LITURGY AND LITERATURE IN THE MAKING OF PROTESTANT ENGLAND

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Introduction

This is a book about early modern literature and representation. In it, I will argue that in Renaissance England, figural representations – that is, fictive and symbolic articulations of something other than themselves[1] – are the site of profoundly important cultural negotiations; that literary criticism of the last two or three decades has, despite its near-obsessive focus on this phenomenon, tended to misrepresent it; that the function of representation in England has a specific, and very important, political and religious history; and that the crucial text in this history is the Book of Common Prayer. Consequently, though the entire book is of literary import, it will deal at some length with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history, theology, and politics to produce a deeper, richer account of early modern English culture and its textually mediated internal network of connections and dislocations. And so, since many of the problems I address involve the way we interpret the past, I would like to begin by talking not about literature, but about the remarkably durable historiographical conflicts surrounding the English Reformation. I want to propose, if not a solution, perhaps at least some grounds for a truce.

The debate, in its general outlines, goes back to the very earliest days of the Reformation. As the Henrician reforms began to be implemented

[1] Some crucial definitions should be given here at the outset. By *representation* – a category whose capacious flexibility has been usefully and endlessly demonstrated by new historicists – I mean "the fact of expressing or denoting by means of a figure or symbol" (*OED*, 2d): in this book, it will encompass theatrical performance, wafers and wine, political personae, fruit, a sea monster, and various complex texts (literary and otherwise). The fictivity necessarily implied here should in no way be mistaken for falsity. For Cranmer, Sidney, and Milton, figural representations are an indispensable means of truth, and for Shakespeare and Hobbes, they generate highly desirable effects.

By *interpretation*, I mean simply the engagement with representations that renders them meaningful. This of course takes different forms (one doesn't "read" a king or a sacrament quite like one reads a poem), but all share some key features. First, all interpretation requires a recognition of the disjunction and nonidentity of sign and referent, figure and reality – but also a recognition that a complex and significant conceptual relationship is posited therein. Reading is thus what mediates the signifying gap and invests the signs with receptive meaning, and how this is done *always* has consequences, whether spiritual, moral, intellectual, or political.

in the 1530s, a (religiously conservative) party argued that these reforms reflected neither popular nor divine will; they were rather the arbitrary caprices of an ambitious monarch, foisted upon a resistant populace which was overwhelmingly committed to, and satisfied with, traditional forms of Catholic piety. On the other side, a (religiously progressive) party contended that reform was in fact the will of both God and people, that England was fed up with Catholic corruption and broadly receptive to the radical changes being undertaken by the godly king. Foxe, certainly the most influential exponent of this view, pointed in particular to Wycliffe and the Lollards as historical evidence of England's long and innate tendency to look through a Protestant glass.

Four hundred years later, the controversy continued virtually unchanged. In the 1950s, Philip Hughes challenged the dominant Whiggish Protestant narrative with a massive new history that highlighted the viability of the medieval Church and the coercive nature of reform. A. G. Dickens responded in the following decade with a ringing and highly influential re-exposition of the progressivist story, which insisted (relying again on the history of Lollardy as well as more immediate evidence of receptivity, like late-medieval anticlericalism) that England was a fertile seedbed for reform, and that Protestant ideas took root quickly, deeply, and widely. Dickens's book remained the standard account of the English Reformation for decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, though, it was increasingly under fire from so-called "revisionist" historians (Haigh, Scarisbrick, Duffy, etc.) who used new historiographical methods like local history to vigorously reargue a very old point: that the late-medieval Church was vitally alive, foundational to English culture, and beloved by the vast majority of English people, who found its ritual, doctrine, and institutional presence to be profoundly satisfying. More recently still, scholars like Judith Maltby have in turn pointed out the biases and distortions that revisionism has introduced into our understanding of this era. And so we now find ourselves pretty much where we began.

The astonishing persistence of this debate and its basic faultlines warrants, I think, several cautious but important conclusions. First, the perennial viability of both sides indicates that neither side has conclusively disproven the other; the absence of a truly knockdown argument either way is what has animated this controversy from the very beginning. Second, this in turn suggests that each side is in some important sense *right*. One side correctly stresses the strengths of late-medieval Catholicism and the enormous resistances that state reform encountered; the other side, equally correctly, argues that Protestantism was rather quickly embraced by significant

numbers of people who clearly found it not only personally empowering but also ritually and theologically preferable to a Catholicism they perceived as superstitious, foreign, and corrupt. Recent revisionist studies have valuably qualified the triumphalist tendencies of the Protestant view, but the strong form of the revisionist project would seem to require that the fundamental claims of a Dickens be positively disproven, and this has clearly not been achieved; demonstrating the persistent appeal of traditional religion is not the same thing as proving that Protestantism did not have a considerable appeal of its own.

This standoff, finally, suggests that the terms in which this debate has been construed are in need of some rethinking. Practically speaking, as things stand now – and, after nearly five centuries, they seem unlikely to change much from within – our options would seem to be either resigning ourselves to stalemate or finding some synthetic or dialectical way out of it.[2] Since the second option seems to me the only really constructive one, we would need to conceive of a new model that is sufficiently capacious to incorporate the strengths of both approaches. This model would, for example, need to reconcile structurally the top-down and bottom-up models; it would need to acknowledge that the English Reformation was simultaneously a vertical and coercive exercise of state power *and* a horizontal distribution of political and religious authority; it would need, that is, to make sense of both aspects of the dynamic of subjectification (that is, the ways in which reform both subjected people to new structures of authority and recognized them as autonomous subjects).[3]

I believe that we have such a model. It has been available to us for four and a half centuries. It is a text – a text created and authorized by the combined force of Crown, Church, and Parliament; a text which spawned rebellions, and for (and against) which many people gave their lives; a text often found at the center of religious and political controversy; a text indisputably familiar to virtually every English subject; a text which forms part of the foundation of England's national identity. It is not the English Bible; it is the Book of Common Prayer.

[2] Ethan Shagan has recently proposed that we might get past these static binaries – Catholic/Protestant, above/below, success/failure – by rethinking the English Reformation as a more complex and dynamic "process of cultural accommodation" (*Popular Politics*, 7) in which politics and belief were experientially negotiated. Time will tell if this in fact proves to be a way out of historiographical stalemate, but in the meantime, my contention is that the Prayerbook is itself the textual site of such negotiations – not so much between Protestant and Catholic (though that tension is of course important to it) as between the conflicting models of authority upon which this particular Reformation was constructed.

[3] This useful term is of course Foucauldian, though part of my argument will register some important reservations about Foucault and his influence on recent critical practice.

If there is something slightly surprising about this claim, at least to scholars of literature, I would argue that this surprisingness is an effect of a longstanding critical blind spot in literary studies, which has paid relatively little sustained attention to the liturgy. But one might argue (though I will not explicitly do so in this book; I offer it here by way of provocation) that in certain respects, the Book of Common Prayer has proven more important to the history and identity of England than have specific theological formulations (e.g. Calvinism), polemical historiographical constructions (e.g. Foxe), or perhaps indeed the English Bible itself.

This last claim may seem absurd. So let me clarify what I do not mean here. I don't mean to suggest that the BCP has ever had an equal status to the Bible in terms of affect or authority; unlike the Scripture, which all sides agreed was the inspired Word of God, the Prayerbook never claimed to be the product of anything more than state authority, careful Bible-reading, and good judgment. Indeed, both its Preface and the essay "Of Ceremonies" are quite insistent on both the BCP's derivative nature and its contingency as a specific cultural product. Hence I'm not saying that the Book of Common Prayer exceeded or even approached the Bible in terms of sheer spiritual or political impact, on either the individual or national level. It was not nearly the catalyst for literacy that the Bible was, nor did it receive the sort of veneration that the Bible did, because it was clearly not regarded as a pure or direct expression of the will of God (in fact, its authors insisted that it *could not* be so regarded, although they certainly suggested that they had done their best).

So then what's left of my claim? This: that the BCP has functioned, quietly and deeply, *in opposition to* the English Bible. This will again seem absurd, given the Prayerbook's insistence on its own biblical foundation, and the vast amounts of Scripture so deliberately present in the liturgy, which was, after all, the primary context and vehicle through which most people experienced the Bible. And it has no doubt set Thomas Cranmer spinning in his grave (metaphorically, of course; having been burned at the stake for his efforts, he doesn't have one). So let me immediately explain that this is a constructive opposition. But the Bible had always, *always* been a site of chaotic potentiality: this is why the medieval Catholic Church controlled its availability and interpretation so scrupulously, and whatever one may think of the Church's final motivations, we must allow that its concerns were precisely on the mark. The dangers inherent in the Bible, and in the mad excess of inspiration it offered, were historically controlled by its companion authorities of church tradition, conciliar decrees, and papal

edicts; but with the Reformation, many of these counterweights were cast off.[4]

It quickly became clear in the unruly early years of the Reformation that the power vacuum created by this revolution needed to be filled if religion and indeed society were to be saved from collapsing into anarchy. Three stabilizing options can be seen in the life and teachings of Martin Luther: a reinvigorated turn to Erastianism, the authoritative voice of a magisterial reformer, and the complicated recourse to a hermeneutic of literalism (which, I'll suggest, should be considerably less simple and synecdochic to us than it is). In England, where a different set of conditions obtained, this burden fell most squarely on the Prayerbook, which embodied a distinctive complex of forces: issued in the name of the king, enforced by parliamentary authority, created and administered by the episcopal hierarchy of the national Church, it staked its authority in a different sphere than that of the Bible. By regulating the conduct of public worship, the aural delivery of the Word, and by implication the format of the individual encounter with the divine, it was the central textual mediator of social and religious experience (a recent book has contended that "what church and state *meant* to by far the greatest number of people, high and low, was the Book of Common Prayer").[5] It also, crucially, provided a potent counterweight of order to balance the chaotic promise of Protestant scripturalism and its attendant controversy. The Prayerbook was, in short, designed to fix the problems that the English Bible caused, to stabilize a historical moment in which inspiration threatened to run amok. But by also incorporating the radical individualism implicit in Protestantism, it sought to weave a complex textual matrix of identity which held in productive tension both the imperatives of the hierarchical nation and the prerogatives of the evangelical soul.

It was in part this orderliness that provoked Puritan attacks in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; evangelicals saw the very idea of a coercively uniform liturgy as a popish relic which impeded the individual and improvisatory nature of true faith. Given these politico-religious valences, it is no surprise that the opposing parties in the Civil War defined themselves centrally in terms of textual affiliation. In fact, it

[4] See Kastan, "Noyse," for a good account of the English Bible's rambunctious early history.

[5] Carrithers and Hardy, *Age of Iron*, 99. Similarly, Maltby (*Prayer Book and People*, 4) suggests that "there was probably no other single aspect of the Reformation in England which touched more directly and fundamentally the religious consciousness, or lack of it, of ordinary clergy and laity, than did the reform of rituals and liturgy."

might be useful to rethink the Civil War as less a matter of old dichotomies of Crown/Parliament or court/country and more a conflict between the competing social, religious, and political visions of a Bible party and a Prayerbook party. Parliament outlawed the BCP on the same day that it attainted Laud (that old arch-liturgist), indicating the high and related priority of both actions; conversely, reestablishing the Prayerbook in what would become its final form was a centerpiece of Charles II's Restoration – a textual monument that powerfully undergirded, and indeed outlived, England's commitment to a specifically religious sociopolitical identity.

So perhaps the Book of Common Prayer, not the English Bible, is the foundational and paradigmatic text of Anglicanism (and more generally of post-Reformation England). But the Prayerbook has, for some, more than a whiff of dusty arch-conservativism about it; it is, after all, the master-text of a putatively elitist Anglicanism once coercive and now moribund. It stands decrepitly, obsoletely, against a historical trend toward accessibility and improvisation to which even the Roman Catholic Church has not proven entirely immune. It is, in short, widely regarded as a relic, a quaint and predictably hegemonic artifact of a distant and repressive past. This alienated view of the Prayerbook, however, not only discourages careful critical attention to the liturgy but also obscures its cultural centrality, its internal complexity, and its deep radicality: while the BCP had extensive continuities with its immediate past, it was also both a revolutionary reconfiguration of that past and one of the deepest taproots of subsequent English identity.

On 21 January 1549, after over a month of debate, Parliament passed the first Act of Uniformity. Attached to this Act was a draft of a new "convenient and meet order, rite, and fashion of common and open prayer and administration of the sacraments," prepared by a committee of "the most learned and discreet bishops, and other learned men of this realm" to the great satisfaction of young King Edward VI.[6] As of Whitsunday of that year (9 June), the Act dictated, all ministers in the king's dominions were to use the new forms exclusively; penalties for using other forms, or failing to use the new form, or openly derogating it, ranged from £10 to life imprisonment and forfeiture of all property. A new era of English civil, religious, and political history was thus announced with the birth of the Book of

[6] Gee and Hardy, *Documents*, 359. For an account of this debate, see Gasquet and Bishop, *Edward VI*, Appendix 5 (pp. 395–443).

Common Prayer, a smallish book designed to provide uniform orders of worship in English for all church services in the realm.[7]

Although at this writing, 450 years after its introduction, the same essential text is still the official liturgy of the Church of England, the BCP (1549, 1552, 1559, 1662) has a history of near-spectacular neglect among literary scholars; despite the incalculable importance of both the Reformation and the Book of Common Prayer to early modern English culture, literary scholars in recent decades have tended to neglect both, and particularly the latter.[8] But the convergence in the Prayerbook of many strands of political, religious, intellectual, and aesthetic traditions make it an unusually interesting subject for analysis. Politics as well as theology were dominant in its conception, birth, and subsequent history (indeed, I will argue that it is the central textual effort to reconcile the two); in another sphere, it seems to have been looked upon almost at once, and still today, as a critical part of post-Reformation England's cultural identity; in yet another, it became almost immediately one of England's most pervasive and dominant linguistic monuments (one writer has made the striking suggestion that the Book of Common Prayer and the English Bible provided the only regular and nationally uniform experience of the English language until the advent of radio).[9] The language of Thomas Cranmer (Henry VIII's Archbishop and the BCP's chief architect), along with that of William Tyndale and his

[7] The 1549 Prayerbook's contents: (1) Preface (2) Table and Kalendar for determining daily readings (3) Mattins and Evensong (Morning and Evening Prayer) (4) Proper readings for each Sunday and feast day throughout the year (5) Holy Communion (6) Baptism (7) Confirmation (8) Matrimony (9) Visitation of the Sick (10) Burial (11) Purification of Women (12) Ash Wednesday (13) "Of Ceremonies" (Holderness is simply mistaken when he says this essay was "added to the 1552 text" ("Strategies," 22) (14) Concluding rubrics. For a fuller account of the Prayerbook's form and contents, see Appendix.

[8] The last half-century of the Prayerbook's history as a subject of literary attention begins with C. S. Lewis's 1954 appraisal in the *Oxford History of English Literature*; notable commentators since then include Mueller, King, Wall, Booty, Guibbory, Robinson, Helgerson, Diehl, and Carrithers and Hardy (and, more indirectly, Chambers). Yet none of these brief and often incidental treatments – and the preceding inventory is something close to exhaustive – treats the BCP extensively and on its own terms, digging deeply into its text as well as its cultural position to explicate more fully its precise place in the contemporary discursive milieu, its pivotal function and enormous significance in English culture of the sixteenth century and beyond. To this end, there are, really, only two explicitly literary–critical books. The first is Stella Brook's 1965 *The Language of the* Book of Common Prayer, a book-length study of the language and style of the liturgy. Thirty-six years then elapsed before the appearance of the other – Ramie Targoff's 2001 *Common Prayer* – which is a provocative and welcome addition to literary studies, but it is also a thin and flawed book which, despite its insistence on the importance of practice, is poorly grounded not only in theology but also in history and ritual theory. Its emphasis on the triumph of the corporate voice quite deliberately ignores the individualizing implications of the BCP (and the Reformation); the dialectical complexity of the Prayerbook is thus more or less entirely left out of Targoff's account.

[9] Valerie Pitt in Bloom, *Jacobean Poetry and Prose*, 44–56.

successors in Bible translation, formed the twin textual and linguistic pillars of religious Englishness. Ian Green has estimated that the Prayerbook went through over 550 printings between 1549 and 1729 – an extraordinary figure unmatched by any other book of the era, even the King James Bible – and Judith Maltby has demonstrated the deep commitments many formed to this book in the Tudor and Stuart eras.[10] Even today, Prayerbook coinages continue to pervade our expression. Much of the modern wedding service, from "Dearly beloved" to "to love and to cherish" to "those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," derives from the BCP; "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" we owe not to Neil Young but to Cranmer's burial service. And when Neville Chamberlain returned from the Munich Conference in 1938, thinking that he had averted war, he found the resonance of "peace in our time" (as had Ernest Hemingway) not in the Bible but in the Order for Morning Prayer.

In short, the Book of Common Prayer is a text of enormous significance for both literary and historical study, a pivotal text in the development of early modern English nationalism and subjectivity, and a deeply pervasive presence in subsequent English language and literature. This book thus attends to the BCP as a promising avenue for an exploratory literary–historical understanding of the English Reformation and Renaissance, as well as of the relationship between these complex and ambivalent phenomena. I contend that the Prayerbook (and by extension the English Reformation itself) was a profoundly important cultural effort to synthesize productively the claims and possibilities of two enormously potent, and potentially contradictory, sixteenth-century conceptual entities: the early modern nation and the Protestant individual. This synthesis is worked out *hermeneutically*; the constantly renegotiated balance between individual and community, authority and conscience, pivots around a newly stressed faith in the power of representations and their interpretation to articulate and transform the relations of human and divine, Church and State, subject and nation. The latter half of this study traces an extension of these principles, this faith, into the theory, practice, and thematics of Renaissance literature: Sidney and Shakespeare (and by further extension Milton and Hobbes), I argue, define their literary/theatrical and political

[10] See Green, *Print and Protestantism*, ch. 5, and Appendix 1, p. 602; Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, *passim*. Maltby argues there has been a tendency in recent historiography to focus disproportionately on Catholicism (both pre-Reformation and recusant) and the godly activists formerly known as Puritans, to the neglect of the quietly satisfied, even enthusiastic, establishment center of the Church of England (see ibid., esp. 1–30). She, as well as Wall, Guibbory, and Targoff, usefully counter the revisionist tendency to assume that Protestantism consistently destroyed community rather than creating it.

concerns around a distinctively Reformed axis of fictive signs and their faithful interpretation.[11]

My analysis seeks to make visible some complexities that are frequently overlooked or elided in current literary and historical scholarship. Excavating the tensions in a foundational text enables a more nuanced understanding of the interplay of identity, agency, and authority in this period; in the wake of the English Reformation, I argue, the negotiated reconstitutions of nation and subject were not only intertwined but interdependent. Looking at the Prayerbook – a text that simultaneously was built on coercive vertical authority, and demanded individual construal of its contents – also makes it possible to isolate some important ways in which this dialectic was itself constituted in terms of textuality, figuration, and hermeneutics. And this stress on representation and interpretation, as a mode of negotiating fundamental cultural questions of authority and identity, creates in turn a productive link between liturgy and literature, Reformation and Renaissance.

The importance of these links has not been fully understood in criticism of the last few decades. "For the understanding of English Renaissance literature," a perceptive critic wrote in 1987, "the contribution made by the Reformation in England, Germany and throughout Europe has not yet been fully appreciated."[12] More than a decade later, this continued to be an accurate description of the state of affairs in literary–critical studies of early modern England. For all of criticism's efforts to historicize newly the English Renaissance anew, there remained a curious weakness in the field, a tacit overlooking by many critics of the enormous historical and cultural significance of the Reformation that made it possible.

One might speculate on the reasons why this has been so. To begin with, the Reformation, whatever else it may have been, was a substantially religious phenomenon, and despite its potential to do otherwise, much New Historicist criticism has exhibited painful inadequacies in its treatment of religion; though it has to some degree talked about religion from the beginning, it has done so, for the most part, in highly problematic ways. This is due in part to the thorough secularization of literary criticism in the last several decades, particularly insofar as it has been a deliberate reaction to the former hegemony of warmly Christianized approaches to literature, and in part to the ideological and methodological

[11] No biographical claims are necessarily implied in this; my concerns are not with authors' religious beliefs but rather with the ways in which they think about the cultural function of signification and reading.

[12] Weimann, "Discourse," 109.

precommitments of the theorists who have shaped recent critical practice; in the case of New Historicism, for example, the totalizing implications of Foucauldian and Althusserian criticism virtually guarantee in advance that religion will be counted as a variety of false consciousness, a discursive mechanism of ideology, rather than a sphere of human experience with its own coherent claims to validity.[13] Consequently, the rejection of religiously normative criticism was not immediately followed with a mode of reading that took religion seriously both in its own right and in terms of its deep implication in other modes of culture. Even a study which ostensibly attempted to do so, Stephen Greenblatt's brilliantly insightful chapter on Tyndale in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, ends up exemplifying the religiously hamstrung quality of High New Historicism. In Greenblatt's account, Tyndale's sacrificial devotion to the authority and availability of the Bible stems ultimately not from religious belief per se but from "an intense need for something external to himself in which he could totally merge his identity" (111) – a simple transfer of psychological dependency from the institutional Church (More's neurosis!) to the inspired Book. This psychologizing of Tyndale's faith is symptomatic of criticism's impulse to translate religious belief into *something else* – psychology, ideology, economics, politics – before it can be talked about; in such accounts, religion is often implicitly an effect or by-product of the "real" which is its putatively true referent. This tendency has persisted in Greenblatt's more subtle recent work: in "The Wound in the Wall," the Eucharist appears to be "about" Christian–Jewish relations, while in "The Mousetrap," it appears to be "about" the philosophical problems of material remainders.[14] My point is not that Greenblatt is necessarily wrong – the eucharistic topos may well have provided a powerful mode of articulating such questions – but rather that there's a lot more at stake, and that a lot is lost when scholars treat religion as really being something else altogether.

This is in part because, despite criticism's frequently professed desires to "make the past strange," it much more often makes it overly familiar. The depth, passion, and occasional ferocity of early modern religious belief simply doesn't resonate in a secular modern culture committed to toleration and agnosticism, so we tend to reduce its alienness by overlooking it, or

[13] Historian Brad Gregory, writing on the perplexing phenomenon of early modern martyrdom, argues that "insofar as one wants to learn what life in the past meant to the people who lived it, such theories are not the answer. They are the problem" (*Salvation at Stake*, 351).

[14] Both essays are found in Greenblatt and Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism*. See also David Aers's trenchant critique of the former piece and its critical underpinnings in "New Historicism and the Eucharist," and Beckwith's in "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," as well as Strier, *Resistant Structures*, ch. 4.

by translating it into terms we are more comfortable with. But those are by definition *not* the terms in which these things existed and operated historically; when we use them as the basis of our critical practice, we are looking not at the past but at an image of modernity in hose and ruffs. Debora Shuger has influentially critiqued the tendency of modern scholarship to "bracket off religious materials from cultural analysis and vice versa,"[15] and contended that we do ourselves no favors by ignoring, displacing, or distorting the era's fundamental conceptual structure.

> Religious belief is "about" God and the soul as much as it is "about" the sociopolitical order. Whether or not one believes in the former two entities, one gains very little by assuming that the culture under investigation did not itself comprehend the essential nature of its preoccupations . . . Religion in this period supplies the primary language of analysis. It is the cultural matrix for explorations of virtually every topic: kingship, selfhood, rationality, language, marriage, ethics, and so forth. Such subjects are, again, not masked by religious discourse but articulated in it; they are considered in relation to God and the human soul. That is what it means to say that the English Renaissance was a religious culture, not simply a culture whose members generally were religious.[16]

The present book is founded on the principle that while religious experience includes social, political, material, behavioral, ideological, philosophical, psychological, and theological dimensions, it is not finally reducible to any one (or combination) of them; my argument attempts to respect the internal coherence of religious belief (that is, the seriousness of its claims to be about what it claims to be about), while also attending closely to its deep and complex implication in these cultural spheres. My focus on liturgy seeks to elucidate the relation between a central religious text and its attendant cultural practices – cultural anthropologist Roy Rappaport has called ritual "the basic social act" – by which complex tensions are symbolically articulated and negotiated.

So I am not saying that consideration of the political, social, and material circumstances and operations of religious discourse, and of belief itself, is

[15] *Renaissance Bible*, 2. Donna Hamilton and Richard Strier were, I think, also correct in their 1996 contention that "the great efflorescence in historicized literary studies of the early modern period in England has not been very mindful of religious issues" (*Religion, Literature and Politics*, 2), as, more or less, is Aers in his 2003 claim that even now, "for all its diversity, New Historicism itself has not been engaged by the particulars of Christian theology and liturgy, preferring to trace flows of secular power, hidden or overt, in putatively religious genres" (241).

[16] *Habits of Thought*, 6. See also Mallette's call for criticism to "examine the diversified and numinous intertextual presence of religious discourses within literary texts quite apart from any claims of truth those discourses might be making on either reader or writer" (*Spenser*, 202) – an activity distinct from source-hunting, doctrinal pigeonholing, or "dismissing 'belief' as outside the sphere of critical inquiry."

inherently invalid; such analysis has much to teach us about the historical workings of this crucial mode of culture, and this book will perform a good deal of it. But a balanced, solidly founded criticism must resist the reductive and condescending urge to translate religion wholly into other analytical categories, or to dismiss religious discourse's inaccessible, animating core of faith as meaningless; it must find ways to talk productively about the cultural operations and implications of belief, both corporate and individual, without assuming that this belief is simply an illusory ideological effect. The reductiveness of such critical assumptions has resulted in a frequently cavalier treatment of religion, and thus in any number of distorting critical shortcuts. To equate Reformed theology entirely with iconoclastic Puritan antitheatricalism (as a distressing number of critics have done), for example, or to think of Protestant literalism as being irrevocably antiliterary, is to sacrifice much of the complexity and the constructiveness of the relationship between religious belief and literary–cultural practice – and there is much to be learned from the deep and intricate links between Protestantism and the more familiar critical topics of theatricality and literary representation.

Happily, there are signs that this broad critical problem has begun to improve. Brian Cummings, in an important book of 2002, registers an ambivalent transitionality when he complains of the persistent tendency in literary studies to consider religion axiomatically "as a transparently ideological construct, an engine of the state," but does so in a book – a book accepted for publication at a major university press, and warmly received by reviewers – founded on an assertion that "without reference to religion, the study of early modern writing is incomprehensible."[17] Michael Schoenfeldt reports in a 2004 review essay that in early modern studies, "religion is back with a vengeance, not as an alternative to historicism but as its necessary medium . . . not just as the exclusive purview of Reformation scholars, or as a disguised discourse of political power, but rather as an element that pervades almost all aspects of early modern culture."[18] This model of pervasiveness comes a little short of Shuger's contention (now over a decade old, and still, I think, correct) that religion is the foundational matrix and "primary language" of early modern culture,[19] but it nevertheless bodes well for the course correction underway in early modern studies.

[17] *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*, 12, 6.

[18] "Recent Studies in the English Renaissance," *Studies in English Literature* 44.1 (2004): 190–1.

[19] One might, for example, see "pervading" as something implicitly done *to* the substance of "real" culture by something essentially extrinsic to it.

But if religion is finding its way back into our critical discourse, the picture is further complicated by the discomforting messiness of the English Reformation itself, which has contributed to its own marginalization; it is simply a very difficult phenomenon to explain neatly, let alone to deploy critically in stable and meaningful ways. The apparently limitless longevity of the historiographical debate I discussed earlier is surely not simply a result of religiously partisan stubbornness (though one suspects it has played its part), but rather an indication of the profound ambivalence of the phenomenon in question. As I have suggested, perhaps both sides have something right: the English Reformation was at once an unprecedented extension of state power over its subjects and an unprecedented validation of individual authority over against that power. This delineates the paradox inherent in any Protestant state Church: the tension of institutional authority (necessary for a coherent sociopolitical structure) and individual autonomy (necessary for a coherent Protestant theology of Biblical access and personal salvation).

The English Reformation's concatenation of these multiple and sometimes conflicting logics is exemplified in a piece of legislation – the 1534 Act of Succession – the establishment of which involves two notable aspects. First, this is the Act which brought More and Fisher to the block: their refusal to endorse it stemmed from their recognition that this statute instituted a radically different order of authority, in which the English state decisively kicked itself free of the binding power of the papacy, and established itself as the realm's temporal arbiter of religious power. The second aspect is related to the first, although the relationship between the two is ultimately one of tension. The concrete expression of More's and Fisher's resistance to the new order, and the grounds for their executions, was their refusal to take an oath in support of the Act. This oath (which involved the recognition of the new succession as legal fact, the condemnation of the Catherine of Aragon marriage, and the implied denial of papal supremacy) was unprecedented in its administration on a national scale: Geoffrey Elton described it as an attempt to "bind the whole nation" in a "political test of obedience to the new order and of adherence to the royal supremacy in the Church."[20] In demanding this oath, the state demanded, and expected, the unified support of the realm on the individual level. But this demand also contained a far more radical implication: that the consent of individual subjects *mattered*. Henry and Cromwell coercively achieved (at least in theory) the unprecedented unanimity of England in their cause at the

[20] Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 135.

profound cost of recognizing the validity of individual opinion in these matters.

This curious, paradoxical doubleness of the English Reformation is one of the principal concerns of the present study. The other is the vast and complex cultural consequences of the English Church/State's attempt to negotiate and stabilize this doubleness by means of a text – and by turning to textuality itself.

It is a historical truism that the Reformation *in principle* disposed of the massive institutional force and external authority of the Roman Catholic Church and replaced it with individual and ideally unmediated interpretive access to God. In practice, of course, things were not that simple – especially in England, where an ambitious but conservative monarch "reformed" a church primarily by stealing it from the Pope. Henry famously complained to his last Parliament that the logic of reform had run out of control, that the English Bible he had reluctantly authorized was being everywhere recklessly read. What Henry's dilemma exposes is, again, the paradoxical – and, for the new Church of England, fundamental – tension of a vertical, hierarchical model of institutional authority and a more dispersed, individualized, and potentially contestatory model of personal faith and discretion. When his son, three years later, authorized the other great text of the English Reformation, he did so to stabilize precisely the same set of conflicts by forcibly imposing a degree of uniformity and coherence on a nation of Christian individuals. The Prayerbook is thus no less paradoxical than the Henrician Reformation, but by textualizing and dialecticizing these conflicts (between a horizontal Protestant subjectivity and a vertical, centralizing hierarchical order), it positions itself precisely at the site of their collision, and attempts to remake the conflict into a constructive and fundamentally representational synthesis. And this synthesis in turn became profoundly influential, not only in defining the Church of England, but in defining England itself, and what it meant to be an English subject.

The significance and complexity of the Prayerbook's position, and the relevance of ceremonial to these concerns, are addressed in Cranmer's essay which concludes the 1549 Prayerbook. In a sense, "Of Ceremonies, Why Some Be Abolished and Some Retayned" might be viewed as the founding document of the Church of England. It elaborated the foundational principles upon which the 1549 BCP was constructed, and these principles of worship were in many ways coterminous with those upon which the Church itself (and the entire realigned polity) was built. They expressed the basic principles of the English version of Reformation, and gave the

English Church a relatively stable groundwork of studied ambivalence and reasoned moderation – a foundation which helped mitigate the violence typical of contemporary religious change, and gave the Church its characteristic ideological shape.

The essay is a proleptic response to the situation in which the Archbishop found both himself and, as he anticipated, his new liturgy. On the one hand, he had discarded much of the old faith and ritual that was very dear to the hearts and souls of many in England; on the other, by constructing the new liturgy so much out of traditional structures and materials, he had kept much that smacked of popery to many of the more ardent reformers. He asserts a scriptural mandate for a common "semely and due ordre" within a church, yet acknowledges the difficulty of trying to establish a coherent church in a time of such seismic change:

> And whereas in this our tyme, the myndes of menne bee so diverse, that some thynke it a greate matter of conscience to departe from a peece of the leaste of theyr Ceremonies (they bee so addicted to theyr olde customes) and agayne on the other syde, some bee so newe fangle that they woulde innovate all thyng, and so doe despyse the olde that nothyng canne lyke them, but that is newe: It was thought expediente not so muche to have respecte howe to please and satisfie eyther of these partyes, as howe to please God, and profitte them bothe. (286)

The policy outlined here of holding extremes peacefully at bay within a general course of moderation, in some ways so foreign to the age, was to become the hallmark of the English Church: Geoffrey Cuming calls Cranmer's approach in the essay "the first tentative statement of the Anglican *via media*."[21]

But the guiding principles by which this liturgical reform was carried out are equally important. Concerning the reasons for selection and deletion of ceremonies, Cranmer advances two main strands of argument. The first concerns only the need to reduce the overabundance of them, which in recent years had grown so excessive that "the burden of them was intollerable" – a strikingly precise echo of the confession of sins in the Communion service. He continues in terms which were central to the entire Reformation ethos:

> This our excessive multitude of Ceremonies, was so great, and many of them so darke: that they dyd more confounde and darken, then declare and sette forth Christes benefites unto us. And besides this, Christes Gospell is not a Ceremoniall lawe (as muche of Moses lawe was), but it is a relygion to serve God, not in bondage of the figure or shadowe: but in the freedome of spirite, beeyng contente

[21] *History*, 67.

onelye wyth those ceremonyes whyche dooe serve to a decente ordre and godlye discipline, and suche as bee apte to stirre uppe the dulle mynde of manne to the remembraunce of his duetie to God, by some notable and speciall significacion, whereby he myght bee edified. (287)

Emancipation from an old, corrupt, "darke" faith is of course not an uncommon theme in Reformation polemics. Cranmer's words, though, are noteworthy for several reasons. His opposition of hollowly externalized ceremonial law to true inward religion is as old as St. Paul,[22] but remarkable here for its connection to the hermeneutic and tropical motifs of contemporary polemic. The key principle of his liturgical reform is the liberation from the "bondage of the figure," the rendering opaque of religious signs and ceremonies which generally characterized most of what was attacked as Roman Catholic "idolatry" and "superstition." Tyndale calls it "blind image-service," and contends that once the Roman Church had crowded out the Gospel with ceremonies and Latin, the common people, having been deprived of "the signification of the ceremonies,"

turned unto the ceremony itself; as though a man were so mad to forget that the bush at the tavern-door did signify wine to be sold therein, but would believe that the bush itself would quench his thirst. And so they became servants unto the ceremonies; ascribing their justifying and salvation unto them, supposing that it was nothing else to be a christian man than to serve ceremonies, and him most christian that most served them; and contrariwise, him that was not popish and ceremonial, no christian man at all.[23]

The English Protestant alternative to this idolatrous literalization emphasized the transparency and interpretability of signs of "notable and special signification," ceremonial and otherwise, whose value is not numinous and self-enclosed, but consists rather of the *effects* of their signification – the focus of which is always on something beyond themselves – on the *understanding* of the participants.

The second strand of Cranmer's argument, which specifies the selection principle, goes as follows: there are many humanly devised ceremonies in the Church; some have been so abused and encrusted with superstition and confusion that they can no longer be profitably used; others can still be

[22] See e.g. Romans 6:14, Galatians 3:23–5. As we shall see, later nonconformists would turn this opposition against the Prayerbook itself.

[23] *An Answer*, 67, 76. He lumps together the "worshipping or honouring of sacraments, ceremonies, images, and relics" (59), and argues that "all the ceremonies, ornaments, and sacrifices of the Old Testament were sacraments; that is to wete, signs preaching unto the people one thing or another" (64); under the yoke of Catholic images and services, however, he imputes "this our grievous fall into so extreme and horrible blindness (wherein we are so deep and so deadly brought asleep) unto nothing so much as unto the multitude of ceremonies" (75).

useful for edification and the keeping of good order (including temporal continuity with the past); therefore it is best to purify and keep the latter sort, and to discard the former sort entirely. "Innovacions and newe fanglenesse" for their own sake are to be eschewed, and godly traditions to be respected, in the pursuit of godly unity and concord. Cranmer closes this section of his argument with a recapitulation which stresses both the historicized contingency of ceremonial signs and the imperative of hermeneutic clarity:

as those [ceremonies] bee taken awaye whiche were moste abused, and dydde burden mennes consciences wythoute any cause: So the other that remaine are retained for a discipline and ordre, whiche (upon just causes) may be altered and chau*n*ged, and therfore are not to be estemed equal with goddes lawe. And moreover they be neyther darke nor dumme ceremonies, but are so set forth that every man may understande what they dooe meane, and to what use they do serve. (288)

Finally, the essay closes with an affirmation of the principle of national self-determination in matters of religion. This is framed as both a charitable recognition of a limited religious diversity between nations ("wee condemne no other nacions, nor prescribe anye thyng, but to oure owne people onelye") and a reassertion of the proto-Erastian self-determination established in England during the previous decade – a claim which was still by no means secure. Ultimately, the Prayerbook sought to establish the new English Church and nation by weaving a complex textual synthesis of multiple discourses: national sovereignty, ecclesiastical and hierarchical order, Protestant scripturalism, a reconceived hermeneutic of truth, and individual competence assumed historically critical formations in the new English liturgy. The consequences of this reformulated episteme of authority, identity, and salvation were culturally deep and pervasive.

The present study, then, seeks to understand the role of the English liturgy in early modern culture by beginning with an extended treatment of the Book of Common Prayer, arguing that the Prayerbook textually synthesized some foundational cultural conflicts in a historically important and enduring way. Chapters 1 and 2 are the core of my analysis of the Prayerbook, and form a complementary dyad which addresses, in turn, the principles of national order and Protestant individualism; the larger theme of this unit is the double logic of the English Reformation discussed above, and the nature of the resolution propounded in the BCP. In Chapter 1, I argue that the political, philosophical, and theological roots of contemporary

proto-Erastianism are manifested and reworked in the Prayerbook, whose discourses of order, nationalism, and language participate in the reconstituted polities of a multinational Europe and an autonomous English state (as well as a more lateral and inclusive sense of nationhood, which partially contests hierarchical models of order, and foreshadows the concerns of Chapter 2).

The hierarchical nature of this discursive order is counterpoised in the Book of Common Prayer by its more radical theological discourse of Protestant individuality. In it, the Supreme Head coexists with personal competency, and the religious vernacular functions simultaneously as a mode of unified national identity and a means of unmediated private grace. In the same way, my study of the liturgical construction of national order is complemented and contested by an extended consideration in Chapter 2 of the more refractory implications of Protestant and Reformed theology. Through an analysis of the successive versions of the eucharistic liturgy, I argue that the theological move away from transubstantiation was accompanied by a shift in sacramental emphasis from elements to participants, from institutional *ex opere operato* objectivity to individual subjectivity. Fundamental to this shift – and additionally significant for its connections to Protestant scripturalism and vernacularism – is a reconception of the eucharistic elements as signs, representations, *texts*, whose regenerative grace was conveyed and internalized through acts of self-conscious interpretation.

Why, though, the stress on the Eucharist? Recent criticism has begun to answer this question, following in part, as it often has, the lead of Stephen Greenblatt, who has written repeatedly on the topic (in a 2000 essay, he recognized that "most of the significant and sustained thinking in the early modern period about the nature of linguistic signs centered on or was deeply influenced by eucharistic controversies"). But other scholars, religious and otherwise, have recognized for some time its absolute cultural centrality. Miri Rubin's brilliant study of the sacrament's medieval history demonstrates that it was the symbolic nexus of post-1100 European culture, the master paradigm from which flowed virtually all significant ideas about social relations, cosmic order, and human experience. And though the Reformation defined itself in large part through its rethinking or outright rejection of divine sacramental immanence, the Eucharist did not lose its fundamental place in Protestant culture. On the contrary, I will argue that the Reformed flesh-made-word was just as important as the Catholic word-made-flesh had been; it was the foundation and the beating heart of

a radically reconstructed symbolic order.[24] As such, I will suggest, it had widespread cultural (and specifically literary) consequences.

In the end, I contend, the Prayerbook helped England to navigate the cultural crisis of the Reformation by enfranchising the evangelical subject, and establishing a permanent dialectic in which the authority, and thus the identity, of nation and individual are mutually constituting. This negotiation takes place on the ground of representation and interpretation, a mode which requires the belief that sign and referent are not copresent, and that meaning and identity are thus created and mediated through the careful reading of signs. Receiving the Prayerbook sacrament was the ceremonial counterpart to the study of Scripture (just as, for Tyndale, its "idolatrous" Catholic counterpart went hand in hand with the denial of scriptural access to the laity); these companionate modes of apprehending Truth in its highest sense embody what is perhaps the ideological and hermeneutic essence of the Reformation. In both cases, divine grace and truth were made available in essentially textual form, as systems of referential signs, and their internalization was a fundamentally interpretive act – one with both individual and communal consequences.

The conceptual parallels between the reception of Scripture and sacrament, and the centrality of (controlled) reading in each, enable the present book to extend its scope at this point. The first two chapters are essentially a case study of a signally important cultural text, one that positioned itself at the confluence of two enormous and potentially conflicting forces, and whose proposed resolution thus can tell us much about these forces' collision and reconfiguration in England. The remainder of this study will attempt to trace some of the influence of this resolution in the literary culture of the following century. In it, I will argue that the Reformation's amplification of representation and reading (centrally expressed, but also restrained, in the Book of Common Prayer) as a means of truth and grace is subsequently manifested in, and is an enabling condition for, the literary outpouring of the following decades.[25] Indeed, a central import of

[24] Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 141; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*. Similarly, Robert Whalen argues that the early modern sacrament "played a crucial role in the formation of religious subjectivity" (*The Poetry of Immanence*, xxi).

[25] An influential and complementary study is Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, which argues that "the primary poetic influences upon [seventeenth-century religious poets] are contemporary, English, and Protestant, and that the energy and power we respond to in much of this poetry has its basis in the resources of biblical genre, language, and symbolism, the analysis of spiritual states, and the tensions over the relation of art and truth which were brought into new prominence by the Reformation" (5). The present study differs from hers in focusing not on a "specifically biblical

this book is its contention that Protestantism was not, in contrast with the richly numinous signification of Catholicism, an inherently, dourly, puritanically, unimaginatively literalist system of belief;[26] on the contrary, it had profoundly metaphorical affinities, without which the literary history of England might have been very different.

But how might such a claim be established, especially between what seem to be culturally diverse deployments of representational principle? In the absence of direct testimonial evidence (say, an explicit Sidneian or Shakespearean invocation of liturgical influence on their conceptions of literary representation), one is left to trace a more generalized route of cultural consequence. On a basic level, the linguistic pervasiveness of the Prayerbook was exhaustively demonstrated years ago by Richmond Noble, who catalogued hundreds of clear liturgical echoes in the works of Shakespeare. This makes it clear that Shakespeare, like virtually all of his contemporaries, was steeped in the language of the Book of Common Prayer, but it does little to demonstrate a *conceptual* link between liturgical or theological and literary or theatrical representation.

And yet I would contend that such links, though inferential, do exist. I've spent some time discussing the failures of New Historicism, but one of its genuinely salutary accomplishments is its insistence on the deep "interdependency of representational practices," a recognition of "the complexity, the historical contingency, of the category of literary discourse" in the early modern period – an awareness that the boundaries of the literary are "contested, endlessly renegotiated, permeable."[27] In short, recent criticism has emphasized, to the effective annihilation of New Critical principles of aesthetic autonomy, the idea that the literary is not walled off from other spheres of culture, but intimately and reciprocally implicated in their operations. And Shuger's reminder that "Renaissance habits of thought were by and large religious" highlights the centrality of religion in this culture's thinking through of a vast range of "other" issues.[28] Such conceptual

poetics" (8), but on a broader representational poetics, foundationally articulated in liturgy, which engages recurrent questions of subject and structure, authority and identity (both religious and political), representation and interpretation.

[26] Peter Herman's contention, for example, that early Protestants "simply refused to grant the validity of the fictive" (*Squitter-wits*, 42–3) is just a particularly egregious example of a widespread, if often tacit, critical tendency.

[27] These formulations are of course Greenblatt's, from *Representing the English Renaissance*, xii, vii.

[28] *Habits of Thought*, 9. As Miri Rubin has demonstrated, this had long been the case with the Eucharist in particular: "From the very nature of its sacramental status, it belonged in every area of life, mediating between the sacred and profane, supernatural and natural. The rituals within which it was enfolded offered ideas of further and analogous uses in other spheres of life" (*Corpus Christi*, 334).

cross-pollenization is immediately visible in Reformation discourse; as I will demonstrate, questions of theology and religious practice are intertwined from the start with reflections on hermeneutics, identity (both individual and communal), history, politics, and the nature of language itself as a system of interpretable signs. This polymorphousness can also be seen in the range of objects under study in the present book, wherein the capacious category of "representation" will include not only canonically literary texts but also bread, wine, a tree, a sea monster, theatrical dynamics, the political practices of several kings, and any number of nonliterary texts; all of these diverse literary, political, and religious phenomena are structurally related in that each depends on both a signifying gap between sign and referent, and interpretive intervention to render that relationship meaningful. In each case, the reading of these representations leads to referents (whether divine grace, moral truth, or political authority) that are experienced and affirmed, both individually and collectively, as objects of faith and bases of consensus.

Another important accomplishment of recent criticism is its recognition that representation is always, in both its generation and its reception, a form of *power*. By abstracting from a narrowly literary sense of representation while also deepening the category's cultural potency, Robert Weimann has constructed an ambitious theory of the relations between the Reformation and Renaissance. In his account, one of the key consequences of the Reformation's dislocation of traditional structures of authority was an inversion of the customary relations between authority and representation: whereas previously, authority generally preceded discourse and made it possible, post-Reformation authority is increasingly a *product* rather than a precondition of discourse. "There is a link (which, I suspect, is of unique cultural potency) between the decline of given, unitary locations of authority," he argues, "and an unprecedented expansion of representational discourses." And this link is not simply the negative relation of a shifting fulcrum, but is positively connected to the bases of reform: "the 'interpretive imperative' served as an invisible link between the diverse promises of emancipation associated with Protestant piety and the 'redemptive' uses of secular writing and reading respectively . . . In England, early modern uses of representation were unthinkable without the growth of Protestant debate and interpretation; they went hand in hand with the gradual spread of literacy, nourished by the increased spread of printed vernacular texts."[29] If, as Protestants loudly insisted, reading is good for you spiritually – indeed

[29] *Authority and Representation*, 8, 4, 11.

essential for access to truth, and for a fully realized existence – then why wouldn't this dynamic be similarly beneficial in other areas of life?

If Weimann's highly suggestive model is correct, it should then come as no surprise that representation, unmoored from its predefinition and its ultimately restrictive claims of immanence, assumed new cultural forms and alliances. Part of my own argument is that the Reformation, in the process of desacralizing the absolute and immanent signs of medieval Catholicism, simultaneously resacralized the representational sign *as sign*. The divine will revealed in the text of Scripture is manifested not in the accreted authority of medieval commentary but through direct, individual interpretive engagement with the text; the divine grace available in the sacrament takes effect not in terms of literal presence, but through faithful individual reception of representational signs as signs. And as the sacrament's claims to presence gave way to a spiritually invested model of "notable and special signification" (even as the spread of print and literacy made Bible-reading not only desirable but increasingly feasible), this principle stimulated an expansion of the cultural status and function of representation and interpretation,[30] the operations of which became in turn broadly constitutive not only of belief and knowledge, but of individual and communal identity.

Subsequent literature is of course not immune to a hermeneutic revolution at such a fundamental cultural level; it in fact at almost every turn registers its deep relationship to the central problematics of the Reformation. As I turn to literary analysis, the second half of this study considers canonical works of literary theory and practice by four major figures: Sidney, Shakespeare, Milton, and Hobbes. The last two figures explicitly address liturgical issues in their writings; the first two do not. All four, though, write in the context of the newly unified but still sometimes discordant polity of post-Reformation England. All address issues regarding the risks, value, and cultural status of representation and reading. And all exhibit

[30] I use the term "expansion" to qualify any suggestion of an absolute, radical epistemic break between the medieval and early modern periods; the cultural project of reevaluating signification surely did not begin in 1549. Jesse Gellrich (*The Idea of the Book*) has argued that some works of Chaucer and Dante actively demythologize the foundational medieval assumptions of closure and immanent, total meaning in signification. But whether or not one accepts Gellrich's claims, the terms in which they are couched suggest something important: Dante and Chaucer, even if they were hermeneutic revolutionaries, were nevertheless part of a general episteme which presupposed the direct immanence of meaning. In the end, such a reading works more to qualify than to disagree with such formulations as Terence Cave's: "In the course of the sixteenth century . . . other accounts of reading began to impose themselves, accounts that make the task of the reader more central and correspondingly change the status and function of the text. In a sense, this is perhaps already a generally accepted hypothesis: for example, it is well known that Protestant theories of Scriptural reading, as well as humanist stress on the return *ad fontes*, release the reader from the constraints of what one might call institutionalized allegory and glossing" (Lyons and Nichols, *Mimesis*, 151).

distinctive combinations of religious, political, and hermeneutic questions characteristic of the new conceptual polity. The first half of this project considers the Book of Common Prayer as one exceptionally significant effort to negotiate and synthesize central Reformation conflicts between Church and State, individual and order, authority and interpretation. In the second half, these issues redivide to some extent, and the two pairings of authors each exemplify the divergent possibilities inherent in (and constitutive of) the Prayerbook solution; in each pair, one figure focuses on the individualizing implications of Protestant thought, while the other concentrates on its consequences for communal identity and authority.

My analysis turns in Chapter 3 to Sidney and Shakespeare, in both of whose works the value and function of representation is self-consciously foregrounded and theologically inflected. In Sidney's *Defense*, literary representation, by virtue of its fictive signifying structure, becomes in effect a means of sanctifying grace; Shakespeare's English history plays of the 1590s, pivoting compositionally around the proleptic Reformation in *King John*, enact a progressive rehabilitation of theatrical–political representation as a constructive, cooperative, and salvific tool of a recognizably and anachronistically Protestant national order. And finally, a concluding chapter on revolution and representation looks ahead to the seventeenth century, when Milton and Hobbes addressed a revolution which crystallized significantly around liturgical issues; in the end, I suggest, even these two vastly differing figures operate within a matrix defined a century earlier in the Book of Common Prayer. The Prayerbook had done more than its ostensible job of restructuring public worship; it had played an important role in reconstituting the terms in which it was possible to think about reading, individuality, and England itself.