

SN 5047 – Study Documentation

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Foxe's Book of Martyrs Variorum Edition

Introduction

John Foxe (1517-87) was one of the most influential writers of the English Reformation. In the forty years between 1547 and his death, he produced some forty works in English and Latin. However, both in his lifetime and since then, he has been principally known for only one of them, *The Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs*.

John Foxe fled to the Continent during the reign of Mary I, and on his return, wrote a history of the English Protestant martyrs from the 14th century to his own time. Usually known as *The Book of Martyrs*, it traces the triumph of Protestantism through the sufferings of English Protestants.

Some four hundred copies of Foxe's editions of 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583 remain, but most are defective to some extent, and all bear their original imperfections. Although microfilms of all the four original editions were available, and were adequate for general use, they too had their imperfections. The copies selected for filming were damaged and incomplete and many running heads and marginalia were omitted during photography. Moreover, these images were devoid of any commentary or apparatus, and well over a hundred years of Reformation scholarship had elapsed since Pratt completed his work.

Also a number of bowdlerised and abbreviated editions had been published in the twentieth century, particularly in the United States, and although there was little danger of these deceiving serious scholars, the proposal suggested that the time was ripe for the full text to reappear with a modern commentary.

It had also been recognised for some time that the *Acts and Monuments* is a major work of sixteenth century scholarship and a significant influence upon the development of the national identity. A reliable scholarly edition was urgently required.

In 1993 the British Academy established this project to produce a new edition. Originally, a paper copy was envisaged, however the scale of the project soon became too large to make this feasible. The 1583 edition alone is densely packed with information, including reference to hundreds of sources, some of them imperfectly identified. In scale it runs to nearly three million words. The Committee decided to switch its objective from a print edition to CD-ROM, which in turn would make a variorum edition feasible, embracing all the four original texts.

Due to technical developments and innovations in 2002, the committee, with the approval of the British Academy, decided to transfer the publishing medium from CD-ROM to an online edition.

This British Academy 'Category One Research Project' has produced a new, definitive edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs*, based on a textual reconstruction of the four editions published in Foxe's lifetime. It also contains extensive editorial commentaries, information on people and places mentioned in the text, and bibliographical database and a corpus of scholarly essays.

Data Contents

The dissemination version of this resource created by AHDS History consists of four kinds of data, namely:

- 1) 158 *.html files which constitute a selection of all the original website constituents. This selection contains only informative material (as opposed to other purely aesthetic constituents such as frames, designs, or page templates) such as introduction texts, a corpus of scholarly essays, and editorial commentaries.

- 2) 12,058 *.xml files containing information about different textual materials such as transcriptions, editorial comments, and summaries found in books 1 to 12 of all four editions (i.e. 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583) of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs*
- 3) 2,472 image *.png files featuring original index tables, pages and woodcuts shown primarily in John Foxe's 1583 edition of the book
- 4) A database of bibliographic scholarly works, publications and other materials related to the *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs*

HTML files

The HTML files are currently distributed in four folders: 'aston_images', 'books_material', 'essays' and 'miscellaneous'. The name of these folders is indicative of their content.

XML content

AHDS History has created an interface which will allow users to select and view all XML files in three different formats. These formats are: full view, a printer-friendly version, and a commentary version. Before using this interface, users should make sure that all the contents of the subdirectory 'xml' including support files (i.e. *.html, *.xsl, *.gif) are copied into a single directory in their local systems. To activate the interface users should double click on the file called 'index.html'. Please be advised that due to the fact that there are well over 12,000 xml files to load, this process could take between 1 and 4 minutes (depending on the specifications of the computer in which this operation is being conducted) and you should only start using the interface once a window showing three buttons with view options has appeared on the top left corner with a list of book directories below as shown in Figure 1.

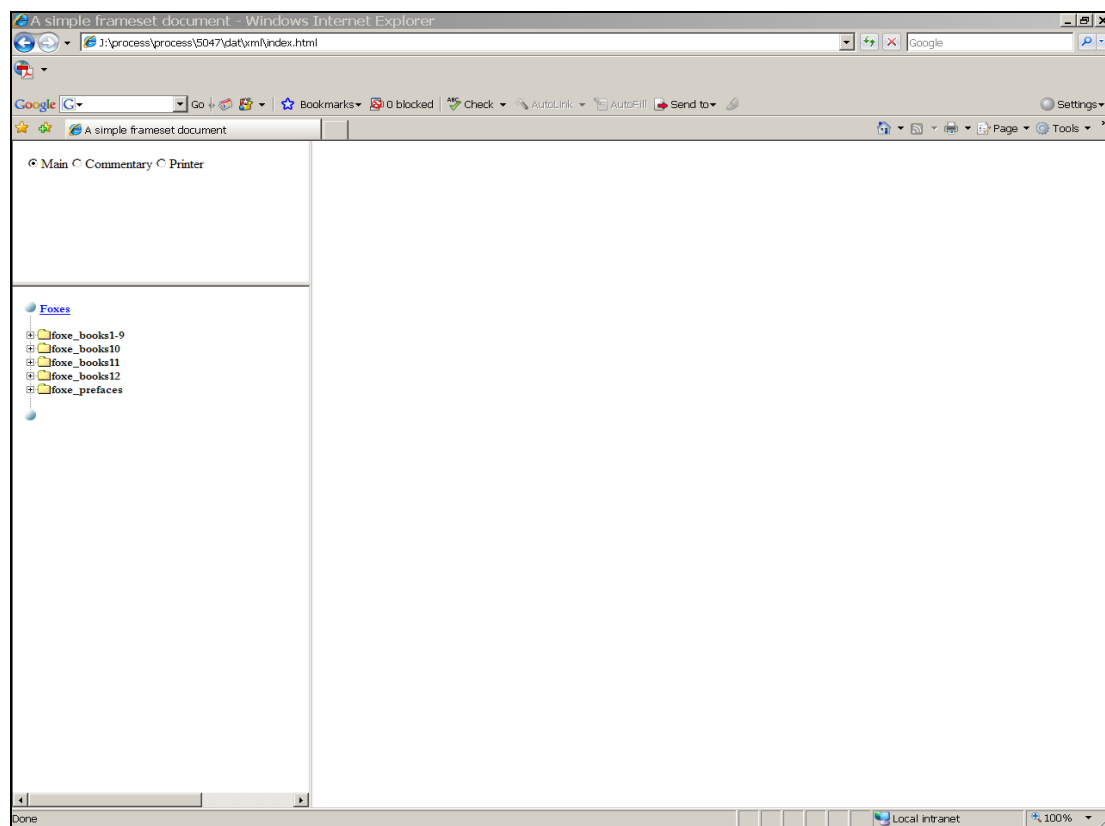


Figure 1. Initial display of the interface support file 'index.html' after this has been fully loaded

Expanding the folders on the task bar menu on the left will produce a tree-like navigation display and will render the chosen XML file with the desired view on the right as shown in Figure 2.

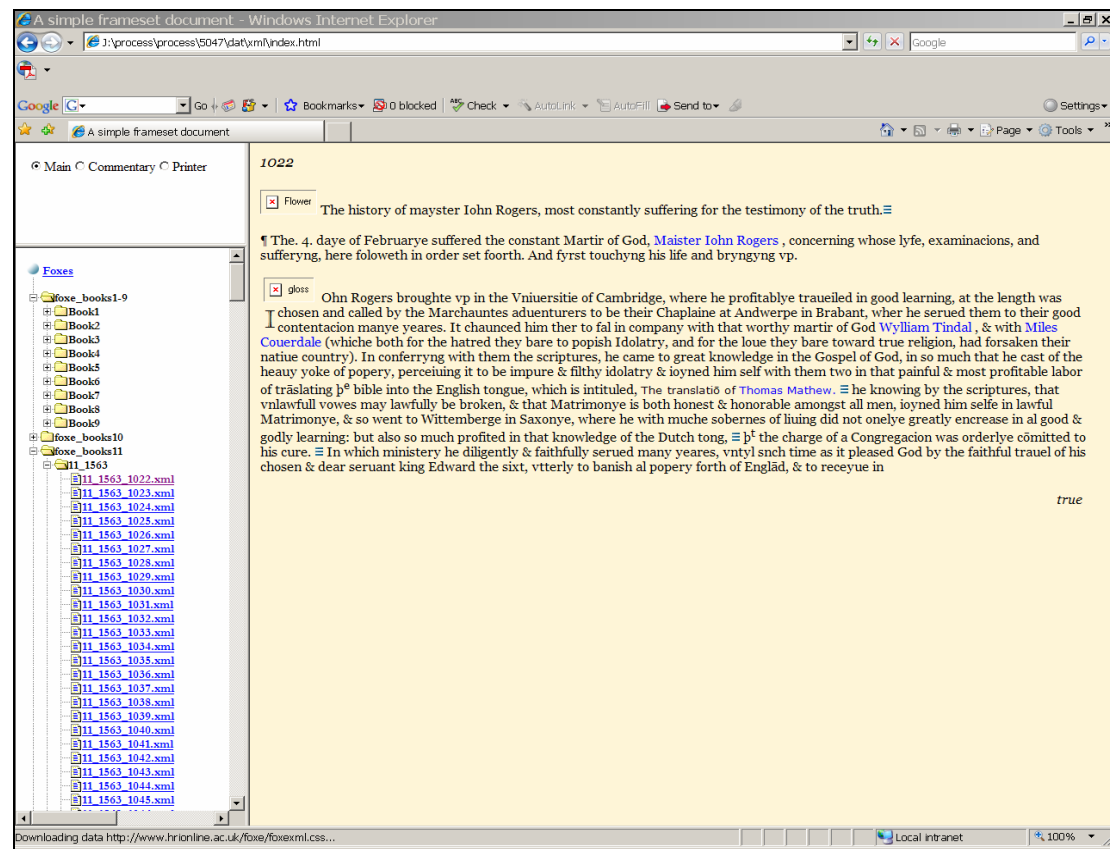


Figure 2. Expanded display of the interface showing how particular XML files chosen from the task bar menu on the left are rendered on the right window.

Images

The images contained in this collection comprised mostly pages, indices, woodcuts and photographs taken to various book pages from the 1583 edition. The deposited images are currently distributed in six folders: ‘calendars’, ‘handwritten’, ‘illustrations’, ‘indices’, ‘photographs’ and ‘texts’. The names of these folders are indicative of their content. Some information related to the images found in the ‘illustrations’ folder such as a description, type, edition from which the woodcut is taken, etc., can be found in a tabular format in one of the tab delimited files that comprise this deposit (see below), however, little or no further metadata is available for the rest of the images in this collection.

Database

A dissemination version of the database originally deposited with AHDS History consists of eight tab delimited files. These files contain the following information:

‘aston_images.tab’:

Data on some of the woodcuts for various editions of the book

‘book.tab’:

Bibliographic data of books written on the topic

'book_section.tab':

Bibliographic data about chapters or sections of books written on the topics

'edited_book.tab':

Bibliographic data of edited books written on the topic

'journal_article.tab':

Bibliographic data of journal articles written on the topic

'main_bibliography.tab'

Combined bibliographic data of material written on the topic

'office_holders.tab'

Data on office holders between ca. 1505 and 1621

'thesis.tab'

Bibliographic data of academic theses written on the topic