



INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JESUIT STUDIES
BOSTON COLLEGE

JESUIT SOURCES

International Symposia on Jesuit Studies

ISSN: 2766-0664

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Ministry, Martyrology, and Hagiography in His Life and Afterlife

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Source: *The Jesuits and the Church in History*
(Proceedings of the Symposium held at Boston College, August 1–4, 2022)

Edited by: Barton Geger, S.J., Robert Gerlich, S.J., and Claude N. Pavur, S.J.

ISBN: 978-1-947617-19-3

Published by: Institute of Jesuit Sources

Originally Published: November 30, 2023

<https://doi.org/10.51238/ISJS.2022.02>

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Edmund Arrowsmith, S.J., and the English Catholic Mission: Ministry, Martyrology, and Hagiography in His Life and Afterlife

ROBERT E. SCULLY, S.J.

The strength and survival of Catholicism varied widely across England in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ For a host of reasons, the county of Lancashire remained a Catholic stronghold during the Tudor and Stuart eras. Among the foundational reasons for the endurance of Catholic belief and worship in this shire was the fact that William (Cardinal) Allen (1532–94), who has justly been called the founder of the English Catholic mission, was from Lancashire and spent several impactful years there in the early 1560s (1562–65) solidifying—along with other resolute Catholic clergy and laity—the traditional faith before going into permanent exile in 1565.² As seminary priests began arriving on the mission from the 1570s onward, Lancashire, which made a significant share of contributions of personnel to the continental seminaries that were training priests for the mission, received in turn a fair number of these newly trained missionary priests, imbued as they were with the zeal of the burgeoning Catholic/Tridentine Reformation. While the various—and often divergent—Tudor and Stuart regimes tried to impose their policies, ecclesiastical and otherwise, on the country, distance often proved to be somewhat of a saving grace for more outlying shires, with Lancashire being a classic case in point. This reality of attempted central control and local push-back is well documented for the sixteenth century in Christopher Haigh’s seminal study, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*. As Haigh notes, “Lancashire

1. For a wide range of essays on developments in early modern Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, focusing especially on England, see Robert E. Scully, S.J., ed., *A Companion to Catholicism and Recusancy in Britain and Ireland: From Reformation to Emancipation* (Leiden: Brill, 2022). A succinct and insightful overview of this subject is found in Alan Dures and Francis Young, *English Catholicism, 1558–1642*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2022). A classic work that is still of considerable value is John Bossy’s *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975). See also Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) for a solid study of the history and historiography of the momentous religious, political, and cultural transformations ushered in by the English Reformation(s). For an important study on the evolving understanding and usage of the term “English Reformation” and its political and historiographical significance, see Benjamin M. Guyer, *How the English Reformation Was Named: The Politics of History, c.1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

2. See Eamon Duffy, “William, Cardinal Allen, 1532–1594,” *British Catholic History* 22, no. 3 (1995): 265–90; Joseph Gillow, *The Haydock Papers: A Glimpse into English Catholic Life under the Shade of Persecution and in the Dawn of Freedom* (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2007, reprint), 7–9; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., *The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales, 1558–1850; Vol. I. Elizabethan, 1558–1603* (Ware, England: St. Edmund’s College, 1968), 4–5.

[...] was at the end of Elizabeth's reign by far the most Catholic county in England."³

During the early decades of the seventeenth century, the ecclesiastical policies of the newly ascendant Stuart dynasty in England were based on a multiplicity of factors, but it is fair to say that both James VI and I (r.1567–1625)⁴ and Charles I (r.1625–49)⁵ generally sought “a *via media* between the two poles of popery and puritanism.” At the same time, both monarchs were “more conciliatory towards Rome and English Catholics than many of their [P]rotestant subjects.”⁶ That was especially true of Charles I, though court Catholics generally fared better than Catholic recusants in much of the rest of the country, most of whom “felt the full weight of the financial exactions of the penal laws,” which helped to fill the king's coffers as well as assuage some of his more intolerant Protestant subjects.⁷ Still, one telling measure of the degree of opposition of the late Tudor and early Stuart regimes to English Catholicism is the respective death counts, that is, the number of those executed for their faith. Under Elizabeth I (r.1558–1603), the toll of those whom Catholics viewed as martyrs was 183,⁸ and it was about twenty-three under James I (excluding the Gunpowder plotters).⁹ However, from Charles's accession to the eve of the Civil Wars (1625–40), only three Catholics suffered that fate: a Jesuit, Edmund Arrowsmith (1585–1628), and a layman, Richard Herst, in 1628, followed by another priest, Arthur Geoghegan, an Irish Dominican, in 1633.¹⁰

3. Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 278. Haigh goes on to say, “In Lancashire, [...] real efforts were made by Catholics to preserve their faith, and [...] the county was transformed from one of the least Protestant areas into one of the most positively Catholic and recusant.”

4. Coming from Scotland as James VI, he ruled in England (and Ireland) as James I (r.1603–25). See Pauline Croft, *King James* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Maurice Lee Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

5. See Mark Parry, *Charles I* (New York: Routledge, 2020); see also Richard Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2005) for probably the best political assessment of the king.

6. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, “The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 23–49, here 24. For a good overview of religious attitudes and realities in early to mid-seventeenth-century England, see Derek Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603–1660: Kingdom, Community, Commonwealth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially chapter 2, “The Holy and the Unholy.”

7. Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 166–67. See also Cust, *Charles I*, 145–47; Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

8. For a good overview of Elizabeth's religious policies, see Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion, 1558–1603* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

9. With regard to James I's religious stance, see James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Woodbridge, England: D. S. Brewer, 2000), especially chapter 6, “King James and the Politics of Conversion.” For an account of a Catholic–Protestant debate that occurred in 1622 between William Laud (1573–1645) and the Jesuit John Percy, aka Fisher (1569–1641), in which King James also participated, see Laud, “A Relation of the Conference between William Laud [...] and Mr. Fisher, the Jesuit,” 1624 (rev. ed. 1639), in *Religion in Early Stuart England, 1603–1638: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Debora Shuger (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 368–97. See also a study of the often-overlooked political/religious role of Queen Anne, the king's Catholic wife, in Albert J. Loomie, S.J., “King James I's Catholic Consort,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1971): 303–16.

10. Martin J. Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 111–14.

Yet, within the wider historical context, the degree to which anti-Catholicism had become ingrained in much of English culture and society cannot be ignored.¹¹ As David Underdown notes, among the major beliefs common across much of elite and popular seventeenth-century English society were “the respect for ancient custom [i.e., the ancient Constitution], the anxieties about social and gender instability, the intense suspicion of Catholics and fears of popish conspiracy.”¹² Therefore, if, as one study of Charles I suggests with some justification, that “throughout his reign he was too friendly toward Roman Catholicism to suit the prejudices of his [Protestant] subjects,” this was bound to cause trouble for both the king and his Catholic subjects.¹³ The role of the king’s French Catholic consort, Henrietta Maria (1609–69), in supporting her coreligionists also aroused the ire of many English Protestants.¹⁴

On the local scene, and specifically in the recusant stronghold of Lancashire, the core of Catholic resistance is amply demonstrated in the lives of the extended Arrowsmith family. Thurston Arrowsmith, a farmer and grandfather of Edmund Arrowsmith, was a resolute recusant who faced fines and imprisonment, finally dying for his faith while still in prison and where, due to his vocal resistance to Protestant services, he was decidedly not a model prisoner.¹⁵ Edmund’s father, Robert, was a yeoman farmer who clearly married up, his wife being the former Margery Gerard, who hailed from an eminent Lancashire Catholic gentry family. Through his mother, Edmund was a cousin of the famous Jesuit missionary John Gerard (1564–1637).¹⁶ Edmund (whose baptismal and childhood name was Bryan) was born to these devout recusant par-

11. See Adam Morton, “Anti-Catholicism: Catholics, Protestants, and the ‘Popery’ Problem,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 410–48; Arthur Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

12. David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45.

13. Michael B. Young, *Charles I* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 42; see also 112–15. While Charles clearly opposed Catholicism, he evidently opposed Puritanism even more. In the astute assessment of Richard Cust, “there were a number of constants in Charles’s political make-up that repeatedly influenced his actions. Two that stand out were his loathing for puritanism and his fear of popularity”; Cust, *Charles I*, 466.

14. See Katie Whitaker, *A Royal Passion: The Turbulent Marriage of King Charles I of England and Henrietta Maria of France* (New York: Norton, 2010). See also Quentin Bone, *Henrietta Maria: Queen of the Cavaliers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). As Bone notes with regard to “the protection of Catholics and the fostering of the faith in England,” the queen’s “benefit to Catholicism resulted not so much from planned activity or program as from her personal influence. Her chapel was open at all times to other Catholics, her Capuchins also administered to her fellow religionists, and her supplications in behalf of recusants often moved the king to grant amnesty”; Bone, *Henrietta Maria*, 88. Concerning the queen’s promotion of Catholic material culture, see Erin Griffey, *On Display: Henrietta Maria and the Materials of Magnificence at the Stuart Court* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). For an intriguing revisionist account, see Leanda de Lisle, *Henrietta Maria: The Warrior Queen Who Divided a Nation* (New York: Pegasus, 2022).

15. Henry Foley, S.J., *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (London: Manresa Press, 1875), 2:26; for Foley’s full account of “The Life and Martyrdom of Father Edmund Arrowsmith,” see 24–74. See also John A. Myerscough, S.J., *A Procession of Lancashire Martyrs and Confessors* (Glasgow: John S. Burns and Sons, 1958), 8, 72–73; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 15.

16. See Gerard’s valuable account of his remarkable time and wide-ranging activities on the English mission: *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*, trans. Philip Caraman (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952).

ents at Haydock, in the parish of Winwick, Lancashire, in 1585. The family suffered fines and harassment for their religious convictions including what must have been a particularly harrowing experience for their young children: one evening, government pursuivants broke into their home and, after an extensive search, took the elder members of the family off to Lancaster jail. The youngsters were taken care of through the kindness of neighbors.

Afterward, faced with repeated fines and imprisonment, Robert Arrowsmith, together with his brother Peter, went to the Spanish Low Countries, where they served for a time as soldiers.¹⁷ Peter died from the wounds of war, while Robert eventually went to the English College at Douai/Rheims, where another of his brothers, Dr. Edmund Arrowsmith (1563–c.1601), was a priest and professor.¹⁸ The Benedictine Mark Barkworth (1572–1601) said that Dr. Arrowsmith was one of several “exceptionally fine confessors” at the school and also a person of great “character and excellent life.”¹⁹ Although the date is not clear, Robert Arrowsmith eventually returned to England, where he is said to have died a holy death.²⁰

By 1599, Margery Arrowsmith was a widow facing financial and other pressures, and so a local priest took young Bryan (Edmund) under his wings, providing him with an education and spiritual sustenance.²¹ Evidently having a desire to pursue a priestly vocation, Arrowsmith, at the age of twenty-one, entered the English College at Douai in December 1605 (perhaps not coincidentally, the month after the Gunpowder Plot).²² Soon thereafter, he was confirmed and took Edmund as his sacramental and permanent name—evidently in honor of eponymous saints and martyrs, especially the English Jesuit Edmund Campion (1540–81), and also of his uncle (Dr. Edmund Arrowsmith).²³ Due to ill health, Arrowsmith returned home to England in 1607 in accord with the contemporary belief in the healing effects of one’s native air; having sufficiently recovered his health, he returned to his studies at Douai.²⁴ There, as part of his

17. With regard to English Catholic exiles, see Anne R. Throckmorton, “‘When Time Should Serve’: The Long Wait of Lay Catholic Exiles,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 199–227.

18. Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, 11.

19. Francis Edwards, S.J., ed., *The Elizabethan Jesuits: Historia missionis anglicanae Societatis Jesu (1660) of Henry More* (London: Phillimore, 1981), 322–23. See also Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 1:416. Regarding Barkworth, who was martyred at Tyburn, see Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1924), 253–56.

20. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 362–63; Francis Goldie, S.J., *Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1952), 2–3.

21. This tutor may have been an old Marian priest connected with the Gerards of Bryn Hall; see George Burns, S.J., *Gibbets and Gallows: The Story of Edmund Arrowsmith, S.J.* (London: Burns, Oates, 1944), 8–9.

22. With regard to this plot and its dramatic impact on the English Catholic community, see Antonia Fraser, *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

23. Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 8, 80–81n3. See also Cornelius Murphy, S.J., *A True and Exact Relation of the Death of Two Catholics who Suffered for Their Religion at the Summer Assizes, Held at Lancaster in the Year 1628 (1737)*, 3 [hereafter *True and Exact Relation*], Huntington Library, Rare Book no. 289271. Murphy’s edition is based on an anonymous account published in 1630, two years after Arrowsmith’s martyrdom. Murphy’s account was in turn abridged and slightly modernized, and appears as *A True Account of the Life and Death of Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith* (London: Office of the Vice-Postulation, 1960). On Campion, see Gerard Kilroy, *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

24. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 363. During his return to his native Lancashire, Edmund evidently stayed at Bryn Hall; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 29.

spiritual training, he made the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556) and, apparently, seeds were planted for his later vocation as a Jesuit.²⁵ Due to recurring health concerns, Arrowsmith was advanced to holy orders early and was ordained in December 1612 at Arras. The following June, despite anticipated hardships, including persecution and the possibility of martyrdom, he arrived on the English mission.²⁶

He worked in his native county of Lancashire, which had become and long remained a key Catholic stronghold in England, with Arrowsmith building on the earlier heroic missionary efforts there of William Allen, Laurence Vaux, Edmund Campion, and others.²⁷ With regard to his ministry, Arrowsmith “covered an extensive area south of the Ribble [Valley].” In particular, he worked in the neighborhood of Brindle, and he normally had the benefit of making his rounds on horseback.²⁸ As to his overall impact, in the telling assessment of F. O. Blundell: “The chief jewel in the crown of the Brindle Mission is the holy martyr Edmund Arrowsmith, who attended to the Catholics of the district for some years.” In this task, he was undoubtedly aided by the fact that he “resided for the most part with relatives of his family at Denham Hall.”²⁹ Apparently, Arrowsmith followed the practice of a number of missionary priests in that he had, at least for stretches of time, a base of operations in a particular house, from which he would go out on circuits throughout the surrounding area.³⁰

Concerning specific details of his missionary travels and impact, unfortunately we have for the most part only general information, along with a few tantalizing tidbits. Obviously, celebrating Mass and the sacraments was central to the ministry of Catholic priests on the understaffed English mission. There is evidence that Arrowsmith celebrated Masses in many parts of Lancashire, often at the homes of various Catholic families, including the capacious houses of the gentry, where relatively larger congregations might gather.³¹ However, the smaller homes of average Catholics were also vital in providing spiritual ministrations to the wider population. According to Michael

25. Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 134.

26. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 363–64.

27. For an overview of the strength and survival of Catholicism in Lancashire in the Tudor/Stuart periods and beyond, with some focus on an important individual and house, see David Brazendale, “Sir Richard Shireburne of Stonyhurst and the Lancashire Recusants,” in Brazendale, *Lancashire’s Historic Halls* (Preston, England: Carnegie Publishing, 1994), 61–88.

28. Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 134.

29. Dom F. O. Blundell, O.S.B., *Old Catholic Lancashire* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1925), 134. Edmund Campion had also spent some time at Denham Hall; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 55.

30. For a discussion of ministry and its limitations on the English mission, see Robert E. Scully, S.J., *Into the Lion’s Den: The Jesuit Mission in Elizabethan England and Wales, 1580–1603* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2011), especially chapter 5: “Behind Closed Doors: Jesuits and Their Clandestine Ministries.”

31. Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 134–35. Among other Lancashire houses, Arrowsmith probably made several visits to Stonyhurst; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 55–56. He also sometimes celebrated Mass using an old altar of the Burgess family, which is now at Bolton-le-Sands; Archivum Britannicum Societatis Iesu [hereafter ABSI] 6/6/2. On the important role of upper-class Catholics, see Susan M. Cogan, “Catholic Nobility and Gentry from Reformation to Emancipation,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 178–98. At the same time, as Haigh points out, “missioners in Lancashire could be particularly effective, for they were not forced to depend on support from the gentry,” as they were in many other parts of England. Significantly, in Lancashire, “priests could work openly in some areas and, where secrecy was not essential, the clergy did not need to hide away in gentry households”; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 280–81.

Hodgetts, a specialist on “priest holes,” there is a house in the village of Gregson Lane, near Brindle, that was used by Arrowsmith: “It is a whitewashed cottage on two storeys [...] and was originally thatched. Under the eaves [...] was a windowless attic, which could only be reached by a ladder and trap door.” Reportedly, a fortuitous gale in 1841 “blew down part of the attic wall, revealing a hide in which was found a box containing a chalice, two vestments and two altar-stones, one broken.”³² This setting is telling proof of the necessarily furtive nature and the evident dangers of evangelization on the Catholic mission. At the same time, this fortunate discovery has provided us with valuable remnants of, and insights into, early modern English Catholic material culture, including the “Arrowsmith Chalice.”³³

There is also, intriguingly, a brief passage in Richard Challoner’s valuable account of English missionary priests referring to one of Arrowsmith’s more “specialized” ministries: “He took much pains with possessed persons, yet seldom or never without the help and assistance of some of his brethren; and so freed many from their troublesome guests, and did much good.”³⁴ It is not clear how often Arrowsmith and others engaged in exorcisms and related activities, nor how common these types of spiritual and healing ministries were among secular or Jesuit priests on the mission. But this is another reminder that, despite its familiarity in some regards, the early modern world was in other fundamental ways decidedly different from our own.³⁵

For religious minorities, and especially for Catholic priests and laity in England, it could also be a very dangerous world.³⁶ In 1622, Arrowsmith was arrested and taken to Lancaster Castle, where he was examined by Dr. John Bridgeman (1577–1652), who was a chaplain to James I and was named bishop of Chester (1619). The priest engaged in some banter and debate with the bishop and some of his clergy. The Catholic sources

32. Michael Hodgetts, “The Godly Garret, 1560–1660,” in *English Catholics of Parish and Town, 1558–1778*, ed. Marie B. Rowlands (London: Catholic Record Society, 1999), 36–60, here 51. According to Sophie Holroyd, “an early-seventeenth-century vestment associated with St. Edmund Arrowsmith,” among the relatively few remaining physical remnants of recusant Catholicism, is on display at the Museum of Lancashire; Holroyd, “‘Rich Embroidered Churchstufte’: The Vestments of Helena Wintour,” in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Ronald Corthell et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 73–116, here 74 and 74n4.

33. For a detailed discussion on this enriching topic of material culture, see Janet Graffius, “English Catholic Material Culture, 1558–1688,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 549–87. With a slightly different account of the discovery of the objects referenced above, Graffius notes that the chalice, “dated ca. 1600–30, known as the Arrowsmith Chalice, was found along with a much-faded late 15th-century green chasuble during building work about 1840 on an internal wall of [this cottage].” She goes on to quote from an archival source that “Brindle belonged to the Society [of Jesus] until 1640 when it passed to the Benedictines. Fr [Edmund] Arrowsmith once served it and probably wore this chasuble”; Graffius, “English Catholic Material Culture,” 572. On a related track, see Peter Davidson and David W. Walker, “Scottish Catholic Material Culture,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 303–38.

34. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 364.

35. See, for example, the Jesuit William Weston’s account of his well-known and controversial ministry of exorcism, in *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), 139–47. See also, concerning the related topic of the witchcraze, James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020).

36. With regard to challenges confronting both priests and laity, see Lisa McClain, “Underground Devotions: The Day-to-Day Challenges of Practicing an Illegal Faith,” in Scully, *Catholicism and Recusancy*, 588–607.

suggest that Arrowsmith got the better of the debate, which may well be true considering his extensive education, but one suspects that the other side might have judged the outcome differently. In any case, Arrowsmith was imprisoned for some time, until King James ordered the release of Catholic priests, probably in conjunction with his hopes for a Spanish match between Prince Charles and the Infanta Maria—such connections reminding us of how potentially perilous the mission could be, and also of how the fate of English Catholics, and of priests in particular (including persecution and possible martyrdom), was often tied, for better or worse, to international developments.³⁷ At the same time, international influences, such as Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, interacted with domestic, including royal, concerns and assistance, providing comfort to priests in their times of greatest need, especially at death's door.³⁸

In any event, Arrowsmith served for about a decade in Lancashire as a secular priest. It is not clear how much contact he may have had with Jesuits on the mission during this period, but it is likely that in July 1623 he fulfilled a long-germinating desire and entered the Society of Jesus, using at that time the name of Edmund Bradshaw.³⁹ He did not go abroad for his novitiate, since it was the normal practice at that time for novice priests to remain in England. Instead, he evidently went initially to Essex for two or three months, during which time he engaged in an extended retreat, centered on the Spiritual Exercises, and also studied the Jesuit Constitutions.⁴⁰ Arrowsmith is officially listed as a novice at the Jesuit novitiate (the house of probation) near London (Clerkenwell), but he probably did not spend much time there. More likely he passed most of the required two-year noviceship in active ministry in Lancashire. He made his profession of vows in the Society under the pseudonym of Rigby (his other alias being

37. *True and Exact Relation*, 4; Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 364–65; Goldie, *Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith*, 5–6. With regard to the Spanish match, with its religious, political, and cultural complications, see Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Carlton, *Charles I*, 34–46. For the broader context, see Albert J. Loomie, S.J., *Spain and the Early Stuarts, 1585–1655* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

38. See Sarah Covington, "Consolation on Golgotha: Comforters and Sustainers of Dying Priests in England, 1580–1625," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (2009): 270–93. As Covington writes, "The case of Margaret Clitherow, who harboured and assisted priests and was executed for doing so [in 1586], is well known, as is Queen Henrietta Maria's visit, or perhaps pilgrimage, in 1626, to Tyburn—an act that might not have been altogether as 'foreign' to English religiosity as assumed"; Covington, "Consolation on Golgotha," 284.

39. While this is necessarily speculative, Arrowsmith may have been influenced in his decision to finally join the Jesuits by the widely publicized canonization of the Society's two dominant early figures—Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier—the previous year, in March 1622. See Simon Ditchfield, "Thinking with Jesuit Saints: The Canonization of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier in Context," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 9 (2022): 327–37.

40. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 364; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:29–30; 7:18–19. With regard to the novitiate experience, especially for priest-novices on the English mission: "The greater number of these priests, though entered in the list as belonging to the London house of novices, would most probably have been employed, during their noviceship, in the country missions (a frequent arrangement in those days of persecution), coming to London at stated times. Watched as they were, it would have been morally impossible for such a number to have lived together in community without immediate discovery"; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 1:74. For more on the Jesuit background and identity, see Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., "And Touching Our Society": *Fashioning Jesuit Identity in Elizabethan England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2013).

Bradshaw, as noted above), and he was assigned to the College of Blessed Aloysius (Gonzaga), namely the Lancashire district.⁴¹

With the final demise of the proposed Spanish match early in 1624, the government once again began to enforce the penal laws, often with considerable harshness. This is clear from “An ‘Aviso’ on the Catholics of England”:

Proceedings in England against Catholics since the renewal of the persecution occurred in the month of April of this year 1624.

After the justices had received an order from the king to persecute the Catholics they granted so much freedom to informers that from that moment they have started proceedings against more than a thousand Catholics in the city of London alone and against as many more in the countryside. [...]

In the countryside the judges on their circuit were very strict and gave more detailed instructions to the Justices of the Peace than in the past concerning the presentment of all recusants above the age of nine years and the collection of the two *reales* for each Sunday that they were absent from the church and the search for and arrest of Jesuits and priests about whom the judges held certain public hearings in different provinces which will be the cause of the total ruin of many.⁴²

Despite the harsher political and religious climate, Arrowsmith spent the next several years continuing to minister to the Catholic flock in his home county of Lancashire before he was arrested a second time, in 1628. This arrest came about based on somewhat bizarre circumstances. Fr. Arrowsmith fairly regularly visited the house of a local Catholic family, the Holdens. As it turned out, the son had married his Protestant first cousin in a Protestant ceremony and desired a Catholic dispensation for his marriage. When Arrowsmith insisted that the couple should separate for a full fortnight before their marriage was validated, they took great offense and turned against him. Although someone attempted to warn him of his impending arrest, he ran into the arresting party, and, partly because of a noncooperative horse that refused to jump a ditch, he was taken into custody at Brindle Moss.⁴³ Arrowsmith alluded to the fact that when he was arrested he was in effect strip-searched and held briefly in an alehouse (the Boar’s Head at Hoghton) before being imprisoned in Lancaster Castle.⁴⁴ However, true to his calling, he continued to minister and preach in prison, and he converted at least one of his fellow prisoners, who ended up following the priest to that layman’s own brave death.⁴⁵

41. H. C. G. [Henry Colin Gray] Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2:525; Blundell, *Old Catholic Lancashire*, 135; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 51–52. In 1623, there were about 120 Jesuits in England, about twenty of whom ministered in the Lancashire district, which included Lancashire, Westmorland, and Cheshire (as well as Stafford until 1679); Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 52–53. On the history of the Lancashire district, see Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:1–23.

42. “Aviso,” London, c. October 1624, in *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics, Volume II: 1613–1624*, ed. Albert J. Loomie, S.J. (London: Catholic Record Society, 1978), 170–73, here 171–72.

43. Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 137–38; Goldie, *Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith*, 6–8.

44. *True and Exact Relation*, 11; ABSI 6/6/2.

45. *True and Exact Relation*, 7; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:37.

Arrowsmith was arraigned before Judge Henry Yelverton (1566–1629), a fiercely anti-Catholic Puritan.⁴⁶ The judge wasted no time getting to the heart of the matter and asked the prisoner if he was a priest. Arrowsmith gave a bold but evasive answer: “I would to God I were worthy.” This answer was based on the not unreasonable stance that he was under no obligation to assist the court in convicting him, as well as his resolve not to betray, even indirectly, any Catholics who may have harbored him. The judge’s animus and determination were manifest when he instructed the jury that they could see that he was in fact a priest and, implicitly, a traitor.⁴⁷ The court introduced a few witnesses, who testified against the prisoner, largely on circumstantial evidence. Arrowsmith was forthright as to his Catholic faith and said: “I will defend it, not only by words, but with my blood.” To this, the judge replied that he would indeed do so—with his blood.⁴⁸

Arrowsmith was indicted on two counts, one accusing him of being a Catholic priest and a Jesuit, and the second of being a perverter in religion, namely of trying to convert individuals from the established church. According to a contemporary Catholic account, the jury, “inflamed by the Judge soon agreed of their verdict,” which was guilty. The sentence was that he was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and to ensure maximum discomfort in the interim, he was to be bound with heavy irons and confined to a small, dark cell. In response, Arrowsmith fell on his knees and cried out, “Deo Gratias, God be thanked.”⁴⁹ He was in jail from Tuesday to Thursday, with little food and kept mostly in isolation, even being denied a visit from a Catholic gentleman. His only visitor was a Mr. Leigh (or Lee), a Protestant parson and justice of the peace, who requested a private debate, but Arrowsmith refused because he had previously been denied a public disputation with Leigh and others, and he feared that Leigh might spread a false account of the outcome.⁵⁰ Arrowsmith may also have had in mind the debates of Edmund Campion in the Tower of London in 1581, which the government had tried to spin, falsely, in its favor.⁵¹

There was some speculation that King Charles might grant a reprieve, and there was evidently some movement on that front, but London was at a distance, whereas the determined and “blood-thirsty” judge, who was at hand, moved expeditiously.⁵² With regard to the king, as highlighted above, in his official stance he was anti-Catholic and anti-papal. At the same time, he tried to avoid excessive persecution of Catholics, especially with regard to the shedding of blood, but he was often pressured by his

46. Yelverton’s own family relations provide a good example of the religious tensions in Stuart England. He had a first cousin who became both a Catholic and a Jesuit, and later died on the mission; in addition, his uncle, Edward, aided John Gerard in Norfolk; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 64.

47. *True and Exact Relation*, 8.

48. ABSI 6/6/2; see also *True and Exact Relation*, 9–12.

49. ABSI 6/6/2, p. 573; *True and Exact Relation*, 10, 13–15; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:40, 43.

50. *True and Exact Relation*, 9, 16–17.

51. See James V. Holleran, *A Jesuit Challenge: Edmund Campion’s Debates at the Tower of London in 1581* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).

52. During this period, Charles I pardoned some sixteen priests in London and elsewhere; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 67. The very different treatment of Arrowsmith provides a telling example of the degree of independence that time and distance could confer on local authorities.

Protestant Parliaments to act against the growth of “popery.” Therefore, based probably on a mixture of conviction and a theatrical show of force, on August 3, 1628, he issued “A Proclamation Declaring His Majesties Royall Pleasure and Command, for Putting the Lawes and Statutes Made against Jesuites, Priests, and Popish Recusants, in Due Execution.”⁵³ Yet, Arrowsmith, at his trial, proffered letters of support from the queen and, paradoxically, even supposedly from the king himself, but Yelverton resolutely “tolde him that the lawes and statutes of the kingdome must bee [...] respected or preferred before letters, and soe gave judgment.”⁵⁴ Yelverton also likely felt greater freedom of action because in the summer of 1628 the king was embroiled in disputes, especially with Parliament. Then, on a more personally devastating level, on August 23 his court favorite, George Villiers, duke of Buckingham (1592–1628), was assassinated, triggering a significant turning point in Charles’s life and reign.⁵⁵

In the case of Arrowsmith, with regard to the infliction of the death penalty, it seems that in the town of Lancaster no one was willing to be the executioner, until a prisoner (deserter) agreed to do so for forty shillings and liberty. There was also trouble regarding the strict legality of the warrant, another judge having refused to co-sign it, so the final wording was that the execution was “ordered by the Court,” not by Judge Yelverton personally.⁵⁶ The judge also tried to time the execution so that the crowd would be at a minimum, but to no avail. Instead, whether due to “the Curiosity of indifferent Persons, or the Hope of Protestants to see him shrink, or the Confidence Catholics had of his known Virtue and Constancy, [this spectacle] unpeopled Lancaster [...] with vast Numbers of all Ages, Sexes and Religions, who waited the Last Scene of this Tragedy.”⁵⁷

The manner in which, and by whom, Arrowsmith received the last rites are in some dispute. According to one version, he had arranged beforehand that another priest in Lancaster jail, John Southworth (1592–1654), standing at a window in his cell, would grant absolution to the soon-to-be martyr as the latter passed through the castle yard on his way to execution, raising his hands as a sign of his repentance and reception

53. James F. Larkin, ed., *Stuart Royal Proclamations, Volume II: Royal Proclamations of King Charles I, 1625–1646* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), no. 96, 203–6. The wide reach of the proclamation was made clear: “Wee doe hereby give notice to all, whom it may concerne, at their uttermost perils, That the Harborours, Receivers, and Maintainers of Jesuites, Priests, and all such others as have received, or shall receive Orders, as aforesaid, shall bee left to the due and ordinary course of Law”; Larkin, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 205.

54. Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage, and Religion, c.1550–1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 465.

55. See Carlton, *Charles I*, 102–9; Parry, *Charles I*, 65–66. On Buckingham, see Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592–1628* (London: Longman, 1981).

56. *True and Exact Relation*, 17–19.

57. *True and Exact Relation*, 19–20; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:47.

of this final blessing.⁵⁸ Based on another account, however, it was Ambrose Barlow (1585–1641), a Benedictine and friend of Arrowsmith, who managed to visit the latter shortly before his execution, at which time Barlow administered the last sacraments to Arrowsmith.⁵⁹ Whether these differing accounts can be reconciled or whether they are, at least in part, interpolations ex post facto is difficult to say.

For the denouement, Arrowsmith was dragged through the city on a hurdle to the gallows on the moor, about a quarter of a mile from the castle. Once there, he prayed for a quarter of an hour on his knees, while Protestant clergymen harangued him with accusations of blasphemy. On his part, Arrowsmith offered his life to Jesus in repentance of his sins, kissed the ladder, climbed up, and asked Catholics to join their prayers with his. He then prayed for king and country, and urged the crowd to “become members of the true Church.” Finally, he was thrown off the ladder and, once he was dead, was drawn and quartered. Many in the crowd, both Protestants and Catholics, were evidently touched deeply by his death, which occurred on August 28, 1628.⁶⁰ Catholics, in particular, “who in great numbers had attended the last scene of his apostolic life, were all the more comforted and confirmed in the truth of their religion, which he had so nobly recommended to them by his example.”⁶¹

Brief mention should also be made of the execution of a Catholic layman the day after Fr. Arrowsmith died. Richard Herst (or Hurst) (d.1628) was charged, in an almost certain perversion of justice, with the death—and alleged murder—of one of those connected with his arrest due to his recusancy.⁶² Having been convicted and condemned, the day before his execution he was forcibly dragged to church to hear a Protestant sermon, though he stopped his ears, refusing to listen to it. Arrowsmith was not treated in a like manner, probably because the authorities feared he would try to offer his own sermon in response. Another difference was that Herst was allowed a visit by two friends, who spent much time with him in prayer and spiritual conversation.⁶³ In contrast, Arrowsmith had been denied access to others, including a prospective visitor (though Fr. Barlow, as mentioned, may have gotten to see him surreptitiously). Here again, the authorities were apparently concerned that a priest, interacting with others, might strengthen their own resolve, or, at least in the view of those officials, fill their minds with various heretical and treasonous ideas.

58. *True and Exact Relation*, 20; Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 370, 505; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:47; ABSI 6/6/2. On Southworth, see Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 505–10. At Samlesbury Hall, the ancestral home of the Southworth family, there is a “peddler’s” trunk that may have been used by Edmund Arrowsmith and John Southworth. There were also some “priest holes” at Samlesbury: one by the fireplace in the entrance hall, adjacent to the chapel; and another upstairs by what would have been a priest’s room. This information is based on the current author’s visit to Samlesbury. For a history of Samlesbury Hall, highlighting some of its more unusual associations, see David Brazendale, “Samlesbury Hall and Witchcraft,” in *Lancashire’s Historic Halls*, 89–118.

59. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 396. For a fuller account of Barlow, see 392–400. See also Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 170.

60. *True and Exact Relation*, 20–24; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:48–52.

61. Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:52.

62. For accounts of Herst, see Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 373–78; Myerscough, *Lancashire Martyrs*, 151–59.

63. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 374–75.

What is particularly striking about most of the accounts of Arrowsmith's life is their martyrological emphasis.⁶⁴ There exists relatively little material on his early life or even on his fifteen years on the mission. In contrast, the last days of his life, from his capture through to his execution and its aftermath, are covered in great detail—analogueously in some ways with the Gospels' detailed emphasis on Christ's passion and death. The various authors' intent concerning Arrowsmith is clear: to emphasize that he died a martyr for the Catholic faith.⁶⁵ Related to this is a hagiographical emphasis.⁶⁶ Based on one account of Arrowsmith's death,

at the time when the martyr was being hung, [...] a certain gentleman (father of the Reverend John Southworth) declared positively to those who afterward asked him, that he saw at the moment of the martyr's death a very brilliant light extending in a stream from the prison to the gallows, like resplendent glass, and that he had never before in the course of his life witnessed anything of the kind.⁶⁷

There is also the intriguing account of the Benedictine, Ambrose Barlow, who, in a letter to his brother, wrote that on the day of Arrowsmith's death, the martyr "appeared" to him, even though Barlow was far away and unaware of his friend's fate. Arrowsmith purportedly mentioned his "happy Conflict" and told his Benedictine friend "that he [also] was to be blessed with the like glorious End."⁶⁸ Barlow was, in fact, the next priest to be executed at Lancaster, though that occurred some thirteen years later, in September 1641. While these accounts contain some of the elements present in traditional martyrological accounts, including supernatural light and apparitions, they clearly testify to the contemporary belief, especially among Catholics, that martyrdom and sanctity were intimately connected, and that dying for what they believed to be the true faith all but guaranteed entrance into the communion of saints. From there, a martyr-saint could intercede for the faithful, as the extensive series of testimonies of healings and purported miracles connected with Fr. Arrowsmith's most famous rel-

64. A classic point of disagreement between the English government and the Catholic community centered on the reason why significant numbers of priests and some recusant laity faced the ultimate penalty of execution. The government claimed that they were traitors to crown and country, whereas Catholics insisted that they were martyrs who sacrificed their lives for God and the true faith. On this important topic of martyrdom, see Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002). See also Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

65. See, for example, Challoner's account, especially his conclusion where he points out four ways in which he believes "Providence" guided Arrowsmith and the events of his life, preserving him for "this most glorious and victorious end"; *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, 362–73, especially 372–73.

66. For a range of studies on medieval developments related to this topic, see Samantha Kahn Herrick, ed., *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2020). With regard to studies of early modern sacred historiography, see Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

67. Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:54.

68. *True and Exact Relation*, 28–29; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 2:54–55.

ic—the “holy hand”—clearly suggest.⁶⁹

According to one account, Thomas Hawarden, a twelve-year-old boy who had been afflicted with convulsions and who had become increasingly crippled from June 1735, was cured of his ailment in October 1736 by the application of the relic of Arrowsmith’s hand.⁷⁰ Some years later, in 1768, Mary Fletcher was apparently also cured of her illness through the intercessory power of the “holy hand.”⁷¹

A more protracted yet remarkable healing evidently occurred in the case of Bridget Conway, a two-year old who, struck with a sudden disease in 1848, could no longer stand or walk. Her mother brought the child to the chapel at Ashton-le-Willows where the hand was kept, but there seemed to be no change in the child’s condition. Evidently, a priest told the mother to go to confession, Mass, and communion, and, at the elevation of the host, to pray for her daughter through the intercession of Edmund Arrowsmith. Bridget, who at that same time was in the care of another woman, reportedly stirred when the consecration took place and ran round the house, apparently cured. A Jesuit brother, John Mullin (whose mother, Mary, was the one watching Bridget at the time of the cure), later wrote up an account of what was believed to be this miraculous healing.⁷²

Among other claimed healings was that of a crippled woman, Bridget Guilfoyle, who began to walk again in 1860 after Arrowsmith’s relic was applied to her body. Another woman, Marianne Dunn, was healed of an abscess in her breast in 1868, apparently through contact with “a piece of holy linen which [had] touched the hand,” that is, relic, of Arrowsmith.⁷³

A final point is suggestive about Arrowsmith’s priestly and Jesuit connections. He had served for ten years as a secular priest and about five years as a Jesuit on the English mission. While it is not clear if or how much his ministry may have changed after he entered the Society of Jesus, the domestic and international reputation of the Jesuits (especially negative among most Protestants) may well have put a clearer target on his back. He was condemned not just for being a priest but perhaps even more so for being a Jesuit. That likely weighed heavily in the mind of Judge Yelverton. Both Arrowsmith and the layman Richard Herst were from the Catholic stronghold of Lancashire, and Yelverton clearly wanted to send a message and a warning by making examples of these two—especially Arrowsmith, a locally well-known priest and Jesuit, but also Herst, a resolute Catholic layman.

69. See Murphy, “A True and Exact Relation of the Wonderful Cure of Thomas Hawarden” et al., in *True and Exact Relation*, vii–xii. Evidently, a Catholic witness managed to cut off one of the martyr’s hands—as a relic. See also Francis Young, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553–1829* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). Another example of an English Catholic martyr whose hand became a treasured relic, which has been preserved to this day, is (St.) Margaret Clitherow; see Scully, *Into the Lion’s Den*, 251–62, especially 257–58.

70. ABSI 2/2 and 6/6/2.

71. ABSI 2/2.

72. ABSI 2/2 and 6/6/2.

73. ABSI 6/6/2. As to its provenance, the “holy hand” came into the possession of the Gerard family of Bryn Hall. In 1822, they placed it in the care of a priest at their parish church at Ashton, and it is currently at St. Oswald and St. Edmund Arrowsmith Church in Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire. Thus, the authentication of this relic is based on the antiquity of the veneration and this chain of possession; ABSI 2/2; Burns, *Gibbets and Gallows*, 85–86.

Over the long term, with regard to Arrowsmith's impact and reputation in and even beyond the Catholic community, being a member of so large and influential a religious order almost certainly contributed to his growing cult and hagiography, finally resulting in his beatification on December 15, 1929 and his canonization on October 25, 1970, including being named as one of the venerated Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. Thus, as in his life, so too in his afterlife, he continued to serve God and his country, as well as his church and his (eventually embraced) religious order—the Society of Jesus.