

**DOM MAURICE CHAUNCY
AND THE LONDON CHARTERHOUSE**

John P.H. Clark

The Carthusians provided more Catholic martyrs under Henry VIII than any other religious order in England; apart from the evidence furnished by state documents, we owe a detailed account of these events to Dom Maurice Chauncy¹, a monk of the London charterhouse, who survived these events. Chauncy was born in Hertfordshire about 1509, and studied at Oxford and Gray's Inn. He entered the charterhouse under the Prior Dom John Houghton, probably in 1532, and had made his profession by May 1534, when the story begins.

It was in 1534 that Henry secured three crucial acts. The first, the Act of Succession, confirmed his marriage with Anne Boleyn, following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, obtained on the authority of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and regardless of the Pope's refusal to grant such a divorce; this established the right of succession of the issue of this marriage. The Act of Supremacy proclaimed Henry to be 'supreme head' of the Church in England, including a spiritual jurisdiction which could be exercised by his Vicar-General and Visitors. The third act, the Act of Treasons, was an extension of an earlier statute, and was intended to enforce acceptance of the title 'supreme head of the Church in England' claimed by Henry.

Following the martyrdom of eighteen English Carthusians, with the dissolution of the London charterhouse, a number of the surviving English Carthusians subsequently made their way abroad, to renew their religious vocation. Among others, Chauncy himself had arrived at the charterhouse of Val de Grace in Bruges by February 1547², shortly after the death of Henry VIII, and it was there that he wrote his first account of the English Carthusian martyrs (= version A), at the request of the Prior of Bruges, Dom Peter Ruge van Hoorne. The fullest manuscript of this version is in

¹ On Dom Maurice Chauncy, see E.M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, London 1930, pp. 343-353; 375-378; 500-514; *The Passion and Martyrdom of the Holy English Carthusian Fathers: The Short Narration. By Dom Maurice Chauncy*, ed. G.W.S. Curtis, London 1935, - Historical Introduction by E.M. Thompson, pp. 24-33; D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, Vol. 3: *The Tudor Age*, Cambridge 1959, pp. 222-237 passim, 240; J. de Grauwe and F. Timmermans, *Prosopographia Cartusiana Belgica Renovata*, AC 154, Salzburg 1999, Vol. 2, p. 450. Chauncy's probable date of birth is here placed c. 1513.

² Miss Thompson's account in *The Passion and Martyrdom*, ed. Curtis, must be updated by the information indicated in Knowles, op. cit., p. 222, note 2, which was not available to her. The date of February 1547 is supplied by Guildhall MS. 1231 (alone of the texts of version A), which reads (f. 24r): ... que etiam citius si licuisset euulgasset, sed principum terror me hactenus a proposito refrenauit, vsque ad annum Domini 1546 in Februario. It is assumed that Chauncy used 'English dating', counting the year from Lady Day to Lady Day. - I am indebted to Professor Peter Cunich at this point.

the National Library at Vienna, MS. SN 12751 (formerly MS. 9366B in the Imperial Library).³ There is an abridged form of this in MS. 0.81 of the Royal Library at the Hague.⁴ Both of these have been published by the Bollandists. Another, differently abbreviated, form of this version is in London Guildhall MS. 1231, combined with a report of the martyrdom of St. Thomas More.⁵

In order to gain the authority of the Prior-General for the refugee monks to remain at Bruges, the consent of the General Chapter was necessary. Previously, at the time of the crisis over the royal supremacy, the then Prior-General, Dom Jean Gaillard, had been misinformed about the true state of affairs in England, and had even been induced to accept the royal supremacy and admit Cromwell to fraternity of the order. So at the instance of the Prior of Bruges, Chauncy wrote a second account of the martyrdom for the present Prior-General, Dom Jean Valon. This was edited, with some improvements to the Latin style, by the Prior of Mainz, Dom Vitus a Dulken, with the assistance of the Procurator, Dom Guillelmus a Sittart, and published at Mainz in 1550 (= version B).⁶ A fine reprint of this, with some annotations, prepared by Dom Victor Doreau, was made by the Carthusians of Montreuil in 1888.

Meanwhile the General Chapter of 1547 had authorised the Prior of Bruges to admit the English refugees to their second profession.⁷

Under Mary Tudor as Queen of England there were hopes that Carthusian life (and the religious life of other Orders) might be restored in England. In 1555 Chauncy was authorised to return to England, and lead the community which was to be re-established at Sheen charterhouse, not far from London. But the Queen's premature death in 1558 put an end to these hopes. The surviving monks returned in 1559 to Bruges.

³ Published in *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1895), pp. 268-283. It is this manuscript, freshly transcribed from microfilm of the MS., which will be the base-text for version A.

⁴ Published in *Analecta Bollandiana* 6 (1887), pp. 35-51.

⁵ See J.P.H. Clark, "The Martyrdom of St. Thomas More and of the English Carthusians as recorded in London Guildhall MS. 1231", a paper read at the Molsheim (2005) Carthusian conference, to be published in the *Acta* of that conference.

⁶ Dom Stanislas Autore, *Scriptores Sacri Ordinis Cartusienis*, photographically reproduced in AC 120, Vol. 9, Salzburg 1993, p. 79, lists a further edition at Munich 1573; p. 81, editions at Cologne 1580, Burgos 1583 and Milan 1606, as well as the edition of Montreuil 1888.

The printed edition was also reworked in an edition of Ghent 1608 by Dom Arnoldus Havensius (d. 1610), who was prior of a succession of charterhouses in the Low Countries. On Dom Havensius, see de Grauwe and Timmermans, *Prosopographia ... Renovata*, Vol. 2, p. 338. On his edition of Chauncy's work, see Dom Stanislas Autore, *Scriptores Ordinis Cartusienis*, Tomus Primus, transcribed and arranged by Jean Picard, AC 200:4, Salzburg 2005, pp. 133-4. Dom Autore's manuscript text at this point is photographically reproduced in AC 200, Vol. 2, Salzburg 2003, pp. 291-293. An English version of Havensius' text was made; this has been edited by J. Clark, "Dom Maurice Chauncy's *Passion and Martyrdom of the Holy English Carthusian Fathers: An Unpublished Version*", in *Liber Amicorum Jan de Grauwe: Essays over de Geschiedenis en het Spirituel Leven van de Kartuisers*, ed. Tom Gaens and Francis Timmermans, AC 222, Salzburg 2004, pp. 73-134.

⁷ *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1536-1570* (MS. Grande Chartreuse 1 Cart. 14), ed. John Clark, AC 100:36, Salzburg 2000, p. 61.

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In 1561 Chauncy was appointed Prior of the Bruges charterhouse, but in 1568 the General Chapter authorized him to form the English monks into a separate community at Bruges.⁸ The exiles' troubles were not at an end; the Protestant Netherlanders, suspecting them of Spanish sympathies, drove them from Bruges in 1578, but they found a refuge in the charterhouse of Louvain.⁹ Subsequently they would move to Anvers in 1590, and Malines in 1591, and eventually in the next century to Nieuport, where the English Carthusians, gaining recruits of their own countrymen from time to time, would continue until the suppression of the contemplative monasteries as useless to society by the Emperor Joseph II in 1783.¹⁰

The English Carthusians continued to look back with longing to Sheen, and their new establishment was called Sheen Anglorum. They were often wretchedly poor; the annuity of £ 100 granted to them by Philip II of Spain was not always paid. It was probably to enlist the support of the authorities at Rome that Chauncy wrote the third account of the English martyrdoms in 1564 (= version C), of which there is a copy in the Vatican archives (Miscellanea, Armadio LXIV, vol. 28, ff. 213r-239v). This has also been published by the Bollandists.¹¹ In this version the detailed background picture of life at the London charterhouse is omitted, but an account of the Marian restoration at Sheen and its dissolution under Elizabeth is given. The account of the martyrdom in this version is distinctly based on version A rather than on version B, as the collation of the different versions in this edition shows.

In 1570 Chauncy wrote, no doubt again as an appeal for monetary aid from a mainland European public, his fourth account of the English martyrdoms (= version D). This is called in its title a 'Short Narration', but it is longer than the others, with much rhetoric and additional scriptural allusions, and sometimes speeches which can only be imaginary put into the mouths of the characters. It follows in broad outline version C, but with some differences, and towards the end a notable difference in the order of events related. It includes some biographical items not found in the other accounts. No doubt for the benefit of mainland European readers who were living at some distance both in space and time from the events, Chauncy gives a full account of Henry VIII and his ministers, and of the political events leading to Henry's assumption of the title of head of the English church, and to the suppression of the monasteries. There is here a very

⁸ *The Chartae ... 1536-1570*, p. 168.

⁹ *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1571-1588 (MS. Grande Chartreuse 1 Cart. 14)*, ed. John Clark, AC 100:37, Salzburg 2001, p. 65. (General Chapter of 1579)

¹⁰ E.M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, pp. 510-515. More recently, Jan de Grauwe, *Histoire de la Chartreuse Sheen Anglorum au Continent: Bruges, Louvain, Malines, Nieuport (1559-1783)*, AC 48, Salzburg 1984.

¹¹ *Analecta Bollandiana* 22 (1903), pp. 51-78.

much increased sharpness of tone in referring to Henry VIII and his authorities, especially Cromwell. No doubt by this time Chauncy was becoming painfully aware that the possibility of a return to England for the exiled religious was receding. An excellent edition of this version by the Revd. G.W.S. Curtis, with a historical introduction by Miss Margaret Thompson, the great pioneer historian of the English Carthusians, has been provided by the S.P.C.K.¹²

Dom Chauncy remained in office as Prior of the English Carthusian community until his death. In 1581 he went to Spain on the business of his community, and on his way back to Bruges he died at the Paris charterhouse on July 12th 1581.

Version A of Chauncy's account of the martyrdom, followed here by Version B, gives a vivid picture of the personality of the Prior Dom John Houghton, and of the life of the London charterhouse under his rule. As mentioned, this material is not repeated in versions C and D. No doubt Chauncy, who received his monastic formation under Houghton, has a hagiographical purpose in his presentation of the Prior and other leading personalities among the Carthusian martyrs, and a taste for the miraculous, but he provides concrete details and the picture which he gives may be taken as a faithful one in essentials.

In these earlier versions Chauncy begins by referring to Houghton's birth in Essex of honourable and devout parents, and to his attaining the degree of Bachelor of Civil and Canon Law at Cambridge University. Houghton entered the London charterhouse in his twenty-eighth year (that is, in 1515). His life was marked by great austerity towards himself, humility, patience, and self-mortification.¹³ After Houghton was appointed Sacristan, Chauncy relates (on the authority of the then Vicar of the charterhouse) a notable incident when Houghton overcame fear and distaste, and consumed, when celebrating Mass, a Host which two days previously had been regurgitated by a gravely ill monk; Houghton was rewarded by tasting indeed in spirit, in the words of the Psalm, that the Lord is gracious.¹⁴ After Houghton had held the office of Sacristan for five years, he was appointed Procurator; after three years of exemplary service in this office, he was elected Prior of Beauvale charterhouse. Scarcely six months afterwards (in 1531) the Prior of the London charterhouse (Dom John Batmanson, who had been in office for just two years), died, and Houghton was recalled to succeed him, and was appointed principal Visitor of the English Province.¹⁵ It was as Prior that Houghton had been known to

¹² See note 1.

¹³ A: MS. Vienna (V), ff. 193rb-193vb; B: Edition of Montreuil 1888, c. 1, pp. 38-39. The additional information on dates, etc., supplied in brackets here and elsewhere in the account of the martyrs, is drawn from the sources indicated in note 1, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 193vb-194va; B: Montreuil, c. 2, pp. 40-43.

¹⁵ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 194va-vb; B: Montreuil, c. 3, pp. 44-46.

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¹⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 19

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¹⁸ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 19

¹⁹ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 19

²⁰ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 19

²¹ B: Montreuil, p. 52.

²² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 19

Chauncy; the latter dwells at considerable length on his outstanding virtues. The material in version A is elaborated in the fourth chapter of version B, which occupies seventeen pages out of one hundred and twenty-seven in the Montreuil reprint.¹⁶

Chauncy begins by emphasising Houghton's profound humility. He disliked being addressed as 'Domine', referring to Christ's injunction to the Apostles that they should not be called 'Rabbi'. When any of the brethren showed him the marks of respect enjoined by the *Statutes*, he accepted this as a humiliation, urging them always to refer such reverence not to him but to God. When in the cell of any monk, he spoke as one brother to another.¹⁷

Again, Houghton's patience was attested even by bad monks and apostates. To one who treated him with physical violence he literally turned the other cheek; when the offending monk was put in the monastic prison by his brethren, Houghton forgave him and commuted his punishment to a few days in his cell. Above all, his discipline was directed to self-mortification.¹⁸

In his profound devotion and love of God, he received the gift of tears, which might appear in the refectory, and especially when he was offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Almost every month, when confessing his faults in chapter, he wept. His special concern was the preservation of peace and charity. He sought to be loved rather than feared; when it was necessary to rebuke anyone, or to refuse something superfluous or 'curious', he did it with gentleness rather than austerity.¹⁹

Houghton was especially vigilant to see that uniformity and reverence was observed in worship, and that the chant was rendered slowly. If there was any carelessness in the chant, he would leave the choir, and rebuke this fault at the next chapter. If the psalms were sung in a tepid or low voice, he would express the hope that the love of God was not tepid or low in the monks' hearts. Chauncy gives specific instances.²⁰

In version B gives a particular picture of Houghton's influence on the younger monks. He was gentle yet firm with all the monks, but he would practise a certain detachment with those who were professed for less than four or five years, just as Joseph made himself strange to his brothers, thus avoiding undue familiarity.²¹ At that point, in a community of thirty monks and eighteen laybrothers,²² there were about twenty who were under thirty-eight years old. The Prior would ask the younger monks individually

¹⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 194vb-197ra; B: Montreuil, c. 4, pp. 47-63.

¹⁷ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 194vb-195rb; B: Montreuil, p. 48.

¹⁸ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 195rb-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 48-49.

¹⁹ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 195vb-196rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 50-51.

²⁰ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 196rb-197ra; B: Montreuil, pp. 53-57, with some differences of detail.

²¹ B: Montreuil, p. 52.

²² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 197ra-rb.

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In version A Chauncy adds a physical description of Houghton; he was of small stature, fine-featured, dark-haired, modest in his appearance and gentle in speech.²⁴

In version B Chauncy adds some details furnished by Dom William Exmew, the martyr, who was Houghton's confessor. After Mattins Houghton never returned to bed, unless seriously unwell, but rested on a bench with a small mattress; he would not allow others to do this unless they were strong in body and religious observance.²⁵

Brief indications in version A are expanded to a full chapter in version B on the perfection of discipline and monastic life at the London charterhouse.²⁶ Here Chauncy breaks into self-reproach for his failure to follow his Prior to martyrdom:

Num aliud expectandum quam quod vocem pastoris audierit et eum secutæ sint? Non plane, non; me solum excepto, qui quasi pecus macilentum ac scabiosum de ovili abscissus sum.²⁷

He gives a radiant picture of the silence and solitude that was observed, and the unity of heart and soul of the community. The performance of the Divine Office at the London charterhouse was a bye-word among the citizens of the city.²⁸ A further chapter in version B is devoted to the uniformity of observance and ceremonies at the charterhouse.²⁹

Following version A, version B devotes a further chapter to outstanding examples of holiness among the monks. Mention is made of the laybrothers Roger Edwards and John Davy;³⁰ the latter would be among the Carthusian martyrs. Special mention is made of Dom William Tynbigh, the Irishman who following a miraculous deliverance from captivity at the hands of the Saracens in the Holy Land, at the intercession of St. Catherine of Alexandria, joined the London charterhouse, and became a 'second Anthony' in his life of prayer and conflict with the spirits of evil. He was over sixty years in the Order; we know from other sources that he was Prior from 1500 to 1529.³¹ Chauncy describes how at Mass for many years before his death Dom Tynbigh could seldom recite the beginning of St. John's Gospel without tears. Like St. Paul, he was taken in spirit into Paradise, and received the gift of prophecy. He was wont to warn the community of the sufferings that would come on them, telling them that as

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²³ B: Montreuil, pp. 58-59.

²⁴ A: MS. Vienna, f. 196vb.

²⁵ B: Montreuil, pp. 61-62.

²⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 197ra-rb; B: Montreuil, c. 5, pp. 64-70.

²⁷ B: Montreuil, p. 64.

²⁸ A: MS. Vienna, f. 197rb; B: Montreuil, p. 69.

²⁹ B: Montreuil, c. 6, pp. 71-72.

³⁰ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 197rb-va; B: Montreuil, c. 7, p. 74.

³¹ J. Hogg, "The Pre-Reformation Priors of the *Provincia Angliæ*": AC 1 (NS), p. 28, with note 103.

³² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 197vb-198rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 77-78.

³³ B: Montreuil, pp. 77-78.

³⁴ A: MS. Vienna, f. 198va; B: Montreuil, p. 78.

³⁵ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 198va-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 78-79.

³⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 198vb-199ra; B: Montreuil, pp. 79-80.

³⁷ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 199ra-va; B: Montreuil, pp. 80-81.

³⁸ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 199va-vb; Montreuil, pp. 81-82.

long as they remained of one heart and mind they would not be overcome, which indeed came to pass.³² Tynbigh obviously left a lasting influence upon the community, and Dom Houghton himself received his monastic formation during his long priorate.

In version B Chauncy also singles out for mention Dom William Exmew, who was born of a distinguished family, and expert in Greek and Latin; he joined the Order at the age of twenty-eight, and was appointed first Vicar and then Procurator of the London house. He repeats Exmew's personal reminiscences which are indicative of his profound humility.³³

Conversely, Chauncy refers to some monks whose lives were the reverse of exemplary, as a warning. He describes Thomas Salter, who several times apostatised, and being imprisoned, was attacked by evil spirits; his being delivered from them still did not lead him to change his ways.³⁴ Another monk named George, who was clearly unsuited to the religious life, was eventually expelled by licence of the General Chapter.³⁵ Dom Nicholas Rawlings, whose dedication to the Carthusian life was distinctly luke-warm, was on one occasion struck with blindness as he entered the church, but recovered on being led back to his cell; on another occasion, when celebrating Mass, he was so struck with terror that he could not proceed, and was obliged to take off the priestly vestments.³⁶ Other instances are adduced.³⁷

Chauncy then turns to significant portents that occurred in the London charterhouse in 1533, the year before the crisis. From this point, describing the events leading up to and including the martyrdom, the earlier versions are matched – with some expansions and minor variations – in versions C and D.

One night the whole community, returning from Mattins, beheld a comet in the heavens pointing towards the charterhouse. On another occasion, as the Prior passed from the church to the monastic cemetery after the second Nocturn, he saw a great globe of blood in the heavens; the same was seen by another brother. Again, in the same year two great swarms of flies, one black, the other of various colours, appeared.³⁸

The time of trial began in 1534. Henry VIII's commissioners arrived in May at the London charterhouse, and demanded that the Prior and community assent to the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn as licit, following the divorce from Catherine of Aragon in the face of the Pope's refusal to grant such a divorce. The Prior replied that it was no part of his vocation,

³² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 197vb-198rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 74-76.

³³ B: Montreuil, pp. 77-78.

³⁴ A: MS. Vienna, f. 198va; B: Montreuil, c. 8, pp. 81-82.

³⁵ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 198va-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 82-83.

³⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 198vb-199ra; B: Montreuil, p. 83.

³⁷ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 199ra-va; B: Montreuil, pp. 83-84.

³⁸ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 199va-vb; Montreuil, c. 9, pp. 88-89.

nor the vocation of his monks, to meddle with the king's affairs; the king might marry whom he would, so long as he made no demands on them in this matter. The commissioners were not content with this reply, but demanded that the Prior and the community without more ado repudiate the king's marriage to Catherine. The Prior replied that he could not understand how a marriage celebrated according to the rites of the Church and so long observed could be set aside. At this the Prior, with the Procurator, Dom Humphrey Middlemore, was carried off to the Tower of London, where they were detained for a month. There they were persuaded that the present issue was not in itself a matter of faith for which they should be prepared to die. On returning to the charterhouse, the Prior addressed the community and advised them that they might take the oath of Succession without betrayal of their faith, but warned them of a harder trial to come in the future. The king's commissioners came twice while this was going on with threats of imprisonment if the community as a whole did not concur, to no avail; the third time, the community acquiesced and took the oath of Succession – version B adds: *cum conditione tamen quatenus licitum esset*.³⁹

But the respite was short. In 1535 the further parliamentary enactment meant that a charge of high treason could be brought against anyone who upheld the authority of the Pope and refused to accept the king as the supreme head on earth of the Church of England. Again the Prior called the community together. According to version B, he expressed a particular concern for the younger monks, who might not feel able to stand firm at this moment of decision. Chauncy relates that the whole community stood together:

Tunc dixerunt omnes constanii animo et una voce: "Moriatur omnes in simplicitate nostra ..."⁴⁰

The Prior expressed the wish that they might all die together, and so enter eternal life together, but he foresaw that he and the senior monks would be given to death, and the younger monks set free. Version B says: "... dimittent avolare liberos in terram non suam",⁴¹ a reference, with hindsight, to the exile of some at least of the survivors after the dissolution. Come what might, let God's will be done. The Prior directed that each monk should choose a confessor, and that there should be a day of mutual reconciliation in the community, followed by a Mass of the Holy Spirit. When the day of reconciliation came, the Prior led the way in asking pardon of the senior monk beside him for any faults that he might have

³⁹ A: MS, Vienna, ff. 199vb-200vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 89-91. The explicit qualification, *cum conditione tamen quatenus licitum esset*, is added in B.

⁴⁰ A: MS, Vienna, ff. 200vb-201ra; B: Montreuil, pp. 91-93. The quotation is given in the B form. The quotation is from 1 Machabees 2.37.

⁴¹ A: MS, Vienna, f. 201ra; B: Montreuil, p. 93.

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⁴² A: MS, Vienna, ff. 20

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committed against him. At the Mass of the Holy Spirit, Chauncy relates how at the elevation of the Host there was a new Pentecost:

sibilus quidam aure tenuis, exterius paululum sonans, interius vero multum operans, a pluribus percipitur et auditur auribus corporis, et ab omnibus sentitur et hauritur auribus cordis⁴²

Meanwhile Dom Robert Laurence, professed of London and Prior of Beauvale, and Dom Augustine Webster, professed of Sheen and Prior of Axholme, came to the London charterhouse on business. Dom Houghton, together with them, resolved to go to the king's vicar, Thomas Cromwell, to ask that they might be dispensed from taking the oath of Supremacy, but were put in the Tower of London for their pains. To the demand that they accept Henry as head of the English church both in temporal and spiritual matters, they would assent "as long as the divine law shall have permitted". Cromwell would have no exception or qualification, and scorned appeals to the tradition of the Church and to St. Augustine. Accordingly the three Carthusian Priors were brought to trial. The jury that was convened would have found them not guilty of treason, but were brow-beaten by Cromwell into finding them guilty after all, on pain of being themselves declared traitors. The three Priors were condemned, and on the appointed day, May 4th 1535, were dragged on hurdles through the streets of London to a horrible and degrading death, in which they were hanged and dismembered. Chauncy gives a vivid picture of Houghton before his death, in his forty-eighth year, witnessing to the Catholic faith, and praying for the king, and for those who stood by; there is a clear echo of the prayer of Christ on the Cross for those who crucified him. Houghton died first, followed by the two other Priors. Together with them, Chauncy adds in version B, was martyred Fr. Richard Reynolds, the Bridgettine of Syon.⁴³

The dismembered bodies of the martyrs were boiled in cauldrons and hung in various parts of London. Chauncy records that an arm of John Houghton, which was hung on the gate of the London charterhouse, was subsequently buried, together, he adds in version B, with the bloody hair-shirt in which the Prior was martyred.⁴⁴

Dom Houghton's own account of his trial and the answers that he gave, indicating explicitly that he was condemned for refusing to reject the Pope's authority, and not for plotting against the king, were sent to Dom William Exmew, the Procurator of the London charterhouse, who entrusted it to Chauncy himself; Chauncy entrusted the same to a certain Spaniard, who undertook to convey it, together with a fragment of the martyr's hair-shirt, to the Pope.⁴⁵

⁴² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 201ra-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 94-97. The quotation is given in the B form (p. 96).

⁴³ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 201vb-203va; B: Montreuil, c. 9, p. 97 - c. 10, p. 105.

⁴⁴ A: MS. MS. Vienna, f. 203va; B: Montreuil, p. 105. Version C (*An. Boll.* 22, p. 65) relates that the arm was subsequently discovered by 'a ministris diaboli' and destroyed.

⁴⁵ A: MSVienna ff. 203va-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 105-106.

After Houghton's martyrdom, the leadership of the London charterhouse passed to the Vicar, Dom Humphrey Middlemore, the Procurator, Dom William Exmew, and Dom Sebastian Newdigate, the former courtier who had embraced the Carthusian life. Efforts to persuade or bully these into submission failed, and they too suffered martyrdom in June of the same year. The account in version B especially is written in words of great beauty:

Hi tres, juvenes erant aetate, senili tamen animo, gratia et virtutibus pleni praeclaraeque prosapie, et tertius eorum, Pater Sebastianus, fuerat enutritus in domo domini Regis; omnes apprime docti et magnæ constantiæ, audacter allegantes de Scripturis Sanctis ante tribunal Judicum, quod Rex non potuit sibi vindicare ex debito et auctoritate Juris divini, illam suprematam et primatum Ecclesiæ quam Papæ et sacerdotibus tribuit Jesus Christus Dominus noster. Iveruntque ad mortem quasi ad epulas, suscipientes eam cum maxima mansuetudine et patientia cordis, alacritate corporis et hilaritate vultus, spe vitæ aeternæ, anno Domini 1535, die XIX Junii.⁴⁶

Two years passed, during which no more monks were imprisoned, but all the while Cromwell and his assistants strove by all means to break the unity and determination of the London Carthusians. Secular men were put in charge of the monastery. They ate and drank in luxury, while terrorising the monks. They took away the monks' books, hoping by this means to deprive them of resources for defending the Catholic faith, but the monks kept the faith with holy simplicity. The king's representatives constantly visited the monastery, and detained the monks in arguments so that they could not sing Vespers or Mattins at the proper hours. Friends and relatives also visited and tried to weaken their resolve. One Sunday four of the monks were seized during High Mass, and taken to St. Paul's Cross, where in the company of a great crowd, including leading citizens, they were compelled to listen to a sermon from a learned bishop against the authority of the Pope.⁴⁷ Version D says explicitly that Chauncy was himself one of the four.⁴⁸

The king's commissioners were still not gaining their end. On May 4th 1536 – the anniversary of Houghton's martyrdom – they sent four of the London Carthusians to distant charterhouses (Hull and Beauvale), in order to weaken and divide the community. In version B Chauncy adds the detail that the departure of one of these monks was delayed because he was *sacerdos hebdomadarius* at the time.⁴⁹ Eight of those who remained were sent to the Bridgettine house at Syon, to hear the arguments of learned men in the king's cause. In particular the aged and dying confessor-general, (Fr. Coppinger), declared that he reproached himself for having earlier counselled Fr. Houghton to reject the royal supremacy; the matter was not,

⁴⁶ A: MS, Vienna, ff. 204ra-va; B: Montreuil, c. 11, pp. 107-108. The quotation is in B, p. 108.

⁴⁷ A: MS, Vienna, ff. 204va-205rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 108-111. (There is some difference of order in B).

⁴⁸ *The Passion and Martyrdom* (ed. Curtis), pp. 108-110.

⁴⁹ A: MS, Vienna, ff. 205rb-va; B: Montreuil, c. 12, pp. 112-113.

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he now said, something for which to die. Hearing him, some of the eight were inclined to follow the counsel of this aged and respected man, but on returning to the charterhouse their earlier resolve was renewed.⁵⁰

It is after this that Chauncy was induced to the act for which ever after he reproached himself. The royal commissioners threatened destruction of the charterhouse if the remaining monks did not accede to the oath of Supremacy. The community was divided. In order to secure the future of the monastery, as they thought, one group within the charterhouse, including Chauncy himself, took the oath, even against their deeper convictions, and asking pardon of God as they did so.⁵¹

The ten remaining London Carthusians who refused to take the oath were imprisoned in appalling conditions at the end of May 1537. There were three priests: Thomas Green, Richard Beere, and Thomas Johnson; one deacon, John Davy; and six lay-brothers: Robert Salte, Walter Peerson (or Parson); Thomas Scriven, Thomas Redding, William Greenwood, and William Horne. Nine of them were soon dead from the squalor in which they were kept. One lay-brother, William Horne, was moved from the prison, but was eventually executed at Tyburn on August 4th 1540.⁵²

Meanwhile in the north of England the Pilgrimage of Grace had taken place against the king's actions. This was crushed, and subsequently, in May 1537, a 'certain nobleman' near the Hull charterhouse denounced to Cromwell the two London monks who had been placed in the Hull charterhouse as rebels against the king. The two monks, Dom John Rochester and Dom James Walworth, were subsequently hanged in chains outside York. The other two monks who had been sent to Beauvale, after a year and a half were remitted to the Bridgettines of Syon, Chauncy notes in Version B, and it was here that they were persuaded to accede to the oath of Supremacy – again, he says, a feigned acquiescence.⁵³

But in any case the hope of saving the charterhouse by assenting to the king's demand was in vain. On November 15th 1538 the remaining monks were expelled from the London charterhouse; in version B Chauncy says that these were twelve professed monks, three *hospites*, and six professed lay-brothers. The monastery was desolated and profaned. The king's tents and armour were put in the church; the images of saints and the Crucifix itself were broken; men played dice on the altars, and other unspeakable acts were performed in the church. However, in 1544 an end was put to this; the charterhouse was given to a knight named Edward

⁵⁰ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 205va-vb; B: Montreuil, pp. 113-114.

⁵¹ A: Ms. Vienna, ff. 205vb-206ra; B: Montreuil, pp. 115-116.

⁵² A: MS. Vienna, ff. 206ra-rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 116-117. – Chauncy says that William Horne was executed on November 4th 1541, but other reliable evidence supports the date of August 4th 1540. – L.E. Whatmore, *The Carthusians under King Henry the Eighth*, AC 109 (Salzburg 1983), pp. 214-215.

⁵³ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 206rb-va; B: Montreuil, pp. 118-119.

North, who made himself a 'palace' there, and converted the church into his dining-room.⁵⁴

Chauncy then relates various miracles to witness to the glory of the martyrs. In the Coventry charterhouse a certain monk named Richard Croftes attempted to drown himself in the monastery's fish-pond, but was prevented from doing so by a great light, in which the same monk and the Prior saw the martyred London fathers.

In the London charterhouse were two monks who were close friends, named Robert Raby and John Darley; the former died first, but after his death appeared to his friend, in white clothing, declaring that he was himself in glory, but the martyrs were far higher in glory, and before them all the Prior, Dom John Houghton, wore a more splendid crown. In version B Chauncy says that this vision was related to the king's commissioners, who forbade the surviving brother, John Darley, to tell it to anyone, under severe threats.⁵⁵ But now (in version B) Chauncy relates it to the Prior-General, asking for mercy for himself on the day of judgment, and meanwhile asking the Prior-General to allow him to remain at the Bruges charterhouse, together with John Perdon, who had been a *hospes* at the London charterhouse at the time of the dissolution, and Hugh Taylor, a professed lay-brother of the house, who had come with him into exile.⁵⁶

Chauncy concludes version B by quoting the psalm, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum eius*. As for their oppressors, they came to bad ends. Cromwell was himself beheaded within two years on the charge of treason. And a woman who came into the church contemptuously while Mass was being celebrated, within five days died wretchedly.⁵⁷

In version C, and at greater length in version D, Chauncy describes the plight of the dispossessed Carthusians, and other religious, after the dissolution. They were exiles in their own country; like the Israelites of old, they sat by the waters of Babylon and wept. The ports were watched, and escape was impossible save at the risk of their lives. But at last they took the risk, and reached the charterhouse of Bruges in safety.⁵⁸

In these later versions, Chauncy describes the glowing hopes for restoration of the Carthusian life in England under Queen Mary. In 1555 Chauncy was authorised by the General Chapter to return to England, with Dom John Fox and Brother Hugh Taylor, both formerly of the London

⁵⁴ A: MS. Vienna, f. 206va; B: Montreuil, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁵ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 206vb, 207rb-vb; Montreuil, c. 14, pp. 121-123. (This and the following item occur in different order between A and B).

⁵⁶ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 207ra-rb; B: Montreuil, pp. 123-125.

⁵⁷ A: MS. Vienna, ff. 207vb-208ra; B: Montreuil, *Epilogue*, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁸ C: *An. Boll.* 22, c. 21, p. 71; D: *The Passion and Martyrdom*, pp. 130-132; 132-134. Pp. 130-132 have the extended lament on the plight of the Carthusians (and other Catholics and especially religious) after the dissolution of the monasteries, referring to Ps. 136 (Vulgate numbering), and the Book of Lamentations.

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charterhouse. Dom Fox died soon after their arrival. He was replaced by Dom Richard Croftes, formerly of the Coventry charterhouse, and subsequently Vicar of the charterhouse of Hollandia (Montis Sanctæ Gertrudis). It will be recalled that Croftes had had severe problems at Coventry at one point before the dissolution, but clearly these had now been overcome. But Croftes too died soon after his arrival in England. Chauncy and Taylor were now doubly bereaved and vulnerable, but Cardinal Pole and Sir Robert Rochester, the latter the Controller of the Queen's household, who had supported the project from the first, gave them all possible support in their hour of need. They were joined by fifteen other former Carthusians who had remained in the country, and the community was established at Sheen; the former charterhouse was recovered by the Queen, not without some difficulty, from the second wife of the Protector Somerset, who had been granted it by Henry VIII. The Carthusians entered Sheen on November 17th, 1555, the feast of St. Hugh of Lincoln.⁵⁹

Chauncy is eloquent in describing the generosity of the Queen, the Cardinal, and Rochester to the re-instated Carthusian community. But the good hopes were destined not to be fulfilled. Again on St. Hugh's day, in 1558, the Queen and Cardinal Pole were taken from them in a single day. Rochester died just after, on November 25th. With the accession of Elizabeth, the Pope's authority was once again abjured, and the Carthusians were expelled from Sheen on or shortly after July 1st 1559. In the event, Elizabeth dealt with the monks more leniently than might have been the case; at the instance of King Philip of Spain, the widower of Queen Mary, they were allowed to leave England peacefully, and returned to Bruges.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ C: *An. Boll.* 22, c. 21, p. 71 – c. 24, p. 73; D: *The Passion*, pp. 134-146.

⁶⁰ C: *An. Boll.* 22, c. 24, p. 73 – c. 26, p. 75; D: *The Passion*, pp. 146-158. Version C gives July 8th 1559 as the date of the expulsion; Version D says July 1st. – The rest of D (pp. 158-162) is an expression of hope for the continuing Carthusian life of the English exiles, without any immediate hope of return.