bring a nosegay to her.<sup>38</sup> Her servants, children, the common people of the town, and loyal lords consistently proclaimed her innocent of all charges.

Throughout Mary I's reign, Elizabeth I was pictured as having prophetic premonitions of an early demise but repeatedly expresses trust in God's providence and joy at the prospect of dying, like a medieval saint, as "a Virgin and a Martyr."<sup>39</sup> In the play, angels divinely intervened to prevent her murder. Moreover, Elizabeth I was granted divine revelation to assure her that she will "with the choirs of Angels" sing and is given an open Bible to assure her of providential protection.<sup>40</sup> Direct ascent to heaven upon death was a prerequisite for a person to be canonized. Even the lords who sought her life, like the persecutors of biblical and medieval saints, acknowledged her innocence and that "her life is guarded by the hand of heaven, / And we in vain pursue it."<sup>41</sup> Similar to the saints of old, Elizabeth I's survival in the play was attributed to her fidelity to Protestantism.

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<sup>36</sup> Teresa Grant, "Drama Queen: Staging Elizabeth in *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*," in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 120, 128–9.

<sup>37</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, D3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> For a description of the legend of Saint Dorothy, see Larissa Tracy, ed. and trans., *Women of the Gilte Legende: A Selection of Middle English Saints Life* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 38.

<sup>39</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, B4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, C1<sup>v</sup>, E3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, F1<sup>v</sup>.

Perhaps in the most directly hagiographical work, Henry Chettle succinctly stated that “Elizabeth the hand-maid to the Lord of Heaven, and Empress of all Maids, Mothers, Youth, and men, then living in this English Earth . . . Preserved she was from the violence of death, her blood was precious in the sight of GOD, as is the blood of all his Saints”<sup>42</sup> Chettle explicitly argued that Elizabeth indeed was one of God’s saints and she acted with the imprimatur of God as his personal servant. An inscription at All Hallows at the Wall likewise overtly depicted Elizabeth I as a “saint” – the “chaste patroness of true religion” and “a mother in Israel.”<sup>43</sup> Despite how conduct literature adjured women to be chaste, quiet, and obedient, Elizabeth I in this depiction only fulfilled the first of the three injunctions. She followed the model of medieval saint far more than that of the ideal woman encouraged by the authors of conduct literature. Elizabeth I was far from silent or compliant.

#### CREATING AN APOSTLE—A PROTESTANT MISSIONARY TO ENGLAND

Eulogists portrayed Elizabeth I as more than just a virgin saint, unjustly persecuted and miraculously protected by God, but instead, she was a second Patrick, Mary Magdalene, or a Maris Stella – a shining light on a mission to teach and guide her nation to Jesus and true Christianity, i.e., Protestantism, for her hagiographers. She served as the foil to the great Roman Catholic missionaries of the period, the Jesuits. By inculcating her nation through instruction by her chosen clergy and thwarting the efforts of the Jesuits, Elizabeth I was represented as a missionary and patron saint of England’s nascent Protestantism, wisely protecting it from the forces arrayed against it.

Numerous authors after Elizabeth I’s death credited her with establishing and spreading Protestantism in England. A spiritual testimony of a Protestant, published in 1643, specifically credited the reigns of Edward VI, Elizabeth I, and James I for reforming

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<sup>42</sup> Henry Chettle, *Englands Mourning Garment* (London: Thomas Millington, 1603), B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1485 fo. 33<sup>r</sup>, quoted in Alexandra Walsham, “‘A Very Deborah?’ The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch,” in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 159.

him from his “Superstitious errors of Popery.”<sup>44</sup> Earlier writers had also treated Elizabeth I as liberating England from popish superstition and converting it to Protestantism. At the end of *If You Know Not Me You Know No Bodie*, Elizabeth I, upon arrival in London as the new Queen, was given an English Bible by the Mayor of London. First kissing the Bible, Elizabeth I announced that the English translation of the Bible after being “so long conceal’d itself, So long shut up, so long hid . . . We here unclasp, for ever it is free.”<sup>45</sup> According to the play, Elizabeth I bequeathed upon England the gift of the English Bible to save the souls of her subjects. Elizabeth I in an almost Christ-like way, rescued souls through her suffering during Mary I’s reign. One of the most explicit representations of Elizabeth I as apostle of England was written shortly after her death. In *Englands Mourning Garment* (London: Thomas Millington, 1603), English dramatist Henry Chettle wrote:

Her Highness therefore taught all her people the undoubted truth: faith in Christ alone, the way, the door, and the life: not turning either to the right hand, or to the left: and in this being the best mean, her Temperance chiefly appeared: this rule she taught her kingdom, her family, herself: at least caused them to be taught by excellent pastors to whom humbly she gave public ear.”<sup>46</sup>

Chettle presented Elizabeth I as a teaching saint, an apostle, bringing faith in Christ to her flock, the people of England, if not always personally, at least through her appointed pastors.

Anglican poet and priest John Donne (1572–1631) resonated with and expanded upon this theme. In his sermon, Elizabeth I was not the only woman depicted as a reformer of religion and arbitrator of orthodoxy. During her lifetime, Elizabeth I was treated as a contemporary Deborah – a prophet and ruler of the Hebrews in the Old Testament who was said to be able to hear God’s voice and would share God’s word with her people.<sup>47</sup> Now

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<sup>44</sup> Herbert Palmer, *The Upright Protestant, As He Was Reformed from the Superstitious Errors of Popery in the Happy Reignes of Edward the 6<sup>th</sup>. Qu. Elizabeth, and K. Iames of Blessed Memory* (London: George Lindsey, 1643), A1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, G4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Chettle, *Englands Mourning Garment*, D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Michele Osherow, *Women’s Voices in Early Modern England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 77–110.

after her death, Donne used Deborah and her song as a framing device for his sermon. Donne presented Deborah as a woman called by God with “a zeal to the cause, and consequently an enmity to the enemy.”<sup>48</sup> Jael too – the heroine in the Book of Judges who delivered Israel from the arm of King Jabin of Canaan – made a special appearance as uniquely called for a God-ordained mission, to nail Sisera’s head to the ground, even though not of the faith. In another sermon devoted to the subject of women’s role in religion, Donne urged his audience that although women might not be as theologically well-versed or physically strong, biblical women had, nonetheless, been called by God, were “capable of religious offices,” and had worked early, long, and earnestly with great piety.<sup>49</sup> In this sermon, too, Donne invoked the memory of Elizabeth I as evidence of the ability of women as “our age hath given us such a Queen, as scarce any former King hath equaled.”<sup>50</sup> Through Deborah and Elizabeth I’s examples, Donne justified women’s involvement in religion as spiritual warriors.

Beyond just permitting or ushering in the Reformation, Donne also rhetorically canonized Elizabeth I’s behavior with regards to religion as the most orthodox. He argued that in theological debates “we settle ourselves best in the Actions and Precedents of the late Queen of blessed and everlasting memory” due to “her power and her wisdom, to this purpose.”<sup>51</sup> “Blessed” was a word frequently used as an honorary adjective for beatified saints and frequently attached by memorialists in references to the queen.<sup>52</sup> Rather than emphasizing the role of her male counselors or

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<sup>48</sup> John Donne, *Five Sermons Vpon Speciall Occasions* (London: Thomas Jones, 1626), B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> John Donne, *LXXX Sermons Preached by That Learned and Reverend Divine, Iohn Donne, Dr in Divinity, Late Deane of the Cathedrall Church of S. Pauls London* (London: Miles Flesher: 1640), Z2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Donne, *LXXX Sermons*, Y2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Donne, *Five Sermons*, G4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> For examples of usage in English, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online, June 2022), s.v. “blessed | blest, adj.” See also the many examples in sixteenth-century calendars and martyrologies, for example, *Here Begynneth the Kalendre of the Newe Legend of Englande* (London: In Fleete Strete at the Signe of the George by (Rychard Pynson) printer vnto ye Kyng, 1516); *The Martirolge in Englysshe After the Vse of the Chirche of Salisburie [and] as it is Redde in Syon, with Addicions* (London: In Fletestrete at the Sygne of the Sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde, 1526).



bishops in determining theology, Donne placed final authority in theological debates on the queen herself. Although Donne claimed that Elizabeth I was not “Judge of the Doctrines,” he nonetheless portrayed her as the one who gave “her gracious allowance” for all theological changes.<sup>53</sup> In Donne’s hair-splitting argument, Elizabeth I rightfully determined whether to add articles to the Thirty-Nine Articles, overruling her counselors, yet she did not judge the doctrines themselves. Her successors’ theology and actions should abide by the precedent set by Elizabeth I. In Donne’s analysis, Elizabeth I as exemplar and missionary set the theological standard for any male successor.

Other clergy echoed Donne’s analysis of Elizabeth I’s reign. The sacerdotal Thomas Adams (1583–1652) described Elizabeth I as the nurse of the Church of England who did “vindicate” and taught it anew “the Dialect of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>54</sup> Under Edward VI, according to Adams, God had found England wanting, not fully ready for the gospel of grace, and had withdrawn his blessing until Elizabeth I came to reign and brought the Reformation fully into realization. In a pamphlet war, clergyman Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) argued in a fictive dialogue that Elizabeth I’s Reformation was the orthodox one and that critics were wrong to accuse her of failing to reform the Church of England sufficiently. In contrast to Edward VI’s incomplete Reformation, according to Fuller, Elizabeth I’s Reformation and the Thirty-Nine Articles were “all gold, no dust or dross in them.”<sup>55</sup> Fuller’s imagined dialogue partner alluded specifically to Elizabeth I’s memory becoming so sanctified that it stultified any further theological development. Fuller refuted the claim that Elizabeth I was a saint as she did not appear in *Prelates Calendar* as a saint while at the same time lending credence to it by asserting her “Reformation was signed with success from Heaven.”<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth I may not be an officially listed saint, yet her actions were divinely sanctioned. Fuller wove a rather fine

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<sup>53</sup> Donne, *Five Sermons*, G4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Adams, *Five Sermons Preached Upon Sundry Especiall Occasions* (London: Iohn Grismand, 1626), D1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Fuller, *A Sermon of Reformation Preached at the Church of Savoy, Last Fast Day, July 27, 1643* (London: n.p., 1643), B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Fuller, *A Sermon*, A4<sup>v</sup>.

dividing line and exposed that his contemporaries and he were well-aware that the memory of Elizabeth I was verging on hagiography. Nonetheless, Fuller claimed that Elizabeth I had nothing “wanting in her” and deserved “a more thankful acknowledgement of her worthy pains then generally she hath received hitherto.”<sup>57</sup> Rather than reducing Elizabeth I’s stature, Fuller contended instead that her reputation has been besmirched by critics and should receive greater praise not less. Elizabeth I’s eulogists presented her on a divinely appointed mission to set the course for England’s Christianity. Her successors, according to the panegyrists, would do well to follow in her footsteps with regards to religion.

These eulogists depicted Elizabeth I as not just liberating the Bible and the English people from popish bonds and superstition through her wise instruction, but also protecting the nation from Roman Catholicism and the perceived archnemesis to English Protestants – Jesuit missionaries. They cast her in the mode of the patron saint of the country, not unlike Patrick, the apostle of Ireland. Robert Naunton’s account of Queen’s Elizabeth’s reign, which was not published until after his death, presented it as a golden age where all was tranquil. English Catholics were not disruptive until the pope stirred up trouble by forbidding English Catholics from attending the Church of England. Such English Catholics, according to Naunton, were not only “apostate” but pagans.<sup>58</sup> But Naunton maintained that Elizabeth I was cleverer than the pope or her Catholic subjects and, thus, able to thwart the pope’s efforts to reestablish Roman Catholicism in England by anticipating his moves, keeping track of any Catholic recusants, and rapidly taking countermeasures. Another writer insisted that Elizabeth I with God’s support and her own ability could stand against the power of the pope, “darkness and hell itself.”<sup>59</sup> Writing shortly after her death, a poet asserted that Elizabeth I was equal

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<sup>57</sup> Fuller, *A Sermon*, C2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia, or Observations on the Late Queen Elizabeth, Her Times and Favorits* (London: n.p., 1641), C1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> *The Fierie Tryall of Gods Saints As a Counter-Poyze to I.W Priest His English Martyrologie*. (London, T. Purfoot and T. Creed, 1611), AA4<sup>v</sup>.

to the bravest of England's kings. This bravery and wisdom had allowed her to avoid Jesuit plots, protect England and the church, teach the truth, and enabled the English people to be taught at schools and universities.<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth's eulogists depicted her as more intelligent and successful in disseminating the Protestant faith throughout the English population than the Jesuit missionaries were in either killing her or convincing the English back to Catholicism. In their hands, she became the teacher and defender of the Protestant faith in England – the God-given missionary to England.

#### IMITATING THE EXEMPLAR

Elizabeth I was treated in many ways as exceptional and unique even among monarchs. She took on yet another aspect of fifteenth century vernacular hagiography – exemplarity. Fifteenth century hagiographers began the process of recasting female saints as exemplars whose behavior could be and should be imitated by ordinary women. Her Protestant panegyrists followed suit and urged their audience to imitate Elizabeth I's saintly example as she exemplified the ideal monarch and woman.

To create a more accessible model, authors tended to emphasize her mother's nonroyal ancestors, who would be relatable to their audience. In *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, Elizabeth I's great-grandfather, Geoffrey Boleyn (1406–1463), was mentioned as the Lord Mayor of London and the generous donor of a thousand pounds for the poor.<sup>61</sup> Originally from the merchant class, Geoffrey Boleyn was knighted by Henry VI.<sup>62</sup> By highlighting such antecedents, the anonymous author made Elizabeth I and her actions not as distant from his audience. William Camden's *Annales*, translated from Latin into French and finally into English by Abraham Darcie in 1625, described Geoffrey as Mayor of London but also a man from “the famous House of Norfolk . . . of much

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *The Translation of Certaine Latine Verses Written Vppon Her Maiesties Death, Called a Comforting Complaint* (London, Edward Aggas, 1603), A3<sup>v</sup>–A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> Early modern writers spelled Geoffrey Boleyn in a variety of ways.

integrity” with great wealth who was generous to the poor.<sup>63</sup> As Patrick Collinson has pointed out, the laudatory image of Elizabeth I in vernacular translations of *Annales* was more the work of his translator Abraham Darcie, rather than Camden himself.<sup>64</sup> By discussing Geoffrey Boleyn both as Mayor of London and coming from an ancient family, Camden’s translator Darcie presented Geoffrey and by extension his great-granddaughter as simultaneously accessible, coming from a similar class to his audience, and yet fully worthy of being a monarch. John Donne, likewise, instead of casting Elizabeth I as an example that could not be imitated by ordinary men and women, made her example accessible to his audience by reminding them that Elizabeth I’s great-grandfather was a Lord Mayor of London. Thus, her background was not so dissimilar to theirs. If a Lord Mayor’s great-grandchild could become the monarch, Donne asserted that he could raise other ordinary merchants and their children who were, like Elizabeth I and her great-grandfather, faithful and willing to be used by God.<sup>65</sup>

The word “mirror” or its synonym “looking glass” were ubiquitous in the titles of conduct literature during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. To name just a few, there was *My Ladies Looking Glasse*, *A Looking Glass for Women*, *A Looking-Glasse for England*, *A Celestiall Looking-Glasse to Behold the Beauty of Heaven*, and even *A Looking-Glasse of the World*. The readers of these looking glass books were to see reflected their own bad or good behavior and, as a result, amend their conduct. In *If You Know Not Me*, Elizabeth I became the mirror for the English. She was described as a “Mirror of virtue and bright nature’s pride.”<sup>66</sup> By portraying her as a mirror, Heywood was casting her as the model of appropriate behavior for his viewers. Heywood may have intended for his audience to duplicate her sinlessness, faith in God, and truthfulness, but he also depicted

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<sup>63</sup> Camden, *Annales*, C1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick Collinson, “William Camden and the Anti-Myth of Elizabeth: Setting the Mould?” in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 79–98. For a discussion of the mixed motivations of Camden’s history, see John N. King, “Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 30–74.

<sup>65</sup> Donne, *Five Sermons*, D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, F3<sup>v</sup>.

an Elizabeth who was stubborn, talked back to a ruling monarch, and was disobedient. Protestants showed her as tenaciously holding onto her religious views despite persecution, but this also presented an example of women being correct about religious matters while men, namely, her jailor and nobles loyal to Mary I, were wrong.

Heywood was not the only one extolling the verbose and intransigent Elizabeth I as a model of behavior. The anonymous author of *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth* also utilized Elizabeth I as an illustration of appropriate behavior, writing that “her goodness partly I relate / That others may her virtues imitate.”<sup>67</sup> But again the virtuous Elizabeth I hardly followed the pattern of the ideal woman in conduct literature. Along with portraying Elizabeth I’s fidelity to Protestantism, the author also praised her learning and her ability to speak in foreign languages.<sup>68</sup> His loquacious Elizabeth I acted decisively, choosing the Protestant religion over Catholicism, her own wise counselors, and marriage to her kingdom over marriage to any man.<sup>69</sup> When danger threatened, this exemplar acted by assigning able military commanders and arriving on the field of battle herself to inspire the soldiers.<sup>70</sup>

It should be noted that Elizabeth I was not the only active, talkative, or disobedient woman suggested as an exemplar to solve the ills of England. In a fiery sermon delivered to Parliament in 1641 and later printed, Edmund Calamy (1600–1666) admonished his audience that England had been visited by an epidemic of smallpox and the plague as well as “unseasonable Weather” as a judgement for the sins of the English people.<sup>71</sup> The exceptionally cold decade of the 1640s brought war, famine, disease, and revolt across Asia and Europe. In the face of these disasters, Calamy warned Parliament not to follow the example of male biblical heroes, but to follow the example of the Hebrew midwives in Exodus who disobeyed the Pharaoh by preserving the lives of the Hebrew boys

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<sup>67</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, A5<sup>v</sup>–A6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, B8<sup>r</sup>–C5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> *The Life and Death of Queene Elizabeth*, C4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Edmund Calamy, *Englands Looking-Glasse Presented in a Sermon Preached Before the Honorable House of Commons at Their Late Solemne Fast, December 22, 1641* (London: I. Raworth for Chr. Meredith, 1642), C3<sup>v</sup>.

and lying to Pharaoh, thereby saving the Hebrew people. Esther also was suggested as a model of appropriate behavior. If one imitated these women, God “will bless and prosper you,” promised Calamy.<sup>72</sup> Many of the works depicting women as exemplars were written during two of the worst decades for climatic disruption in the seventeenth century – the 1620s and 1640s. In an unstable world, women, and specifically Elizabeth I, were presented as the cure, not just the cause of the trouble.

During periods of unpredictable weather and politics, women rhetorically at least were seen as a possible solution. A published sermon by Puritan William Gouge (1575–1653) also extolled the virtues of Elizabeth I and her Reformation. Throughout the sermon, Gouge compared Elizabeth I to Moses delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. According to Gouge, Elizabeth I restored the legal rights of the English as well as the “true Religion and a free passage to the Gospel of peace (having clean put out the cruel fire of the Marian persecution and dispelled the thick cloud of popish Superstition).”<sup>73</sup> Gouge was yet another preacher presenting Elizabeth I as evangelizing England to a purer Christianity. By her accession to the throne, Gouge insisted, “the souls of many millions saved.”<sup>74</sup> In Gouge’s telling not only did Elizabeth I free England from the bondage of popery but also enabled Protestantism to survive in Scotland, Netherlands, Portugal, and France, thus, expanding Elizabeth I’s role as the patron saint for Protestantism in general, not just England.<sup>75</sup> Much of Gouge’s sermon was dedicated to urging his audience to avoid the dangers of Roman Catholicism (which in his depiction literally enslaved the masses) and covert criticisms of Charles I for his lack of military victories and attraction to Catholicism. But by invoking the memory of a female monarch as a foil for a male, he cast a woman not as the erring Eve that brings the downfall of men but rather woman as a restorer, preserver, and savior of men’s souls. Gouge did not attempt to equate Elizabeth I with the Virgin Mary, nor did he claim that she

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<sup>72</sup> Calamy, *Englands Looking-Glasse*, H2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> William Gouge, *Mercies Memorial* (London: George Miller for Ioshua Kirton, 1645), B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Gouge, *Mercies Memorial*, B2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Gouge, *Mercies Memorial*, B1<sup>v</sup>.

was sinless. Unlike the Virgin Mary, it was not Elizabeth I's chastity or obedience that saves English souls; instead, it was her action and speech that rescued the English and, by extension through military action, other European kingdoms as well. By not making Elizabeth I into a full-blown saint, Gouge enabled his audience to emulate her example. Likely, inadvertently, Gouge was casting a different vision for women – one of action and speech on behalf of religion, not just silence and obedience.

#### CREATING THEIR OWN EXEMPLAR

Male playwrights, poets, and preachers may have intended their audience only to imitate Elizabeth I's fidelity to Protestantism, or only for men in authority to emulate Elizabeth I, but the praise of a powerful, talkative woman as an exemplar was not lost on women. Women found inspiration in the example of Elizabeth I to be not merely silent followers but to speak, write, and actively participate in politics and religion.

In 1630, Diana Primrose (likely, a pseudonym) published *A Chaine of Pearle*. Much like male hagiographers, Primrose also emphasized that Elizabeth I's greatest virtue was bringing true religion, i.e., Protestantism, to England. Although Elizabeth I's posthumous eulogists also focused on her sex, Primrose depicted Elizabeth I's exceptionality because of her sex not despite it. Her "Lady's hand" is gentle but firm.<sup>76</sup> Her sex allowed her to be wise and not push Protestantism immediately upon reticent Catholics. Primrose presented Elizabeth I as a initially gentle and persuasive reformer, but when pushed by Catholic foreign threats, to capably serve as a reformer who "bravely did advance / Christ's Glorious Ensign."<sup>77</sup> Only after being excommunicated and threatened by foreign attacks does her "Lion's heart" cause her to take sterner actions to defeat the pope and advance the Gospel.<sup>78</sup> But her great wisdom, according to Primrose, meant that she had already taken steps to ensure that the pope's and any rebellious Catholic

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<sup>76</sup> Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle*, B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle*, B1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle*, B2<sup>r</sup>.

subjects' actions would be thwarted. Primrose's Elizabeth I was not acting in the capacity of an honorary man but was treated as fully a woman. Although Primrose considered Elizabeth as exceptional and without "comparison," Elizabeth I's virtues were not limited to her. Instead, Primrose, like her male counterparts, encouraged her audience to "imitate" her virtues.<sup>79</sup> By emphasizing her femininity and depicting Elizabeth I as a female saint, an exceptional, God-ordained woman rather than an honorary man, Primrose rendered her example impossible to be fully duplicated but, nonetheless, as the ideal for female behavior.

As with her male counterparts, *A Chaine of Pearle* contained some not-so-subtle critiques of the Stuart kings.<sup>80</sup> Implicitly, Primrose's work positioned Elizabeth I as an exemplar for England's male monarchs. In contrast to Charles I, who by this time had had a string of military disasters, Elizabeth I was depicted as so successful in war that other European rulers beg her for military aid. Likewise, Elizabeth I was successful at inspiring deep love and affection in her people and living in sweet concord with them. By 1630, Charles I was already experiencing conflict with Parliament, had prorogued it, and had raised the highly unpopular forced loan to finance military expenditures. Additionally, unlike James I and Charles I, who were well-known for having favorites at court, Elizabeth I was depicted as historically so temperate and prudent as not to be swayed by favoritism.<sup>81</sup> Primrose urged her audience to yearn with her for the golden years of a women's rule.

Primrose particularly highlighted Elizabeth I's speech. Through her own courage in words, Elizabeth I vivified and inspired her army to military victory. Her speech, moreover, revealed great learning, thereby, raising the status of England. Intelligence, scholarship, speech, reformation of religion, along with the physical and spiritual

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<sup>79</sup> Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle*, A3<sup>v</sup>, B3<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of how contemporary scholars have interpreted laudatory depictions of Elizabeth I by male writers as a critique of the Stuart kings, see Lisa Gim, "Representing Regina: Literary Representations of Queen Elizabeth I by Women Writers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," PhD diss., (Brown University, 1992), 172–79, ProQuest.

<sup>81</sup> Primrose, *A Chaine of Pearle*, B3<sup>r-v</sup>.



salvation of her subjects, prudence, and military victory marked a woman's rule, according to Primrose. So, at least as Primrose presented her case, a woman's rule and speech did not invert society. Instead, female rulers championed and disseminated Christianity and solved society's problems.

Across the Atlantic, another English woman looked to Elizabeth I for inspiration for her writing. As Lisa Gim has demonstrated in "Representing the 'Phoenix Queen': Elizabeth I in Writings by Anna Maria Van Schurman (1607–1678) and Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672)," Elizabeth I captured the imagination of women cross-nationally. Van Schurman and Bradstreet used an idealized memory of Elizabeth I to imagine a world where patriarchy did not rule and women were empowered to write, be educated, and have authority.<sup>82</sup> Bradstreet was more explicit than Primrose in her calls for Elizabeth I to be considered as representative of women in general. Bradstreet directly contended that the reign of Elizabeth I "will vindicate our [sex's] wrong" from "Masculines" who "have thus tax'd us long."<sup>83</sup> Indeed Elizabeth I proved conclusively that women had "reason" as well as intelligence, learning, and wisdom.<sup>84</sup> Surprisingly, for a devout Protestant, Bradstreet does not discuss the Elizabethan Reformation, dwelling instead on Elizabeth I's military victories, the wealth of England under her rule, and the help she granted foreign kingdoms. The end of Bradstreet's poem was full of wistful sadness at women's loss of such an exemplar and hope that the Phoenix Queen would indeed be reborn. For Bradstreet, Elizabeth I proved an inspiration to step beyond society's gender norms to write, publish, and imagine a world where women would receive the same learning and respect as a man.

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<sup>82</sup> Lisa Gim, "Representing the 'Phoenix Queen': Elizabeth I in Writings by Anna Maria van Schurman and Anne Bradstreet," in *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, eds. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway (Cranbury, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 168–84.

<sup>83</sup> Anne Bradstreet, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (London: Stephen Bowtell, 1650), O4<sup>v</sup>, O6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Bradstreet, *The Tenth Muse*, O6<sup>v</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Posthumously, eulogists of the Phoenix Queen resurrected her memory to both haunt her Stuart successors and present to their audience a model monarch and Protestant. In their efforts to utilize her memory to shape their present, panegyrists utilized tropes from medieval saints' lives: visitations from angels, escape from persecutors bent on murder, fidelity despite interrogation, martyrdom or at least near martyrdom, tower imprisonment, and homage from small children. Her theology was depicted as fully Protestant, but her actions, nonetheless, could mimic those of Catholic saints. Rather than the association of the Virgin Mary with the Virgin Queen disappearing after her death, it persisted in the rhetoric and images of an eternal and now sainted queen. In times of apocalyptic concern, she was presented as the virtuous woman of Revelation 12 bringing forth the redemption of the world.

As a critique to a Stuart monarchy that felt increasingly distant and disconnected from its populace, a sympathetic and very much accessible queen served as a contrast. Her eulogists portrayed a queen who inherently as a ruling monarch was exceptional yet could and should serve as a model of Christian behavior for both men and women. This exemplar stood in sharp contrast with conduct literature that adjured women to be silent, chaste, and obedient. Elizabeth I was not silent or obedient. She defied both in word and deed male authorities according to plays, sermons, and poems. But this failure to abide by traditional standards of behavior was presented by her panegyrists as the very means by which she successfully evangelized, reformed, and protected England and its religion as England's new Protestant evangelist.

In these many depictions of Elizabeth I by a variety of poets, preachers, and playwrights, women heard conflicting advice about ideal behavior. Women in England may have lost the strong female religious exemplars of saints with the Reformation, but they rapidly had gained a new Protestant apostolic saint. When seeking to understand the role of women in religion in the seventeenth century, the image of Elizabeth I cast by her apologists should not be

ignored and should be considered alongside conduct literature when seeking to understand women's religious activity in the mid to late seventeenth century as preachers and writers. Women could imagine through the representations of Elizabeth I placed before them that they too could reform religion by being vocal and active, not silent and obedient. Timing was not coincidental. Much of the literature extolling the virtues of Elizabeth I occurred in the decades when the Little Ice Age caused significant societal disruption. In an uncertain world, women had a role to play in rectifying society's problems.