



DOUAI AND THE ENGLISH COUNTER-REFORMATION

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TERT.*



In the year of Our Lord 1558, the last Catholic queen of England, [Mary Tudor](#), died. Her successor, Elizabeth I, upon taking the throne, implemented the well-organized and devised scheme of re-establishing English Protestantism. After the death of [Edward VI](#) in 1553, [Sir William Cecil](#), at the head of the active Protestant party, organized the future executive committee for the restoration of Protestantism in England.

To all appearances, a pious Catholic and in self-imposed retirement in Wimbledon, Cecil set up the body of "Sustainers," persons of wealth and influence who acted as a committee of ways and means. Through their work, performed while in exile on the continent, the scheme to train students for the future Protestant clergy of England came about.

When Elizabeth became queen, this same executive committee under Cecil effectively took the reins of power in England. Through the infamous Act of Supremacy - which act declared that "no foreign... prelate... shall exercise any... jurisdiction... spiritual or ecclesiastical within this realm... but the same shall be clearly abolished out of this realm... forever" - thus making Elizabeth the Head of the Church in England - and the Act of Uniformity, which abolished the Catholic Mass and restored the [Edwardian Prayer Book](#) of 1552 - the religious revolution in England had again returned.

In this article, we will examine the reaction of the Catholics of England, which included their attempts at effecting a Catholic restoration of their country. More specifically, we will examine these attempts through the work of one man - [William Allen](#) - and the realization of his dream to establish an English College on the Continent. This dream materialized in the territory of Spanish Flanders, in a town called [Douai](#) (or, rarely, Doway) by English speakers. Douai is located South and East of the city of Lille, which is located at the very northern tip of France.

The Catholic historian, Philip Hughes, writes: "It was through the practical genius of William Allen, that the greatest achievement of early Elizabethan Catholicism came, the founding of the [college at Douai](#). For here, under God, was the principal means of preserving the Catholic Church in England for the next two hundred years. Superlatives come very easily, even to practiced observers of human endeavor as history records it, but it is scarcely possible to exaggerate what the Catholic Church owes to the work of this Lancashire priest. The day of Douai's foundation should be indelibly marked in the calendar of every English Catholic."

Some Background

In the years of Elizabeth's reign there arose a great opposition, on the part of Catholics, to the execution of the new laws regarding the religion of the realm. This was surprising, for during Henry VIII's time, the whole body of clergy went over to his schism, and during the reign of Edward VI, the new liturgy was generally accepted.

But in 1559, every bishop, save one, stood firm against the royal impositions, and by the end of that year, every one of them had been deprived of their sees and placed in custody. Everywhere, too, the higher clergy stood firm: the cathedral dignitaries, the heads of colleges, and the professors in the universities. The religious orders were no less loyal. Along with the bishops, seven deans of cathedral chapters were deprived, as well as ten archdeacons, seven chancellors, twenty-five heads of colleges (nineteen at Oxford, six at Cambridge) and, at Oxford, thirty-seven fellows of colleges.

However, the parochial clergy were less attached to the Catholic Faith. Conservative estimates say that of the approximately eight thousand priests in England at the time, only a quarter to a third of them resisted the taking of the new oath. This is a sad commentary due to the fact that the penalty for not going over to the new worship was only deprivation, not the death sentence as in Henry's time.

Also necessary as background to this story is a short discussion of the means by which the Protestant imposition was implemented and by whom it was accomplished. It is fundamental to any understanding of the Catholic reaction to realize that the religious revolution was simply the victory of a seditious minority, or a clique, which by skillful trickery had possessed itself of the confidence of the sovereign and the machinery of government.

Father William Allen would later write the treatise *True, Sincere and Modest Defense of English Catholics*, wherein he would state: "We set forth the truth of all these actions for the honour of our nation, which otherwise, to her infinite shame and reproach, would be thought wholly generally to have revolted from the Catholic Faith." However, the truth is that the disorder proceeded only from "the partiality of a few powerful persons abusing Her Majesty's clemency and credulity..." and "the whole state (excepting the authority of the Prince) may yet be rather counted Catholic than heretical."

In fact, a shrewd and calculating politician of the time, [William Paget](#), one not to be counted as a biased

observer in favor of the Catholic side, noted that only one-twelfth of the nation was in favor of the new religion!

What was the effect of this imposition by a few, then, on the Catholic majority of people in the country? Many historians tell us that this latest "change of service" was no great novelty for them, since the English had become accustomed to these liturgical variations made by the State over the past thirty years, by both illegitimate and legitimate authority. The testimonies of Catholics at this time state that the greater part of them went to these new services.

The penalty in 1559 for staying away from the Protestant services was a fine equal to two days' wages for a laborer, with the penalty increasing to such an extent that, by 1580, the fine, if paid, would have reduced a wealthy man to poverty. Father Allen suggested that it was all but inevitable that many should have fallen. He said that fidelity was "a most difficult thing to obtain in that country because of the iniquitous laws and the punishment of imprisonment, as well as other penalties, which it entails." He counseled that their more fortunate brethren should deal leniently with those who fell.

[Pope Clement VIII](#), in later years, would echo Father Allen's counsel when he reaffirmed the unlawfulness of assisting at Protestant services. Led by the Marian priests (priests formed during the reign of Mary Tudor), the people began to wake up to the fact that it was wrong to attend such services. Then the fight against "Church Going," came as the first sign of a reaction to the novelties of Anglican worship. In general, Catholics thought that this Queen, who was a frail sort, would soon die, or that she would marry a Catholic, since no Protestant prince existed as her peer.

Due to the highly organized and well-financed minority that now controlled the machinery of government, the great body of Catholics, whatever the degree of their loyalty to the old Faith, was wholly at the mercy of the enemy. The Catholic leaders were removed, and the majority of English Catholics, as a body, was destroyed as an organization. And while English Catholics hoped that some foreign prince like [Philip of Spain](#) would come to their rescue, they did not know at the time that Philip himself had counseled a patient toleration of the English persecution! Not only had he counseled it, but also he imposed his policy on the pope and Philip stood between any appeals for violent action the Catholics made to the pope and any favorable hearing of those appeals.

However, while the thought existed that English Catholics simply hoped and did not act, this simply was not the case, for the English Catholic was far from being an idle spectator of his own tragic fate. In every

diocese, even in London, there was the activity of priests who remained true to the Faith.

There was also a large literary venture launched from abroad, on the part of English Catholics who had fled overseas to Antwerp and Louvain. For example, in the years between 1564 and 1567, there were no fewer than eighteen Catholic writers who published books of devotion, religious instruction, and religious controversy. Over twenty thousand copies of these scholarly works were smuggled into England and sold there despite the government's police measures. [Nicholas Sander](#), one of the great Catholic resistance leaders of the time, commented: "A new zeal for Catholic truth made the Catholics dare everything in order to learn about their Faith and to defend it."

Along with these genuinely religious refugees that ended up in Spanish Flanders and France, a very high proportion were priests. They made their way abroad with difficulty, at their own expense, and most of them lived in utter destitution once they arrived.

It is to the story of the endeavors of one of these exiled priests that we will now turn.

William Allen And His Dream

Lancashire was a very Catholic county in England, and it remained the most Catholic of all the counties through the several-hundred-year persecution of the Church in England. In fact, a speaker in the House of Commons in 1641 made the statement that in Lancashire and Yorkshire there were more Papists than in all the other counties put together!

William Allen was from Lancashire. He was born there in 1532 and, at the age of 15 he went to Catholic Oxford to receive his secondary education. In 1550 he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and was made a fellow of Oriel College. Four years later, he received his Master of Arts and was chosen as Principal of St. Mary's Hall. When Elizabeth became queen, Allen, being the staunch Catholic that he was, resigned all of his positions, left the country, and took up residence at the [University of Louvain](#).

A year later we find him back in England evangelizing his native countrymen, though he was not yet a priest. He recalled later how his arguments and instructions on the authority of the Church and the Apostolic See brought about, in a very short time, a vast number abstaining altogether from communion, churches, sermons, books, and all spiritual communication of any sort with the heretics.

These next three years of his life had a profound effect on his future course. He found everywhere he went that the people were not Protestant by choice but by force of circumstances; the majority were only too ready to return to Catholicity.

As such, he was convinced that the Protestant wave over the country could only be temporary, and that the whole future of English Catholicism depended on a supply of trained clergy and controversialists ready to come into the country whenever Catholicity should be restored. He later spoke to a friend of the needs of England as regards the Faith.

That friend we will get to soon enough. For now, we paraphrase Allen's thoughts in that letter as follows: In the course of time death would carry off the existing clergy, and what would be the plight of the Faith if, when the expected restoration came, there were no English priests? Even though Elizabeth died and a Catholic succeeded, heresy would triumph if there were not Catholic preachers, writers, and priests to seize the opportunity. It would be an excellent thing to have always-ready men of learning outside the realm, to restore religion when the proper moment should have arrived.

A college would serve to gather all that Catholic talent which, homeless and without means of living now for eight years and more, was slowly decaying in half a dozen cities of the Low Countries. The students could finish their education; the priests could perfect their studies. Priests could be formed; books could be written. The English Church would possess once more an essential instrument of her continuance: a shelter for her intelligence, a hearth whence her Faith might continue to be fed.

In 1567, William Allen made a pilgrimage to Rome, and on his return trip he met, on the way, one [John Vendeville](#), a professor of Civil Law at the new University of Douai. (Vendeville was the friend to whom the above-mentioned letter was sent.) The meeting was no accident in God's Providence, for it put together the two ingredients needed for such a project to be realized - the will for it to happen and the means.

John Vendeville, eventually named Bishop of Tournai, was at this time a very successful young lawyer who had influence with King Philip II himself. Vendeville was one of the most celebrated teachers of law his generation knew. At the young age of twenty-nine, he was already professor of civil law at Louvain, and had been recommended for a seat on the ruling Council of the Low Countries for [Charles V](#).

John Vendeville was instrumental in the beginnings of the University of Douai, which university was founded by Pope Paul IV in 1562 under the patronage of King Philip of Spain. In 1558 Vendeville had urged upon the ruling Council of the Low Countries that colleges and seminaries were the best weapons with which to fight heresy, and it was from this standpoint that he had pressed upon the King the foundation of a university which could be for the French-speaking provinces what Louvain was for the Flemings and the Dutch. Thus, a new university was established at Douai in 1562, and Vendeville took the chair of Civil Law.

The Birth Of The English College At The University Of Douai

The newly founded University of Douai became the home of the crème de la crème of the faculty of Catholic Oxford and Cambridge. Five of the early University's professors were from Oxford. There was great desolation, an almost total academic destruction at the Catholic universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which followed upon the Elizabethan legislation of 1559.

I will mention some of them briefly. [Richard Smyth](#) was given the highest chair, that of Theology. It was he who advocated that the first generation of professors of this new undertaking should be men of mark. After all, wasn't it precisely and principally the idea to produce good theological thinking upon which this new university was founded?

[Owen Lewis](#) was given the chair of canon law. To William Allen, in 1567, were given the practical posts of the chair of catechetics and of controverted doctrine. [Thomas Stapleton](#), the most celebrated doctor of them all, would follow Allen in these positions.

In essence then, the University of Douai, while founded upon the model of the University of Louvain, from which the majority of its first professors came, became the continuation of Catholic Oxford with the addition of these learned Catholics. As such, the University began to attract the English exiles living in the Low Countries.

Now, the next step in the realization of Father Allen's plans began to take shape: that plan, of course, being the establishment of an English college which would be attached to the University of Douai, and which would be used to supply the English Church with good Catholic priests.

John Vendeville set about finding patrons, in the material sense, for this new project. They would be needed to provide the money to buy a house and keep the community in food for the first few years. While providing much from his own holdings, Vendeville was able to enlist the sympathy of three Benedictine prelates, the Abbots of [St. Vaast](#) in Arras, of [Anchin](#), and of [Marchiennes](#) - all local abbeys.

The three contributed generously. Allen was able to afford the purchase of two large houses and the gardens attached to them. And so, on Michaelmas Day, September 29, 1568, the English College opened with four English students - [Richard Bristowe](#) (who would become Allen's right-hand man), [John Marshall](#), [Edward Risdén](#), and [John White](#), all from Oxford.

Four years later, in 1572, the first priests would be ordained. In 1574 there were six, ten in 1575, eleven in 1576, and by the end of 1578, after ten years of work, the college had produced seventy-seven new priests who were returning to England to work there against the express wishes of Elizabeth and the ruling clique of that country. As Father Allen had first planned to generate priests for the English and have them in waiting for the Catholic Restoration of England, the situation changed in 1574 when it was decided to send them to England to help with the good work of the underground priests then living there. This "new venture" was to become the main purpose of the college. By 1580, there were a hundred Douai priests at work in England. By 1603, 450 priests had been sent from the English College.

As the English College was part of the bustling university world at Douai, and the college leaders were important personages there, many of the students were also pupils of the University.

Douai became the chief center of English Catholic life, and its secondary activities were little less important than the main purpose of training priests. Among these secondary activities was the education of laymen who came to Douai to study the humanities and philosophy, and to take their degrees in arts. They desired to receive a Catholic education, but despaired of receiving such from Oxford and Cambridge, where "no art, holy or profane, was thoroughly studied and some not touched at all." Protestants doubting their new faith came as well, as did Catholics who had apostatized. Such were duly catechized and reconciled to the Church. Over five hundred of these conversions occurred in the first ten years.

Visitors came out of curiosity, interested to see what became of those who had left England years before. Also, the college served a very practical purpose in providing temporary homes for the priests who, without leaders, without help or encouragement of any kind - from any source save their personal

friends - had fought the good fight in England since their deprivation. These came to Douai to find the peace of normal Catholic life which they thought they had lost forever, and they also found there a means to replenish and refurbish their theological armament.

The Spirit And Formation Of The Douai Priests

Douai College flourished, and its rule was the will of its president, Father Allen. The secret and history of its first years is discovered in the character of William Allen and the love and veneration he inspired in all. Details of the system whereby the English College trained the missionary priests are found in the letters and thought of Father Allen.

But first let it be mentioned that the new missionary seminary had a strong adherence to university ideals and that there was a real reverence for learning with much etiquette practiced in its attainment. Within the first ten years of the college, there were twenty-two students who proceeded to degrees in theology at the University, and it was only for the lack of money that other promotions were hindered.

For the spirit of the formation of these future missionaries, Allen strove to supply a competent working clergy. He wrote: "Our students, intended for the English harvest, are not required to excel or be great proficient in theological science... but they must abound in zeal for God's house, charity and thirst for souls." However, they were not to shirk those things of theological science. He described what kind of knowledge his priests must possess. Deep knowledge is not any hindrance to a priest's usefulness: "...the more knowledge they possess concerning the Scriptures and controversial divinity, and the greater the prudence and discretion they couple with this knowledge, so much the more abundant will be their success." If only the missionaries "have burning zeal, even though deep science be wanting, provided always that they know the necessary heads of religious doctrine and the power and nature of the sacraments, such men, among the more skilled laborers whom we have in nearly all the provinces of the kingdom, also do good work in hearing confessions and offering sacrifice."

To hear confessions and to say Mass - it was to these points that the training was especially directed, and the first and most fundamental part of the training. "Our first and foremost study" was to brace the aspirant "to a zealous and just indignation against the heretics" by placing all his college life in the setting of the liturgical offices of the Church, carried out in the best manner possible, as the best of all means to awaken their minds to the ruin and desolation of their native land. And while encouraged to this hatred of the forces which had wrought such destruction, the student was reminded that the

source of all ills is man's sin, and that all men are sinners, and he was bidden to dedicate himself to the work before him in a spirit of contrition and reparation for all his own sins. To make amends for the routine confessions of past years, "there is now a special devotion to the sacrament of Penance and, a most important detail of the spiritual formation of the missionaries, they make "the spiritual exercises under the fathers of the Society [of Jesus]. The student must never lose sight of the land he has left, of the evils there wrought, of the sufferings of his kinsfolk and friends at the hands of "the impious persecutors." This will brace him to sacrifice himself utterly for his calling: "they are happy to whom it is given to suffer something for their country, kinsfolk, religion, and Christ... There is nothing, then, which we ought not too readily to suffer rather than see the evils of our nation."

As to the course of studies, Father Allen first speaks of Sacred Scripture. It was of the utmost importance that the missionary priest should be thoroughly familiar with the whole of it and "have at his fingers' ends" the passages in dispute between Catholics and the Reformers. Hence there was a daily lecture in the New Testament; a running explanation daily of a chapter of the Old Testament in the refectory after dinner and of the New Testament after supper; and a dictation of all the controverted passages with notes of the arguments for the Catholic interpretation and answers to the Protestant case.

Every week there was a disputation, students being trained not only to put the Catholic case but to understand the Protestant side by themselves defending it, as well as by putting the Protestant objections; and twice a week a student made a kind of scriptural sermon on one or other of the controverted points. "The holy bible is always read at dinner and supper, while all listen attentively... four or at least three chapters at a time," and every one read over daily, in his room, the passages read in the refectory and those expounded. "Those who are able to do so read them in the original. In this way the old Testament is gone through twelve times every three years or thereabouts... the new Testament is read through sixteen times in the same period; and this is a great help towards acquiring a more than common familiarity with the text."

The rest of the students [those not able to read the Scriptures in the original], "are not required to excel or to be great proficient," but are "successively taught Greek and Hebrew, so far as is required to read and understand the Scriptures of both Testaments in the original, and to save them from being entangled in the sophisms which heretics extract from the properties and meanings of words."

The Douay Bible

From this devotion on the part of the Douai priests to the Holy Scriptures, we can see the greatness of the achievement on the part of the English college in the [translation of the whole Bible into English](#). This project began in 1578, the same year as the removal of the college to Rheims. In those years in France and the Low Countries, continual religious wars were raging between the Catholics and the Calvinists.

William Cecil was financing much of the anti-Catholic side with the express purpose of destroying anything and everything Catholic in that part of Europe. Certainly, he thirsted for, and sought, the destruction of the English College and there is much information available that testifies to his many efforts at accomplishing just such an end. Rheims, in 1578, was under the control of the [Catholic League of France](#) and was a safe haven for the English during the next twenty years or so. Rheims lies 130 miles directly south of Douai. One man, Father Gregory Martin, accomplished the translation during the next four years. In fact, he gave the last four years of his life to this work!

This priest, [Gregory Martin](#), was another Oxford man. While at Oxford University, one of Gregory Martin's closest friends was [Saint Edmund Campion](#). It was through the efforts of Gregory Martin that Edmund Campion came back to the Faith - which he did at Douai - and ultimately became a priest. Saint Edmund stayed at Douai for his theological course and its lesser degree, later entering the Jesuits. Martin was a brilliant scholar and linguist; proficient in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

According to the famous Douai Diaries, Father Martin, under the supervision of Father Allen, began the translation in October 1578, and completed it in March 1582. He adhered very closely to the Latin Vulgate with some careful comparison with the Greek. In this project, Father Martin "transliterated" rather than translated many technical words, words that are now very familiar to us: "evacuated," "gratis," "holocaust," "victims," and "evangelize." This was due to the fact that no literal translation into English was available from the Latin and Greek.

After Father Martin finished with some portion of the text, then to Fathers Allen, Richard Bristowe, [Thomas Worthington](#), and [John Reynolds](#) would go the task of revising the text and preparing suitable notes to the passages most used by the Protestants.

The reason given by Father Allen for the project of vernacularizing the Bible was that of alleviating the handicap to Catholics, where the priest did not "commonly have at hand a quote from Scripture save in the Latin," when dealing with the heretics. "Unless there is some English version of the words," and he

remembers it, the preacher must, there and then, translate "on the spur of the moment," and this, unfortunately, "they often [did] inaccurately and with unpleasant hesitation." "This evil might be remedied if we too had some Catholic version of the bible, for all the English versions are most corrupt." And he states very momentarily, "we, on our part, if his Holiness shall think proper, will undertake to produce a faithful, pure, and genuine version of the bible, in accordance with the edition approved by the Church... Perhaps indeed it would have been more desirable that the Scriptures had never been translated into barbarous tongues; nevertheless at the present day... it is better that there should be a faithful and Catholic translation than that men should use a corrupt version to their peril and destruction."

Douai Priestly Training

The students at Douai were taught to preach by weekly exercises on the Sunday epistles and gospels, and they were taught to preach them in English. "We preach in English in order to acquire greater power and grace in the use of the vulgar tongue, a thing on which the heretics [pride] themselves exceedingly, and by which they do great injury to the simple folk. In this respect, the heretics, however ignorant they may be in other points, have the advantage over many of the more learned Catholics." Father Allen was well aware of the weaknesses in the Catholic action of his time, and he was willing enough to learn where the enemy's superiority could teach him.

There were two lectures daily on the Summa of Saint Thomas Aquinas. "For we teach scholastic theology (without which no one can be solidly learned or an acute disputant) chiefly from Saint Thomas, though sometimes also from the Master of the Sentences [Peter Lombard]. Once a week there is a disputation on five specially chosen articles of the Summa."

There were two classes weekly in moral theology with the *Manual* of [Azpilcueta](#), serving as a text. Cases of conscience had a place of their own in the timetable, and those cases sent in from England and those of more frequent occurrence were written up in a book and the student kept a copy for future guidance. As a kind of preparation to these studies, the students "were most carefully instructed in the whole catechism." Particularly stressed were those sections on ecclesiastical censures and the "marvelous power and authority of the Sovereign Pontiff." It was "the exceeding neglect and contempt with which this was treated by pastors and people alike, that God has punished [England] with the present miserable desolation."

A list of books was recommended for private reading by the students as well. This included, the dogmatic decrees of the recent [Council of Trent](#); the decrees of the English provincial synods ([William Lyndwood's Provinciale](#)); "the whole of church history, especially that of [Venerable Bede](#), in order that they may be able to show our countrymen from it that our nation did not receive in the beginning any other than the Catholic Faith which we profess, and was converted to no other form of Christianity except that we preach to them, and that their forefathers bore the name of Christians and were such only as members of this Catholic Christendom;" [St. Augustine against the heretics](#) of his time, especially on the unity of the Church, such as his letters to certain Donatists (the [De utilitate credendi](#), and the [De catechizandis rudibus](#)); St. Cyprian's [De unitate ecclesiae](#); [Vincent of Lerins](#); St. Jerome's [Against Vigilantius](#) and [Against Jovinian](#); [Thomas of Walden](#) for his [refutation of Wyclif](#), "the father of all modern heretics."

For their spiritual life, all said the Divine Office and everyone used "the Blessed Virgin's rosary with the meditations attached." Mass was heard together each morning at five, and, before Mass the Litany of the Saints was said for the Church and for the conversion of England. Every Sunday and on the greater feasts they received Holy Communion.

In those times, the reception of Holy Communion was a rare event, even though the ancient practice of daily Communion was endorsed by the Catechism of the Council of Trent. Those who were priests said Mass every day. The feasts of Saint Gregory the Great, [Saint Augustine](#) the apostle of England, and [Saint Thomas of Canterbury](#) were kept with special solemnity. Days of solemn intercession were kept for the conversion of "our country," and for this same intention the college fasted twice each week.

Fruits Of The Labors At Douai

As mentioned earlier, by the end of the 1500s, the English College at Douai had produced over 450 priests for the harvest in England. Of that number, about a hundred would suffer martyrdom at the hands of the heretics in England, and another hundred priests would be banished from that country. By the end of the persecution of English Catholics, Douai had given to the Church more than one hundred and sixty martyrs.

Father Allen became William Cardinal Allen, and, after he died in 1594, the English College underwent much turmoil. This was only natural since the will of Allen had been the rule of the college. But English College survived and it continued to supply the Catholics of England with the priests necessary to keep

the Faith under tremendous difficulties.

In fact, the English College continued on for the next two hundred years, up to the time of the French Revolution, during which event the revolutionaries expelled the collegians from France and forced them to move into England, where the Penal Laws had recently been repealed. There the "Douains" founded two colleges to continue the work of Douai: [Crook Hall](#), afterwards [Ushaw](#) in the north of England, and [St. Edmund's Old Hall](#) in the south.

Before Father Allen's death, he was able to write of the glorious martyrdoms suffered by his students at the hands of the impious English heretics. They were for him a very special fruit of his labors at Douai.

In preparing his book on the martyrdoms of the Douai priests, Father Allen stated in a letter to a fellow priest: *"About our brothers and yours, who have lately been murdered, I have already written to you; and deeply grieved though I am, I am now constrained to compose the history of their deaths and of the others. It must be written in English first, for our people desire this very much and send me information for it. Afterwards we shall perhaps also publish it in Latin. You will see in it a constancy quite equal to that of the ancient martyrs. Their fortitude has marvelously moved and changed all hearts. Men of good will and moderation are repentant, the wicked and the enemies are amazed. Loud, indeed, is the cry of sacred blood so copiously shed. Ten thousand sermons would not have published our apostolic Faith and religion so winningly as the fragrance of these victims, most sweet both to God and to men. The other prisoners have become more courageous, our men are more ready, and the harvest increases. With labor and constancy, and God as our leader, we shall conquer. The enemy rages more than ever, for they are desperate."*

Some Glorious Sons Of Douai

This article will end with some of the final words of the glorious martyrs of Douai, words spoken just before they were martyred in a most cruel manner by the enemies of our holy Faith.

In Father Allen's histories, he describes how the murder scene typically unfolded. Upon arrival at the place of execution, a proclamation for keeping the peace was read. The martyrs were not immediately let free from the hurdle (a frame or sled used to drag the prisoner to the place of execution), but while the first was hanging, the second was brought up and made to turn backward and look at the first,

while he was being quartered. Occasionally, they were allowed to kneel and pray.

Standing in the cart, and having the rope round their necks, they generally began their last prayers with the Sign of the Cross and the Pater, Ave, and Credo in Latin. Sooner or later, they would be called upon to pray in English or with the Protestants. The latter was uniformly refused. At this point they were subjected to what was known as the "bloody question," namely, what did they think of the excommunication of the Queen by Pope Pius V? An opinion on this matter was not why the martyrs were there in the first place, but the answers inevitably given by the accused would only serve to excite the fanatics in attendance who came to gloat over the slaughter of the priests. Thus the execution could take place without much attention being given to the palpable injustice of the charges actually alleged against them.

The last words of some of these martyrs follow:

Asked by the Sheriff what he thought of the queen's title of Head of the Church in England, [Father John Shert](#) replied: "I will give to Caesar that which is his and to God that that belongeth to God. She is not, nor cannot be; nor any other, but only the supreme pastor."

Sheriff: "What, do you mean that whore of Babylon the Pope?"

Father Shert: "Take heed, M. Sheriff, for the day will come when that shall be a sore word for your soul, and then it shall repent you that ever you called Christ's vicar-general on earth, "whore." When you and I shall stand at the bar, before that indifferent judge, who judgeth all things aright; then, I say, will you repent your saying. Then must I give testimony against you."

Then just before the hangman readied the rope, Father Shert ended his earthly life with these words, "Whosoever dieth out of the Catholic Church he dieth in the state of damnation" (May 28, 1582).

After climbing into the hanging cart with the help of the executioner, [Father John Roberts](#) turned to the criminals in the gallows and said: "Here we are all going to die, nor have we any hope of escape, but if you die in that religion now professed and established in this country, without any doubt you will be condemned to the eternal fire of Hell. For the love then of our Blessed Savior, I earnestly pray you to return from the evil path, so that we may all die in one and the same true Faith..."

And then a little while later, he turned to the people who had gathered there and spoke to them: "*Memorare novissima tua* - Let man remember his end. "*Quia nos omnes manifestari oportet ante tribunal Christi* - We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ there to render an account of our Faith and of our deeds. Those who have done well will have eternal life, and those who have done evil will suffer eternal torments."

Having said this, he exclaimed loudly for all to hear: "*Extra ecclesiam nulla est salus* - Outside the true Church of Christ there is no salvation."

After [Father Thomas Somers](#) was prepared for hanging, he was allowed to speak. He now said, in a loud and cheerful voice: "*Benedicat nos omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus*," and added, "Father Roberts has told you the reason why we are to suffer death, and so it is not necessary that I should repeat more than one thing. I did not refuse to take the oath because I refused any sort of allegiance that his Majesty the King could justly demand of me. I refused on account of the matters of Faith included in that oath, and that is why it has been forbidden by His Holiness the Pope, whom all of us who are sheep of Christ are bound to obey in matters of Faith. I pray you all therefore and exhort you to be obedient to the chief Shepherd of the Church of God." And then Father Somers concluded with these words: "Out of the Church there is no salvation" (December 10, 1610).

Fathers Shert, Roberts, and Somers, Pray for us!

