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Callista, Martyrdom, and the Early Christian Novel in the Victorian Age¹

Leon B. Litvack

The Victorians' obsessive interest in death was widely reflected in the imaginative literature and theology of the period. In 1840 the annual death rate per 1000 persons in England and Wales was 22.9; more particularly concerning infants, statistics from 1840 show that out of 1000 live births, over 150 died within the first year, and this figure remained fairly constant until the turn of the century (Rowell, 12). These figures had important implications for John Henry Newman, who must have heard many sermons on the subject during his Evangelical childhood, and for the construction of his second work of fiction, *Callista*, which was part of a popular genre known as the Early Christian novel (Maison, 156).

Newman's Evangelical background was central not only to his own views on mortality, but also to those of Victorian society as a whole. On the question of attitudes to death Rowell links Romanticism with Evangelicalism: both saw it as "possessing a peculiar poetry of its own, and the emotions which it aroused were taken as revelatory of truth about the human condition" (Rowell, 7). If Romanticism saw death as the occasion for significant emotion, Evangelicalism endowed the event with a moral significance. The death-bed became for the Victorians the place where the elect testified to their faith and demonstrated their trust in God. Some, like Henry Venn, whose *Complete Duty of Man* (1812) became a standard Evangelical work of moral guidance, urged parents to let their children have experience of Christian death-beds:

If an opportunity could be found of bringing your child to the bedside of a departing saint, this object would infinitely exceed the force of simple instruction. Your child would never forget the composure and fortitude, the living hope and consolation painted on the very countenance of the Christian; nor his warm expressions of love, and gratitude to the Saviour, for a heaven of peace within, and assurance of pardon, instead of gloomy thoughts and foreboding apprehensions, or stupid sensibility to any future existence, the general case of dying men. (Quoted in Rowell, 7-8)

Concern over being in a state of grace was widespread, and found adherents in Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. As a consequence of the death of the Queen's mother, the pair read together a book by William

Branks entitled *Heaven Our Home* (1861, published anonymously), which portrayed the Celestial City as an "etherialised, luminous, material habitation", where there would be a reunion of friends, and was emphatic on the point that those already departed were much concerned with those still on earth (Report in the *Northern Whig*; summarized in Rowell, 9-10).

The "death-bed cult", to use Jay's term (157), engendered certain devotional exercises of preparation for death amongst Victorians. These included laying oneself out as a corpse for a few moments, going through the rite of Extreme Unction mentally, and assisting imaginatively at one's own funeral (Rowell, 165).² These practices were seen as necessary because the faithful, on the point of death, were said to be acutely aware of their proximity to the Judgment seat. Newman was acquainted with this tradition, and identified Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651) as one of "the most popular books in our Church" (*Lectures on the Prophetic Office*, 397).³

Newman made this statement while still an Anglican. In the Church of England, many Evangelicals were drawn to the deathbed for spiritual edification. Some, such as the Claphamite Legh Richmond, counselled, "Let it be your sole business here to prepare for eternity" (Quoted in Jay, 158). A clear example from literature of this attitude to death may be found in Richmond's *The Dairyman's Daughter* (1810), which is more of a tract than a religious novel, and was based on the author's own experience. After Elizabeth's death Richmond gazes meditatively on her earthly remains, and thinks:

The blood circulates no more: the eye has lost its power of seeing, the ear of hearing, the limbs of moving. Quickly a thought of glory breaks in upon the mind, and we imagine the dear departed soul to be arrived at its long wished-for rest. It is surrounded by cherubim and seraphim and sings the song of Moses and the Lamb on Mount Zion. Amid the solemn stillness of the chamber of death, imagination hears heavenly hymns chanted by the spirits of just men made perfect. In another moment, the livid lips and sunken eye of the clay-cold corpse recall our thoughts to earth, and to ourselves again. And while we think of mortality, sin, death and the grave, we feel the prayer rise in our bosom, 'O let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' If there be a moment when Christ and salvation, heaven, and hell, appear more than ever to be momentous subjects of meditation, it is that which brings us to the side of a coffin containing the body of a departed believer. (111-112)

The key word for Richmond, and more generally for Evangelicals, was meditation.

The High Church tradition of death may be represented by the work of John Warton, who in 1827 published his three volumes of *Death-bed Scenes*, which were read by Pusey as a young man (Rowell, 8), and which may to this day be found in Newman's library at the

Birmingham Oratory. The following extract depicts the death of a Mr. Waring:

Mr. Waring... was stretched upon the bed of death, and now almost a lifeless corpse. His eyes were closed; his face was black and ghastly; his throat gurgled horribly, as the breath forced a passage through it. I seized his hand, and pressed it. He opened his eyes convulsively, and shut them instantly. He attempted to speak but no intelligible sound escaped from his lips. Nevertheless his mind was manifestly not yet gone; and I hoped that he still possessed the sense of hearing. I knelt down, therefore, and began in a loud and solemn tone the most beautiful, affecting, and divine prayer, which is prescribed for the sick at the point of their departure. His lips moved, as if he were trying to accompany me. This sign of God's gracious goodness towards him, in the midst of his dreadful agony, for a moment overpowered me, and of necessity I stopped. He began to speak, and I put my head close to catch his words. He said, 'It is very comfortable to me'; and that was all which I could distinctly understand. . . . When he had entirely ceased, I resumed the prayer; his lips moved again for a short time, and then became motionless altogether. I grasped his hand, and asked him, if he died in the faith of Jesus Christ. He gave me no sign. Unwilling to witness his last moments, I withdrew; ejaculating to Heaven a petition for the Salvation of his soul, and [was] at length relieved by tears. (Quoted in Rowell, 8)⁴

The account of Mr. Waring's death, is important to the understanding of Tractarian eschatology, to which Newman was an adherent. In the 1830s and 1840s Pusey, Newman and others extended to the future life the emphasis which they placed on the doctrine of the Church and the necessity of sanctification. Rowell notes that in an eschatological context the doctrine of the Church was developed through a stress on the communion of saints, and the call to sanctification led to a gradual acceptance of some kind of purgatory (90).

The early Tractarian understanding of the communion of saints was drawn both from the older High Church tradition and from the Fathers, but it was set within the framework of a seriousness shared with Evangelicalism and a sharp awareness that the drama of salvation was set against the ultimate choices of heaven and hell. This idea is evoked in Newman's "The Dream of Gerontius" (1865) which, although written ostensibly from the Roman Catholic viewpoint, draws on writers from all Christian denominations. Gerontius's soul balances on the point of death, and, aided by the prayers of friends and of the saints, struggles through to an act of faith, is escorted across the river to be purged, and finally shares in the adoration of the Heavenly Host. This was Newman's picture of an ideal Christian death, with Gerontius as the good though not exceptional Christian, who, because of his faith, is saved. The poem sums up, according to Rowell, much that Victorian believers wished to affirm about the future life (90, 160).

The context of a personal eschatology, in which Newman painted his picture, is also characteristic of Pusey, who speaks of death as a means of grace, whereby God offers man the chance of communion with Him; therefore he can describe death as "that almost sacrament, when God's mercy and grace were particularly evident". This idea enabled him to soften the popular doctrine of hell, which implied that few were saved (E.B. Pusey, *What is faith as to Everlasting Punishment?*; quoted in Rowell, 112.).

Although, in Newman's poem, his eschatology concentrates on the joy of heaven, in his novel *Callista* there is evidence of strictness: God's reward is offered to men who work out their own salvation. Every Christian must undergo some test of faith, because all are tainted by original sin. The trials which individuals undergo are varied, but are epitomized according to Newman, by the sufferings of the martyrs, who have come closest to the Beatific Vision. The example of suffering martyrs who were recompensed in a life beyond death became for Newman an important theme in his novel, where he brought his characters to life, and then put them to death, in order to create a vision of heaven which had implications for life on earth.⁵

In addition to fuelling theological debate on death, the writers of "martyrological" novels dwelt on the grisly details of death in order to excite feelings of terror in his readers. The appeal to such emotions had been popularized by such writers as Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), author of *The Monk* (1796) and *Tales of Terror* (1801). The former was a three-volume Gothic novel for adults, containing scenes of torture, murder, rape and the supernatural. The latter, a collection of children's tales in verse with color illustrations, was also designed to excite terror. In his version of "Little Red-Riding-Hood" Lewis graphically depicts the wolf's attack on the grandmother:

He pac'd the bed-room nine times three,
And then devour'd poor grand-mummie!

He dash'd her brains out on the stones,
He gnaw'd her sinews, crack'd her bones;
He munch'd her heart, he quaff'd her gore,
And up her lights and liver tore!! (*Tales of Terror*, 25)

Both *The Monk* and *Tales of Terror* had passed through numerous editions by the end of the 19th century (14 and 4 respectively), thus supporting the idea that the macabre had by Newman's day become an accepted part of both adults' and children's literature.

The word "torture", which so often accompanied accounts of martyrdom, seems to have held a special fascination for the Victorians. Peters explains contemporary attitudes to the idea:

The nineteenth-century language of morality and sentiment, expanded and applied to increasing kinds and numbers of human relationships, widened the applicability of the term ["torture"] to all areas of human brutality, from the workplace to the home. Owners now tortured workers, husbands wives, parents children, criminals victims. All oppressors tortured all the oppressed. (151)

As an illustration of this semantic shift Peters considers the issue of wife-beating in Victorian England. The English Criminal Law Procedure Act of 1853 was designed in part to deal with this widely perceived problem. Shortly after its passage, however, the Act was seen not to have been particularly effective, and more substantial protection for abused wives was demanded. The adoption of new laws (the Matrimonial Causes Act) in 1878 was greatly aided by a pamphlet of the same year: Frances Power Cobbe's *Wife Torture*. The arresting and unambiguous title linked the problem to a term which, by the later 19th century, was one of universal opprobrium; it proved effective in harnessing what had until then been a scattered opposition.

Newman was acutely aware of the power of words, and he chose them carefully in order to achieve maximum effect. This statement holds true in his fiction as well as in his other writings. One of his favorite techniques was the use of images, of which Holloway writes: "Newman. . . relies on metaphors and analogies to provide vivid imagery in which we may see the life of the world and of the Church" (181). In the case of his own religious uncertainties, enquiries, and eventual conversion (all central themes in *Callista*) he used images of death and martyrdom. In the *Apologia*, for example, Newman described himself during the period 1841-1845 as being "on my death-bed, as regards membership with the Anglican Church" (99). Those years were painful ones for him, filled with spiritual suffering, rejection by family and friends (Newman's sister Harriet never spoke to him again), tragedy, and torment. For him, this was the price of embracing the truth as he saw it.

Also among his losses was Oxford, the beloved university where many of his ideas were forged, and to which he did not return for thirty years. It is there that *Loss and Gain* (1848) is set, and although that novel does not tell of actual violent death, Newman, through his character Morley, chose to describe the journey from Anglicanism to Romanism as "a sort of martyrdom"; yet those who chose to follow this path, with its resultant hardships, receive "a martyr's reward" (*Loss and Gain*, 82).

In light of what has been said about Victorian notions of death-beds and torture, the word "martyrdom" here has a marked effect. Given what the future had in store for Charles Reding, particularly the anguished parting from his mother and from Oxford, the image of the martyr, with its associated pain and torment before peace is at last

achieved, is a fitting one not only for Reding, but also, as we shall see, for Callista.

There were, however, two important novels preceding *Callista* by prominent clergymen-turned-novelists which portrayed martyrdoms: Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1852-1853) and Nicholas Wiseman's *Fabiola* (1854). These three novels, which must be considered concurrently, were among the most important and popular religious historical novels of the 19th century. In addition to the violent deaths recounted, Kingsley, Wiseman and Newman displayed certain parallel aims in their respective works: use of the stage of history to tell a contemporary tale, with the novel's assuming a propagandist, moral role, in what amounted to polemical warfare.

Hypatia, or, New Foes with an Old Face was first published serially in *Fraser's Magazine* from January, 1852 to April, 1853. To a greater extent than the productions of Newman or Wiseman, it was a tract for the times: a reaction against agnostic radicalism, Tractarianism and Roman Catholic claims of purity for the Patristic age. Unlike the heroes and heroines of the other novelists *Hypatia* is not converted, but rather moved towards a Platonic acceptance of Christ, at which point she is brutally murdered:

She shook herself free from her tormentors, and springing back, rose for one moment to her full height, naked, snow-white against the dusky mass around, shame and indignation in those wide clear eyes, but not a stain of fear. With one hand she clasped her golden locks around her; the other long white arm was stretched upward toward the great still Christ appealing, and who dare say, in vain? from man to God. Her lips were opened to speak; but the words that should have come from them reached God's ear alone; for in an instant Peter struck her down, the dark mass closed over her again. . . . and then wail on wail, long, wild, ear-piercing, rang along the vaulted roofs, and thrilled like the trumpet of avenging angels through Philammon's ears. (409)

This scene, which gave the novel a disturbing, open-ended quality, was perceived by some as immoral when the novel first appeared. It had painful consequences for Kingsley: in addition to provoking angry exchanges with reviewers, it resulted in the decision by Oxford University in 1863 not to grant Kingsley an honorary degree, even though the recommendation came from the Prince of Wales, Kingsley's former pupil (Sanders, 133). Yet the murder of *Hypatia* by the leading figures of a frenzied and decaying civilization, allows Kingsley to question what Newman and Wiseman considered foregone conclusions concerning the Church and her traditions.

The life and death of *Hypatia*, and the questions Kingsley raises, are rather complex. Kingsley attempts to give an accurate description of 5th-century Alexandria, in which some of the major characters,

including *Hypatia*, *Philammon*, and *Raphael*, display more "roundness", according to E.M. Forster's definition (74-81), than those of *Wiseman* or *Newman*. He endows them with a level of physicality, sometimes bordering on the erotic, which *Wiseman* and *Newman* would not contemplate. Unlike *Wiseman*, *Kingsley* uses history to disprove rather than prove his point. He constantly questions the assumption that the modern Church should be proud of its descent from what he saw as a corrupt Patristic age, and it must be remembered that the novel is set not in the era of persecutions, which both *Newman* and *Wiseman* chose, but at a time when Christianity was the state religion. By the 5th century, *Kingsley* says, the Christians had produced persecutors of their own; this "development" proves to be a key factor in the downfall of this corrupt society. The clearest, most concise statement of *Kingsley's* sentiments concerning the Alexandria he portrays are found in *Philammon's* reaction to *Hypatia's* murder at the hand of Peter the Reader. When asked by Eudaemon, "And this. . . is the Catholic and apostolic Church?" *Philammon* answers, "No! Eudaemon, it is the church of the devils of hell!" (*Hypatia*, 410). *Kingsley* enjoins his readers to look to themselves for justification—not to the past, in which he finds little support for his faith.

The novel, written in the early days of *Kingsley's* antipathy to *Newman*, defied the whole way of thinking which characterized the latter, and the others who employed the argument from antiquity to defend both the High Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. By setting his tale in the 5th century, *Kingsley* was able to engage in a two-pronged attack on both communions. In Alexandria as he portrayed it, the Church had gained in power, and had forced her authority on many unwilling citizens; in the process she became more corrupt and tyrannical. The parallel drawn to the Roman Catholic Church in his day resulted from the threat which he believed she posed to the nation which had officially accommodated her in 1829; she was by the 1850s growing in strength, to the extent that the hierarchy was restored, with Cardinal *Wiseman* as the Archbishop of Westminster. The parallel with the "Puseyites" (a vogue-word for Anglo-Catholics favored by *Kingsley*) is also observable in their appeal to antiquity; the force with which *Kingsley* saw them pressing their point, and its resultant influence, was most acutely felt by him in his struggle with his wife to keep her from entering the religious community established under Pusey's aegis in Park Village (Chapman, 104). On a personal level, then, faith in the past was for *Kingsley* a dangerous obsession.

Fabiola, or, The Church of the Catacombs, was the first in a series of novels envisioned by *Wiseman* for the Catholic Popular Library, designed to illustrate (particularly, though not exclusively, for Roman Catholics) the condition of the Church in ages past. He claimed that the 19th-century Roman Church was consistent with that of the first centu-

ries, and that its creeds, formularies and observances were virtually identical. The protagonist, a pagan, is induced to convert to Christianity as a result of the unwavering faith of those she sees go, almost haughtily, to their deaths. These martyrdoms are the most memorable feature of Wiseman's novel, not only because the tortures are apparently enjoyed equally by those who inflict the pain and those who receive it, but also because the portrayals are so detailed. One example is the death of Deacon Laurentius, which Diogenes recounts:

He had been first on the rack, and variously tormented, and he had not uttered a groan; when the judge ordered that horrid bed, or gridiron, to be prepared and heated. To look at his tender flesh blistering and breaking over the fire, and deeply scored with red burning gashes that cut to the bone where iron bars went across; to see the steam, as thick as from a cauldron, rise from his body, and hear the fire hiss beneath him, as he melted away into it; and every now and then to observe the tremulous quivering that crept over the surface of his skin, the living motion which the agony gave to each separate muscle, and the sharp spasmodic twitches which convulsed, and gradually contracted, his limbs; all this, I own was the most harrowing spectacle I have ever beheld in all my life. (*Fabiola*, 205)

Wolff is justified in finding in *Fabiola* a "large element of the *grand guignol*", and also, perhaps, "elements of voyeurism, sadism and masochism" (64); the impetus behind Wiseman's depiction of martyrdoms differed significantly from that of Kingsley. While Kingsley was concerned to present the death of *Hypatia* as an example of the depths to which Alexandrian Christianity had sunk, Wiseman's death scenes were pure sensationalism, designed to launch the Catholic Popular Library in the most exciting way possible. The desired result was achieved: *Fabiola* ran through several editions in the first year, and was translated into ten European languages. It was also adapted for the stage by Frederick Oakeley in 1856, under the title *The Youthful Martyrs of Rome*. This sustained popularity, by no means confined to a Roman Catholic readership, was in large measure due to the gruesomely detailed martyrdoms, which Wiseman clearly relished despite his claim that "It is far from our intention to harrow the feelings of our gentle readers, by descriptions of the cruel and fiendish torments inflicted by the heathen persecutors on our Christian forefathers" (*Fabiola*, 249).

Yet Wiseman had other reasons for writing *Fabiola*. It was not simply, as he claimed, "the recreation of leisure hours" (*Fabiola*, 7); he wished to challenge *Hypatia* on its claims concerning the early Church (Wolff, 61-62). Also, by dwelling on persecutions, and finally ending with the measures of tolerance instituted by the Emperor Constantine Wiseman reminded his readers of their own troubled times, and the gradually improving situation for English Roman Catholics. They would have felt the effects of the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), and

would certainly have been encouraged by the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in 1850, with Wiseman himself as the new Archbishop of Westminster. These links between past and present are made clear in the pages of *Fabiola*.

Callista too was a response to Kingsley's *Hypatia*. Newman wrote the novel at Wiseman's request for the Catholic Popular Library, and it emulates *Fabiola* in its account of the conversion of a beautiful and intelligent pagan woman to Christianity. In this respect *Callista* is more interesting than *Fabiola* because it was written by one who himself underwent a conversion. Although not published until 1855, some portions, as Newman notes in the Postscript, were written as early as 1848, immediately following the completion of *Loss and Gain* (*Callista*, vii).

Newman's novel differs in several important ways from *Fabiola* and *Hypatia*. It appeared anonymously as the twelfth volume of the Catholic Popular Library, and was written, Newman said in the Advertisement, as "an attempt to imagine and express, from a Catholic point of view, the feelings and mutual relations of Christians and heathens at the period to which it belongs" (*Callista*, vii). It was written at Wiseman's request, though not executed according to his plan. While the Cardinal envisioned a series of novels following from his own "Church of the Catacombs" through the Churches of the "Basilicas", "Cloister", and "Schools" (*Fabiola*, vii), Newman followed a different path, setting his novel not in Rome, but like *Hypatia* in North Africa. And the connection to Kingsley does not end here, for while their public collision was still some eight years away, Newman was fully aware of Kingsley's hostility to his religious opinions, particularly those concerning the Patristic tradition, his spiritual development, celibacy, conversion, and adoptive Church. Newman uses the argument from history to support his view of contemporary issues; he also uses the convention of martyrdom to show the depth of Christian faith; but the heroine's similarity to Charles Reding, and to Newman himself, makes *Callista* seem at times like an antiquarian *Loss and Gain*. It has certain factors in common with *Fabiola*; but it does not try to draw exact parallels between the old world and the new. Its main purpose is to observe the soul struggling for direction in a perennial dilemma. Sanders explains:

Despite his view of history as development, Newman sees man and his nature as unchanging, and determined not by a social reality but by a spiritual one. He finds *Callista's* dilemma familiar, but his is a familiarity based both upon his own experience, and on his sacerdotal assumption that the human soul aspires equally to truth in all ages. (140)

Callista in effect undergoes a double martyrdom: the first, associated with her conversion, is emotional, or spiritual; the second, at the end of

the novel, is actual. The emotional one bears a resemblance to that of Charles Reding in *Loss and Gain*. While still in the "midway region of enquiry" (*Callista*, 317), she encounters a fellow Greek, Polemo, to whom she confides, "I love Greece, but I love truth better" (311). This declaration indicates that she is distancing herself from pagan values and norms in order to embrace a higher principle. This martyrdom is marked not only by her being thrown into prison, thus cutting her off from her former life, but also by a disintegration of her physical beauty and feminine vanity. *Callista*, who was "more gifted, accomplished, beautiful than any daughter of Africa" (310), is transformed by her acceptance of Christ. When she, on the verge of conversion, is visited in prison by Caecilius, the prelate is surprised and overjoyed by what he finds:

He could hardly keep from tears, of pain, or of joy, or of both, when he saw the great change which trial had wrought in her. What touched him most was the utter disappearance of that majesty of mien, which once was hers, a gift, so beautiful, so unsuitable to fallen man. There was instead of it a frank humility, a simplicity, without concealment, an unresisting meekness, which seemed as if it would enable her, if trampled on, to smile and to kiss the feet that insulted her. She had lost every vestige of what the world worships under the titles of proper pride and self-respect. *Callista* was now living, not in the thought of herself, but of Another. (345)

The above passage is particularly noteworthy for its autobiographical echoes: Newman himself suffered physically during his Anglican "death-bed" years, so much so that his doctor was shocked by his shrunken appearance. This first, "spiritual" martyrdom is important for both *Callista* and Newman, for it was only thereafter that they found inner peace.

While Newman is eminently qualified to portray the first type of martyrdom, the second is more problematical. Given what Kingsley, Wiseman and others had already produced, it seemed that the tradition of the Early Christian novel required a violent, graphic martyrdom to make the novel complete. But Newman was not equal to the task, and could at best provide only a second-hand account of the torture of a child by the witch Gurta. Juba says to her:

You bloodthirsty old hag! Yes, I've seen your secret doings. Did I not catch you the other day, practising on that little child? You had nailed him up by hands and feet against the tree, and were cutting him to pieces at your leisure, as he quivered and shrieked the while. You were examining or using his liver for some of your black purposes. It's not in my line; but you gloated over it; and when he wailed, you wailed in mimicry. You were panting with pleasure

Yes. . . you revelled in it. You chattered to the poor babe when it screamed, as a nurse

to an infant. You called it pretty names, and squeaked out your satisfaction each time you struck it. You old hag! (263)

Here Newman attempts to soften the impact of an account which clearly places *Callista* in the tradition of the martyrological novel; however the restraint shown by Newman in this scene, and more particularly in the later martyrdom of the protagonist, detracts from the novel's overall effect. This is not to say that *Callista* was unpopular: like *Fabiola* it was often reprinted and translated, and it too emerged in a stage version, *The Convert Martyr* (1857), by Frederick Husenbeth (See *Letters and Diaries*, XVII, 523). It also met with the approval of Wiseman, the series editor (See *Letters and Diaries*, XVII, 255). Yet by comparison, Newman is inferior as a storyteller to both Wiseman and Kingsley. It may be that Newman aimed at some degree of ordinariness, as if, says Sanders, "he were deliberately countering the sensationalism of Kingsley's and Wiseman's stories" (140). Although the level of cerebral activity required of his characters and readers is as high as in *Loss and Gain*, Newman is sometimes at a loss for what to say. In his account of the riots in chapter 17, he acknowledges his own limitations:

It would require the brazen voice which Homer speaks of, or the magic pen of Sir Walter, to catalogue and to picture, as far as it is lawful to do either, the figures and groups of that most miserable procession. (*Callista*, 190)

Although he considers his verbal skills inferior to the task at hand, his plot construction has dictated that *Callista* must die. Her death does not satisfy the reader in the same way as do those of Agnes and Miriam in *Fabiola*, or of the protagonist in *Hypatia*. The following is Newman's account in chapter 34, entitled "The Martyrdom":

A few minutes sufficed to put the rack into working order. She was laid down upon its board in her poor bedimmed tunic, which once flashed so bright in the sun, she who had been ever so delicate in her apparel. Her wrists and ankles were seized, extended, fastened to the moveable blocks at the extremities of the plank. She spoke her last word, 'For Thee, my Lord and Love, for Thee! . . . Accept me, O my Love, upon this bed of pain! And come to me, O my Love, make haste and come!' The men turned round the wheels rapidly to and fro; the joints were drawn out of their sockets, and then snapped in again. She had fainted. They waited for her coming-to; they still waited; they got impatient.

'Dash some water on her,' said one. 'Spit in her face, and it will do,' said a second. 'Prick her with your spike,' said a third. 'Hold your wild talk,' said a fourth; 'she's gone to the shades.' They gathered round, and looked at her attentively. They could not bring her back. So it was: she had gone to her Lord and her Love. (*Callista*, 369)

Here there is little of the sensationalism of Wiseman, and none of the eroticism of Kingsley. The painful death is quickly passed over, and the pathos with which Newman fills the scene is overdone. While it may seem that Newman constructed the scene in this way in order to remain within the bounds of "good taste", the product is flat, evasive, and, as Sanders notes, "unspiritual" (146).

Each of the three authors discussed here considered himself to be the purveyor of truth concerning the historical development of Christian faith. Though their religious backgrounds differed widely, and they had irreconcilable personal differences, they all used the Early Christian novel to convey their message. This genre provided them with an opportunity to express their views on the relevance of the past to the present. This noble purpose alone, however, was not enough to entice potential readers. What they needed was a spicing of sensationalism to transform their works from good novels into the fashionable "thrillers" of mid-Victorian times (see Maison, 156-157). There is no doubt that Kingsley, Wiseman and Newman were aware of the sales potential inherent in a "martyrological" novel. Each exploited the Victorian reading public's preoccupation with death, and hunger for the tales which depicted such scenes, successfully in terms of profits and reprints, and also in terms of the expression of a vision. Kingsley, who stood in opposition to the other two in matters of tradition and faith, believed that historical certainties could and should be challenged; *Hypatia's* death marked the end of an era, and the extinguishing of a light which would only be rekindled at the Reformation. Wiseman's *Fabiola*, a real best-seller, claimed that the modern Roman Catholic Church was consistent with that of the catacombs; the martyrs served as examples of those who can attain the surety of salvation, if they were willing to pay the price. Newman's *Callista*, the most subtle and intricate of the three, approaches the author's own experience in the period of transition between the loss of one pattern of belief and the acceptance of another. *Callista's* death, though the least animated of the ones considered, follows a life which parallels Newman's own, and tells us much more about the "midway region of enquiry", with its accompanying uncertainty, trials and anguish, than *Loss and Gain* ever attempts.

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Notes

1. I would like to thank Dr. Sheridan Gilley, Dept. of Theology, University of Durham, and Dr. Andrew Sanders, Dept. of English, Birkbeck College, University of London, for their help in gathering research materials for this article.
2. Cf. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), in which Tom attends his own funeral. While the scene is an amusing one, it shows that Twain was well aware of the religious tradition that is being considered here.
3. See also Michael Wheeler, *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology*, and Regina Barreca, ed., *Sex and Death in Victorian Literature*.
4. For a consideration of Victorian sentimentality, especially within the context of 18th-century moral philosophy, on major writers like Dickens, Thackeray and Carlyle, see Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears*.
5. Cf. the comments of another clergyman-turned-novelist, John Mason Neale (1818-1866), who, in a sermon for Holy Week entitled "If We Suffer with Him", explained the experience of the martyr, to whom all Christians should look for the key to salvation: "We all know how our very nature shrinks from pain. Not that all dread it equally. . . . But still, all do dread it; and no doubt, in and by itself, pain is very dreadful. But then see what it is, and what it has done. It is that without which it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven; it is that which all the spirits of the just men now made perfect have borne, and have borne bravely, before they could have done with it for ever. It is that which GOD's most gracious servants, the Martyrs, have endured in a still greater measure. They who were torn to pieces by evil beasts, dragged asunder by wild horses, burnt in the furnace, cut to pieces by knives, hung by one joint for days together in agony, — all these have known pain in a degree in which we probably may not be called to know it. . . . 'If we suffer we shall also reign with Him'. It follows that, if no suffering, then also no crown" (J.M. Neale, *Readings for the Aged*, 132-133).

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