



ACTS OF FAITH:  
READING, RHETORIC, AND THE CREATION OF COMMUNAL BELIEF IN  
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

by

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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

The passages drawn from early modern texts within the pages of this project have been represented as accurately as possible while still allowing for ease of reading. The capitalization and punctuation of the originals has been preserved and the spelling modernized throughout. In the special case of titles, the spelling of the original has been preserved in order to ensure that the reader will be able to locate the text consulted.

These changes have been made in an effort to render these texts more easily understood by readers. The unintended consequence of this effort is that the instability of printing conventions during this period are not as accurately portrayed as they perhaps could be. Spelling, typeface, formatting of paragraph breaks, notes, title pages, etc. differ significantly from one book to another during this early period in English printing. Images of some of the original documents discussed in this project have been included in an effort to demonstrate more accurately the instability of the conventions of printed text during this period.



## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation began with an interest in the communal experience of the shift from mystical to didactic signification in worship forms in early modern England. Through the late Middle Ages the laity of the Roman Catholic Church participated in a culture of mystical worship: touching the elements of the Eucharist could heal the sick, calling on a saint could mean the difference between life and death, and making a pilgrimage could reduce one's time in purgatory. Late medieval missals indicate that the clergy were expected to have an intellectual understanding of the doctrinal underpinnings of the sacraments, such as the Mass. The laity, however, were not expected to understand religious practice; instead, they were instructed "on how to assume their proper role in the ritual drama."<sup>1</sup> That medieval Christians were to adore, not think, is also evident from their interactions with the Word of God. One late medieval religious treatise explains that even when the words being spoken are not understood by parishioners, "the power of God's word still avails."<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the Reformation stripped religious practice and belief of supernatural potency and urged the laity to understand Christian doctrine as well as the meaning of worship practices. Belief in the supernatural power of common elements, such as bread, wine, water, and relics was challenged often as words and ceremonies took on didactic significance. For example, Eamon Duffy notes the stark difference between late medieval Roman Catholic and early modern Reformation theology in England that is evident in the ten articles of 1536/7:

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 172. For more on the shift from late medieval Roman Catholic Church teaching and practice to Reformation teachings and practice in Europe, see also Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), and Lee Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 172.

[T]he sprinkling of holy water was explained not in terms of the water's power to banish demons or bring blessing, but "to put us in remembrance of our baptism and the blood of Christ sprinkled for our redemption," holy bread was presented not as a curative but "to put us in remembrance of the sacrament of the altar," candles at Candlemas not as defenses against the power of evil or the disorder of the elements but "in memory of Christ the spiritual light."<sup>3</sup>

The ten articles further declare that "none of these ceremonies have power to remit sin, but only to stir and lift up our minds unto God."<sup>4</sup> Here, we see in the early years of the English Reformation the evidence of the belief that Christian practice requires understanding in order to be effective.

The timing of this shift from the medieval, Roman Catholic to an early modern, Reformation epistemology of faith has been the subject of some debate. Prior to Duffy's critical work, religious scholars had long held that late medieval Christians in England regarded Catholicism with great skepticism. While studies of Lollardy certainly support the notion that common members of late medieval English society were predisposed to Reformation theology, examinations of mainstream religion in early modern England reveal that the beliefs and practices of the Lollard community cannot accurately be considered indicative of the late medieval religious climate in England.<sup>5</sup> Duffy's study reveals that Catholicism was highly successful in England throughout the Middle Ages and was characterized by a remarkably high level of lay involvement. The shift from mystical to didactic conceptions of religious practices, such as reading, that occurred during the

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<sup>3</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 394.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> On this point, see also Lee Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation* and Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

Reformation was gradual and recursive in nature. Duffy's recasting of the early modern religious climate has contributed to a renewed interest in the religious practices of this period and speaks to the timeliness of this project.

The fact that the transition from Roman Catholic to Reformation belief and practice was neither smooth nor inevitable invites a reexamination of, among other things, the relationship of sixteenth-century English Christians and sacred texts. A cursory consideration of reading during the Reformation may perhaps suggest that the act of reading spread rapidly throughout Europe and that it flourished during the early modern period as a direct result of the invention of the printing press and the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura*. Indeed, this notion was first suggested by sixteenth-century reformers themselves. In his *Tischreden*, Martin Luther (1483-1546) famously states: "Printing is the ultimate gift of God and the greatest one. Indeed, by means of it God wants to spread word of the cause of the true religion to all the Earth, to the extremities of the world."<sup>6</sup> This statement, as well as other similar endorsements of print and reading by prominent reformers, suggests an uncomplicated relationship between Reformation theology and the act of reading. The Reformation appeal to Scripture alone as the authoritative message of God to believers also suggests that the act of reading (the Bible, in particular) is a quintessential Christian activity.

But although numerous reformers adopted *sola scriptura* as a rallying-cry, their interpretation of this principle varied significantly and impacted the ways they envisioned the act of reading in the life of a Christian. In the most general sense, *sola scriptura* asserts a hierarchical relation between Scripture and the tradition of the Church; Scripture holds primary authority in shaping Christian doctrine, belief, and practice. Prior to the

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<sup>6</sup> Gilmont, "Protestant Reformations and Reading" in *A History of Reading in the West* ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 213.

Reformation, late medieval theologians understood the relationship of Scripture and tradition in at least two ways. In the first view, the Church, equipped with theologians specially gifted in understanding the Word of God and guided by the Holy Spirit, provides the proper context for interpreting Scripture. According to this view, the authority of Scripture and tradition are not contrasted, but are rather conceived of as serving complementary functions.<sup>7</sup> In the second view, two traditions are defined as authoritative: the written Word of God and an oral tradition established by Jesus in the forty days following his resurrection and preceding his ascension. The extra-biblical, oral tradition, passed down through subsequent generations of the Church, held equal authority to the Word of God.<sup>8</sup> Although early modern church reformers were in general agreement regarding the primacy of Scripture, their responses to late medieval conceptions of the relation of Scripture and tradition varied.

Luther, for example, viewed the tradition and history of the Church as the rich story of the interaction of God's people and God's Word mediated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Luther argued for the "coinherence of Scripture and tradition," a view that closely parallels the first late medieval understanding of the complementary functions of tradition and Scripture outlined above. In describing Scripture as the *norma normans* (the determining norm) rather than a *norma normata* (a determined norm),<sup>10</sup> Luther departs from the late medieval theory of tradition and Scripture as complementary only insofar as he asserts the primacy of Scripture over tradition.<sup>11</sup> Though Luther subordinates the Church to Scripture, he finds value in preserving the traditions of the Church. For example, he writes: "We do not reject everything that is under the dominion of the Pope. For in that even we should also reject the

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<sup>7</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, ed. *Forerunners of the Reformation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 54.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 81.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

Christian church. Much Christian good is to be found in the papacy and from there it descended to us.”<sup>12</sup> In accordance with this position, Luther retains numerous practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, such as the confession of the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds and the performance of (a revised version of) the liturgy.

Other early modern reformers, however, differ significantly from Luther in their interpretations of *sola scriptura*. For example, some interpret *sola scriptura* as a prohibition of those beliefs and practices not explicitly addressed in the Bible. The German reformer Martin Bucer (1491-1551) rejects the use of theological terminology such as *homoousios* and *Trinity* on the basis that it is not biblical language.<sup>13</sup> Menno Simons (1496-1561) rejects much of the liturgical tradition of the Church on similar grounds, arguing that “[t]here is not a word to be found in Scripture concerning [the Roman Catholic Church’s] anointing, crosses, caps, togas, unclean purifications, cloisters, chapels, bells, organs, choral music, masses, offerings, ancient usages, etc.”<sup>14</sup> Reformers such as Bucer and Simons agree with Luther insofar as they, too, affirm Scripture’s supremacy, but they depart from Luther in assigning Scripture an exclusive role in determining Christian belief and practice.

Different interpretations of *sola scriptura* led reformers to conceive of the relationship between believers and the Bible differently. The Reformation emphasis on the primacy of the Word of God did not necessarily translate into the open reading of the vernacular Bible by the general public. Low literacy rates limited the number of believers able to engage the newly available vernacular Bibles, and many reformers suspected that even those literate members of the laity were ill-equipped to interpret and understand the Word of God properly. Luther, for example, translated the Bible into German early in his

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>14</sup> quoted in George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 274.

career as a reformer and advocated its close and constant study by believers of all rank. But Luther later moved away from promoting Bible lay-reading and instead focused on vernacular preaching and the study of his catechisms as important means of carrying the teachings of the Bible to the laity.<sup>15</sup> Other reformers such as Philip Melancthon, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli also became reluctant to open Bible reading to the general public. For these reformers, *sola scriptura* meant that all Church teachings and traditions should be based on the Bible, but it did not necessarily mean that all Christians should themselves read and interpret the Bible.

As views about what the laity should read shifted, so also did the nature of reading practices. Reading the catechism, for example, was a very different activity from reading the Bible. The question and answer format of Luther's catechism resists interpretation by inviting rote memorization. Drawing meaning from the parables, psalms, historical accounts and epistles of the Bible, on the other hand, requires interpretation. The probability that readers would generate inconsistent interpretations of Scripture ultimately led reformers on the continent such as Luther and Zwingli toward the position that only the well-educated man of God was sufficiently equipped to glean God's truths from Scripture.

The precise meaning of the Reformation principle *sola scriptura* is somewhat more difficult to determine in the context of the English Reformation than it is on the continent, for there is no primary figure guiding the course of the Reformation there in the way Luther, Zwingli and Calvin directed the reform of churches in Germany, Zürich, and Geneva, respectively. The beliefs and practices that came to define what it meant to be part of the Church of England for parishioners across England were the result of competing and sometimes inconsistent doctrinal precepts—a fact borne out by the changing policies of the

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<sup>15</sup> Gilmont, "Protestant Reformations and Reading," 220.

English sovereign regarding Bible reading. As late as 1530, Henry VIII vehemently opposed the production, circulation and reading of vernacular Bibles in England by outlawing such activities in a Royal Proclamation:

[H]aving respect to the malignity of this present time, with the inclination of people to erroneous opinions, the translation of the New Testament and the Old into the vulgar tongue of English should rather be the occasion of continuance or increase of errors among the said people than any benefit or commodity toward the weal of their souls, and that it shall now be more convenient that the same people have the Holy Scripture expounded to them by preachers in their sermons.<sup>16</sup>

Henry's concern that misreadings would divide his realm is only thinly veiled by his reference to the welfare of the souls he governs. Adopting a position similar to Luther's, Henry here advocates placing the task of interpreting the Word of God exclusively with the clergy. The importance reformers placed on understanding the Word of God and looking to the Word of God as a guide for Christian belief and practice is evident in Henry's policy regarding Bible reading. However, Henry promotes the notion that the layperson's understanding of the Bible should be shaped by the clergy rather than by an individual's own interactions with the sacred text.

After breaking from the Church of Rome in 1534, Henry reluctantly changes his policy regarding the reading of the Bible by members of the laity. In December 1534, the clergy of the southern province of the Church of England assemble at the Convocation of Canterbury and petition Henry to order an English version of the Bible translated, published

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<sup>16</sup> Henry VIII, *A proclamation [...] prohibitinge the havinge of holy scripture, translated*, (London, 1530; Early English Books Online, 2007), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99847154](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99847154). See also Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations: vol. 2, The Early Tudors (1485-1553)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 193-197.

and “delivered to the people for their instruction.”<sup>17</sup> Henry acquiesces, but remains concerned about the divisive potential opened up by allowing the laity to read and interpret the Word of God for themselves. Just a few years after outlawing vernacular Bibles in England in 1530, Henry orders that a copy of an English Bible be placed in every Parish Church for laypeople to read in his Articles and Injunctions for the Reformation of Religion (1536/7):

Every person or proprietary of any Parish Church within this realm, shall on this side of the feast of S. Peter ad vincula, next coming, provide a book of the whole Bible both in Latin and also in English, and lay the same in the choir for every man that will, to look and read thereon, & shall discourage no man from the reading of any part of the Bible either in Latin or English, but rather comfort exhort, & admonish every man to read the same, as the very word of God, & the spiritual food of mans soul, whereby they may the better know their duties to God, to their sovereign Lord the king & their neighbor<sup>18</sup>

Though Henry here permits and even encourages the laity to read the Bible, the next passage of this Article reveals the extent to which he remains concerned that lay-readers will misinterpret Scripture. After ordering that vernacular Bibles be made available to all and after encouraging their use, he tutors the clergy on how to promote reading strategies among their parishioners that will avoid division and foster consensus:

ever gently and charitably exhorting them, that using a sober and a modest behavior in the reading & inquisition of the true sense of the same, they do in no wise stiffly or eagerly contend or strive one with another, about the same, but refer the declaration

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<sup>17</sup> Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 88.

<sup>18</sup> quoted in Foxe. *Actes & Monuments [...]*. (1583 edition) [online]. (hriOnline, Sheffield, 2004; 20 January 2009), 1095. <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/>.



of those places that be in controversy, to the judgment of them that be better learned.<sup>19</sup>

Henry's instruction that readers take on a sober and modest demeanor in reading and "in no wise" contend with one another about their interpretations of what they read in the Bible indicates his enduring anxiety that allowing the laity to read the Bible could lead to religious schism. As we shall see, Henry was not alone; many reformers and leaders of the English Church shared similar concerns about the potential for division brought on by mainstream readers of sacred texts. Though concerns about divergent interpretations and Church schism were not ultimately enough to hold back demand for the vernacular Bible in England, these concerns significantly influenced the ways the act of reading the Bible was crafted during this transformative time in England's history.

As this project illustrates, the history of reading vernacular religious texts in early modern England involves much more than simple directives either to or not to read. Historian of reading Robert Darnton reminds us that "we may think of [reading] as a straightforward process of lifting information from a page; but if we consider it further, we would agree that information must be sifted, sorted, and interpreted."<sup>20</sup> Literacy scholar Keith Thomas expresses a similar sentiment when he writes that "some commentators [...] seem to regard literacy as a tool, a piece of technology whose effects will always be the same. But our experience suggests that tools can have very different effect, depending on when they are used, for what purposes, and by whom."<sup>21</sup> The act of reading is conceived of variously during the sixteenth century in England. The vernacular Bibles placed in churches were contested

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Darnton, "History of Reading," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 177.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," in *The Written Word in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 97.

rhetorical spaces, and what it meant to read was impacted by shifting epistemologies, by the anxiety of divisive (mis)interpretation, and by varied literate ability, among other things. Significantly, the different methods and purposes imagined for reading vernacular religious texts had direct bearing on evolving conceptions of religious community. Henry's suggestion that reading can usefully instruct readers of their ecclesiastical and civic duties in his 1536/7 Articles and Injunctions for the Reformation of Religion quoted above, for example, indicates a significant shift in the perception of how knowledge, texts and readers relate to one another. For the late medieval reader or hearer, the Word of God is believed to be effective regardless of whether or not it is understood. But for Henry, reading the Bible informs the Christian's understanding of the proper way to relate to God, to the sovereign, and to one's neighbors. This emphasis on reading for understanding and reading as an activity with communal ramifications recurs throughout the texts considered in this study.

This dissertation explores the various ways the act of reading vernacular religious texts was shaped during the Reformation of the Church in sixteenth-century England and takes as its starting point the printing of William Tyndale's English New Testament in 1525. Aside from the metrical psalms, English New Testaments and complete versions of the English Bible were the most widely-circulated texts in early modern England. Tyndale's translation of the Bible was, in many ways, the father of the most widely circulated English Bibles of the sixteenth century. The many versions of the English Bible produced during this period competed with one another for a place of dominance within the newly-formed Church of England. In 1611 the first edition of the King James Bible was printed, effectively ending

the debate over which Bible would serve as the standard for the Church of England. This event serves as the end-point for this study.

The shift from censorship to open availability of the English Bible coincides with shifting religious belief and practice and with shifting oral, written, and print cultures. I argue that as vernacular religious print developed during the sixteenth century, various stakeholders, such as sovereigns, leaders of the Church, printers, writers, compilers, translators, booksellers, readers, and book-buyers, worked to assign various functions, ends, and uses to the rhetorical space occupied by the most widely read English religious texts of the sixteenth century. This project will examine the manner in which the interaction between the act of reading and communal involvement was envisioned during the formative years of the Reformation of the Church in England. Emphasis is not placed on a single reading strategy, but on tracing how different forms of reading evolved and were created out of and for particular communities.

As scholars have sought to construct histories of reading that will further define what it has meant for different people to read, recovering a reading history has presented a number of methodological challenges. Not only do our own experiences with reading fog our understanding of reading's history, but there is sparse evidence available to those interested in reconstructing the who, what, when, where, and why of past reading practices. Studies of readers during the early modern period have revealed much about the practices of the highly educated. There have been important studies, for example, of the reading practices of Gabriel Harvey, John Dee, Ben Jonson, and Sir William Drake. These highly educated readers have been such attractive objects of study, in part, because of the relatively large amount of material evidence of their reading practices that has been preserved for our consideration

today. We have been able to gain an understanding of what it meant for these men to read through examinations of their marginal comments, markings, writings, and collections of books.

However, the picture of reading in early modern England we are able to glean from examinations of the material evidence left us by these exceptional individuals is incomplete at best. Most people in early modern England were not highly educated and therefore would not have developed the same reading practices fostered in grammar schools. Rather, many commoners attended only petty or dame schools where they may or may not have learned to read. Eugene Kintgen has suggested that once commoners were beyond this minimal education they would have perhaps learned more about reading at church through the examples of priests and fellow parishioners.<sup>22</sup> A key contention of this dissertation is that the reading practices of mainstream Christians were also shaped by the messages about reading they received from the books they encountered.

Readers of common rank would not have left the traces of their reading practices that the highly educated left. They would not have owned large collections of books, if any books at all. They would have been less likely to leave marginal notes in books, since writing was taught separately from reading and at a more advanced stage in the education process than was reading. Examining the reading practices of mainstream early modern Christians presents significant methodological challenges—a fact which certainly contributes to the relatively limited number of such studies. As Heidi Brayman Hackel explains: “Most of the material evidence of reading that survives in early modern books—heavily worn pages, faded ownership inscriptions, unsigned marginal annotations—cannot be traced to particular,

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<sup>22</sup> Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

identifiable individuals.”<sup>23</sup> This would have been especially true for some of the communally owned texts considered in this study, such as those versions of the Bible placed in parish churches by order of the crown and editions of John Foxe’s *Actes & Monuments* commonly displayed in public institutions, including churches. This study seeks to understand the ways early modern mainstream Christians used books by examining the religious texts they most commonly confronted.

Another notion in the history of reading that this project seeks to address is the common conception of the *solitary* early modern reader. When studies in the history of reading have considered religious readers, they have often focused on reading as a solitary activity. Studies have focused strongly on religious practice, in part, because the shift from Catholicism to Reform theology has been so strongly linked to different theological understandings of the meaning of the Word. For example, in *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (2000), Ian Green examines the interrelation of text, book, and understanding in an effort to discover how the Protestant Reformation appeared to those members of early modern English society who had access only to widely circulated texts. Green highlights the difficulty, and even impossibility, of identifying cohesive readerships of early modern texts. Rather, he suggests that the relation of readers, one to another, was spectral:

Nor can readerships be distinguished by simple fault-lines based on status, education, or access to books [...] But other, vertical distinctions cut across these horizontal ones: between male and female readers, young and old, and dissenters and conformists, though even here there was probably a spectrum rather than a simple division. We

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<sup>23</sup> Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17-8.

should therefore probably be thinking not of two or three distinct readerships but of many “communities of interpretation,” and, moreover, not of fixed or discrete communities, but fluid, overlapping readerships, with individuals or groups shifting from one category to another as their reading skills developed or their ideas changed, or simply when they were in the mood for entertainment rather than edification.<sup>24</sup>

Green relies on Stanley Fish’s concept of “communities” of interpretation, but his sense of fluctuating relation ultimately renders readers solitary individuals. A central contention of this project is that acts of reading, though undertaken by particular individuals occupying particular sets of circumstances, were regularly placed within a communal context.

Cecile Jagodzinski takes on the notion of the solitary early modern religious reader more directly in her monograph *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England*. There, she argues that the rise of silent reading during the seventeenth century coincided with the notion of the solitary reader, alone with God and his or her book. Jagodzinski writes:

The rise of silent reading was a radical development in the history not only of reading and literacy but of privacy. It encouraged a new level of literacy: that of silent comprehension of the text. The eyes became the channels through which impressions reached the heart and worked their effects. This made possible private devotion and private scholarship unmediated by an official church.<sup>25</sup>

Jagodzinski fixes her attention on the perception of church leaders that parishioners who read silently were potentially dangerous and divisive. This focus, perhaps, exaggerates the causal link between private reading and private belief. Because reading is, in the ways that the work

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<sup>24</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26.

<sup>25</sup> Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 25-6.

of Darnton and others makes clear, so variable and individual, it has been associated with individualism and, in religious studies, with private belief. Yet, as the texts examined in this dissertation demonstrate, there was a persistent focus on communal belief and action as the purpose for religious reading in early modern England.

This dissertation is interested in the ways the most widely read and widely available vernacular religious texts circulated in sixteenth-century England, such as the Bible, Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* and the Psalms were both impacted and used by the mainstream Christian laity in England. On one hand, the level of diversity within this demographic can hardly be overstated. Some sixteenth-century laity were very well-educated, some not at all; some had high social standing, others very little. Gender, geography, age, occupation, and other such socio-economic factors also distinguished the various members of this group from one another. But on the other hand, sixteenth-century English men, women and children were bound by their shared experience of the Reformation of the Church in England. The texts considered in this study reflect the changing religious climate, the residual beliefs, practices, and expectations of believers, the varying literate abilities of believers, and the shifting oral, scribal, and print cultures of this period. The exploration of how this shifting religious and cultural terrain impacted the reading practices of mainstream early modern Christians serves as the focus of this study.

Methodological tools from several disciplines have proven useful in seeking to understand mainstream early modern religious reading practices. Historian of print culture, Richard Chartier, provides a useful paradigm for examining the reading practices of mainstream readers of vernacular religious texts in early modern England. In "Texts,

Printing, Readings” he suggests that reading be envisioned as a complex process represented by three poles: the text itself, the object that conveys the text (i.e., book, periodical, manuscript), and the act that grasps the text/book (i.e., understanding).<sup>26</sup> The similarities between Chartier’s three poles and Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle of text, author, and reader cannot be missed. But while Aristotle focuses on the power the author yields as he creates a text with the aim of persuading an audience, Chartier’s three poles place the focus on the interference which separates the text the author intends for an audience from the text the reader apprehends. The work of editors, publishers, and translators fleshes out the space between authorial intent and reader apprehension. So for example, the way a text is apprehended may vary from one reader to another because the medium of the text is altered (e.g., Shakespeare’s *Othello* on the stage versus in a college English textbook). Similarly, the editorial apparatus of a text may influence a reader’s understanding of a text (e.g., the marginalia in Tyndale’s 1526 English Bible translation provided Protestant readings of Scripture while the editorial apparatus of the 1582 Douay-Rheims Bible encouraged an understanding of Scripture commensurate with Roman Catholic teachings). Likewise, the act of reading may vary from person to person due to educational, social, or cultural differences (e.g. twentieth-century college freshman’s reading of More’s *Utopia* versus a sixteenth-century humanist’s). In short, Chartier highlights the significant influence that discourse conventions of a particular medium and cultural norms have on reading practices. This study will pay particular attention to the influence the editorial apparatus and the formatting of vernacular religious texts have on readers while also considering the backdrop of shifting oral, scribal, and print cultures of sixteenth-century England.

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<sup>26</sup> Chartier, “Texts, Printing, Readings,” in *The New Cultural History: Studies on the History of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).



The study of rhetoric also offers useful tools for investigating early modern reading practices. A rhetorical lens has proven useful, for example, for understanding the move to the didactic in the religious practice of the early modern period. In *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England*, Achsah Guibbory enlists rhetorical principles in her investigation of seventeenth-century religious literature. For Guibbory, ceremony serves as the point of stasis driving seventeenth-century religious debates:

As it was the ceremonies rather than theology that divided the church, the controversy over ceremonies most clearly reveals these differences. So long as ceremonial conformity was laxly enforced, ideological differences could coexist within the church. But once conformity was rigorously insisted on under Charles I, those differences were intensified.<sup>27</sup>

During the early modern period, ritual acts were a kind of text that communicated religious beliefs. A rhetorical lens allows Guibbory to explore the different sides of the ceremonial debate and to understand ritualist and anti-ritualist aesthetics as pointed statements regarding religious reform.

In addition to lending itself to analysis of religious debates, rhetoric has encouraged us to think of belief not just as private acts of faith but also as manifested in communal acts. For example, by considering rhetorical principles, such as audience and purpose, Ramie Targoff has revised our perceptions of the Book of Common Prayer. Whereas the Book of Common Prayer was once considered a liberating text that allowed the individual Christian more independence in worship, Targoff's important work calls attention to the conformist,

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<sup>27</sup> Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5.

conservative aspects of the new liturgy. For Targoff, the Common Prayer Book imposes a new, reformed orthodoxy; it does not represent a break from communal belief and practice.

For early modern churchgoers, common prayer had two important aspects. First, it was a standardized devotional practice, a public activity in which all English subjects were required to participate weekly. Second, in the form of the Prayer Book, it was a collection of premeditated texts, whose very formalization ensured, in the view of the established churchmen, a devotional efficacy that could not be attained with spontaneous and original prayers.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than freeing the Christian from prescriptive worship acts, the Common Prayer Book encourages conformity even in private worship. A rhetorical lens makes possible Targoff's understanding of Common Prayer by highlighting the extent to which the official prayer book of the English Church dictated certain modes of belief. The study of commonplaces, maxims, and epideictic rhetoric inform our understanding of the different ways communal consensus may be built through religious texts such as the Common Prayer Book or Bible preliminaries.

A rhetorical lens is also useful for the way it illuminates connections between belief and action. The sixteenth century is characterized by a pragmatic drive. Reading was ends-driven and was crafted to be applied to one's own living. This dissertation explores the ways that reading the Bible was crafted as a means of creating communities of believers that were, first and foremost, identified by their actions.

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<sup>28</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4.

The four chapters of this project will explore the different ways vernacular religious texts were crafted as communal spaces for a readership of mainstream believers. The texts selected as the basis for consideration in each of these chapters are, therefore, those that engaged an especially wide readership during the sixteenth century. Though these texts were addressed to a broad readership, it is important to note that they conceive of the act of reading in different ways. Attention will be paid both to the distinctness of the various ideal readers suggested by these texts and to recurring themes.

Chapter one will consider the most popular English Bibles produced during the sixteenth century against a backdrop of theological debate and shifting oral, scribal, and print cultures. Aside from the metrical Psalter, English New Testaments and complete English Bibles were the most widely circulated texts in early modern England. This chapter will consider the ways readers' encounters with these texts were shaped by the theological debates of the period, by the evolving print technology and its related conventions, and by the editorial matter accompanying these translations of the Word of God. The various calendars of readings and Church celebrations, summaries of the Bible, exhortations to read Scripture, and letters by reformers addressed to readers that preface different translations of the Bible all yield different conceptions of what it means to read the Bible.

A central concern addressed in these prefaces is regularizing the interpretations of individual readers. Competing notions of the relationship of Scripture and tradition yielded different conceptions of the ideal reader. At the heart of these debates was a concern for preserving the unity of the Church. Insofar as lay-readers might interpret the Bible differently, they threatened the unity of the community of believers in England. The preliminaries of these Bibles address this concern about Church schism in a number of ways

and project different sorts of readers, though all of these Bibles exhibit a desire to situate reading within the context of a religious community. Efforts to identify a translation of the Bible for the Church of England that would serve as a standard ended in 1611 with the printing of the first King James Bibles. Considering the process of selection and production preceding the introduction of the King James Bible reveals competing notions of the relationship of reader, sacred text, and Church.

Chapter two will examine Foxe's *Actes & Monuments*. Though the considerable size and cost of these volumes made it unfeasible for average mainstream Christians in early modern England to purchase personal copies of this text, their placement in churches and other public institutions made Foxe's martyrology both highly visible and widely accessible. Foxe's larger goals for his project have direct bearing on the way he conceives of the act of reading. Himself a Marian martyr, Foxe works to buttress and spread the Reformation in England. In doing so, he frequently contrasts Roman Catholic strategies of maintaining a united community of believers with Reformation means of attaining unity. The scenes of martyrdom—depicted throughout the volume—provide the ultimate contrast of persuasive means. The violence to which the Roman Catholic authorities resort in dealing with dissenters contrasts starkly with the peaceful disposition of “true believers” confronting their deaths.

The act of reading plays an important role in Foxe's vision of the “true religion.” Reading is a peaceful means of searching for the truth, whereas Church ceremonies, violently enforced, are portrayed as a striving for hollow conformity. Foxe also sees reading as a valuable means of spreading the purification of the Church—one of the primary goals driving his work. As believers encounter God's truths in the Bible, they are moved to perform acts of

faith, such as public witness and even martyrdom. Reading, then, both defines the community of believers and serves that community by perpetuating it. In this chapter, I will examine Foxe's explicit statements about reading, the portrayals of readers he includes in his text, and the sorts of practices that the material presentation of *Actes & Monuments* encourages in its readers.

Chapter three examines the material existence of some of the most familiar English Psalters of the sixteenth century as well as commentaries on the Psalms in an effort to understand the ways acts of reading, hearing, and singing the Psalms were constructed for mainstream Christians of that period. While Christians are encouraged to view the Psalms as a shortened version of the whole of Scripture, they are also encouraged to think of the psalmists' words as their own. The Psalms, then, provide Christians with appropriate words with which to speak to God. As Christians take the words of the Psalms as their own, they integrate the vocabulary of this common, sacred text into their lives. The many translations of psalms produced by Christians and applied to the individual circumstances of their lives provide evidence of the fact that early modern Christians did in fact consider the words of the Psalms their own. The words of the Psalms, therefore, provided early modern English Christians with a common frame of reference which informed their actions and beliefs.

Chapter four will consider the Sidney Psalter as a particular instance of psalm translation. Though it is more often regarded as an exemplary poetic text, I will argue that the Sidney Psalter was a devotional text that envisioned the relationship between reader, writer, and psalm sources (including the divine) in a particular way. I will work to understand Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke's goals for this text by considering the autobiographical details of her life, by examining several of her other translations of religious

texts, by considering her relationship with her brother Philip Sidney, and his goals for this translation. With an understanding of her goals for this text in mind, I will examine select passages of her translation by comparing it to some of her prime sources.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Unfeigned Readings and Godly Living:

#### The Editorial Formation of Early Modern Religious Communities of Readers

On All Saints' Eve in 1517, nearly a century after Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439, Luther, the Augustinian monk, attempted to ignite an academic debate on papal indulgences by nailing ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. A few years later Pope Leo X declared Luther and his followers heretics, and the break between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church in Germany followed. Meanwhile, beginning in 1527 in England, King Henry VIII sought a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. In 1532 Archbishop of Canterbury William Warham, an unwilling participant in Henry's divorce, died and was replaced in March of 1533 by Thomas Cranmer. Shortly thereafter, Pope Clement VII's delayed response to Henry VIII's request for a divorce was met with the English Act of Supremacy. The newly appointed Archbishop Cranmer effected Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, thereby paving the way for Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn in 1533.

These events had the cumulative effect of facilitating both the break of Christians in England from Rome and the production and widespread distribution of English Bibles. The emergence of mass-produced English Bibles, in turn, represents a significant moment in the history of reading. Prior to the 1525 English New Testament produced by Tyndale (c.1494-1536), English Bibles were uncommon. The English translation known as the "Wycliffe Bible" appeared in the first half of the fourteenth century, but without the technology of the printing press the high cost of reproduction limited its reception to a small audience. The

Wycliffe Bible ultimately had little to no effect on most Christians in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, and no copies of this translation survived into the sixteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, vernacular Bibles were forbidden throughout the late middle ages. The “Constitution of Oxford” (1407/8) illustrates this point. Put forth a couple decades after the production of the Wycliffe Bible, this decree forbade the translation of the Bible into English.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, despite the late medieval unavailability and unlawfulness of English Bibles, parishioners commonly received vernacular training in Church teachings. A catechetical program drawn up in 1281 instructed clergy to explain core beliefs—such as the Creed, the Ten Commandments and Christ’s summary of these in dual precepts to love God and neighbor, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven vices, and the seven sacraments—to their parishioners in the vernacular four times a year. This program was designed to provide a comprehensive guide to Christian belief and practice.<sup>31</sup> Guides designed to help ill-equipped clergy catechize their parishioners were published and eventually circulated among clergy and laity alike. By the fifteenth century other vernacular religious texts also circulated among parishioners, such as didactic treatises on the virtues or vices, saints’ lives, rhymed moral fables, accounts of visions or visits from or to the afterlife, and collections of prayers and devotions.<sup>32</sup> Nicholas Love’s late fifteenth-century translation of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* provided Christians with what was essentially an expanded

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<sup>29</sup> As we will see in chapter two, although John Wycliffe’s Bible was read only by a relatively small number of English Christians, the legend of this early reformer and his Bible were influential through the sixteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 53.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.



harmony of the Gospels.<sup>33</sup> Though most people did not have access to the Bible in the vernacular, they did have access to other sorts of religious texts.

Therefore, when copies of Tyndale's New Testament appeared in England in 1525, readers were confronted with a new, yet familiar, sort of text. The well-established tradition of vernacular catechesis accompanied by various vernacular religious texts provided a point of reference for Christians as they encountered English Bibles for the first time. And yet, the Bible represented a significantly different sort of religious text—much larger in size, more diverse in style, and less clear in its message than the oral and written catechetical texts with which parishioners were then familiar.

Suspicion and unease surrounded efforts to translate the Bible into English well into the sixteenth century, while lay-exposure to certain other vernacular religious texts was allowed and even required. As noted in the introduction, Henry VIII issued a royal proclamation outlawing the production and use of vernacular Bibles in 1530—nearly five years after the first edition of Tyndale's New Testament was printed and four years before the Act of Supremacy. When Henry cites the “inclination of people to erroneous opinions” as his reason for outlawing vernacular Bibles in this proclamation, he indicates his concern that the act of interpreting the Bible will invite speculation and allow for disagreement regarding Christian belief and practice to a greater degree than would the act of interpreting or processing the sorts of written synopses of Christian teachings or the spoken words of the clergy that were officially sanctioned and encouraged at that time. The gravity of Henry's concern regarding divergent interpretation is indicated at the end of this prohibition where he

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 79.

warns that henceforth those who “buy, receive, keep, or have” the Old or New Testament in English, French or Dutch “will answer to the King’s highness at their uttermost perils.”<sup>34</sup>

Ultimately, Henry’s 1530 proclamation was too little, too late. In December 1534, the clergy of the southern province of the Church of England assembled at the Convocation of Canterbury and petitioned Henry to order an English version of the Bible translated, published and “delivered to the people for their instruction.”<sup>35</sup> Monarch and clergy alike had rejected Tyndale’s translation as “too Lutheran” or simply “heretical,” but they no longer rejected English Bibles outright. Over the next century, hundreds of editions of numerous versions of the New Testament in English and the complete English Bible would be published. Almost overnight, the faithful in England were exposed to vernacular Bibles—texts which were on one hand rare and illegal well into the sixteenth century but which were on the other hand also familiar in nature. Green notes in his extensive historical study of religious publication in early modern England that though the laity had access to catechisms, paraphrases and summaries of the Bible at this time, “apart from the special case of the metrical psalms, [...] the forms of scriptures which the average Englishman was most likely to encounter were just two: a complete bible in English, and a New Testament in English.”<sup>36</sup> An estimated twenty-nine editions of the English New Testament were printed in the 1530’s, as opposed to the mere two editions printed in the 1520’s. Between the years 1525 and 1640, approximately 175 editions of the English New Testament and 280 editions of the complete Bible were printed.<sup>37</sup> The first section of this chapter offers a brief account of the most prominent sixteenth-century versions of the English Bible. As we shall see, the abundance of

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<sup>34</sup> Henry VIII, *A proclamation [...] prohibitinge the havinge of holy scripture, translated[...]*.

<sup>35</sup> McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 88.

<sup>36</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, 49.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

versions of the English Bible produced between 1525 and 1611 came as the result of competition among different stake-holders wishing to create a version of the Bible that would become the English standard. Tyndale's Bible, Coverdale's Bible, the Matthew Bible, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, and the Douay-Rheims Bible were some of the most influential versions that vied for widespread approval during the early decades of the English Reformation—though there were many other competing versions produced during this period as well. While the translations of Scripture included in these versions of the Bible were remarkably similar, these books were separated by the way editors, theologians, and translators framed the text of Scripture in the preliminaries and margins.

Gérard Genette defines paratexts as the adornments, reinforcements and verbal or non-verbal productions that accompany a literary work, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations, etc.<sup>38</sup> Genette refers to these features of a work as a fringe that is

always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, [that] constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it.<sup>39</sup>

The preliminaries appended to sixteenth-century English translations of the Bible vary in length and content, but all provide a vision of the relationships of readers, biblical texts, and the Church. In short, the paratexts of these books reveal the changing reading practices of sixteenth-century Christians. Heidi Brayman Hackel argues that of all the paratextual

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<sup>38</sup> Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

materials produced during the early modern period, such as title pages, frontispieces, preliminaries, illustrations, annotations, indexes, and errata sheets, “prefatory letters and printed marginalia most clearly signal concerns about interpretation and most explicitly direct readers’ experiences of a text.”<sup>40</sup> While marginalia “directs the reading of individual moments in a text,” preliminaries “attempt to shape the readership of the published text” in a more general sense.<sup>41</sup>

Complaints commonly lodged against editions of the Tyndale Bible are revealing in this regard. While his translation of the text of Scripture was so respected that it served as the basis, to one degree or another, for subsequent sixteenth-century English translations of the Bible, Tyndale’s commentary was regarded as too Lutheran and therefore as dangerous by his critics. The accuracy of a translation was not, in fact, the primary consideration when judging the quality of a new version of the Bible in sixteenth-century England. Few, if any, of Tyndale’s English contemporaries had sufficient knowledge of the Greek language to critique his skills as a translator, and, in fact, Tyndale’s translation of the Word of God received little criticism. Rather, the material supplied by editors, translators and commentators, such as Tyndale, which framed English translations of the Bible proved much more controversial, since it was regarded as a powerful force in influencing a readers’ interpretation of sacred texts. As we shall see, though the theologians, translators, editors and printers that crafted the contents of these preliminaries convey different conceptions of ideal Bible readers, they all place great faith in the ability of these preliminary documents to shape readers’ encounters with biblical texts.

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<sup>40</sup> Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

The second section of this chapter will consider some of the most common elements of sixteenth-century Bible preliminaries. This section will begin with a detailed examination of the preliminary material from a 1568 Bishops' Bible since the preliminary materials from this particular book are more comprehensive than most; this section will then broaden to consider other prominent versions of the English Bible that circulated during the sixteenth century. Comparing different English Bible prefaces from this period reveals differences and similarities in the ways relationships between readers, sacred texts, and Church traditions are formulated in these rhetorical spaces. While some have argued that the relatively sudden availability of vernacular Bibles in sixteenth-century England had a revolutionary effect on early modern religious practice, an examination of sixteenth-century English Bible prefaces suggests that changes in religious reading at this time are more accurately described in terms of reform and stabilization.

Another common theme that emerges in this study is the notion of a reciprocal relationship between religious reading and religious living. As we shall see in the final section of this chapter, this relationship becomes especially evident when we examine the prefaces and letters written by reformers and translators and addressed to readers of the Bible. In these documents, metaphors are commonly used to describe the act of religious reading. Reformers used metaphors such as walking, eating, and the book of the heart to represent the relationship of the act of reading and godly living. The notion that reading facilitates godly living renders reading itself a part of godly living. As reading and godly living are interwoven, reading is conceived of in communal terms; interpretations of Scripture are verified or checked by a community of believers, and correct interpretations of

Scripture, in turn, are credited with leading Christians to live in God-like harmony with one another.

In addition to considering these common themes, it is important to note that the act of reading the Bible was envisioned in many different ways during the sixteenth century and that the paratexts of sixteenth-century English editions of the Bible reflect this diversity. The texts considered in this chapter are not only a record of doctrinal differences, but also of theologically distinct understandings of the role of Scripture in the lives of Christians. The differences which distinguish various editions of the Bible from one another reveal the complexity of the negotiations that took place among church leaders, monarch, publishers, translators, printers, booksellers, and mainstream Christians to establish one Bible translation common to all. The history of the most popular sixteenth-century English translations of the Bible bears this out.

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The story of the most popular versions of the English Bible in sixteenth-century England is generally characterized by a competitive drive to produce a standard Bible for use in both public and private settings. The effort to create a version of the English Bible during the sixteenth century that would serve as a standard for the Church of England was in part commercially driven. Printers and booksellers were keenly aware of the commercial potential of English Bibles; smuggled versions, such as Tyndale's, had demonstrated the market demand for these books, and the desire to turn a profit drove printers to produce one edition of the English Bible after another. In addition to the commercial motive for producing different editions of the Bible, theologians and lay-people also had a stake in defining their national and religious identities through the selection and use of a standard English Bible.

Walter Ong has noted the power a grapholect—a “transdialectal language formed by deep commitment to writing”—has to dilate a language community.<sup>42</sup> Written discourse has the capacity to be much more comprehensive and stable than oral discourse and can thereby regularize the language of a greater number of people to a greater extent than an oral dialect. This sort of regularization of language has the effect of creating larger language-based communities than can be united by an oral dialect. There is a parallel to be drawn here between Ong’s analysis of grapholect and dialect and the movement in England to identify an edition of the English Bible that would serve the nation and Church of England as a standard. The desire to provide the English nation and her Church with a standard English Bible was driven, in part, by the desire to define and cultivate the English community. A common English Bible would help assimilate the beliefs and practices of various, regionally defined groups of believers throughout England. Duffy tells us that many of the specific practices of late medieval Christians differed from one region to another. The pursuit of an English Bible common to all was, in part, an effort to unite smaller communities of believers in England under one standard religious text. As noted above, this pursuit began with Tyndale’s translation and ended in 1611 with the arrival of the King James Bible.

Tyndale’s translation was produced on the continent at a time when vernacular religious texts were forbidden in England. David Daniell estimates that at least 3,000 and as many as 6,000 of Tyndale’s New Testaments were printed at Worms in 1525 and smuggled into England—a huge number when compared to other print runs of that time.<sup>43</sup> Even Luther’s “September Testament” had a first run of only 4,000 copies.<sup>44</sup> Tyndale’s 1534 New Testament had an original print run of 3,000 and was the first edition of his translation

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<sup>42</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 188.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

published with his name.<sup>45</sup> Tyndale was executed as a heretic in 1536. Though his *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*—a work based loosely on a sermon of Luther’s which condemned the belief in good works as a means to salvation—was largely responsible for inciting accusations of heresy from Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall, Archbishop Warham, and Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, the reputation of Tyndale’s New Testament also suffered as a result of these denunciations.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, production of Tyndale’s translation would never be sanctioned by the English sovereign. Yet, the influence of Tyndale’s New Testament on subsequent English Bibles can hardly be overstated, as it provided the basis for some of the most widely circulated English Bibles of the sixteenth century.

The Bible translation Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) produced in 1535 could more accurately be classified a “compilation” than a “translation,” since he was not himself much of a linguist. Coverdale admits as much in his prologue “unto the Christian reader” where he asserts: “to help me herein, I have had sundry translations, not only in Latin, but also of the Dutch interpreters: whom (because of their singular gifts and special diligence in the Bible) I have been the more glad to follow for the most part, according as I was required.”<sup>47</sup> Coverdale relied on Tyndale’s translation more than any other, though he also relied on two Latin translations of the Bible, Luther’s German translation, and a Swiss-German variant of Luther’s translation.<sup>48</sup> Coverdale produced his English Bible with full knowledge of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>47</sup> Coverdale, *Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scrypture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to Englyshe* (Southwark, 1535; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 8 September 2007), v r, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:38160515](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:38160515). The 1535 Coverdale Bible consulted is a folio edition, and thus the leaves of paper are numbered accordingly with recto (*r*) and verso (*v*). When necessary, irregularities in numbering are noted and corrected in citations. Corrected citations maintain a method of numbering consistent with the original text cited. Because multiple editions of several versions of the Bible are cited in this chapter, short citations include author name, title of the work cited, year of publication, and page(s) cited.

<sup>48</sup> McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 89-90.



Tyndale's work, and so any similarities or differences between Tyndale's and Coverdale's English editions are the product of careful and deliberate editing on Coverdale's part. Similar claims can be made with regard to subsequent English print Bibles of the sixteenth century.

John Rogers (1500-1555) produced a Bible translation in 1537 which drew heavily on both Tyndale's and Coverdale's Bibles. The preface, which is signed "Thomas Matthew," caused this Bible to be known as the "Matthew Bible." It is believed that Rogers used two apostles' names—"Thomas" and "Matthew"—to sign the preface since the name of Tyndale, "the heretic," would compromise the translation's marketability. Rogers hoped his edition of the Bible would become the official English version, but his hopes were disappointed when his glosses were condemned as too Protestant by Church leaders.

Coverdale's Great Bible of 1539 was a revision of the Matthew Bible undertaken at the request of Cranmer. Cranmer desired that an authorized, official English Bible be produced that could be placed in all English parishes. Coverdale produced just such a translation, with Cranmer's assistance and advice, by removing much of the Protestant commentary contained in the Matthew Bible. The Great Bible became the official English Bible when it was ordered placed in all parish churches in 1540. Cranmer wrote a preface to the reader for the second edition of the Great Bible (1540). This preface was later reproduced in the Bishops' Bible (1568).

The Great Bible and the Bishops' Bible were both licensed by English rulers, and yet the Geneva Bible (1560) outsold them both.<sup>49</sup> William Whittingham (1524-1579) produced the New Testament and printed it in Geneva (among other English Marian exiles). The congregation there funded the printing of a complete Bible and used the Great Bible as a point of departure. Anthony Gilby and Thomas Sampson aided Whittingham in producing

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<sup>49</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 52.

this complete translation of the Bible. Royal permission to print the Geneva Bible was obtained from Queen Elizabeth in 1560.

The Bishops' Bible (1568) was in a certain sense the conservative response to the widely popular Geneva Bible. Matthew Parker (1504-1575) took charge of the project that aimed to replace the Great Bible and Geneva Bible as a fixture in English churches. Translators were told to follow the 1539 Great Bible except when inaccuracies compelled them to do otherwise.

The Douay-Rheims Bible (1582) was produced as a Roman Catholic alternative to the numerous English translations produced by church reformers. In 1589 William Fulke (1536/7-1589) produced a side-by-side translation of the Douay-Rheims Bible and a reformed Bible meant to refute the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible translation.

This brief survey of the most popular English Bibles of the sixteenth century is significant for our purposes here in two ways: it reveals the effort to create a translation of the Bible common to all English Christians. It also reveals how hotly contested the details of the reform of the Church in England were at this time and the extent to which disputes about religious practice and belief took specifically textual forms. This latter point is perhaps somewhat difficult to remember from a post King James Bible perspective. Set alongside one another, sixteenth-century English translations of the Bible reveal fissures and divisions separating sixteenth-century English church reformers; there existed no common, uniform vision for the Church of England or for the way Bible reading was imagined. As we have noted, editions of the New Testament and complete Bibles were some of the most widely circulated texts in early modern England, and the preliminaries of various editions of English Bibles provide some of the most explicit directives of the period regarding the reading of

vernacular Bibles. Examining these paratexts reveals gradual shifts in religious practice which bear the marks both of residual, late medieval religious practice and of innovative, Reformation teaching and practice. Most often, Bible prefaces were designed to accomplish two distinct, yet related ends: reinforce the importance of reading the Bible and (re)conceive of Bible reading as a pragmatic and communal practice.

The sorts of texts prefacing English Bibles vary significantly from one edition to another. Moreover, different copies of the same edition of the English Bible often vary from one to another. The differences distinguishing various copies of the same edition of the Bible are often partially accounted for by price and market. Larger Bibles, which would have been more costly, often included more front-matter than smaller, less expensive Bibles. A 1537 edition of the Coverdale Bible produced by James Nicolson in Southwark includes a title page, prayers to be said before and after reading Scripture, Coverdale's address to King Henry VIII, Coverdale's address to readers, and a list of the books of the Bible—in all, fifteen pages of text. Many, but not all, Bibles included similar texts in their prefaces. While some Bibles included no prefatory material at all, others included additional elements, such as calendars, almanacs, synopses of the Bible, lists of Bible passages commanding the reading of Scripture, explanations of difficult terms found in Scripture, and histories of the world from Adam to Christ. The next section includes an examination of the preface of the 1568 Bishops' Bible as well as a comparison of certain features of that preface with other sixteenth-century English Bible preliminaries.

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A 1568 edition of the Bishops' Bible printed by Richard Jugge provides an excellent example of the sorts of prefatory materials commonly found in sixteenth-century English

Bibles. The Bishops' Bible represents the last royally sanctioned Bible to precede the King James Authorized Version of 1611. The Bishops' Bible, therefore, serves as a point of reference from which to discuss other Bible prefaces. Editions of the Bishops' Bible are also some of the most aesthetically pleasing of the sixteenth-century, since advances in print technologies made possible elaborate ornamentation and graphic presentation of concepts in this late sixteenth-century translation. Inspecting the prefatory pages of this Bible also reveals the extent to which early modern Bible prefaces reflect and promote different—even competing—ideals for the Christian Church in England.

Upon opening this 1568 Bishops' Bible, the reader first encounters an ornate title page centered around Queen Elizabeth (Figure 1).<sup>50</sup> Surrounding Elizabeth's image are the words "ELIZABETH, DEI GRATIA, ANGELIE, FRANCIAE, ET HAEBERNIAE REGINA, FIDEI DEFENSOR, ETC."<sup>51</sup> The prominence of Elizabeth's image and the titles enclosing it immediately establish a connection between the English Bible and a religious community united under a supreme ruler. The title *Fidei Defensor* is suggestive of continuity within the relatively short history of the Church of England. This title was first attributed to Henry VIII by Pope Leo X on October 11, 1521 in response to the king's pamphlet "Declaration of the Seven Sacraments Against Martin Luther." Pope Paul III deprived Henry of this designation when England broke from Rome, but the title was restored to the king by Parliament in 1544, leading English reformers to quip that even the Antichrist (i.e., the Pope), though misguided, had recognized Henry's virtues as a reformer. *Fidei Defensor* continued to be used by Henry's successors throughout the early modern period. The presence of this title and of the

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew Parker, *The. holie. Bible, conteynyng the olde Testament and the newe* (London, 1568. Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 1 September 2007), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857223](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857223)

<sup>51</sup> *Elizabeth, by the grace of God, ruler of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith, etc.*

queen's image on the title page of this Bible underscores the hierarchical, monarch-headed organization of the Church in England. At the time of this Bible's production in the 1560's, several powerful, widely-accepted alternative visions of Church organization, practice, and belief presented a challenge to the headship and unity of Elizabeth's Church. Indeed, the establishment of the Queen's authority over the Church on the title page of the Bishops' Bible must be understood as an assertion of *contested* power. And yet, such assertions of centralized Church authority served to comfort many early modern readers craving (an image of) Church unity.



Figure 1. 1568 Bishops' Bible Title Page

At the bottom of the title page are the words of Romans 1:16 in Latin: “Non me pudet Evangely Christi. Virtus enim Dei est ad Salutem omni credenti.”<sup>52</sup> Being unashamed of the Gospel and the act of reading Scripture are equated throughout the editorial prose prefacing this Bible translation. Notably, such an interpretation of the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura* asserts a causal relationship between pious living—i.e., the reading of Scripture—and eternal salvation. This connection is affirmed throughout this preface.

Following the title page are several tables designed to help readers navigate the church year as well as the Bible readings appointed for each day (Figure 2).<sup>53</sup> These tables provide readers with a place to start as they confront the massive text of Scripture; significantly, they also urge conformity, unity, and, therefore, community. For example, the first table following the title page—“Proper lessons to be read for the first lessons both at Morning and Evening prayer, on the Sundays throughout the year, and for some also the second lessons”—prescribes readings for corporate Sunday worship.<sup>54</sup> The next table appoints “Proper psalms on certain days.”<sup>55</sup> The days for which Psalms are appointed in this table are festival days. These first tables address Bible reading within the context of public worship, since they outline a schedule of readings to be undertaken on Sundays and Church festival days. Such tables provided the obvious benefit to clergy of ease of planning; they also had the somewhat less apparent effect of fostering an instinctual (and actual) continuity among English parishes, extending the public community of the church beyond the parish walls to all of England.

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<sup>52</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe.*

<sup>53</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, ii r.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, ii r – ii v.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, iii r.


 <b>Proper lessons to be read for the first</b> <i>lessons both at Morning and Evening prayer, on the Sundayes</i> <i>throughout the yere, and for some also the seconde lessons.</i>					
Sundayes of Aduent.	Mattins.	Euenfong.	Trinitie Sunday.	Mattins.	Euenfong.
<b>The first.</b> ii. iii. iiii.	<b>Esai. i.</b> b. xxb. xxx.	<b>Esai. ii.</b> xxiiii. xxvi. xxvii.	i. Lesson. ii. Lesson.	<b>Gen. xvi.</b> <b>Mat. iii.</b>	<b>Iosue. i</b>
<b>☿ Sundayes after Trinitie.</b>					
Sundayes after Christmas.	Mattins.	Euenfong.	<b>The first.</b> ii. iii. iiii. b. vi. vii. viii. ix. x. xi. xii. xiii. xiv. xv. xvi. xvii. xviii. xix. xx. xxi. xxii. xxiii. xxiv. xxv.	<b>Iosue. r.</b> <b>Judic. iiii.</b> <b>i. King. ii.</b> xii. xv. <b>ii. King. xii.</b> xxii. <b>iii. King. xiiii.</b> xxviii. xxi. <b>iiii. King. v.</b> x. xix. <b>Jeremie. v.</b> xxv. <b>Ezech. ii.</b> xvi. xx. <b>Daniel. iiii.</b> <b>Joel. ii.</b> <b>Abacuc. ii.</b> <b>Prouer. ii.</b> xi. xiiii. xv. xviii.	<b>Iosue. xxviii.</b> <b>Judic. v.</b> <b>i. King. iiii.</b> xviii. xvi. <b>ii. King. xxi.</b> xxiiii. <b>iii. King. xviii.</b> xix. xxii. <b>iiii. King. ix.</b> xviii. xxiii. <b>Jeremie. xxi.</b> xxvii. <b>Ezech. xiiii.</b> xviii. xxiiii. <b>Daniel. vi.</b> <b>Miche. vi.</b> <b>Prouer. i.</b> iii. xii. xiiii. xvi. xix.
Sundayes after the Epiphanie.	Mattins.	Euenfong.			
<b>The first.</b> ii. iii. iiii. b.	<b>xlvi.</b> li. lv. lvii. lix.	<b>xlvi.</b> liii. lv. lviii. lxiiii.			
Septuagesima. Sexagesima. Quinquagesima.	<b>Gen. i.</b> ix.	<b>Gen. ii.</b> vi. xii.			
Lent.	Mattins.	Euenfong.			
<b>first Sunday.</b> ii. iii. iiii. b. vi.	<b>Gen. xix.</b> xxvii. xxix. xlvi. <b>Exod. iiii.</b> ix.	<b>Gen. xxii.</b> xxiiii. xlii. xlv. <b>Exod. v.</b> x.			
Easter day.	Mattins.	Euenfong.			
<b>i. Lesson.</b> <b>ii. Lesson.</b>	<b>Exod. xii.</b> <b>Rom. vi.</b>	<b>Exod. xiiii.</b> <b>Actes. ii.</b>			
<b>☿ Sundayes after Easter.</b>					
<b>The first.</b> ii. iii. iiii. b.	Mattins. <b>Num. xvi.</b> xxiii. <b>Deut. iiii.</b> vi. viii.	Euenfong. <b>Num. xxi.</b> xxv. <b>Deut. v.</b> vi. ix.			
Sunday after Ascension day.	<b>Deut. xii.</b>	<b>Deut. xiiii.</b>			
Whitsunday.	Mattins. <b>Deut. xvi.</b> <b>Actes. x.</b> Then Peter opened his mouth. &c.	Euenfong. <b>Wisdome. i.</b> <b>Actes. xix.</b> It fortunated when Apollo went to Corinth. &c. vnto After these things.			
<b>☿ Lessons proper for holy dayes.</b>					
S. Andrewe. S. Thomas the Apostle.	Mattins. <b>Prou. xx.</b> xxiii.	Euenfong. <b>Prou. xxi.</b> xxiiii.			
Natiuitie of Christe.	<b>Esai. ix.</b>	<b>Esai. lvi.</b> God spake once againe to Achas.	<b>i. Lesson.</b>		
	<b>Luk. ii.</b> vnto. And vnto men of good wyll.	<b>Titus. iii.</b> The kindnesse and loue. &c.	<b>ii. Lesson.</b>		
Steuen.	<b>Prou. xxviii.</b> <b>Act. vi. and. vii.</b>	<b>Eccle. iiii.</b> <b>Actes. vii.</b>	<b>i. Lesson.</b> <b>ii. Lesson.</b>	<b>Prou. xxviii.</b> Steuen full of faith and power &c vnto. And when fourtie yeres. &c.	And when fourtie yeres were expired, there appeared vn to Moyes &c. vn to. Steuen full of the holy ghoft. &c.

Figure 2. 1568 Bishops' Bible, "Proper lessons to be read [...] throughout the yere"

The various fonts used in these tables may shed some light on the audience for whom they were originally intended. Printers' choices of fonts had far-reaching ramifications in early modern England. Slower, less educated readers were most familiar with black letter while scholarly readers were able to read both black letter and roman type with ease.<sup>56</sup> While the translated Word of God and most of the preliminaries contained in this volume appear in black letter, these tables rely heavily on roman type. The titles introducing these tables as well as the explanatory notes embedded in the tables are in roman and italic types, which would have been easily deciphered by educated clergy but not necessarily by the average parishioner. Yet, the lists of Bible readings contained in these tables appear in black letter. Perhaps the printer wished to set the list of Bible readings apart from the other text in the table by using a different font. This, however, could have been accomplished with italic type. As Joseph Lowenstein has noted, italic type came to signal special emphasis in early modern England, while black letter did not traditionally serve this function.<sup>57</sup> It is also possible, therefore, that these tables were pointedly directed at two separate audiences, the boundaries of which were delineated through font. The more technical and specific instructions regarding how to order Bible readings may have been intended exclusively for a more educated audience, while the list of Bible readings may have been intentionally aimed at a broader audience who, once set on its way, would be able to follow the schedule prescribed in these tables even though unable to read all of the table's text.

There is not enough evidence to draw definitive conclusions regarding the printer's intentions for these tables, but the fonts used here raise interesting questions. One thing that is clear from these tables is their emphasis on the communal aspect of the act of reading. The

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<sup>56</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Lowenstein, "Idem: Italics and the Genetics of Authorship," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, no. 20 (1990): 224.



reformation tenet *sola scriptura* is here applied in the form of communal participation in a reading schedule that is shared in common with other believers. The fact that this reading schedule corresponds with the Church calendar that was a part of the lives of all Christians, literate or not, devout or not, would only have further heighten the sense of communion with other Christians felt by those participating in the practice of ordering their reading of the Bible according to the schedule set out here.

The next pages of this copy of the Bishops' Bible include several additional tables and brief prose sections which also have the effect of regularizing the celebration of Church festivals and the reading of Scripture. "The order how the rest of holy scripture beside the Psalter, is appointed to be read" orders the Bible readings appointed for each day and refers readers to the calendar on subsequent pages for a schedule of Bible readings to be undertaken throughout the week.<sup>58</sup> "A brief declaration when every Term begineth and endeth" divides the Church year into four terms and explains when each season of the Church year begins.<sup>59</sup> The Almanac on the next page provides the dates for important Church festivals, such as Whitsunday, Easter, and the first day of Lent from 1561 to 1590.<sup>60</sup> Then follows a table guiding Christians "To find Easter forever."<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the most explicit attempt to regularize Church practice contained in the material prefacing this edition of the English Bible appears at the bottom of the same page in the section titled "These to be observed for holy days, and none other" (Figure 3).<sup>62</sup> Preserving a revised list of Roman Catholic Holy Days creates continuity between the practices of the pre- and post-Reformation Church in England. During the seventeenth

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<sup>58</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, iii r.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., iii v.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., iv r.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

century, the Church of England's calendar of holy days was a site of conflict between Puritans and ceremonialists. Puritans condemned holy days created by humans as idols, charging that "religious worship had been turned into art, and spiritual matters into something possessing a material form and fixity not unlike an idolatrous monument."<sup>63</sup>

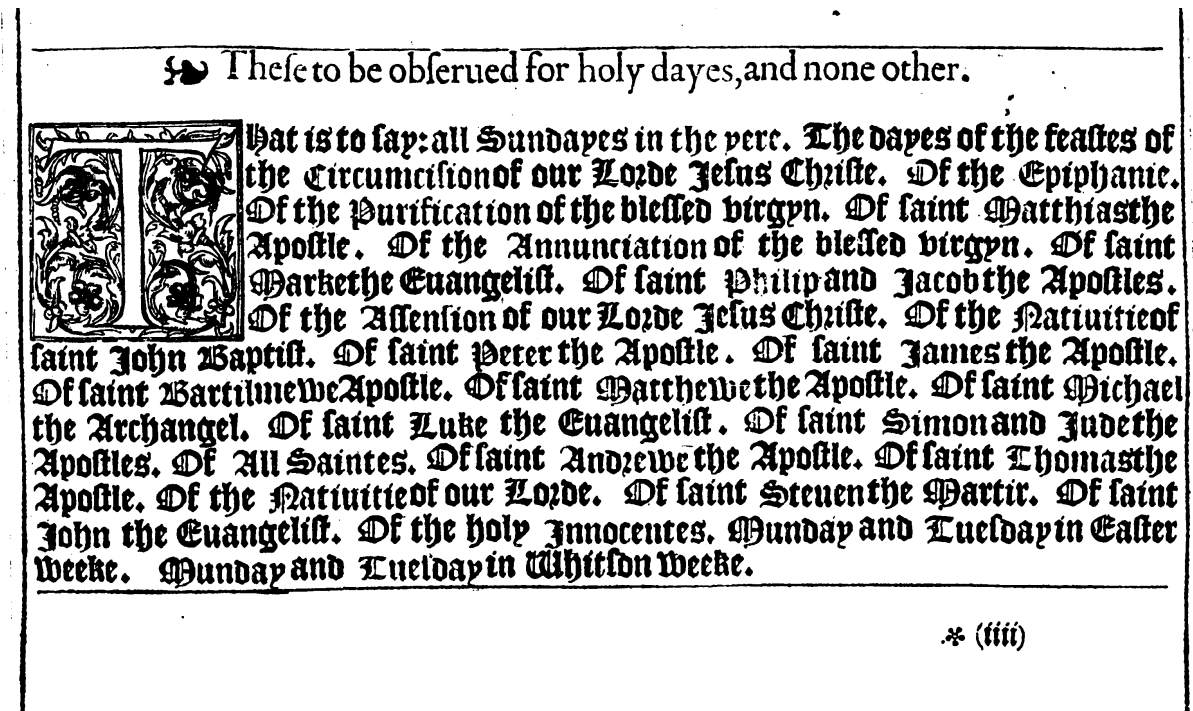


Figure 3. 1568 Bishops' Bible, "These to be observed for holy dayes, and none other"

Conflicting interpretations of the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura* were at the heart of such debates. While Puritans held that the second commandment forbade any humanly-instituted religious practice, defenders of ceremonies and images "interpreted the second commandment in ways that left space for art, images, and ceremony in worship [...] To superstitiously adore a ceremony or image is to misread it, to divorce the sign from the signified, matter from spirit, to stop at the sensible representation without recognizing the

<sup>63</sup> Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton*, 17.

spiritual meaning it conveys.”<sup>64</sup> The disagreement of Puritan and ceremonialist groups regarding the roles of tradition and Scripture in determining Church practice came to a head in England in the seventeenth century, but the events of the sixteenth century provided the fodder for this debate. The decision to include a calendar of holy days in the preliminaries of a print Bible reflects a belief in the cooperative function of tradition and Scripture—a view held by some but not all reformers, as noted in the introduction. Calendars of holy days place private devotional activities in conversation with acts of public devotion, and the regularization of public devotion is in turn reinforced within the setting of the private act of reading.

The line between public and private worship practices is further blurred in the “Table for the order of the Psalms, to be said at Morning and Evening prayer”<sup>65</sup> as well as in the calendar<sup>66</sup> (Figure 4)<sup>67</sup> that follow the list of holy days. These schedules of Bible readings render otherwise private, individual acts of reading communal; though undertaken alone, reading the Psalm or gospel lesson appointed for any given day develops into an act of communal participation as these private acts are coordinated and shared among a community of believers. Just as the daily events of sunrise and sunset exist beyond individual experiences of them, so also do the readings appointed for each day exist beyond an individual’s enactment of them. The schedule of readings unites individual readers across time and space. Unlike a table of contents or concordance which organizes a text thematically, the schedule of readings organizes readings temporally. As the schedule is followed over a span of years, readings become connected with seasons in time, and readers

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, iv v.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., v r – x v.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., vi r.

are linked with past and future readers/Christians. Consulting prescribed texts at prescribed times lends the act of reading a shared, but individual presence in time.

<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>M</b>arche hath. xxxi. Dayes.  <i>The moone. xxx.</i> </div>							
Sonne } riseth. } } falleth. }		} hour } } } } } } }		} } } } } } } }		} } } } } } } }	
		vi. min. 15.		v. min. 45.		Psalms.	
				Morning prayer.   Evening prayer.			
				i. Lesson.		ii. Lesson.	
				i. Lesson.		ii. Lesson.	
iii	d	kalend.	Dauid bishop.	xxx	Deut. xvi.	Leu. xii.	Deu. xvi.
	e	vi. No.	Cedde bishop.	i	xxvii	xxii	1 Phi. i.
xi	f	v. No.	Haurini & Ake.	ii	xx	xxiii	ii
	g	iiii. No.	Adrian mart.	iii	xxii	xxv	xxiii
xix	A	iiii. No.	Soer & Eusebi.	iiii	xxv	xxvi	iiii
viii	b	iii. No.	Victoris mart.	v	xxvii	xxvii	Coloss. i.
	c	Nonas.	Perpetue mart.	vi	xxix	xxviii	v
xvi	d	viii. Id.	Appoloni mart.	vii	xxxi	xxix	vi
v	e	vii. Id.	fourtie mar.	viii	xxxii	xx	xxviii
	f	vi. Id.	Agapit mart.	ix	Josue. i.	xxi	Josue. ii.
xiii	g	v. Id.	Sol in Arrete.	x	iii	xxii	iii
ii	A	iiii. Id.	Grego. bish. Ro.	xi	v	xxiii	vi
	b	iiii. Id.	Theodosi mart.	xii	vii	xxiiii	vii
x	c	iii. Id.	Leon. vi. & Zach.	xiii	ix	John. i.	viii
	d	Idus.	Longi. mart.	xiiii	xxiii	ii	xxviii
xviii	e	Idus.	Apul. Hilari.	xv	Judg. i.	iii	Judg. ii.
vii	f	xvi. Kl.	Getradis Patri.	xvi	iiii	iiii	iiii
	g	xv. Kl.	Edwarde king.	xvii	v	v	i. Tim. i.
xv	A	xiiii. Kl.	Jose. husb. Dar.	xviii	vii	vi	vii
iiii	b	xiii. Kl.	Euthbert bish.	xix	ix	vii	viii
	c	xii. Kl.	Benedic abbot.	xx	xi	viii	ix
xii	d	xi. Kl.	Astrodoti bish.	xxi	xiii	ix	xiii
i	e	x. Kl.	Theodon prest.	xxii	xv	x	xvi
	f	ix. Kl.	Fall. pigment.	xxiii	xvii	xi	xvii
xix	g	viii. Kl.	Annu. of Dar.	xxiiii	Eccle. ii.	xii	Eccle. iii.
viii	A	vii. Kl.	Caloy martir.	xxv	Judg. x.	xiii	Jud. x.
	b	vi. Kl.	Dorothe vierg.	xxvi	xxi	xiiii	Ruth. i.
xvi	c	v. Kl.	Ruperti bishop.	xxvii	Ruth. ii.	xv	ii. Tim. i.
v	d	iiii. Kl.	Victorini mart.	xxviii	iiii	xvi	i. King. i.
	e	iiii. Kl.	Quintini mart.	xxix	i. King. ii.	xvii	iii
xiii	f	iii. Id.	Adelmi bishop.	xxx	iiii	xxviii	v

Figure 4. 1568 Bishops' Bible, March Calendar

Examining the calendar and schedule of readings in a single sixteenth-century version of the Bible does not reveal the extent to which common, regularized Bible readings were contested. The attitudes toward history undergirding the practice of scheduled Bible readings

were not agreed upon by all reformers, so it is not surprising that the nature and presence of calendars, almanacs, and reading schedules varies from one translation of the Bible to another. For example, the Geneva Bible includes no calendars of readings or Church festivals. Instead, the limited prefatory materials in various editions of the Geneva Bible focus on the state of mind with which a reader ought to approach Scripture—i.e., how a reader ought to interpret the Word of God. It is important to note that the absence of calendars and schedules of readings does not necessarily signal a firm rejection of the regularization of devotional practices; material constraints, such as the cost of printing, for example, might preclude publishers from including such tables. The consistent lack of calendars in editions of Geneva Bibles, however, suggests an ideological, rather than material basis for omitting such texts and tables.

The notion that time is measured by the church year was a dominant feature of medieval Christian ritual. Church historian Thomas Greene writes that

the fabric of each medieval life was woven out of symbolic occasions. Each lifetime was punctuated by innumerable ceremonial observances, just as the organization of each year depended on a ceremonial calendar. [...] The individual knew who he or she was, found his/her place in time and society, through this fabric of symbolic occasions. It is not too much to speak of each medieval individual as endowed with a ceremonial identity.<sup>68</sup>

The almanacs and calendars of saints days printed in English Bibles continue this tradition of crafting a place in time for Christian ritual.

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<sup>68</sup> Greene, "Ritual and Text in the Renaissance," in *Reading and Renaissance: Culture, Poetics, and Drama*, ed. Jonathan Hart (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 17.

Tyndale's 1525 New Testament includes an almanac and calendar, as do many subsequent sixteenth-century Bible translations, such as Roger's Matthew Bible, the Great Bible, and the Taverner Bible. However, none are as detailed or as user-friendly as those that appear in the Bishops' Bible. A 1585 edition of the Bishops' Bible includes similar tables and calendars. The almanac appearing in this 1585 folio edition of the Bishop's Bible accounts for the years 1580-1611 (Figure 5). A note below the almanac explains that it has been included "For the more ease of the reader," in order to assist in "comprehending, not only how to find the Epact for the space of 30 years to come, but also the Golden number afore specified, together with the dominical letter, leap year, and vii. other moveable feasts, or days in the year, during the same time, as may appear."<sup>69</sup> The moveable feasts included in the almanac are Advent Sunday, Whitsunday, Ascension Day, Rogation Week, Easter Day, the first day of lent, and Septuagesima. The "Dominical letter / The Epact" is explained below the almanac as the time that is added to the year of the moon (354 days) to make up the year of the sun (365 days); the difference between these two is 11 days and 3 hours. The Golden Letter is also included on the table, and is explained thus: "The Golden number is so called, because it was written in the Calendar with letters of gold, right at the day whereon the Moone changed: and it is the space of 19.years, in the which the Moon returneth to the self same day of the year of the Sun."<sup>70</sup> There are also instructions regarding how to keep time beyond the thirty years provided for in this almanac. With this table, time and Christian ceremony are linked.

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<sup>69</sup> Cranmer, *The Holy Byble: conteining the Olde Testament and the Newe / authorised and appointed to be read in churches*, 1585, iii v. Authorship of the 1585 edition of *The Holy Bible* consulted is attributed to Cranmer. This Bible and was popularly known as the *Bishop's Bible*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, iii v.

# An Almanacke.

The Golden number.	The Epact.	Dom. let.	Septuagesima.	The 1. day of Lent.	Easter day.	Rogation weeke.	Ascension day.	Whit Sunday.	Aduent Sunday.
1601	vi	D	18. Febru.	25. Febu.	12. April.	18. Maii.	xxi. Maii.	xxii. Maii.	29. Nouem.
1602	iiii	E	17. Janu.	17	14	18	xxii	xxiii	xxviii
1603	iiii	F	20. Febu.	19. March.	24	xxi	12. Junii.	12. Junii.	xxvii
1604	v	G	15	22. Febua.	18	xxii	17. Maii.	27. Maii.	12. Decemb.
1605	v	A	27. Janu.	12	21. March.	vi	xx	xxi	1
1606	vi	B	16. Febu.	5. March.	20. April.	xxv	xxix	8. Junii.	30. Nouem.
1607	vii	C	1	18. Febu.	5	xx	xxii	24. Maii.	xxix
1608	viii	D	24. Jan.	10	27. March.	ii	vi	xxv	xxvii
1609	viii	E	12. Febu.	1. March.	16. April.	xxii	xxv	4. Junii.	3. Decemb.
1610	ix	F	4	21. Febua.	18	xxiii	xxvii	27. Maii.	ii
1611	ix	G	20. Janu.	6	24. March.	29. April.	ii	xxi	1
1612	x	A	9. Febu.	25	12. April.	18. Maii.	xxi	xxxi	29. Nouem.
1613	x	B	31. Janu.	17	14	18	xxii	xxiii	xxviii
1614	xi	C	20. Febu.	19. March.	24	xxi	12. Junii.	12. Junii.	xxvii
1615	xi	D	5	22. Febua.	19	xxv	18. Maii.	28. Maii.	13. Decemb.
1616	xii	E	28. Janu.	14	31. March.	vi	xx	xxi	1
1617	xii	F	16. Febu.	7. March.	20. April.	xxv	xxix	8. Junii.	30. Nouem.
1618	xiii	G	1	18. Febua.	5	xx	xxii	24. Maii.	xxix
1619	xiii	A	24. Janu.	10	28. March.	ii	vi	xxv	xxvii
1620	xiiii	B	13. Feb.	1. March.	16. April.	xxii	xxv	4. Junii.	3. Decemb.
1621	xiiii	C	28. Janu.	14. Febu.	1	xxv	18	20. Maii.	ii
1622	xv	D	17. Febu.	6. March.	21	xxvii	xxi	19. Junii.	1
1623	xv	E	9. Febu.	16. Nouem.	13	xxix	xxii	1	30. Nouem.
1624	xvi	F	25. Janu.	11	28. March.	iii. Maii.	vi	16. Maii.	xxviii
1625	xvi	G	13. Febu.	2. March.	17. April.	xxiii	xxv	15. Junii.	xxvii
1626	xvii	A	5	22. Febu.	19	xxv	xxviii	28. Maii.	13. Decemb.
1627	xvii	B	31. Janu.	17	25. March.	20. April.	ii	xxii	ii
1628	xviii	C	10. Febua.	27	13. April.	19. Maii.	xxii	11. Junii.	30. Nouem.
1629	xviii	D	1	18	15	xx	xxii	24. Maii.	xxix
1630	xix	E	24. Janu.	10	28. March.	iii	vi	xxv	xxvii
1631	xix	F	16. Febu.	23	10. April.	xxv	xxix	xxvii	1
1632	xx	G	29. Janu.	20	1	xxv	18	18	2. Decemb.
1633	xx	A	17. Febu.	10. March.	21. April.	xxvii	xxi	19. Junii.	ii

## Of the Golden number.

The Golden number is so called, because it was written in the Calendar with letters of golde, right at the day whereon the Moone changed: and it is the space of 19 yeeres, in the which the Moone returneth to the selfe same day of the yeere of the Sunne: and therefore it is also called the Cycle of the Moone, in the which the Solistices and Equinoxials do returne to all one point in the Zodiacque.

To finde it euery yeere, you must adde one yeere to the yeere of Christ (for Christ was bozne one yeere of the 19 already past) then diuide the whole by 19, and that which relecth, is the Golden number for that yeere: if there be no surplufage, it is then 19.

## The Epact.

Epactæ hemezæ in Greeke, both signifie in English, dayes set betweene, and therefore the 11 dayes and 3 houres that are added to the yeere of the Moone, are called Epactæ, and are added to make the yeere of the Moone, which is but 354 dayes, full with the yeere of the Sunne, which hath 365 dayes and a quarter.

To finde out the Epact of each yeere, do thus: To the Epact of the yeere that last went before that yeere for which you would finde the Epact, adde 11, and the summe of these two make the Epact. If it surmount 30, then take 30 out, and that which relecth above 30, is the Epact you desire.

## The vse of the Epact.

To know how olde the Moone is at any time for euer by the Epact, do thus: Adde vnto the dayes of your moneth wherein you would know this, the Epact, and as many dayes moe as are moneths from March to that moneth, including both moneths, out of the which subtract 30 as often as you may, the age remaineth: if nothing remaine, the Moone changeth that day.

For the more ease of the Reader, we haue placed here ouer an Almanacke, inclusively comprehending, not onely how to finde the Epact for the space of 30 yeeres to come, but also the Golden number afoze specified, together with the Dominicall letter, Leape yeere, and seuen other moueable feasts, or dayes in the yeere, during the same time, as may appeare.

Note that the Golden number and Dominicall letter doeth change euery yeere the first day of Ianuarie, and the Epact the first day of March for euer. Note also, that the yeere of our Lord beginneth the xxv. day of March, the same day supposed to be the first day vpon which the world was created, and the day when Christ was conceived in the wombe of the virgin Mary.

B 2

¶ A Prologue

Figure 5. 1585 Bishops' Bible, "An Almanacke"

The calendars that appear in many early modern English Bibles most often include lists of the days of the month, saints days, immoveable church festivals and the times of sunrise and sunset. Figure 6 is a copy of an early sixteenth-century calendar from an English Bible. The Bishops' Bible calendars (such as the one represented in Figure 4) were much more detailed than those printed in earlier English Bibles. The most significant addition to Bishops' Bible calendars is a schedule of daily Bible readings for morning and evening. Such schedules both continue and now augment the traditional medieval ritual time by adapting it to print culture. Schedules of Bible readings assigned specific texts and the act of engaging those texts a place in time. As with the late medieval ritual calendar, the schedule of Bible readings rendered religious acts, such as reading, communal. Even those individual believers that did not read the Bible lessons appointed for a particular day were vicariously connected to the act of Bible reading by virtue of their participation in the community of the Church of England. The time-keeping and scheduling function of these tables and calendars strengthened communal participation in the act of Bible reading insofar as this activity existed in time, even if not in an individual Christian's daily routine.

It is significant that the act of Bible reading is regularized more thoroughly in the Bishops' Bible than in any of its predecessors, since the Bishops' Bible was the official Bible of the Church of England. Francis Bacon explained Queen Elizabeth's approach to governing the Church of England by suggesting that she did not wish to make windows into men's souls. However, as this project suggests, there was no clear divide between one's outer and inner spiritual reality. By assigning certain passages of Scripture to be read at certain times, reformers under Elizabeth were doing much more than creating outward conformity; they



were promulgating specific religious acts that, in turn, advanced a particular understanding of faith, salvation, and godly living.

<b>March hath .xxxi. dayes.</b>		
<b>The mone .xxx.</b>		
iiij	b. saynt Dauid byshop	i
	e saynt Chadde byshop	ii
x	f saynt Martyne	iii
	g saynt Adriane	iiii
xix		v
viiij	b saynt Victore & Victoryn	vi
	c saynt Perpetue & filicite.	vii
xxi	d Deposicion saynt Felix	viii
v	e xl. martyrs	ix
	f saynt Agape virgynne.	x
xiiij	g saynt Quiryon & candida.	xi
ij	A saynt Gregore pope	xii
	b saynt Theodoze matrone	xiii
x	c The sen in arict. Equi.	xiiii
	d saynt Longinus martyr	xv
xxiiij	e saynt Helari & tacomani	xvi
viiij	f saynt Patryke kysshop	xvii
	g saynt Edwarde kynge	xviii
xx	A saynt Joseph.	xix
ix	b saynt Cuthberte abbote	xx
	c saynt Benet abbote	xxi
xviii	d	xxii
v	e saynt Theodoze prestre	xxiii
	f saynt Agapite martyr	xxiiii
xv	g Annis of our lady	xxv
	A saynt Caloz martyr.	xxvi
xxviiij	b	xxvii
vi	c saynt Dorothe virgynne	xxviii
	d Victoryne	xxix
xiiiiij	e saynt Quirine	xxx
ij	f saynt Adelme byshop	xxxi
<b>Martius / adria / per / de coratur gregorio / cyr.</b>		
<b>Gertrud / alba / bene / iuncta Maria genitrice,</b>		

Figure 6. 1536 Tyndale New Testament, March Calendar

In the 1568 Bishops' Bible under consideration, several tables and prose sections following the calendar provide readers with an interpretive guide for reading Scripture. The first of these sections, entitled "The sum of the whole Scripture, of the books of the old and new Testament" (Figure 7),<sup>71</sup> provides an overview of Christian teachings in just two pages.<sup>72</sup> The formatting of this section is complex, including various font sizes within the main text that highlight section headings—all of which emphasize the authority of Scripture. Significantly, this preliminary text is printed in roman type rather than the black letter of the preliminary material preceding this summary of Scripture. The presence of roman type here may signal that this particular document was left from a previous print-run and was appended to this edition—a common printing practice, particularly when constructing preliminary material for English Bibles. The change in font here may also be due to a shortage of black letter characters. In any case, this change in font does not seem to signal a shift in the printer's perception of audience, since the more detailed table summarizing the history of the world which follows this two-page summary of the Bible is printed in black letter just as most of the other preliminary material in this book. Indeed, the use of the less accessible roman type to print a document seemingly designed to provide less educated readers with an overview of the Bible seems puzzling until we recall that large editions of the Bishops' Bible, such as the one under consideration here, were often placed in churches and read aloud to a gathered audience of believers by a more skilled lay-reader.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., xi r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., xi r – xi v. (Corrected foliation)

The summe of the vvhole Scripture, of  
the bookes of the olde and new Testament.

The bookes of the olde Testament, do teache God.

Psal. 45. c. 14.  
Gene. 1. d. 13.  
Dan. 7. c. 9.  
Gene. 1. a. 9.  
Esa. 45. c. 18.  
Exodus. 9. d. 17.  
Psal. 10. b. 7.  
Esa. 45. d. 18.  
Ezo. 1. d. 17.  
1. Cor. 12. c. 6.  
Rom. 9. d. 20.  
Esa. 45. b. 9.  
Iere. 14. a. 6.

vs that the same God, whom Adam, Noe, Abraham, Isahac, Iacob, Dauid, and the other fathers did worship, is the onely true God, and that he the same is almightie and euerlasting: VVho of his meere goodnesse hath created by his worde heauen and earth, and all that is in them: From whom all thinges do come: without whom there is nothing at all: And that he is iust and mercifull: VVho also worketh all in all, after his owne will: To whom it is not lawfull to say, wherefore he doth thus or thus.

Moreover, these bookes teache vs, that this Creatur of man.

Gene. 1. d. 17.  
Sapi. 11. d. xxiii.  
Rom. v. c. xiiii.  
& d. xviii.  
Eph. 1. a. iiii.

very God almightie, after he created all thinges, shope also Adam the first man, to the image and spirituall similitude of him selfe, and that he did constitute him lorde ouer all thinges that he had created in earth. VVhich Adam, by the enuie and fraude of the deuill, transgressing the precept of his creator, by this his sinne, brought in such and so great sinne into the worlde, that we which be sprong from him by the fleshe, be in nature the children of wrath, and therevpon we be made subiect and thraulc to death, to dampnation, to the yoke, and tyranny of the deuill.

Furthermore, vve are taught by these excel- Christe promy- sed.

Gene. 3. c. xv.  
Gene. xii. a. iiii.  
Gene. xxvi. a. iiii.  
Gene. xxviii. c. iiii.  
Hebr. 11. d. xiiii.  
11. Sam. vii. c. xii.  
Psal. 113. a. c. xii.

lent bookes, that God promyfed to Adam, Abraham, Isahac, Iacob, Dauid, and to other fathers of the olde time, that he would send that blessed seede, his sonne Iesus Christe our sauour, which should deliuer all those from sinne, and from the tyranny of the deuill, which by a liuely and working faith should beleue this promise, and put their trust in Iesus Christe, hoping that of him and by him they shoulde obtayne this deliuerance.

Also, they geue vs to vnderstand, that in the The lawe.

Ezo. xx. a. i.  
Rom. 11. c. xx.  
Gala. 3. c. xix.  
Hebr. vii. c. xviii.  
& x. a. i.  
Iohn. 1. d. xxix.

meane season, whyle those fathers the Israelites looked for the saluation and deliuerance promyfed (for that the nature of man is such, so proude and so corrupt, that those would not wyllingly acknowledge themselves to be sinners, which had neede of the sauour promyfed) God the creator gaue by Moyse his lawe wyrtten in two tables of stone: that by it, sinne and the malice of mans heart being knowen, men mought more vehemently thirst for the comming of Iesus Christe, who should redeeme and deliuer them from sinne: VVhich thing, neither the lawe, nor yet the sacrifices and oblations of the lawe did performe. For they were shadowes and figures of the true oblation of the body of Christe: by which oblation, all sinnes should be blotted out, and quite put away.

By the bookes of the newe Testament we Christe came our sauour.

Rom. ix. b. v.  
Luk. 1. c. xxxi.  
Gala. 3. a. iiii.  
Eph. 1. b. x.  
Rom. v. b. viii.

be taught, that Christe so afore promyfed (which is God aboue al thinges most blessed for euer) euen he, I say, which was shadowed in the bookes of the olde Testament, and in sacrifices figured, that he was sent at the last from the father the selfe same time which the father did constitute within him selfe: I say, at that time, when all wickednesse abounded in the worlde, than he was sent: And this Iesus our sauour, being borne in the fleshe, suffered death, and rose againe from the dead. VVhich actes of his were not done by him in respect of the good workes of any man (for we were all sinners) but that this God our father shoulde appeare true in exhibiting the abundant ryches of his grace which he promyfed, and that through his mercie he mought bring vs to saluation.

Eph. 1. b. ii.  
Titus. 1. a. v.  
Rom. 1. b. 8.  
Eph. 1. b. 7.  
Esa. 53. b. vii.  
Iohn. 1. d. xxix.  
Eph. 1. a. ii.  
Hebr. ix. g. xxvii.  
Act. 13. c. xxvii.  
Eph. 1. c. xiiii.  
11.  
Apoca. 1. a. v.  
Hebr. 1. d. xiiii.  
Gala. 3. a. v.  
Eph. 1. a. v.  
Rom. viii. c. xvii.  
Eph. 1. c. v.  
Rom. viii. c. xv.  
Gala. 3. a. vi.  
Eph. 1. a. i.  
Gala. v. d. xxviii.  
Eph. 1. c. xiii.  
& iiii. g. xxx.  
1. Cor. xii. a. iiii.  
Rom. viii. c. xvi.  
Rom. v. a. v.  
1. Cor. xii. a. iiii.  
Eph. 1. c. xiiii.  
Gala. v. d. ii. a.  
Gala. v. a. vi.

VVherevpon it is euidently shewed in the newe Testament, that Iesus Christe, being the true lambe, the true sacrifice of the worlde, putting away the sinnes of men, came into this worlde to purchase grace and peace for vs with the father, washing vs from our sinnes in his owne blood, and should deliuer vs from the bondage of the deuill, whom by sinne we did serue: And so we shoulde be adopted by him to be the sonnes of God, made heires with him of that most excellent and euerlasting kingdome.

Now, that we should acknowledge this singuler and excellent benefite of God toward vs, almightie God geueth vs his holy spirite: the fruite and effect of the which is, faith in God, and in his Christe. For, without the holy ghost, by which we are instructed and sealed, neither can we beleue that God the father sent Messias, nor yet that Iesus is Christe: For no man (saith Paul) can say that Iesus is the Lorde, but by the holy ghost. The same spirite witnesseth to our spirite that we are the children of God, and powreth into our bowels that charitie which Paul describeth to the Corinthians. Furthermore, that holy spirite doth geue vs hope, which is a sure looking for eternall lyfe, whereof he him selfe is the certaine token and pledge. Also he geueth vs other spirituall gites, of the which Paul wryteth to the Galathians. Therefore the benefite of

(ii) faith

Figure 7. 1568 Bishops' Bible, "The sum of the whole Scripture, of the books of the old and new Testament"

In the left margin of this summary of the whole Bible, references to specific passages of Scripture are cited, verifying the assertions within the main text. Concise topic headings appear in the right margin, such as “God,” “creation of man,” “sin,” “Christ promised,” etc. Taken together, these topic headings provide a shorthand account of the salvation story. These concise topic headings provide an overview for less educated readers while highlighting important concepts for advanced readers. William H. Sherman has noted that the well educated were taught to make notes in the books they read as an aid to the memory. Sherman highlights this notion in his summary of John Brinsley’s *Ludus Literarius; or, The Grammar Schoole* (1612): “Only with marking and practice can books lead us to the kind of understanding needed to make them speak to our present needs.”<sup>73</sup> Summaries included with Bibles such as this one provided mainstream readers and hearers of the Bible who were not necessarily able to write with tools for summarizing and memorizing the most important concepts held in the text before them. Though both served similar functions, the experiences of creating marginalia and of encountering printed summaries differed from one another in significant ways. Whereas an individual reader’s markings provide a reflection of his or her unique process of reading and interpretation, printed summaries prescribe interpretations for the collective audience of a given text.

Many other versions of the English Bible include similar texts designed to summarize Scripture, while also stressing its authority. For example, the summary of Scripture in the edition of the Bishops’ Bible under consideration here appears to be a revision of an earlier text found in a 1537 edition of the Rogers, or Matthew Bible.<sup>74</sup> The same summary also

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<sup>73</sup> Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>74</sup> John Rogers, *The Byble which is all the holy Scripture: in whych are contayned the Olde and Newe Testament truly and purely translated into Englysh by Thomas Matthew. M,D,XXXVII, set forth with the Kinges*

appears in a 1539 edition of the Great Bible<sup>75</sup> and a 1551 edition of the Taverner Bible.<sup>76</sup> The 1537 Matthew Bible and 1551 Taverner Bible also contain tables of the principle matters in Scripture, which is essentially a glossary of key Christian terms and teachings. It is likely that these summaries of Scripture were, in turn, revisions of a summary of the four Gospels that was printed as part of a 1534 edition of Tyndale's New Testament. The dual focus on summarizing Scripture and asserting the authority of Scripture is evident even in the title of this early document: "A prologue into the iiii Evangelists Showing what they were and their authority."<sup>77</sup>

A longer, more detailed table that graphically presents a Christian history of the world through the time of Christ follows the two-page prose summary of Scripture in the 1568 edition of the Bishops' Bible. This table is divided into eight sections. The title of this section explains that "This Table setteth out to the eye the genealogy of Adam, so passing by the Patriarchs, Judges, Kings, Prophets, and Priests, and the fathers of their time, continuing in lineal descent to Christ our Savior."<sup>78</sup> Figure 8<sup>79</sup> contains an image of the first page of the

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*most gracious lycen[n]ce* (London, 1537; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 19 June 2007), iv v – v r (Corrected foliation) [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857136](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857136).

<sup>75</sup> *The Byble in Englyshe that is to saye the content of all the holy scrypture, both of ye olde and new testament, truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by ye dylygent studye of dyverse excellent learned men, expert in the forsayde tonges* (London, 1539; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 27 August 2007), iv v – v r, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857493](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857493). The 1539 *The Byble in Englyshe* consulted, also known as the *Great Bible*, is catalogued as an anonymous work and is referenced as such in the Works Cited.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Taverner, *The Byble that is to say, all the holy Scripture contained in the olde [and] new Testament, faythfully set furth according to ye copy of Thomas Mathewes trauf[n]slacio[n], whereunto are added certain learned prologes, annotacio[n]s for the better understanding of many hard places thorowout the whole Byble* (London, 1551; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 26 June 2007), xx r – xx v (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99842713](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99842713).

<sup>77</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke by Willyam Tindale, and fynished in the yere of our Lorde God A.M.D. & xxxiiij. in the moneth of November* (Antwerp, 1534; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 11 June 2007), x r (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:20189777](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:20189777) x r.

<sup>78</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xii r. (Corrected foliation)

same table as it is printed in a 1602 edition of the Bishops' Bible. Though the annotations accompanying the table are copious and detailed, readers may follow the graphic depicting the genealogy of Adam through Christ with ease.

The detailed table and annotations outlining the history of the world from Adam to Christ found in the Bishops' Bible likely sprung from less complicated prose accounts of Bible history located in the Great Bible and Taverner Bible. A 1539 edition of the Great Bible and a 1551 edition of the Taverner Bible contain "A description and succession of the kings of Judah and Jerusalem, declaring when and under what kings every prophet lived. And what notable things happened in their times, translated out of the Hebrew."<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the Taverner Bible also contains "A perfect supputation of the years and time from Adam unto Christ, proved by the Scriptures, after the Collection of divers Authors, by Edmund Becke"<sup>81</sup> as well as "A Register or brief rehearsal of names of the most famous and notable persons, mentioned in the old and new Testament."<sup>82</sup> Though these sections of the Great Bible and Taverner Bible drive at the same purpose as the genealogical table presented in the Bishops' Bible, they are much less extensive and lack the graphical depiction of Christ's lineage that so significantly eases the reader's burden in the Bishops' Bible.

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<sup>79</sup> Matthew Parker, *The Holy Bible containing the Old Testament and the New. Authorised and appointed to be read in churches* (London, 1602; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 10 October 2007), xiii r. (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857245](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99857245). Parker's 1602 Bible consulted is also known as the *Bishops' Bible*.

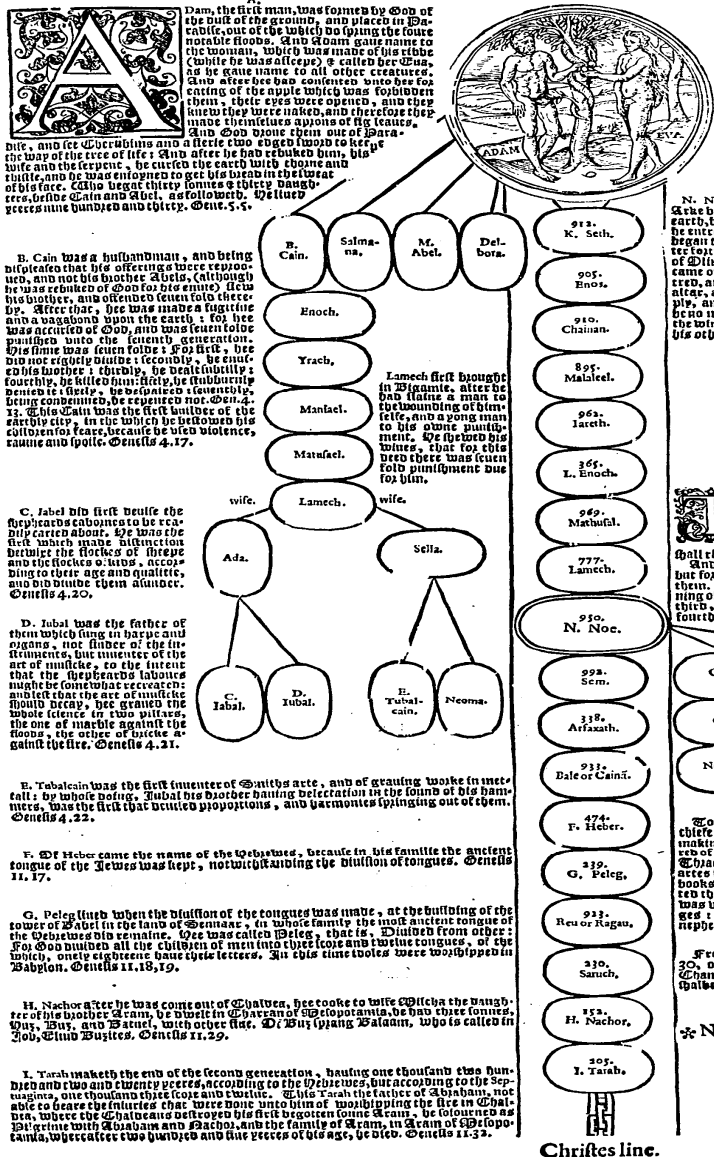
<sup>80</sup> *The Byble in Englyshe [...]*, 1539, viii r – v (Corrected foliation); Taverner, *The Byble [...]*, 1551, xxii r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>81</sup> Taverner, *The Byble [...]*, 1551, xx v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii r. (Corrected foliation)



This Table setteth out to the eye the Genealogie of Adam,  
 fo passing by the Patriarches, Iudges, Kings, Prophets and Priests,  
 and the Fathers of their time, continuing in lineall  
 descent to Christ our Saviour.



**A.** Adam, the first man, was formed by God of the dust of the ground, and placed in Paradise, out of the which he sprung the four notable floods. And Adam gave name to the woman, which was made of his ribbe (quite he was asleep) & called her Eve, as he gave name to all other creatures. And after he had conversed with her for eating of the apple which was forbidden them, their eyes were opened, and they saw they were naked, and therefore they made themselves aprons of fig leaves.

And God drove them out of Paradise, and set Serpents and a fierce two edged sword to keep the way of the tree of life: And after he had rebuked him, his wife and the serpent, he cursed the earth with thorns and thistles, and he was employed to get his bread in the sweat of his face. Cain begat three sons & three daughters, before Abel and Seth, as follows. He lived years nine hundred and thirty. Genesis 5. 5.



**K.** Seth was begotten by Adam in the 130 year of his life, where Adam had entered one hundred years, where Adam and Seth did beate themselves to the fourth of Eve, in whose time it is thought that Adam died. Genesis 5. 24. and 22.

**L.** Enoch pleasing God, was translated into Paradise, and there lived with God. Enoch which by translating certain letters, wrote a booke, as he to be gathered out of the Scripture of Job, in whose time it is thought that Adam died. Genesis 5. 24. and 22.

**M.** Abel was the first martyr, who began to build the Church, which is the City of God, whereof he was the first Citizen, and because he was righteous, God accepted his oblation. Genesis 4. 4.

**N.** Noe in the first hundred year of his life, upon the rage of the waters, made his Ark by Gods monition twenty years before, and the waters ascending upon the earth, by the vehement of the rain, which continued forty dayes and forty nights, he entered his ship with seven families, and after a hundred and fifty dayes the waters began to decrease, and the Arke did rest upon the mountains of Ararat. And after forty dayes, he first out a Raven, and after him, a Dove, returning with a branch of Olive in her mouth. And in the seven and twentieth day of the second month, he came out of the Arke, the eighth day after the resolution of the year, that he entered, and had gathered him to eat Arke, accepting the blood therein, and builded an altar, and sacrificed to God, and God blessed him that he should growe and multiply, and he had the signe of the rainbow given him, as a token that the world should be no more overflown with flood. Wee first planted vines, and was drunken with the wine thereof, and was foamed of his fowle Cham, who cursed him, and builded his other houses, and so died. Genesis 9. 29.

Here at Noe doth end the first age, having yeeres according to the Hebrewes, 1666. and according to the Septuaginta, 2242.

The eight ages of the world.

The first age was from Adam to Noe: the second, from Noe to Abraham: the third, from Abraham to David: the fourth, from David to the transmigration of Babylon: the fifth, from thence to Christ: the sixth, from Christ to the end of the world: the seventh, may be added as of them which be in rest, which may be accounted from Christs passion to the day of judgement: the eighth, a part of them which shall live againe from the day of judgement for ever.

And these ages be not to be called by the number of certain thousand yeeres, but by certain notable actes which were wrought in the beginning of every one of them. For in the beginning of the first age, the world was created: In the beginning of the second, the world was purged by the flood: In the beginning of the third, circumcison was given against original sinne: In the beginning of the fourth, was the anointing of the Kings of Israel: In the beginning of the fifth, was the transmigration of Gods people into Babylon: In the beginning of the sixth, was the incarnation of the sonne of God: In the beginning of the seventh, were the gates of heaven opened: In the beginning of the eighth, shall be the resurrection of the bodies, the reward of good and evil. Austen, Hierom, Crotius.

After the flood, sprang vp four principall kingdomes.

- Assyrians of the East, where Belus was the first King.
- Septentrion of the West, where Gogolus was the first King.
- Indians of the South, where Sibus was the first King.
- Aegyptians of the South, where Sibus was the first King.

To this Belus succeeded Semiramis his wife, who did constitute Babylon the chief of his kingdom, to whom Sibus succeeded, who was the builder of Babel, making an image to his father: Belus after his departure, and caused it to be honored of all men. He obtained all Asia, and called the head city, Nineve. He received his empire in two pillars, one of brass, and another of hickie, he destroyed all manner of books. After him succeeded Sardanapalus, and after him, Sardan, who translated the kingdom to the Medes, unto whom reigned Artaxages, whose daughter was wife to the Prince of Persia, of whom sprung Cyrus, who conquered Artaxages: after his death, Darius, Artaxages sonne, reigned, with the last Cyrus his nephew.

From these children of Noe, doe spring 72 generations: of Iaphet 16, of Cham 30, of Sem 27: which was spread over all the whole world. Sem obtained Asia, Cham Africa, Iaphet Europe, that is, the fourth part. The generation of Sem shall be followed in this genealogy, for the other two spring the Gentiles.

Note, that where in any circle ye finde two numbers, the upper sheweth how many yeeres he lived, the vnder number sheweth how many yeeres he judged or reigned. Note also, that where thorow these Tables any person or deed is mentioned not in the very words of the Scripture, they may be aduouched out of histories Ecclesiasticall, and other good and ancient authorities.

Figure 8. 1602 Bishops' Bible, "This table setteth out the the eye the Genealogie of Adam [...]"

The very title of the next section of the Bishops' Bible is itself an interpretation of Scripture:

The whole scripture of the Bible is divided into two Testaments, the old Testament and the new, which book is of divers natures, some legal, some historical, some sapiential, and some prophetic: The old teacheth the figures and ceremonies, the law was given in lightning and thundering, to induce the people to observance thereof by fear. The new Testament came in more gloriously with the gentle name of the Gospel, and good tidings, to induce men to observe it by love.<sup>83</sup>

Notably, this interpretation names as its end the inducement of believers to observe the law by love. This two-page table categorizes the books of the Bible and provides brief synopses of each book. Significantly, both this and the previous section provide readers with a comprehensive overview of Scripture, thereby suggesting that passages of the Bible do not stand alone; rather, Scripture interprets Scripture, and must therefore be taken as a whole. The prefatory material discussed here provides just such an understanding of the whole. Significantly, this theory of biblical exegesis leaves the reader with little to no interpretive agency. A note at the end of the table summarizing and categorizing the books of the old and new Testaments bears this out: "So let the hearers also with all meekness and lowliness, receive this word that is thus grafted and grounded amongst them by the great mercy of God, which word is able to save their souls saith the holy Apostle saint James."<sup>84</sup> This brief note reveals that more than thirty-five years after Henry's prohibition of the production and use of vernacular Bibles, the same concerns regarding divergent interpretations remain. Though

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<sup>83</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xvii v – xviii r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii r. (Corrected foliation)



Bible reading is here encouraged, readers are to be submissive—meek and lowly—as they read the Word of God. The material prefacing different versions of the English Bible chronicles the various ways sixteenth-century reformers interpret and work to enact the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura* while also guarding against division within the Church of England.

One of the most common sorts of texts prefacing English translations of the Bible are prologues, prefaces, or letters to readers. The content and effect of these prose addressed to readers will be considered in the subsequent pages of this chapter. However, we can note here that these texts were usually written by a translator, editor, or theologian and provide some of the most explicit directives of the period regarding Bible reading practices. In this particular edition of the Bishops' Bible, there is an unsigned document likely written by Parker titled "A Preface into the Bible following"<sup>85</sup> and another document labeled "The Prologue. A prologue or preface made by Thomas Cranmer, late Archbishop of Canterbury."<sup>86</sup> Cranmer's prologue appears first in a 1541 edition of the Great Bible, and was reprinted in numerous subsequent editions of the English Bible. Parker's prologue was significantly less popular. The impact and specific themes of these and other sixteenth-century English Bible prefaces will be discussed later in this chapter. In general, these addresses guide readers to understand their relationship to the Bible and to Christians around them in certain ways. Or, put another way, these texts regularize the expectations of a broad community of believers for the ways they will interact with one another and with sacred texts.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., xx r – xxii v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., xxiii r – xxv v. (Corrected foliation)

The table outlining the history of the world from Adam through 1568 that follows Cranmer's prologue is much more concise than the earlier table tracing the line of Adam through Christ.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, the lists of "The order of the books of the old Testament" and "The order of the books of the new Testament"<sup>88</sup> that directly precede the book of Genesis are a much shorter presentation of the books of the Bible than those found on earlier pages of the preface. While such a list seems redundant at this point, it is important to note that this list of the contents of the Bible is much less complicated than the other accounts of the books of the Bible offered in this Bible preface, and would therefore serve to provide less sophisticated readers with a point of reference. As in many of the other prefaces examined in this study, the material preceding the translation of the Word of God in this Bishops' Bible caters to readers of varying literate ability, for example, through several discussions of the themes of the Bible that vary in degree of complexity.

One common element of sixteenth-century English Bible preliminaries that is not as pronounced in the 1568 Bishops' Bible considered here are references to Scriptural passages that themselves reference the importance of reading Scripture. Many of these passages discuss godly living in relation to the reading of Scripture. For example, Matthew Parker paraphrases II Timothy, chapter three in his preface to the Bishops' Bible (1568). Within the context of arguing that anyone who dissuades Christians from reading the Bible is the Antichrist, he writes that "All the whole scripture, saith the holy apostle Saint Paul inspired from God above, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to inform, to instruct in righteousness, that

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<sup>87</sup> The full title of this table is "A description of the years from the creation of the world, until this present year of 1568. drawn for the most part out of the holy Scripture, with declaration of certain places, wherein is certain difference of the reckoning of the years." Parker, *The. holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xxv v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>88</sup> Parker, *The. holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xxvi r. (Corrected foliation)

the man of God may be sound and perfect, instructed to every good work.”<sup>89</sup> In his 1551 revision of the Tyndale Bible, Edmund Becke calls upon Old Testament passages to substantiate his claim that kings, nobility, and commoners should read the Bible so that they may lead a Godly life. For example, he writes that Joshua and Moses communicate “the express words commanded of God himself to study Gods book.” Becke goes on to quote from the book of Joshua:

Let not the book of the law depart out of thy mouth, but study therein day and night, that though mayest perform and keep all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then though shalt have understanding. Behold, I have said unto thee be strong and bold, nether fear not dread, for thy Lord God is with thee whither so ever though goest.<sup>90</sup>

Directly following this quotation, Becke offers an interpretation of this biblical text. He applies the Old Testament command to study the law to the English Sovereign, nobility and commoners: “Here are comfortable words in Gods commission, by force whereof, a king is commanded diligently to study God’s book, to practice the same in his outward conversation and living that the nobility and commons of his realm, moved and encouraged hereby, may imitate and follow his virtuous example.”<sup>91</sup> Becke equates “the book of the law” and “God’s book” and thereby broadens the Old Testament dictum to study God’s law to the study of the entire Bible. This passage, which appears in Becke’s address to King Edward, also serves the purpose of affirming the English civil order by tying it to the ecclesiastical order. The English sovereign holds the highest level of responsibility and power, for it is his Christian example—drawn from study of the Bible—that the nobles and the commoners will follow.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., xx r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>90</sup> Taverner, *The Byble [...]*, 1551, iv r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

The act of Bible reading is here imagined as a duty of the sovereign and as an activity that informs the actions of the sovereign.

In other places, Bible passages are referenced in order to justify the reading of the Bible by a broader audience. Three Bible passages printed on the title page of a 1537 edition of the Coverdale Bible serve as arguments justifying the widespread reading of vernacular Bibles:

S. Paul. II. Tella. III.

Pray for us, that the word of God may have free passage and be glorified.

S. Paul. II. Colloss. III.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you plenteously in all wisdom.

Joshua. I.

Let not the Book of this law depart out of thy mouth, but exercise thyself therein day and night, that thou mayest keep and do everything according to it that is written therein.<sup>92</sup>

All three of these passages, within the context of sixteenth-century religious reform in England, serve as arguments in favor of widespread distribution and consumption of vernacular Bibles. The notion that the word of Christ dwells within the Christian provides a graphic illustration of the purposeful reading of Scripture designed to improve oneself. The Old Testament directive to “exercise thyself” in the Book of the law day and night defines a causal relationship between Bible reading and godly living.

Several Bible prefaces dedicate a full page to quoting Bible passages that encourage Bible reading. For example, a 1537 edition of the Rogers’ Bible,<sup>93</sup> a 1539 edition of the Great

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<sup>92</sup> Miles Coverdale, *Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scrypture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to English[...]* (Sowthwarke, 1537; Early English Books Online. TCU Library. 19 June 2007), i r.

Bible<sup>94</sup> and a 1551 edition of the Taverner Bible<sup>95</sup> all include “An Exhortation to the study of the holy Scripture, gathered out of the Bible.” Included in this list of eight passages are the passages from II Timothy and Joshua I that appear on the cover of a 1537 edition of Coverdale’s Bible.<sup>96</sup> Also included in this list is Deuteronomy, chapter twenty-one: “See that thou read this law before all Israel in their ears. Gather the people together, both men, women, and children and the strangers that are in thy cities: that they may hear, learn, and fear the Lord your God, to keep all the word of thy law.” Once again, in addition to encouraging Christians to read the Bible, this passage instructs readers to apply what they read to the improvement of their lives.

The 1568 Bishops’ Bible preface is much more extensive than most sixteenth-century Bible prefaces, though its contents include some of the most common prefatory components. The themes that appear in the 1568 Bishops’ Bible preface are also broadly representative of some of the themes apparent in many of the Bible prefaces of the period. The prose and tables that make up the prefatory matter of this edition of the Bible depict the act of reading as a means to a practical end—godly living. Though reformers interpreted *sola scriptura* to mean different things, there was general agreement regarding the Bible’s status as the primary authority for judging Christian belief and practice. Many of the prefaces examined in this chapter also share a focus on Scripture as a tool for accomplishing godly living. Though there are significant differences among various sixteenth-century editions of the Bible, the link between the act of reading the Bible and an individual’s actions within the context of a community of believers is recurrent. The final section of this chapter considers the addresses

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<sup>93</sup> Rogers, *The Byble[...]*, 1537, iv r.

<sup>94</sup> *The Byble in Englyshe*, 1539, iv r.

<sup>95</sup> Taverner, *The Byble [...]*, 1551, xix v.

<sup>96</sup> Coverdale, *Biblia The Byble [...]*, 1537, i r.

to readers that appear in so many of these first English Bibles. In these texts, the act of reading and interpretation is sometimes taken up explicitly. The beliefs and associations implicitly tied to the practice of reading also inform our understanding of how reading the Bible was constructed for early modern Christians.

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As has already been suggested, the notion that reading the Bible has ramifications for the way Christians conduct their lives and for their salvation is a central theme of many of the preliminaries of sixteenth-century English Bibles. There, Christians are regularly instructed to read God's Word in order better to do God's will. Reading, therefore, is not an end in and of itself, but rather a means to godly living and salvation. In a 1535 edition of Coverdale's 1535 Bible, a prayer is suggested to readers for use "After the end of any Chapter (if thou wilt)."<sup>97</sup> In this prayer, the connection between instruction through reading and pious living is drawn out: "Lead me (o Lord) in thy way, and let me walk in thy truth. Oh let mine heart delight in fearing thy name. Order my goings after thy word, that no wickedness reign in me. Keep my steppes within thy paths, lest my feet turn in to any contrary way."<sup>98</sup> Here, readers are led to request in prayer that their act of reading the Bible will positively impact the way they conduct their lives.

This connection is explained in more detail in Coverdale's "A prologue. Miles Coverdale Unto the Christian reader,"<sup>99</sup> which also appears in this copy of Coverdale's Bible. Coverdale here conceives of the relation between reading, godly living, and salvation. He instructs, "whosoever thou be, take these words of scripture into thy heart, and be not only an

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<sup>97</sup> Coverdale, *Biblia the Byble* [...], 1535, i v.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., iv v – vii r.

outward hearer, but a doer thereafter, and practice thyself therein.”<sup>100</sup> For Coverdale, reading in and of itself is inadequate; rather, that which the Christian reads is to be understood and practiced. The supreme importance of reading and doing God’s will becomes apparent as Coverdale continues: “that thou mayest feel in thine heart the sweet promises thereof for thy consolation in all trouble, and for the sure establishing of thy hope in Christ.”<sup>101</sup> For Coverdale, reading and doing God’s will define the essence of Christianity; they produce the benefits of God’s consolation and the hope of heaven. Moreover, Coverdale offers direction for those Christians unable to read. After underscoring the importance of honest and reliable teachers, he addresses those unable to read for themselves:

though thou be but an hearer or reader of another mans doings, thou mayest yet have knowledge to judge all spirits, and be free from every error, to the utter destruction of all seditious sects and strange doctrines, that the holy scripture may have free passage, and be had in reputation, to the worship of the author thereof, which is even God himself: to whom for his most blessed word be glory and dominion now and ever. Amen.<sup>102</sup>

Coverdale’s address to readers demonstrates the extent to which conceptions of reading, moral living, and salvation are intertwined during this period. Reading the Bible yields godly living; reading and living God’s will provide the individual Christian with the comfort and hope of salvation. And perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Coverdale’s address to readers is his comparison of reading the Word of God on the page with reading the Word of God as it

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., vii r.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

is enacted in the lives of other Christians. God's Word is believed to leave so potent a mark on the lives of those who read it that the readers themselves become the living Word.

Cranmer powerfully highlights the practical nature of reading the Bible when he compares the Bible to an artisan's tools in his address to readers: "Dost thou not mark and consider, how the smith, mason, or carpenter, or any other handy craftsman, what need so ever he be in, [...] he will not sell nor lay to pledge the tools of his occupation, for then how should he work his seat or get his living thereby? Of like mind and affection ought we to be towards holy scripture."<sup>103</sup> Just as the artisan's tools provide a means of earning a living, so also the Bible provides the means of gaining God's consolation and salvation.

These are just a few representative examples of the ways Bible reading and godly living were imagined to be related to one another within the prefaces of sixteenth-century English Bibles. Tyndale's earliest address to readers, which appears in his 1525 translation of the New Testament, provides a useful point of contrast to these later conceptions of the relationship between Bible reading, godly living, and salvation. It is important to note that Tyndale's 1525 preface differs dramatically from his 1534 preface. In his 1525 preface, Tyndale retells, again and again, the story of the fall into sin, Christ's coming as the savior of all, and the Christian's grateful response to Christ. Tyndale writes that "In Christ god loved us his elect and chosen, before the world began, and reserved us unto the knowledge of his son and of his holy gospel, and when the gospel is preached to us he openeth our hearts, and giveth us grace to believe and putteth the spirit of Christ in us, and we know him as our

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<sup>103</sup> Cranmer, *The Byble in Englysh that is to saye the content of all the holy scripture, both of the olde and newe Testament with a prologe thereinto, made by the reverende father in God, Thomas archebyshop of Cantorbury. This is the Byble appoynted to the use of the churches* (London, 1541; Early English Books Online.TCU Library. 27 August 2007), iv v (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99856032](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99856032). The copy of Cranmer's 1541 *The Byble in Englysh* is also known as *The Great Bible*.



father most merciful.”<sup>104</sup> Tyndale explains that the Christian’s motivation for doing God’s will is gratitude. Once the Christian knows God “as our father most merciful,” he wishes to “consent to the law, and love it inwardly in our heart, and desire to fulfill it, and sorrow because we cannot, which [...] is sufficient [that] more strength be given us, the blood of Christ hath made satisfaction for the rest.”<sup>105</sup> Tyndale’s understanding of good works motivated by gratitude differs significantly from later conceptions of the connection between God’s Word and godly living. In his 1525 address to readers, Tyndale views the attempts of grateful Christians to follow God’s laws as doomed to failure. Failure to do God’s will once again reminds the Christian of God’s grace, which once again provokes a response of gratitude from the Christian. Tyndale is careful to note that “though faith be never without love and good works, yet is our saving imputed neither to love nor unto good works, but unto faith only.”<sup>106</sup> While in 1525 Tyndale asserts that good works do not effect one’s salvation, his 1534 revised preface is suggestive of the opposite. Tyndale’s beliefs seem to change as he moves away from translating and adapting Luther’s works to composing more of his theological commentary on his own.

In the preface to his 1534 New Testament, Tyndale’s views regarding Bible reading, godly living and salvation change dramatically. Notably, Tyndale revises his understanding of faith and good living:

two things are required to be a Christian man. The first is a steadfast faith and trust in almighty God, to obtain all the mercy that he hath promised us through the deserving and merits of Christs blood only, without all respect to our own works. And the other

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<sup>104</sup> Tyndale, *The New Testament* (Cologne, 1525; Early English Books Online, TCU Library. 7 June 2007) v r (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:21993444](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:21993444).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, v r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

is, that we forsake evil and turn to God, to keep his laws and to fight against ourselves and our corrupt nature perpetually, that we may do the will of god every day better and better.<sup>107</sup>

Tyndale continues to contend that salvation comes through faith alone even while insisting that godly living is a requirement of salvation. Later in this address to readers he writes: “for God offereth him mercy upon the condition that he will mend his living.”<sup>108</sup> Tyndale has clearly altered his understanding of the relationship between salvation and good works by 1534.

As Tyndale’s revised 1534 preface and the examples drawn from other prefaces mentioned earlier in this section demonstrate, the notion that Bible reading and godly living were related permeated mainstream sixteenth-century England. However, the nature of this relationship was often unclear, since explicit discussions of the relationship of Bible reading and godly living are often lacking. Though many passages point to the importance of reading for living a godly life, they do not give any clear indication of how this occurs. Erasmus of Rotterdam alludes to the elusive nature of the effects of Bible reading in his address to readers titled “An exhortation to the diligent study of scripture,” which appears in a 1536 edition of Tyndale’s New Testament:

And this kind of philosophy doth rather consist in the affects of the mind, than in subtle reasons. It is a life rather than a disputation. It is an inspiration rather than a science. And rather a new transformation, than a reasoning. It is a seldom thing to be a well learned man, but it is lefull [sic] for every man to be a true christian. It is lefull

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<sup>107</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1534, iv r.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, iv v.

for every man to live a godly life, yea and I dare be bold to say it is lefull for every man to be a pure divine.<sup>109</sup>

The phrases “affects of the mind,” “new transformation,” and “pure divine” suggest that the Bible’s effect on the lives of readers was ephemeral in nature.

Teasing out the significance of a Scriptural reference or the metaphoric language within a preface helps demystify how the connection between reading and living or acting was conceived by early modern reformers. Examining these preliminaries in this way also reveals competing idealizations of the act of reading. As we saw in the introduction to this project, reformers interpreted *sola scriptura* to mean different things, and this had an effect on the way the role of reading was conceived. One important aspect of vernacular Bible reading practices was the sense of community that both defined and was defined by mainstream vernacular Bible reading. Residual aspects of the manuscript culture to some extent suggested a sense of community among new readers of the print Bible. Sections of the Bible had been read aloud during public worship for centuries. In these settings, the communal reception of sacred texts was apparent. The spoken and written word were sometimes equated completely, as in the revised version of Tyndale’s preface where he asserts that the “new testament should be preached *and published* unto all nations.”<sup>110</sup> The simulation of hand-written discourse about Scripture also often implied a communal audience of readers and believers. For example, the notes to readers prefacing English translations of Scripture were often framed as letters much like those that would have been

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<sup>109</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament yet once agayne corrected by William Tyndall; wheare unto is added an exhortacion to the same of Erasmus Rot.; with an Englyshe kalendar and a table, necessary to fynde easly and lyghtly any story contayned in the iiii. evangelistes & in the Actes of the apostles* (France [?], 1536; Early English Books Online, TCU Library. 14 June 2007), xxii r (Corrected foliation), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:22771019](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:22771019).

<sup>110</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1534, vii v. (Corrected foliation) Emphasis added.

passed around among a group of believers. Gary Schneider has noted that these sorts of “open letters” addressed to the Protestant community were likely meant to resemble St. Paul’s epistles to the early Christian Church.<sup>111</sup> These letters were not addressed to individual readers, but to a collective. For example, Tyndale’s Prologue to his 1525 translation of the New Testament is addressed to “Brothers and Sisters in Christ.”<sup>112</sup> Tyndale, and later authors of Bible prefaces, used the plural pronoun “we” throughout prefaces, rather than “I” and “you.” Even when discussing the personal task of searching “for the profession of our Baptism or covenants made between God and us,”<sup>113</sup> in his 1534 preface, Tyndale continues to break down the barrier separating himself and his readers. The task of verifying one’s own salvation must be undertaken by the individual, and yet the preface presents author and readers as members of a community of believers united by their dedication to undertake the same spiritual journey. The nature of the Christian communities by which interpretations of the Bible were either validated or condemned in these preliminaries reflect different interpretations of the reformation tenet *sola scriptura*. As noted in the introduction, while some reformers held that Scripture and tradition should function in a complementary manner, other reformers rejected all extra-biblical traditions. The different understandings of the role of Scripture and tradition are reflected in the various ways the threat of interpretive discontinuities are dealt with in the preliminaries.

In his oft-reprinted preface to the Great Bible, Cranmer makes an explicit appeal for order and communal conformity when reading Scripture. Citing St. Gregory, Cranmer condemns those who discuss and debate the higher things of God in all places and at all

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<sup>111</sup> Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letter and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 188.

<sup>112</sup> Tyndale, *The New Testament*, 1525, ii r.

<sup>113</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1534, ii v.

times. He argues that Christianity could be judged a talking craft, or a sophistic craft, if it be judged by such people. However, he argues, it should not be spoken of in all places and at all times or by all people.<sup>114</sup> After explaining this position further, he carefully explains that he is not dissuading anyone from reading, studying, or preaching the Word of God. Rather, his aim is good order and godliness: “I forbid not to read, but I forbid to reason. Neither forbid I to reason so far as is good and godly. But I allow not that is done out of season, and out of measure and good order.”<sup>115</sup> Cranmer goes on to explain that those who speculate while reading the Bible are neglecting the more virtuous desire to apply Scripture to their lives through godly living.<sup>116</sup> Cranmer’s directives to seek out good order and godly living reflect a complementary view of Scripture of Tradition. While the laity ought to read the Bible, for Cranmer, the correct interpretation of that text lies with the well-ordered Church.

The notion that private reading was in fact an act of communal participation was for some reformers an important aspect of maintaining the unity of the Church. There was great anxiety among church leaders that layreaders would misinterpret Scripture and that heresies would emerge. Indeed, this was Henry VIII’s stated reason for outlawing the production and use of vernacular Bibles in England in his 1530 decree (printed in the introduction). There must also have been a desire on the part of layreaders for the guidance and affirmation that communal participation affords. New access to vernacular Bibles came with new responsibilities. When vernacular Bibles became available, early modern Christians were left with the daunting task of engaging and using them. The advent of mass-produced vernacular Bibles caused anxiety of a different sort among church leaders. As the prefaces of sixteenth-century English Bibles reveal, church leaders were concerned that heresies would emerge if

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<sup>114</sup> Cranmer, *The Byble in Englysh* [...], 1541, v v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, vi r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

readers were not given guidance as they sought to interpret Scripture for themselves. Those passages believed to be especially prone to misinterpretation are referred to throughout the prefaces as “hard” or “difficult,” and the instructions given readers regarding how to approach these passages generally uphold Orthodox Christian teachings.

Though many things may be difficult to thee to understand, impute it rather to thy dull hearing and reading, than to think that the Scriptures be insuperable, to them which with diligent searching labor to discern the evil from the good. Only search with an humble spirit, ask in continual prayer, seek with purity of life, knock with perpetual perseverance, and cry to that good spirit of Christ the comforter: and surely to every such asker it will be given, such searchers must needs find, to them it will be opened.<sup>117</sup>

Here, the implication is that if Scripture is approached in the appropriate way, understanding will follow. The assertion that stumbling readers should not “think that the Scriptures be insuperable” suggests that difficulties in enacting good reading practices should not be mistaken for theological difficulty; the Word of God remains intact even when readers fail to recognize its message.

In the end, all individual interpretations of Scripture can be verified as true by comparing them to the interpretations of the community. Tyndale suggests that if Scripture is read correctly (i.e., in the way he instructs that it be read throughout his preface), it will have a positive effect on the state of the reader’s soul, but if it is read incorrectly it can also harden one’s heart to God and lead to one’s damnation:

for the nature of Gods word is, that whosoever read it or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he

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<sup>117</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xix v. (Corrected foliation)

be grown into a perfect man in the knowledge of Christ and love of the law of God: or also make him worse and worse, till he be hardened that he openly resist the Sprite of God, and then blaspheme, after the example of Pharaoh, Coza, Abiron, Balam, Judas, Symon Magus and such other.<sup>118</sup>

Jews are commonly held up in Bible prefaces as examples of ineffective readers of the Bible. Tyndale goes on to explain that “The jews, they had cleansed themselves with gods word, from all outward idolatry and worshipping or idols. But their hearts remained still faithless to godward and toward his mercy and truth and therefore without love also and lust to his law and to their neighbors for his sake.”<sup>119</sup> Here, the act of reading and comprehending the Bible is not enough; faith must also enter in.

Parker offers a more explicit indictment of Jewish readers in his prologue to the Bishops’ Bible. There, Jews serve as the ultimate example of a people who read scripture attentively, and yet got it “wrong.” For all their attention to Scripture, they reject the messiah they’ve been promised. The Jews failed, according to Parker, in that “they did not call upon God in a true faith, they were not charitable to their neighbors, but in the midst of all this devotion, they did steal, they were adulterers, they were slanderers and backbiters, even much like many of our Christian men and women now a days [...]”<sup>120</sup> Here the warning which is often tacitly present in sixteenth-century English Bible prefaces is stated explicitly: reading Scripture is not enough. You must read Scripture in a certain way—so as to amend your life—in order to be a true Christian and receive salvation. And thus, godly living is once again revealed as an essential aspect of determining the Christian’s status as such. Reading the Bible is not enough to warrant salvation; one must also live a godly life.

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<sup>118</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1534, iv r.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, v v.

<sup>120</sup> Parker, *The holie. Bible [...]*, 1568, xx v.

In addition to standing in as a measure of the accuracy of one's interpretation of Scripture, the community defined and was defined by Bible reading practices. The evidence of correct interpretations of Scripture (godly living) benefitted the good of the overall community directly. Indeed, the godliness of the whole of England was believed by some to rely on the reading of Scripture. Moreover, a whole sense of decorum evolved around the act of Bible reading. As we noted earlier, there were proper times to read the Bible and proper sections of the Bible appointed to be read on certain days. Bible reading became an integral part of the Christian calendar that defined the lives of early modern Christians. Communal language and the ordering of religious practice in time point to a pragmatic, communal purpose for Bible reading. Metaphoric language used by preface writers to discuss Bible reading also reveals much about the relationship believed to exist between Bible reading and godly living.

Heart imagery provides a vocabulary for discussing some of the most elusive aspects of religious belief and practice during the sixteenth century. The book of the heart is a powerful trope with a history predating the Reformation of the Church in England by more than a millennium. Throughout the middle ages, the heart was conceived of as a book imprinted with God's Word, with the devotional experiences of a Christians' life, and even with a moral record of the individual's life.<sup>121</sup> Imagery of the heart in the first English Bible prefaces reveals sixteenth-century conceptions of the relationship between religious belief and pious action, as well as conceptions of how a Christian's faith might be validated. For example, passages from Tyndale and Roger's Bible prefaces highlight and attempt to account for discrepancies between religious appearance and reality. Rogers juxtaposes the outward appearance of religious devotion with the inward reality of worship when in his Bible preface

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<sup>121</sup> Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).



he writes: “Let us worship with the heart, and not with the lips.”<sup>122</sup> Tyndale also speaks of the heart as an interior validation of pious acts when he writes that “there is a full righteousness, when the law is fulfilled from the ground of the heart.”<sup>123</sup> Both Rogers and Tyndale imply that worship and good works are empty unless they are undergirded by an inner sincerity. This valuation of inner sincerity renders the interpretive aspect of reading far more important than the outward appearance of reading.

Coverdale poses the problem of validating appearances more pointedly and personally in his preface when he writes that “if thou put thy trust [in Christ], and be an unfeigned reader or hearer of his word with thy heart, thou shalt find sweetness therein, and spy wondrous things, to thy understanding, to the avoiding of all seditious sects, to the abhorring of thy old sinful life, and to the establishing of thy godly conversation.”<sup>124</sup> While Coverdale’s words seem aimed at comforting readers of the Bible, they must also be understood as an admonition: if you do not find sweetness, wonder, and understanding in the Bible, and if you do not consequently amend your sinful life, your reading/interpretation must be regarded as feigned, insincere, and—worst of all—inefficacious.

These passages promoting the reading of the Bible as a path to attaining salvation hit on what was inevitably a source of anxiety for the English laity. Amidst the religious reform in early modern England, mainstream parishioners were bound to struggle to understand what salvation required, what it looked like, and what it felt like. Different interpretations of the assertion *sola scriptura* suggested different visions of how readers ought to encounter the Word of God. As we saw in the introduction to this project, many reformers on the continent ultimately adopted the position that the laity should encounter the Word of God through the

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<sup>122</sup> Rogers, *The Byble [...]*, 1537, xix r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>123</sup> Tyndale, *The New Testament*, 1525, iv v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>124</sup> Coverdale, *Biblia the Byble [...]*, 1535, v v. (Corrected foliation)

screen of learned men “gifted in interpreting” that text (e.g. Luther’s endorsement of his catechism and of preaching as the ideal sites for the laity to encounter the Word of God). Though Bible reading was rarely forbidden by continental reformers, proper interpretation of the Word of God was often placed firmly in the hands of the ecclesiastical elite. Though a similar position was asserted by Henry VIII at different times during his reign, it was ultimately rejected in England. Mandates to place Bibles in churches and to encourage the laity to read these texts leave the task of interpretation with the individual lay-reader. And since the process of interpreting the Bible is not external to the lay-person, it is more difficult to regularize.

The issue of interpretation taken up in these passages is, therefore, of central importance. The mandate to read the Bible leaves the individual reader questioning the existence of his or her faith; though reading the Bible is beneficial for attaining and strengthening one’s faith, not all who read and hear the Bible have faith. As we have seen, Jewish readers serve as a counter-example for early modern English Christians in this respect; though they read the Bible regularly, their literal interpretation yields neither faith nor salvation. Coverdale provides Bible readers with a rubric for self-examination; the Christian reader must ask himself if his understanding of the Bible and his response to the Bible fall in line with Coverdale’s description of “unfeigned” reading. In contrast to Jewish readers, Coverdale’s readers are to approach the Word of God “with thy heart.”

Coverdale’s description of the unfeigned reader effectively provides a working definition of Christian community. Though the individual reader’s faith is examined privately and individually, the basis of that faith is validated according to communal standards. Interpreting the Bible is an interior function of individual readers, but interpretations are

nevertheless validated or condemned through comparison with external standards. As we shall see, while the ecclesiastical authority (i.e. learned clergy, Tradition) is sometimes held up as the proper standard against which to measure one's interpretation of the Bible in sixteenth-century English preliminaries, communities of lay-readers are also sometimes understood to serve this function—a position amenable to those taking an exclusivist view of the reformation tenet *sola scriptura*.

Imagery of the heart often suggests a pragmatic purpose for reading the Bible in sixteenth-century prefaces, thereby creating a community of individual readers. Coverdale's instruction that readers, above all things, "fashion thy life, and conversation according to the doctrine of the holy ghost" reflects this fact. Reading, therefore, is an action useful for becoming more pious. Notably, this means that comprehension is tied up with the notion that one should read, since comprehension is required if reading is to translate into action. The notion that reading Scripture should translate into action is drawn out in the summation of preaching at the close of Perkin's preaching manual:

the order and sum of the sacred and only method of preaching: 1. To read the Text distinctly out of the Canonical Scriptures. 2. To give sense and understanding of it being read, by the Scripture it self. 3. To collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the natural sense. 4. To apply (if he have the gift) the doctrines rightly collected to the life and manners of men, in a simple and plain speech.<sup>125</sup>

Here, Perkins reveals the extent to which it was expected that preaching rely on Scripture, was to be clear and understandable, and was to apply to the lives of the parishioners. This emphasis on applying ones' preaching to the lives of Christians accords with the practical application of the words of the Bible to the reader's life noted throughout early English Bible

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<sup>125</sup> Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England*, 128.

prefaces. The important point to note here is that idealized notions regarding both the reading of the Bible and preaching on the Bible place greater emphasis on the application of God's Word to the lives of Christians than they place on the actual activity of studying God's Word. The godly interactions of individual believers within a community are a primary goal of Bible reading.

In one further respect does imagery of the heart render the potentially solitary act of religious reading a shared, communal activity. Though reading the Bible represented an important aspect of early modern English Christian piety, the actual encoding of this text was sometimes considered unnecessary. Heart imagery that depicts acts of reading and writing as metaphors for the spiritual life and development of Christians also points to the secondary nature of the act of reading the Bible. Metaphoric religious reading and writing certainly helps to explain seemingly contradictory passages about Bible reading in the King's Book. At one point, all are encouraged to read Scripture: "we heartily exhort our people of all degrees willingly and earnestly both to read and print in their hearts the doctrine of this book."<sup>126</sup> However, the preface to the King's Book goes on to explain that "the reading of the Old and New Testament is not so necessary for all those folks."<sup>127</sup> The sometimes figurative "reading" and "writing" of the laity could take several forms, some of which relied on the actual reading and writing of the educated clergy. So while it was necessary for the clergy to read the Bible, the laity might "read and write" God's Word by reading the Bible for themselves, or they may listen to a sermon or a reading of Scripture and "write" those words on their hearts.

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<sup>126</sup> quoted in Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England*, 106.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Reading and writing were engrained as metaphors for piety. The illiterate were encouraged to learn to read and write. But even those who would never learn to read or write were participating in acts of literacy both directly and indirectly in their spiritual lives. They were participating in acts of secondary worship as they were hearing sermons that were based on (and filled with references to) Scripture. And while hearing the preaching of others, whose words were based on the reading of Scripture, these people were “writing” the words of God on their hearts, to be read and consulted in times of trial or temptation. The illiterate could also “read” the lives of literate Christians who applied their Bible learning to their lives. As we have already noted, Bible reading was envisioned as a practical religious activity.

In several prefaces, language of ingestion and edification is used to describe the effects of reading. An address to readers by Desiderius Erasmus appears in Tyndale’s revised New Testament. There, Erasmus famously wishes, “I would to god, the plowman would sing a text of the scripture at his plowbeam, And that the weaver at his loom, with this would drive away the tediousness of time. I would the wayfaring man with this pastime, would expel the weariness of his journey. And to be short, I would that all the communication of the christian should be of the scripture.”<sup>128</sup> Erasmus continues: “for in a manner such are we ourselves, as our daily tables are.”<sup>129</sup> Here, Erasmus essentially suggests that the words one takes in through reading define one’s being. A later passage of Erasmus’ address sheds light on his comparison of ingesting and reading. Near the end of his address, Erasmus repeats the same sentiments regarding the study of Scripture, but in more literal terms. He beseeches the

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<sup>128</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1536, xx v – xxi r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

reader: “Let us kiss these sweet words of Christ with a pure affection. Let us be new transformed into them, for such our manners as our studies be.”<sup>130</sup>

The language of ingestion is also present in other English Bible prefaces. The definition of worship in a glossary of key terms in the Matthew Bible describes the Word of God as food for the soul: “The word of God abideth not in us, if we believe not in Christ. Let us pray then that it may dwell in us. that it may be preached and declared over all. by what occasion so ever it be. For it is the light to see by. the fountain of wisdom. the food of the soul. the helmet of health and sword of the spirit.”<sup>131</sup> Here again, the notion that Scripture is ingested and translated into living is striking.

Tyndale’s words, as printed in a 1551 Taverner Bible, portray the Bible as a tool useful for revealing human sinfulness and God’s Grace, as well as for leading good lives. Tyndale encourages Bible readers to apply the stories of the Bible to their own lives in order to live more Godly lives. In this context, Tyndale writes that Scripture is necessary nourishment for maintaining man’s life: “so that we see, how that man’s life is not maintained by bread only (as Christ sayeth) but much rather believing the promises of God.”<sup>132</sup>

While discussing the presence of difficult passages within the Bible, Cranmer assures readers that the Bible can edify even the simplest of readers. Cranmer writes that, unlike the philosophers, the Scriptures are written so that all may benefit: “But the Apostles and prophets wrote their books so, that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived of every reader, which was nothing but the edification [and] amendment of the life

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., xxvii v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>131</sup> Rogers, *The Byble [...]*, 1537, xix v. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>132</sup> Taverner, *The Byble*, 1551, xxiii v. (Corrected foliation)

of them that readeth or heareth it.”<sup>133</sup> The pragmatic nature of Bible reading comes through once again in this passage. Tyndale similarly writes in his 1534 Bible preface: “for we have not received the gift of god for ourselves only / or for to hide them: but for to bestow them unto the honoring of god and christ / and edifying of the congregation / which is the body of christ.”<sup>134</sup>

Another metaphor used to describe the act of Bible reading is conversation. Some of the earliest uses of the word “conversation” suggest a mode of living, as opposed to the exchange of ideas that the word most commonly suggests today:

Conversation:

1. The action of living or having one’s being *in* a place or *among* persons. Also *fig.* of one’s spiritual being.
2. The action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy.
7. Manner of conducting oneself in the world or in society; behavior, mode or course of life.

The Oxford English Dictionary records no instance of *conversation* meaning the “Interchange of thoughts and words; familiar discourse or talk” predating 1580, when Sidney used the term in this way in his *Arcadia*. Discussions of *conversation* in early English Bible prefaces reveal conceptions about godly living within communities of believers. Coverdale’s address to readers as printed in a 1535 Bible presents one example. In his address to readers Coverdale commands:

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<sup>133</sup> Cranmer, *The Byble in Englysh* [...], 1541, v r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>134</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament* [...], 1534, ii r-v. (Corrected foliation)

Go to now (most dear reader) and sit thee down at the Lord's feet and read his words, and (as Moses teacheth the Jews) take them in to their heart, and let thy talking and communication be of them when thou sittest in thine house, or goest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up. And above all things fashion thy life, and conversation according to the doctrine of the holy ghost therin, that thou mayest be partaker of the good promises of god in the Bible, and be heir of his blessing in Christ. In whom if thou put thy trust, and be an unfeigned reader or hearer of his word with thy heart, thou shalt find sweetness therein, and spy wondrous things, to thy understanding, to the avoiding of all seditious sects, to the abhorring of thy old sinful life, and to the establishing of thy godly conversation.<sup>135</sup>

Here, Coverdale links pious living with the reading of Scripture. It is clear from the context of this passage that the term *conversation* suggests living among others. Thus, the notion of religious community is tied up with private reading.

Erasmus' address to readers reveals the same. Erasmus notes that scholastic teachings are not wrong in and of themselves, but that they are not central. He wishes for the central Christian teachings to be preached and discussed in churches and schools.<sup>136</sup> He goes on to argue that if this would happen, "Then should we not differ only in title and certain ceremonies from the heathen and unfaithful. But rather in the pure conversation of our life."<sup>137</sup> Significantly, the act of reading the Bible is not credited here with differentiating Christians from heathens, but rather, "the pure conversation of our life" differentiates Christian from heathen. Erasmus goes on to explain the relationships binding Christian faith, Bible reading, sincerity of heart, Christian living, and community:

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<sup>135</sup> Coverdale, *Biblia the Byble [...]*, 1535, v v.

<sup>136</sup> Tyndale, *The Newe Testament [...]*, 1536, xx r. (Corrected foliation)

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, xx v. (Corrected foliation)



Now if these would a while seclude their own private business, and lift up their hearts with a pure intent unto Christ, seeking only his glory, and the profit of their neighbor, we should see verily within few years, a true and godly kind of Christian spring up in every place, which would not only in ceremonies, disputations, and titles profess the name of Christ. But in their very heart and true conversation of living.<sup>138</sup>

The connection suggested here between reading the Bible and godly living is suggested often throughout the Bible prefaces considered in this chapter. Because of the theological belief that the Bible is the primary communication of God's truth to believers, there was great emphasis on interpreting that message correctly. This was a matter of salvation and also a matter of preserving the unity of the Church. The notion that godly living results from reading the Bible shifts the focus of lay-readers of this central Christian text from discovering doctrine. Rather, Christians are to use the Bible in order to consider how best to live their lives. By shifting the focus of the practice of reading from belief to practice, Erasmus and other reformers steer Christians away from doctrinal disagreement.

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As we have seen, the Reformation of the Church in England was the product of negotiations between various stake-holders who embraced a range of theological convictions and advocated different beliefs and practices. The diversity of religious views competing for dominance during these formative years of the Church of England yielded various conceptions of the act of reading within the context of the Christian life. The question of who should read and interpret the Bible was a central concern for reformers who wished to

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

balance the conviction that the Word of God serves a primary function in relation to the traditions of the Church with concerns about “bad” readers and division within the Church.

Though there are different approaches to this question demonstrated throughout the preliminaries, some themes recur. Many preliminaries provide readers with various interpretive summaries of Scripture that readers can then use as a point of reference as they make their way through the massive text of the Bible. Calendars or schedules for reading the Bible unite readers in time. Some of the preliminaries suggest to readers the sorts of behavior that proper Bible reading inspires or effects. One theme recurring throughout the preliminaries is the notion that religious community provides a means for verifying an individual’s interpretation of the Word of God. In some cases readers are encouraged to defer interpretation of difficult passages to those that are more learned—a view similar to Luther’s “coinherence of Scripture and tradition.” But other documents in the preliminaries suggest a less comfortable relationship between Scripture and tradition and encourage lay-readers to examine their responses to the Bible and their interpretations of the Bible’s teachings with other lay-readers’ interpretations. In both cases, communities of readers are formed as ways of regularizing interpretations of the Bible. The subtext of these preliminaries is that reading is not enough; reading must be undertaken properly in order to be efficacious. At stake in these negotiations is the stability of the fragile Church of England. The preliminary material accompanying translations of the Bible was designed to regularize interpretations of that sacred text. The movement to identify a standard Bible translation for the English Church reflects a desire to stabilize the national identity of England and her Church by infusing members of that society with shared, or common, public knowledge.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Reading and Inscribing Action in Foxe's *Actes & Monuments*

Although public authority then lacked to maintain the open preaching of the gospel, yet the secret multitude of true professors, was not much unequal: certes the fervent seal of those Christian days seemed much superior to these our days and times: as manifestly may appear by their sitting up all night in reading and hearing, also by their expenses and charges in buying of books in English [...] In which rarity of books, and want of teachers this one thing I greatly marvel and muse at, to note in the Registers & consider how the word of truth notwithstanding did multiply so exceedingly as it did amongst them. Wherein is to be seen no doubt the marvelous working of Gods mighty power. For so I find and observe in considering the Registers, how one neighbor resorting and conferring with an other, eftsoons with a few words of the first or second talk, did win and turn their minds to that wherein they desired to persuade them, touching the truth of Gods word and his sacraments. To see their travails, their earnest seeking their burning zeals, their readings, their watchings, their sweet assemblies, their love and concord, their godly living, their faithful meaning with the faithful, may make us now in these our days of free profession to blush for shame.

In the previous chapter we examined the various paratexts of sixteenth-century English Bibles. These early editions of the English Bible circulated widely among mainstream Christians in the sixteenth century, and even those believers who were unable to purchase a copy of the Bible had access to the editions of the Great Bible and Bishops Bible placed in parish churches. Placed alongside these official Bibles in churches across England were the massive volumes of Foxe's *Actes & Monuments*. In 1571 the Privy Council ordered that *Actes & Monuments* should be placed in every cathedral church and in the homes of chapter clergy; many parishes followed of their own volition.<sup>140</sup> These volumes were not regarded as sacred texts and were therefore not used during public worship. Yet, their placement in churches alongside authorized versions of the Bible granted them an official status. Although *Actes & Monuments* is not itself a sacred text, in this volume Foxe presents a particular conception of the relationship between readers and religious texts.

Foxe's idealization of the act of reading is shaped by his larger goals for his volume, which include determining and defining the identity of the true Church and true believers. Before the first edition of *Actes & Monuments* was published in 1563, Foxe wrote *Comentarii Rerum* (1554), a historical justification of the Reformation which serves as the basis for *Actes & Monuments*. David Loades argues that Foxe had been hoping to revise his 1554 work into a European martyrology but was persuaded by John Day or Edmund Grindal to pursue a martyrology of the English Church in the English vernacular instead in an effort

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<sup>139</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 819.

<sup>140</sup> Loades, "Introduction," in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Brookfield, VT: Scholar Press, 1997), 4.

to buttress the fragile Church of England. Foxe's belief that England was providentially selected to be a nation of true believers permeates his account.

The description of English lay-people taken from Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* that opens this chapter narratively pre-dates the public posting of Luther's 95 theses, the break of England from the Church of Rome, and the authorization of the mass-production and distribution of vernacular religious texts in England—all events associated with the beginning of the Reformation in England. In this passage many of the beliefs and actions advocated by sixteenth-century Church reformers are attributed to groups of Christians predating this period. Making arguments from history was an important rhetorical move for early modern reformers across Europe as they worked to legitimate their teachings as part of, rather than separate from, the long history of the Christian Church.

Just before this passage, Foxe addresses the suggestion that the beliefs and practices of reformers constitute a new religion. He argues that history reveals “the church of England hath not lacked great multitudes, which tasted & followed the sweetness of Gods holy word, almost in as ample manner, for the number of well disposed hearts as now.”<sup>141</sup> Foxe lists several of the regions of England whose registers and records he has surveyed and concludes: “this was before the name of Luther was heard of in these countries among the people. Wherefore they are much beguiled and miss informed, which condemn this kind of doctrine now received, of novelty, asking where was this church and religion xl. years ago, before Luthers time?”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 819.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

A comparison of the narrative scope of the first four editions of *Actes & Monuments*<sup>143</sup> suggests that establishing a relationship between early modern reformers and the larger Christian tradition became an increasingly pressing concern for Foxe and his collaborators.<sup>144</sup> While he begins his 1563 edition of *Actes & Monuments* with “the year of our Lord a thousand,” the starting-point for his history moves back steadily in subsequent editions: the 1570 edition begins “from the time of the first Christened King Lucius, King of this Realm of England, which is from the year of our Lord 180,” and the narrative of the 1576 and 1583 editions begins with the first Christians of the first century. Loades and Tom Betteridge argue that whereas Foxe takes on an optimistic tone in his 1563 edition of *Actes & Monuments*, in his 1570 edition he responds to the events of the 1560s, such as the rebellion of the Northern Earls, the threat posed by Mary Queen of Scots, and the failure of the Protestant cause to make significant headway in England, with a less hopeful tone.<sup>145</sup> Citing a 1574 edict of Queen Elizabeth’s which in effect forced the acceptance of the English Bible, Ronald Shields

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<sup>143</sup> Foxe oversaw the production of the first four editions of *Actes & Monuments* in 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583. Though *Actes & Monuments* went through many subsequent revised editions, the scope of this chapter will be limited to these first four editions. Citations from *Actes & Monuments* are drawn from the 1583 edition unless otherwise noted. For further discussion of the differences between Foxe’s four editions of *Actes & Monuments* see Tom Betteridge’s “From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the Writing of History,” in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1997); David Loades’ “Introduction”; and Ronald E. Shields and James H. Forse, “Creating the Image of a Martyr: John Porter, Bible Reader,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33 no.3 (2002).

<sup>144</sup> Though Foxe is commonly credited with authoring *Actes & Monuments*, John N. King has suggested that Foxe’s role in relation to the volume could more accurately be described as “compiler.” Though this chapter focuses on *Actes & Monuments*’s audiences and their practices, it is nevertheless important to characterize the nature of Foxe’s relationship with this text accurately. *Actes & Monuments* is a collection of disparate documents set down in annals fashion with the support of a network of collaborators. See Thomas Freeman, “Text, Lies and Microfilm: Reading and Misreading Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 1 (1999): 23-46, for a discussion of Foxe’s relationship to his sources. Freeman suggests that “Foxe did not generally invent, or even embellish this material; instead he abridged or edited it, suppressing or deleting what did not suit his purposes” (40). It would therefore be inaccurate to suggest that Foxe asserts his agency in *Actes & Monuments* as a single author. Rather, he is the primary agent in initiating the gathering, organizing and editing of the information that comprises *Actes & Monuments*. References to Foxe as author of *Actes & Monuments* throughout this chapter should be understood in this light.

For a detailed discussion of King’s notion of “compilation” see his *Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” and Early Modern Print Culture* (24). See the same volume for more on Foxe’s network of collaborators (25-36). See King’s “‘The Light of Printing’: William Tyndale, John Foxe, John Day, and Early Modern Print Culture” (56-64) for an examination of traces of *Actes & Monuments* in manuscripts written by many different hands.

<sup>145</sup> Loades, “Introduction,” 3; Betteridge, “From Prophetic to Apocalyptic,” 231.

and James Force argue that the English Bible was regarded with hostility in London well into the 1570s.<sup>146</sup> Foxe's decision to broaden the narrative scope of his ecclesiastical history can be understood as an attempt to recast the ongoing plight of English Protestants as relatively insignificant and short-lived in light of the long history of Christian persecution.

Arguments from history served to comfort Christians in the midst of religious tumult and change. At the start of the second book of the 1583 edition of *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe urges readers to read the first book of his volume, since he deems it more important than any other of the books included in the volume. He suggests that the devil and sinful men did their worst at this time, and yet the Christian faith survived. Foxe argues that if the church has survived such tumult in the past, then surely it will continue to endure; though Christians may suffer and even die for their faith, they should take comfort in knowing that the Christian community of believers will persist.

Despite all of Foxe's concern with the past, *Actes & Monuments* is at least as much about the present and future of the Christian Church. By incorporating the recent events of the Reformation into a much longer narrative account of the Christian Church, Foxe works to combat the notion that Reformation teachings and practices somehow constitute a new religion. Foxe also uses the past as a vehicle for putting forth examples of the ideal community of true believers he would have the church in England become. Michael C. McGee has argued that

the first principles of all public argument appear to lie in the society's collective judgment of its past: lines of argument drawn from an ideological view of history are of use in educating children to the norms of society, in amplifying positions taken in

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<sup>146</sup> Shields and Force, "Creating the Image of a Martyr," 733.

legislative and legal deliberation, and in collectivizing a community so that such crises as war and depression might be overcome.<sup>147</sup>

Foxe's project of recording the history of the Christian Church, especially as it pertains to the nation of England, is designed to provide early modern Christians with a common conception of the past that will in turn inform their present beliefs and actions.

A primary concern of this dissertation is to consider the ways in which the most important vernacular religious texts of the sixteenth century impacted and were used by mainstream Christian parishioners. Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* significantly influenced early modern Christians in England. Set alongside Bibles in cathedral churches and other public buildings, *Actes & Monuments* reached laity and clergy, rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike. On one hand, the diversity of *Actes & Monuments*'s audience can hardly be overstated. While some sixteenth-century laity were well-educated, others had little education at all; some had high social standing, others very little. Gender, geography, age, occupation, and different socio-economic factors also distinguished sixteenth-century English Christians from one another. But on the other hand, all sixteenth-century English Christians were bound by their shared experience of the Reformation of the Church in England. In *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe works to underscore this union by crafting a common conception among this community of believers of their collective past, present and future.

In *Actes & Monuments* there is an implicit value placed on reading as the means of establishing a common conception of the past and present state of the Christian Church in sixteenth-century England. Foxe's oft-stated purpose for writing, compiling, revising and adding to *Actes & Monuments* is the purification of the Christian Church, and he had

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<sup>147</sup> McGee, "The Fall of Wellington: A Case Study of the Relationship between Theory, Practice, and Rhetoric in History," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 63 no.1 (1977), 28.



particular concern for the Church in England. Foxe's four revised editions of *Actes & Monuments* present the history of exemplary Christians and promote certain practices as essentially Christian. Reading the Bible is the first step down the road to personal religious purification. Once the truth has been accessed and understood, the believer is moved to share what he or she has learned with others and to combat false teachings and practices. The work undertaken by individual believers is always to the end that the community might be purified. Even the solitary act of dying for one's faith is formulated, in Foxe, as an act of witness to the community. This chapter will examine the role that Foxe imagines for reading in *Actes & Monuments*. For Foxe, reading and action are causally linked to one another. Reading the Bible or other sacred texts has the power to change an individual into a true believer. And as Foxe demonstrates over and over again throughout *Actes & Monuments*, true believers act in certain ways. Certain actions constitute signs of belonging to a particular community—the community of true believers. For Foxe, then, reading one's own life is the first act undertaken by true believers in response to reading. Foxe's historical accounts of martyrs provide examples against which Christians can judge their own lives.

Encounters with religious texts play a central role in informing and maintaining Foxe's ideal community of believers. Foxe's massive collection of the acts of exemplary Christians is intended to enliven similar acts of reading and witness in his audience. According to the passage included as the epigraph to this chapter, an exemplary Christian community works zealously to overcome any obstacle keeping them from reading or hearing the Word of God, and they share what they read or hear with their neighbors. Here, as elsewhere in Foxe's volume, praise for exemplary Christians of the past is intended to inspire his audience to become exemplary themselves.

Foxe's interest in addressing the state of the whole Christian community necessarily entails attending to those believers who are unable to read. As the account at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the encounters with religious texts recorded in *Actes & Monuments* were sometimes through reading and sometimes through hearing. The lines between oral and written interaction with texts are often blurred in Foxe's accounts. While Foxe places a high value on literacy and learning, his text nevertheless models ways for the less learned to participate in his project through oral and aural interactions with the Word of God. Cynthia Zollinger has suggested that *Actes & Monuments* provides the material for an ethnographic study of how people with various literacy levels encountered English religious texts, such as the Bible, in sixteenth-century England. Zollinger begins with an examination of some of the ways the illiterate gained access to the text of the Bible in Foxe's volume and goes on to consider the accounts of several martyrs who attained personal literacy. Upon observing the range of oral and literate practice chronicled within *Actes & Monuments*, Zollinger argues that Foxe's volume provides a snapshot of the shift occurring at this time from orally based encounters with texts to personalized acts of reading and interpretation. Here, I will be expanding on her claim by considering the ways Foxe's volume reveals how oral and literate practices shaped one another. I will argue here that for Foxe, even personal acts of reading constitute acts of communal involvement. In *Actes & Monuments* Foxe provides a vision of how his diverse audience might be united through exposure to religious texts and through acts of faith.

Numerous studies of this period have confirmed that literacy rates in sixteenth-century England at this time were relatively low.<sup>148</sup> Though Foxe praises the learned throughout his volume, his frequent accounts of aural encounters with religious texts suggest both that he was aware of the large number of English laity who were unable to read and that he was very interested in addressing this large group of people. Foxe's acknowledgment and treatment of the oral transmission of religious texts within his volume impacts (and is impacted by) the purpose and function he crafts for reading. The written word was valued by early modern religious reformers, in part, because it was authoritative and accurate. But written texts may be read in physical obscurity from others, while oral communication carries with it the advantage that it is inherently communal. Blurring the line between oral versus written transmission of texts in *Actes & Monuments* allows Foxe to maintain the Reformation value of accuracy and consistency offered by print within the communal context.

The first part of this chapter will examine the explicit statements Foxe offers in *Actes & Monuments* outlining his purpose for writing, his goals for the purification of the Church, and the role he envisions for writing, printing and reading within that context. The next section will examine Foxe's accommodation of those readers (historical and present) who are not able to read religious texts for themselves because of the expense or rarity of books or because of low literacy levels. The final section of this chapter will consider the causal relationship between text and action exhibited in Foxe's accounts of martyrs.

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<sup>148</sup> See Kintgen, *Reading in Tutor England*; Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); and Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England."

As a reformer, Foxe seeks to purify the Christian Church of its papist superstition, greed and ignorance. *Actes & Monuments* can be understood as his attempt to further this goal in England. While this goal undergirds the whole of Foxe's massive volume, there are several moments in which Foxe outlines his vision of reform explicitly. For example, when discussing the advent of print in a section titled "the benefit and invention of printing" Foxe acknowledges John Faustus and Gutenberg, but then goes on to credit God as the originator of printing: "Notwithstanding, what man soever was the instrument, without all doubt God himself was the ordainer and disposer thereof."<sup>149</sup> Foxe strengthens this connection by likening the gift of speaking in tongues given at the first Pentecost to the invention of printing:

And well may this gift of printing be resembled to the gift of tongues: for like as God then spake with many tongues, and yet all that would not turn the Jews, so now, when the holy ghost speaketh to the adversaries in innumerable sorts of books, yet they will not be converted nor turn to the Gospel.<sup>150</sup>

Just as the gift of tongues created a community of hearer-believers in the early Christian Church, Foxe suggests God's gift of print creates a growing community of reader-hearers. By drawing a parallel between contemporary readers who "will not be converted nor turn to the Gospel" and Jews who would not convert to Christianity at the time of the first Pentecost, Foxe delineates the boundaries of this community and names his adversary. Printing is the weapon God has supplied the Church for fighting this enemy:

In this very time so dangerous and desperate, where mans power could do no more, there the blessed wisdom & omnipotent power of the Lord began to work for his

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<sup>149</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments*[...] (1583 edition), 707.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

church: not with sword and tergate [sic] to subdue his exalted adversary, but with Printing, writing, and reading to convince darkness by light, error by truth, ignorance by learning. So that by this means of printing, the secret operation of God hath heaped upon that proud kingdom a double confusion. [...] God of his secret judgment, seeing time to help his Church, hath found a way by his faculty of Printing, not only to confound [the Pope's] life, and conversation, which before he could not abide to be touched, but also to cast down the foundation of his standing, that is, to examine, confute, and detect his doctrine, laws, and institutions most detestable in such sort, that though his life were never so pure: yet his doctrine standing, as it doth, no man is blind, but may see, that either the pope is Antichrist, or else that Antichrist is near cousin to the pope: And all this doth, and will hereafter more and more appear by Printing.<sup>151</sup>

Foxe's imagery is striking. Printing, writing, and reading are nonviolent weapons that convince rather than subdue; darkness, error and ignorance are the enemies they combat. The contrast of brutal weaponry and nonviolent means of gaining assent is deliberate. Foxe juxtaposes the brutality of the Roman Catholic Church with the reasoned means by which reformers attain unity throughout *Actes & Monuments*. The gruesome accounts of the suffering imposed on dissenters by the Roman Catholic Church that fill Foxe's volume cut at the foundation of Roman Catholic consensus, since "a consensus held together by threats of torture at the stake is not consensus at all."<sup>152</sup> Foxe sees printing as the means by which God's Word will be spread and understood properly.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 79.

The contrast Foxe sees between the means of the reformers and the means of the Roman Catholic Church are represented in a woodcut included at the end of the first volume of the 1576 and 1583 editions *Actes & Monuments* (Figure 9). There, blind justice weighs the Bible, on her right, against the riches and relics of the Roman Catholic Church, on her left. The inscription attached to this woodcut draws the common Reformation contrast between Scripture and tradition: “A lively picture describing the weight and substance of God’s most blessed word against the doctrines and vanities of mans traditions.” As the weighty Scriptures overwhelm all of the riches heaped on the opposite end of the scale, the viewer examining this representation of the contest between Scripture and tradition cannot help but note the manner in which each side makes its case before Justice. On the side of man’s traditions there is struggle and turmoil as various members dressed in the regalia of Roman Catholic authority fight to heap more onto Justice’s scale. But on the side of Scripture, there is tranquil conversation as the men and women assembled stand back and watch the Scriptures overpower Roman Catholic tradition. Whereas Scripture’s power is so great that it requires no assistance in order to prevail, the strain and struggle with which the traditions of the Church are put forth signal their impotence.

☞ A lively picture describing the weight and substance of  
Gods moſt blessed word agaynſt the doctrines and  
vanities of mans traditions.



Figure 9. 1576 and 1583 *Actes & Monuments* woodcut, “A lively picture describing the weight and substance of God’s most blessed word against the doctrines and vanities of mans traditions.”

For Foxe, the potency of written text is due, in part, to its ability to persist. A letter of “public testimony given out by the University of Oxford, touching the commendation of the great learning and good life of John Wycliffe” published in *Actes & Monuments* suggests that it is the enduring nature of written discourse that makes it useful for combating ignorance and superstition: “whensoever witness by word of mouth can not be present, the pen by writing may supply the same.”<sup>153</sup> In the context of this letter, the loss of the “witness of the mouth” refers not only to a loss of the memory of an event, but also to the fact that

<sup>153</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 448.

Wycliffe's ability to transmit a message orally is taken from him with his life. For Foxe, the martyrologist and reformer, print provides a valuable means of recording the finite acts of believers for posterity. Foxe's encouragement to Christians to pursue encounters with written religious discourse does not constitute an end in itself. Foxe views the reading and hearing of religious texts as a means of accomplishing acts of faith. These acts—when witnessed first-hand or when encountered in written form—provide their audience with the means of accomplishing new acts of faith which in turn provide witness to another audience.

Acts of faith are also what distinguish the appearance of true believers from that of feigned believers. In book I of the 1583 *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe explains that the visible church includes two types of people—true and feigned believers:

the one standeth of such as be of outward profession only, the other which by election inwardly are joined to Christ, the first in words & lips seemeth to honor Christ, and are in the visible Church only, but not in the Church invisible, & partaketh the outward Sacraments of Christ, but not the inward blessing of Christ: the other are both in the visible & also in the invisible Church of Christ, which not in words only and outward profession, but also in heart do truly serve & honor Christ, partaking not only the Sacraments, but also the heavenly blessings and grace of Christ.<sup>154</sup>

The fact that sincerity of belief separates true from feigned believers renders judging the heart a necessary activity when seeking to create a community of true believers. While Foxe's account acknowledges the difficulty of such a task, he repeatedly insists that certain actions indicate a believing heart. The highest act of true faith is the willing sacrifice of one's life for the Christian faith.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 31.



Foxe's views on printing, writing, reading, reform, and acts of faith can be detected throughout his volume, though his vision is not always laid out so plainly as it is in the passages noted here. And there are relatively few moments in *Actes & Monuments* when Foxe points to readers of texts and discusses the act of reading explicitly. Yet, the act of reading undergirds his entire project; discussions of the beliefs and practices for which Christians are martyred include subtle reminders that reading (or hearing another read) the Bible provides the impetus for believers to change their beliefs or actions. Reading text also leads to reading action, as certain actions are coded to signify true or feigned belief. The willing martyrs described in Foxe's volume are credited with true belief and offer the ultimate witness of faith for others to follow.

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The amplified value placed on reading in early modern England can be seen as part of the broader shift from orality to literacy which began in the West with the ancient Greeks. There was also occurring at this time a shift from scribal to print culture. The first four editions of *Actes & Monuments* provide a valuable record of these shifting oral, written, and print cultures. As Foxe's account reveals, the attitudes and practices associated with each of these types of communication interacted dynamically with one another. For example, John N. King notes that Foxe's use of manuscript sources in compiling his volume exemplifies the continuation of manuscript circulation and scribal publication after the advent of printing. Moreover, though Foxe values print more than scribal publication because of its relative efficiency and low cost, he does not draw a sharp distinction between manuscript and print in enumerating codices in the list of "Names of the Authors Alleged in this Book" which he

added to the 1570 *Actes & Monuments*.<sup>155</sup> The shifting roles and influence of oral, scribal and print cultures were driven in large part by technological advances in the mass-production of print and were linked to the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura*. However, as Foxe's account reveals, encountering the written Word of God did not necessarily require that one read.

Both the technology and theology driving the budding print culture outpaced the ability of some men, women, and children, particularly of the lower orders of society, to develop high literacy levels. David Cressy argues that in England "more than two-thirds of the men and nine-tenths of the women were so illiterate at the time of the civil war that they could not even write their own names."<sup>156</sup> Cressy reaches his estimates by examining the signatures on early modern documents. In many cases when a document requires a signature, a mark is left instead of a written name. But Thomas notes that reading and writing were not taught together in early modern England and that literacy estimates cannot accurately be based on the assumption "that a good reader was usually able to sign his or her name."<sup>157</sup> Thomas further notes that the labels "literate" and "illiterate" do not accurately capture the wide range of literate abilities of early modern English people. For example, black letter type was more commonly decipherable by common people than was roman type.<sup>158</sup> And because writing was taught at an older age than reading, many who could read type could not read the specialized scripts of written documents.<sup>159</sup> The ability to read Latin and Greek represented an even higher level of literacy within this culture.<sup>160</sup> This elaborate hierarchy of literacy skills makes it difficult to determine just what portion of the early modern English population

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<sup>155</sup> King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*, 45.

<sup>156</sup> Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 2.

<sup>157</sup> Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," 102.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101.

was “literate.” What we do know is that there was a range of literate ability and that the most widely accessible texts were those printed in black letter.

Much as there was a range of literate ability in early modern England, there were also various ways for the less literate or illiterate to encounter texts. The new commercial and religious rigor with which textual interaction was promoted at this time precipitated an increased intermingling of oral and print cultures. One need not necessarily be literate, for example, to participate in religious practices based in literacy. In religious matters in particular, there were ways to interact with text without being literate, such as memorizing and saying “by heart” various prayers, passages, psalms, sermons, etc.<sup>161</sup> Hearing religious texts read aloud was also common at this time. A 1541 proclamation ordered that the English Bibles placed in parish churches for general use not be read “with loud and high voices” during service times; the implication is that these Bibles were read aloud regularly.<sup>162</sup>

Foxe’s volume includes accounts dating back to the first century CE. Accounts of martyrs predating the sixteenth century in Foxe’s volume are relevant to the current discussion of oral, scribal and print culture in early modern England insofar as Foxe’s selection and editing of these accounts reflects his sixteenth-century values. Foxe’s *Actes & Monuments* captures various aspects of oral, scribal, and print cultures as well as their dynamic interactions. Foxe works hard to glorify learning and reading throughout *Actes & Monuments*, and yet many of the martyrs he commemorates and praises are not able to read. As Zollinger has noted, many of the accounts throughout *Actes & Monuments* describe believers who are illiterate or who have varying literate abilities. Zollinger’s examinations of the accounts of martyrs who encounter the Bible without the ability to read support her

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<sup>161</sup> Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 14-15.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas, “The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England,” 107.

assertion that many reform-minded sixteenth-century laity inhabited a space between literacy and orality.<sup>163</sup> Many Christians represented in Foxe's volume who could not read nevertheless owned Bibles that they had others read aloud. Public oral readings were also a way for believers who could not read to encounter the Word of God. Other believers memorized religious texts—even whole books of the Bible—in lieu of reading them. David Scott Kastan argues that *Actes & Monuments* was itself as much intended as a volume to be viewed as it was to be read, noting that “the book's imposing physicality is unquestionably part of its polemical strategy, overwhelming resistance to its historical vision by sheer magnitude of the demonstration.”<sup>164</sup>

Henry VIII's 1538 injunctions for the reformation of the Church, recorded in *Actes & Monuments*, reflect an increased intermingling of oral and written practice. Among other things, Henry orders parish clergy to place English Bibles in their churches with the instruction that they “shall discourage no man, privately nor apertly, from the reading or hearing of the said Bible, but shall expressly provoke, stir & exhort every person to read the same, as that which is the very lively word of God, that every Christian person is bound to embrace, believe, & follow.”<sup>165</sup> In the same set of injunctions Henry also orders parish clergy to supervise their parishioners' memorization of the creed and Pater Noster. Henry's order to make English Bibles available to the laity represents a change to the status-quo, while his command that all laity learn the Pater Noster and creed echoes and reaffirms late-medieval attempts at better training the laity.<sup>166</sup> The inclusion of encouragement to hear the Bible

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<sup>163</sup> Cynthia Wittman Zollinger, “‘The booke, the leafe, yea and the very sentence’: Sixteenth-Century Literacy in Text and Context,” in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>164</sup> David Scott Kastan, “Little Foxes,” in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 117.

<sup>165</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 1096.

<sup>166</sup> See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*.

alongside encouragement to read the Bible may suggest a practical awareness of the limited abilities of average mainstream laity to engage text. The injunction to memorize the creed and Pater Noster, however, includes no literate component. Parishioners must memorize the creed and Pater Noster regardless of their ability to read. The injunctions even prescribe an examination “every Lent” of every person at the time of confession:

whether they can recite the Articles of our faith, the Pater Noster in English [...] wherein if they be not perfect, ye shall declare to them, that every Christian person ought to know the same before they should receive the blessed Sacrament of the Alter, and monish them to learn the same more perfectly by the next year following, or else, like as they ought not to presume to come to Gods board without perfect knowledge of the same (and if they do, it is to the great peril of their souls).<sup>167</sup>

Even as the 1538 injunctions for the Reformation of the Church encourage mainstream Christians to embrace the written Word, they also uphold rote memorization as necessary for one’s salvation. The injunction encouraging Bible reading is accompanied by a caution “to avoid all contention and alteration therein, and to use an honest sobriety in the inquisition of the true sense of the same, and to refer the explication of the obscure places, to men of higher judgment in scripture.”<sup>168</sup> Significantly, the injunction to memorize the creed and Pater Noster includes no such warning. For Henry and his advisors, the important thing is that memorization of these religious texts is accomplished; the manner of memorization is inconsequential. Reading, on the other hand, is perceived as potentially divisive, and so the manner of reading is prescribed in an effort to avoid contention. Henry’s anxieties regarding the potential for divergent interpretations of the Bible have been noted in the previous

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<sup>167</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 1096.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

chapter, but they are relevant to this discussion of oral versus literate religious practice. Discourse that has been regularized and memorized is static; it is always encountered in the same order and resists summary or interpretation by inviting repetition. A reader discussing a text, on the other hand, can hardly help but summarize and interpret it. It is significant that even as Henry encouraged mainstream laity to engage print culture, he also strenuously upheld certain oral practices as beneficial to their souls.

A study of the whole of Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* reveals a give and take between the values and practices associated with orality and literacy. The notion that mainstream religious culture in early modern England progressed from oral to written is inaccurate. As Ong has noted, print cultures "sustain traces of oral culture, but they do so to varying degrees."<sup>169</sup> Foxe upholds certain characteristics of oral, scribal and print culture while he resists others to the end that a reformed, unified Church might emerge in England.

Eric A. Havelock and others have noted some of the ways cultural approaches to knowledge change when shifts in orality and literacy occur. Whereas orally preserved discourse requires a cognitive focus on memorization and preservation, written discourse creates a critical distance between the discourse and the subject that enables the reader to approach the text critically. In other words, when the accurate endurance of a piece of discourse can generally be taken for granted, the individual is freed to examine and question. Havelock describes memorization and recitation in ancient Greece as mimicry. For centuries, the oral Greeks attained and maintained cultural unity through the memorization and recitation of Homeric poems. Havelock describes Greek oral culture: "You did not learn your ethics and politics, skills and directives, by having them presented to you as a corpus for

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<sup>169</sup> Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 25.

silent study, reflection and absorption. You were not asked to grasp their principles through rational analysis. You were not invited to so much as think of them. Instead you submitted to the paideutic spell.”<sup>170</sup> Sixteenth-century English Christians were often encouraged to memorize set religious texts. Memorization of such texts, when undertaken faithfully, could not but create a level of uniformity among believers, since believers had minimal control over memorized, static texts. But sixteenth-century Christians were also often invited to read and examine the Word of God for themselves. Foxe highly values the critical examination of Scripture in his volume.

The account of John Marbecke demonstrates the value Foxe places on critical examination and judgment and the correlative faith he places in print to facilitate such activities. Marbecke is examined several times by Church authorities beginning in 1544.<sup>171</sup> One of the recurring issues taken up during these examinations is Marbecke’s composition of a concordance of the Bible. In resistance to the content of his concordance, Church authorities press Marbecke to reveal the source of his controversial text. During his fourth examination Marbecke reasserts that the concordance is his own composition and explains how he came to compose it:

When Thomas Matthews bible came first out in print, I was much desirous to have one of them: and being a poor man not able to buy one of them, determined with my self to borrow one among my friends, & to write it forth. And when I had written out the 5. books of Moses in fair great paper, & was entered into the book of joshua, my friend M. Turner chanced to steal upon me unawares, & seeing me writing out the Bible, asked me what I meant thereby. And when I had told him the cause: Tush,

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<sup>170</sup> Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 159.

<sup>171</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments [...]* (1583 edition), 1214-1220.

quoth he, though goest about a vain and tedious labor. But this were a profitable work for thee, to set out a Concordance in English. A Concordance said I? what is that? Then he told me it was a book to find out any word in the whole Bible by the letter, & that there was such a one in Latin already. Then I told him I had no learning to go about such a thing. Enough, quoth he, for that matter, for it requireth not so much learning, as diligence.<sup>172</sup>

Turner's reaction to Marbecke's copying down of the Bible indicates a shift from a scribal to a print culture mindset. Whereas creating written copies of texts had once been a highly valued activity, Turner calls Marbecke's effort "vain" and "tedious."

Ong argues that even after writing had been deeply interiorized in the West, manuscript culture remained marginally oral, rendering manuscripts speech-aides and memory-aides much more than objects in themselves.<sup>173</sup> The moveable-type printing press was more accurate, easier to use, and much more efficient than producing manuscripts by hand had been. Ong suggests that the perceived permanence of print is greater than that of writing: "[p]rint suggests that words are things far more than writing ever did."<sup>174</sup> Unlike a written manuscript, "[p]rint encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion."<sup>175</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein makes similar claims about the nature of print when she suggests that preservation is possibly the most important feature of print.<sup>176</sup> In the case of manuscripts, "[h]owever they might be collected or guarded within some great message center, their ultimate dispersal and loss was

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 1217.

<sup>173</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 117.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>176</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* Vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 113.



inevitable. To be transmitted by writing from one generation to the next, information had to be conveyed by drifting texts and vanishing manuscripts.”<sup>177</sup> Print allowed for texts to be reproduced at a much lower cost, and the machination of the print process overcame human error associated with scribal drift.

Turner’s assertion that copying the Bible is “vain” suggests that he believes little can be gained by such an activity. The text of the Matthew Bible has already been “finalized”; once printed it has become a static object of interpretation. Turner describes the act of creating a concordance, on the other hand, as “profitable.” The increased availability of print text made it easier for readers such as Marbecke to participate in a wider range of cognitive activities, such as synthesis and summary. A concordance allows readers to assert a higher level of authority over a text as they re-order their experience of a text topically. Perhaps it is this quality that prompts Turner to call the creation of a concordance “profitable.”

What Turner calls “profitable,” Marbecke’s examiners find objectionable. Marbecke’s persecution takes place after prohibitions on reading vernacular Bibles have been lifted, so it is striking that he is persecuted for engaging a vernacular religious text. Though most church leaders in sixteenth-century England accepted (and many even promoted) the reading of vernacular religious texts, their ideas regarding proper use of these texts varied. Creating a concordance as Marbecke does entails making interpretive judgments about the meaning and importance of various sections of the Bible. Foxe values this higher level of textual interaction in his volume by celebrating those who engage in it.

Adrian Johns notes, however, the extent to which Foxe’s glorification of print and the possibility it unfolds was self-serving propaganda. Despite the relative ease with which regularized texts could be produced with the printing press, textual regularity was less a

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 114.

reality than an ideal propagated by early modern printers and writers. The hasty practices of many writers and printers and the piracy of printed texts made early modern texts less reliable than printers and writers, such as Day and Foxe, for example, would have readers believe.<sup>178</sup> There are certainly examples of unreliable printings of the Bible in the early modern period. For example, Luther's frustration over the production of erroneous, pirated copies of his German Bible contributed to his decision to emphasize preaching and the study of his catechism rather than the reading of the Bible. And Tyndale complains bitterly in the preface to his 1535 New Testament about the pirated copies of his translation that George Joye altered and printed under Tyndale's name.<sup>179</sup> Johns argues that the "air of intrinsic reliability" associated with print has been carefully crafted over the centuries to support its commercial success.<sup>180</sup> Foxe, like so many other early modern writers who circulated their texts in print, had a vested interest in building the ethos of that medium. Foxe worked to raise the ethos of his own text by asserting its accuracy and truthfulness regularly. Moreover, for Foxe, asserting the credibility of print supported his goals of purifying the Church through print, since corrupted print would not provide an acceptable basis for purifying the Church.

The oral Greek culture Havelock describes is far removed from Foxe's sixteenth-century account of Marbecke. The cognitive possibility Marbecke's creation of a concordance of the Bible represents is not new to the early modern West as a whole. However, it does signify the impact of increased access to religious vernacular text on mainstream Christians in early modern England. Havelock's contrast between oral and written culture is relevant insofar as the increased availability of print made possible an

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<sup>178</sup> Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (TCU Library, *ACLS Humanities E-Book*: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5, <http://hdl.handle.net.ezproxy.tcu.edu/2027/heb.01007> (accessed February 20, 2009).

<sup>179</sup> Daniell, *William Tyndale*, 321.

<sup>180</sup> Johns, *The Nature of the Book*, 2-3.

increased reliance on textual records for literate and illiterate Christians alike. In other words, even early modern Christians who could not read were encouraged to rely less and less on their memories to accurately maintain and access religious records. Illiterate members of the laity could (and often did) purchase copies of the Bible that others would read to them. Even though unable to read for themselves, these Christians were in possession of a stable record that they needn't worry about preserving with their minds.

Just as textual records of discourse create a space between readers and words that enables readers to examine texts critically, to a lesser degree an increased availability of text facilitates a critical space between hearers and oral communication. For example, readily available text impacted the manner in which the laity might listen to readings of religious texts. Foxe's account of the believers in the diocese of Lincoln martyred on the cusp of the English Reformation demonstrates various text-based oral activities. Foxe is careful to note of the martyrs in Lincoln that "few or none were learned, being simple laborers and artificers, but as it please the Lord to work in them knowledge and understanding, by reading a few English books, such as they could get in corners."<sup>181</sup> Foxe's account indicates that there was at least some ability to read among this group. Here, as elsewhere in *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe does not descriptively portray the act of reading in his historical account. We are not told where or when these believers read or how many were present at a reading. However, Foxe's characterization of what occurs after reading or hearing English religious books is revealing:

Such reasons and allegations as these and other like, taken out of the scripture, and out of the Shepherds Calendar, Wickliffes wicket, and out of other books they had amongst them. And although there was no learned man with them to ground them in

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<sup>181</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 836.

their doctrine, yet they conferring and communing together among themselves, did convert one another, the Lords hand working with them marvelously.<sup>182</sup>

Like other communities of believers idealized in Foxe's volume, this group of believers is described as harmonious and unified. But reading or hearing the Bible is not sufficient in Foxe's account for creating a unified community. Neither is reading the Bible sufficient for "ground[ing] them in their doctrine." Rather, they "convert" one another by "conferring" and "communing" together and by "the Lords hand."<sup>183</sup> Here, oral discourse is a tool for overcoming divergent understandings of text. The terms "convert" and "confer" suggest that there is a suasive aspect to oral religious discourse within this community. Unlike the oral Greeks who Havelock describes as having lived lives "without self-examination,"<sup>184</sup> the community of believers in Lincoln are portrayed critically analyzing their religious convictions in Foxe's account. Foxe's account of martyrs in the Diocese of Lincoln at the cusp of the English Reformation demonstrates the impact on illiterate laity of the increased availability of texts. Because their mental energies are not consumed with preserving what they are hearing, auditors are free to question and critically examine.

Like Henry VIII, Foxe recognizes the potential for divergent interpretations of the Bible to threaten the unity of the purified Christian community he wishes to promote in England. But while Henry pushes lay-readers to defer the interpretation of "obscure places"

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Susan Felch notes in "Shaping the Reader in the *Acts and Monuments*," in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1997) that despite the Reformation ideal of unmediated encounters between text and reader, the reformation church was faced immediately with negotiating between its belief on the one hand of the sufficiency of Scripture and the on the other hand the need to establish interpretive coherence. Felch notes that Calvin's solution to this problem was to argue that there was "a permanent relationship between faith and the Word" (53). "Calvin explained that although external witnesses to the truth of the Bible should be sufficient to generate faith, the radical nature of sin so blinds the mind, that 'without the illumination of the Spirit, the Word can do nothing'. Nevertheless, by the illumination of the Spirit, the true believer is enabled to understand the Scriptures and to do so in a way consistent with fellow Christians. This conviction that true believers will agree on essential areas of doctrine and life through the witness of the Spirit resurfaces throughout Reformation literature." (53).

<sup>184</sup> Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 190.

to “men of higher judgment in scripture,” Foxe envisions a community of unlearned believers accomplishing shared belief through oral discussions of the religious texts they study together. For both Henry and Foxe, reading is understood to be a potential source of faith and of heresy.

Foxe’s method for attaining and preserving religious agreement contrasts sharply with the methods of the persecutors of the martyrs of Lincoln. Foxe’s account of these martyrs narrowly predates England’s break from Rome. He notes the

blind ignorance & uncourteous dealing of the bishops against them, not only in that they, by their violent oath, and captious interrogatories, constrained the children to accuse their parents and parents their children; the husband the wife, & the wife the husband. &c. but especially in the most wrongfully they so afflicted them, without all good reason or cause, only for the sincere verity of Gods word, & reading of Holy Scriptures.<sup>185</sup>

Throughout his volume, Foxe condemns the violent Roman Catholic methods for maintaining a united community of believers.<sup>186</sup> Foxe asserts that true union can be reached through reasonable discourse. Foxe values oral discourse as a means of norming divergent beliefs that potentially arise as a result of reading. The insinuation is that the method for attaining and maintaining consensus reflects accordingly on the value of the beliefs consented to.

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<sup>185</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 836.

<sup>186</sup> The violent and cruel means of the Roman Catholic Church for maintaining religious union are especially pronounced in book 5 of the 1563 version of *Actes & Monuments* and in books 10, 11, and 12 of the 1570, 1576 and 1583 versions. One such example of the extreme cruelty exercised on Foxe’s martyrs is depicted in a woodcut of a child coming out of its mother’s womb while she is burning being thrown back into the fire. Greenblatt notes in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* that Protestant hagiography, such as Foxe’s *Actes & Monuments*, insists that the Church’s relation to dissent was characterized by a recourse to violence (77). The intended implication of this assertion was that the church must be wrong if they had to rely on violence rather than reason (as Augustine did, for example) in their fight against Protestantism (77).

As Foxe continues his account of the martyrs in Lincoln, he creates for his readers a parallel experience of reading, followed by “discourse” to “convert,” followed by martyrdom. Foxe offers the beliefs of these martyrs, the Scriptural basis for these beliefs, and discursive defenses of these beliefs which textually mimic an oral exchange. Only after this defense of the beliefs and actions of these believers—only after Foxe’s readers have been invited to join this community of believers by assenting to their views—does Foxe describe their deaths. Readers are thus enabled to participate vicariously in the glorified condemnation and suffering of these martyrs at the hands of Roman Catholic Church authorities.

Throughout his volume, Foxe embraces the communal nature of oral discourse and puts it in the service of attaining and maintaining religious agreement. Unlike speaking, reading is not necessarily a communal activity. But also unlike oral discourse, text can be regularized, duplicated and preserved with relatively little effort. McGee explains shifts toward greater text-dominance in terms of the increased perception of text communication as permanent:

Understanding is more important than truth in an oral culture. It doesn’t matter to me whether my audience agrees with what I have to say. I’m very flattered that they’ll listen to me. In other words, truth is not a consideration in our conversation, but understanding is a consideration. I will go out of my way in terms of being more elaborate, coming back and finding new examples to make sure that my audience understands. Truth doesn’t matter as much in an oral culture because it’s not possible. It’s hard to say something that’s permanent. We aim for a version or a kind of truth that our technologies of recording and remembering are up to. With the equipment we’re born with—our tongues and our ears and our inventions of language—the kind

of truth that an oral culture is up to is the truth of understanding, *verstehen*. The invention of writing, I believe, can be characterized as a response to the gravest and most glaring weakness of oral communication: its impermanence.<sup>187</sup>

Reformers rejected traditions, beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church on the basis that they were not based on the Bible. In appealing to this sacred text as the primary authority regarding Christian belief and practice, reformers became extremely interested in the accuracy and accessibility of the Bible—goals for which they enlisted the new print technology. *Actes & Monuments* suggests that permanence is one of the most valuable qualities of print. For example, Foxe records a sermon in book five of his 1583 *Actes & Monuments* and explains that he has included this sermon alongside his account of William Thorpe for “the public utility of the reader, to whom by the studious reading thereof, might rise plentiful matter of true Christian information, both of the wholesome fearing of God, and of the right guiding of every Christian mans life.”<sup>188</sup> Here, print is valued for its ability to preserve and spread oral discourse, such as sermons, that might contribute to the purification of the Church.

There is also a sense in which Foxe valued print for its fluidity. While Foxe perpetuated the notion that print was a stable, reliable medium, he also capitalized on its flexibility by revising *Actes & Monuments* four times—a task that would have been much more difficult in a manuscript culture. Foxe engages a narrative of progress and suggests that these revisions are improvements in order to contribute to the positive picture of print he works to create in his volume.

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<sup>187</sup> McGee, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee*, ed. Carol Corbin (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 65.

<sup>188</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 552.

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The previous section considered the ways Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* values various aspects of oral, scribal and print cultures as useful for fostering a purified Christian community of believers in England. For Foxe, the task of defining such a community of true believers raised interpretive difficulties. As noted earlier, in book I of *Actes & Monuments* Foxe asserts that within the visible church there are two types of people—true and feigned believers.<sup>189</sup> Interpreting or “reading” people and determining whether they belong to the community of true believers is a difficult task, since what separates these two types of people is the sincerity of their beliefs “in heart”; outwardly, both “seemeth to honor Christ” with words and lips.

For Foxe, the act of martyrdom resolves the difficulty of identifying true and feigned believers. While all members of the visible church appear to honor Christ sincerely with their words and through their participation in the Sacraments of Christ, only true believers are willing to die as martyrs for their beliefs. The pinnacle of Foxe's account of the martyrs of Windsor, for example, is his description of their deaths: “And so yielded they up their souls to the father of heaven, in the faith of his dear son Jesus Christ, with such humility and steadfastness, that many which saw their patient suffering confessed that they could have found in their hearts (at that present) to have died with them.”<sup>190</sup> In *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe offers examples of readers, writers, and printers, but he is consistently more interested in examples of the true faith and of martyrdom than he is in literate activity. For Foxe, the literacy-based activities of translating, writing, printing and reading and oral activities such as preaching and conversing are valuable for purifying the Church and spreading the true

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 1220.



Christian message. Foxe's accounts of martyrs are filled with portrayals of readers who go on to engage in activities that serve as testaments to their faith such as preaching and conversing about their beliefs and even dying for them. Throughout *Actes & Monuments*, Foxe chronicles the "patient suffering" of true believers. The manner in which a true martyr dies provides the ultimate proof of his or her membership in the community of true believers. The patient suffering and death of a martyr also serves Foxe's end of spreading the true faith; in many of his accounts observers of a martyr's death are converted. In the account of the Lincoln martyrs, Foxe reports that the conversion of many of the observers is so complete that they are willing to make the ultimate commitment to their beliefs—to die for them. By implication, Foxe's readers are also willing to be martyred, since for Foxe, reading and witnessing are not only conversion activities but also the first step leading down a path to martyrdom.

Foxe suggests that persecution is a standard component of Christian life. For example, in book 4 of the 1583 edition of *Actes & Monuments* Foxe writes that even those believers who fled to other countries to escape persecution in England were followed by persecution. Foxe asserts that being followed by persecution is a sign of the faithful:

But as the cross commonly followeth the verity & sincere preaching of Gods word: so neither could these be suffered to live in rest. There are yet to be seen, the consultations of Lawyers, Archbishops and bishops of France, as Narbonensis, Arelatensis, Aquesis and Albanensis, devised amongst themselves, and yet remain in writing, for the abolishing, & extirpating of these Valdenses. written above 300. years ago: whereby it appeareth, there was a great number in France.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 232.

Foxe suggests that persecution verifies one's relationship to God again in book 5 of his 1583 edition of *Actes & Monuments* when he refers to martyrs as the heel of Christ.<sup>192</sup>

Significantly, this assertion is made within the context of discussing the loosing of Satan after his 1000 years of bondage. This reference to the heel of Christ calls to mind the curse placed on Satan after the fall into sin in Genesis: "he will crush your head and you will strike his heel." Foxe's assertion that the Christian martyrs are the heel of Christ therefore grounds the notion of martyrdom in one of the earliest Christian sacred texts. It also validates martyrdom as a Christian activity in the highest way by suggesting that when one is martyred, one is part of Christ's body. The manner in which a martyr faces death indicates whether or not he or she is part of Christ's body, a true believer.

Foxe aims to do more in his volume than help readers discern between true believers and feigned; he aims ultimately to move his readers to be and act as true believers themselves. Example is Foxe's means for impacting the actions of his readers. The importance of imitation in the early modern period has been well documented. This chapter examines Foxe's ecclesiastical history and martyrology as an object of imitation. Or, in other words, this is a study of exemplarity. *Actes & Monuments* is crafted in such a way as to impact the actions of its readers/hearers/viewers. This notion is related to, but distinct from scholarship on early modern imitation. As Timothy Hampton explains in *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*, imitation has come to be seen as the cornerstone of writing in the early modern period;<sup>193</sup> the study of exemplarity shifts this enquiry to the level of reading. "The exemplary figure in the Renaissance text can be seen as a marked sign that bears the moral and historical authority of antiquity and engages the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>193</sup> Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 5.

reader in a dialogue with the past, a dialogue to be played out [...] on the stage of public action.”<sup>194</sup> In other words, imitation and exemplarity are two views of the same early modern phenomenon of looking to models to guide thought, word and action. The early modern texts we study can be viewed as models or examples or they may be viewed as imitations of models. Hampton’s distinction is useful because it opens up new possibilities for considering the relationships between written models or examples and actions other than writing. Or, put another way, while studies of early modern imitation have focused on the influence of texts as models for writers, a study of exemplarity focuses on the influence of texts as models for action. As we have noted, Foxe’s stated goal for compiling *Actes & Monuments* is to bring about a more complete purification of the Church. The sort of influence Foxe seeks to accomplish over his readers and hearers, therefore, is not limited to literary production. On the contrary, for Foxe, the act of martyrdom provides the ultimate witness of one’s faith. *Actes & Monuments* provides readers and hearers with examples of how to live and die in such a way as to further the purification of the Christian Church.

The account of Thomas Bilney demonstrates Foxe’s understanding of reading as a means of moving Christians to acts of faith. Bilney’s conversion begins with reading the Bible and ends in his conviction to risk his life and preach to others. Foxe includes a letter by Bilney in which he explains his conversion experience:

But at the last I heard speak of Jesus, even then when the new Testament was first set forth by Erasmus. Which, when I understood to be eloquently done by him, being allured rather for the Latin, then for the word of God (for at that time, I knew not what it meant) I bought it even by the providence of God, as I do now well understand and perceive: And at the first reading, as I remember I chanced upon this

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

sentence of S. Paul (O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul) in his first Epistle to Timothy and first chapter: It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief and principal. This our sentence, through Gods instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins and being almost in despair, that immediately, I felt a marvelous comfort and quietness, in so much, that my bruised bones leapt for joy.

[...]

As soon as (according to the measure of grace given unto me of God) I began to taste & savor of this heavenly lesson, which no man can teach but only God, which revealed the same unto Peter: I desired the Lord to increase my faith: and at last, I desired nothing more, then that I being so comforted by him, might be strengthened by his holy spirit and grace from above, that I might teach the wicked his ways, which are mercy and truth, and that the wicked might be converted into him by me, which sometime was also wicked, which thing, whilst that with all my power, I did endeavor before my Lord Cardinal and your fatherhood, Christ was blasphemed in me (and this is my only comfort in these my afflictions) whom with my whole power I do teach and set forth.<sup>195</sup>

Bilney's letter suggests that his initial acts of faith—preaching—were motivated by his reading of religious texts. As Foxe's account of Bilney continues, the boldness of Bilney's decision to share his beliefs with others is emphasized. At one point, Bilney is pulled out of the pulpit (Figure 10).<sup>196</sup> The notion that true believers suffer persecution patiently is

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<sup>195</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 1005.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 1001.

represented pictorially in this woodcut. The peaceful demeanor of Bilney and his auditors provides a sharp contrast to the snarling face and forceful grasp of the two men pulling Bilney from the pulpit. Because of the size of Foxe's volume, it is unlikely that an average layperson read it in its entirety. Most people encountered *Actes & Monuments* in their church where a copy had been placed for public use and probably read short accounts from time to time or heard someone reading a portion of *Actes & Monuments* aloud to a group of listeners. The many woodcuts of the martyrs that pepper Foxe's volume would have had the effect of highlighting his accounts of certain martyrs. These images provided those unable to read with a means of accessing Foxe's message or a means of remembering the story of a martyr they may have heard read aloud. In this woodcut, the contrast between the patient suffering of martyrs and the forceful, violent means of the Roman Catholic authorities is highlighted. This woodcut visually reinforces the notion that members of the community of true believers—the "invisible church"—can be distinguished from feigned believers by their actions and demeanor.



Figure 10. 1583 *Actes & Monuments* woodcut of Thomas Bilney being pulled from the pulpit

Foxe's account of Bilney includes a couple of woodcuts, which is unusual for Foxe's volume.<sup>197</sup> The second woodcut accompanying Foxe's account of Bilney depicts Bilney in the Tower on the eve of his death (Figure 11).<sup>198</sup> Foxe's narrative and the text of the woodcut explain that Bilney is testing his finger in a candle as he contemplates his impending death at the stake. The text surrounding this woodcut reinforces the connection depicted in the woodcut between reading the Bible and the patient suffering of a martyr:

<sup>197</sup> In "Illustrating the Book: A Protestant Dilemma," in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002) Andrew Pettegree notes that when Foxe's volume was published English publishing technology was far behind that on the continent, and so including illustrations was a far more daunting task for Foxe and his publisher, John Day. The inclusion and placement of a woodcut in *Actes & Monuments* must be considered deliberate, therefore.

<sup>198</sup> Foxe, *Actes & Monuments* [...] (1583 edition), 1012.

the Friday following at night, which was before the day of his execution, being S. Magnus day Saturday, the said Bilney had divers of his friends resorting unto him in the Guildhall, where he was kept. Amongst whom one of the said friends finding him eating of an Albrow with such a cheerful heart and quiet mind as he did, said that he was glad to see him at that time, so shortly before his heavy and painful departure, so heartily to refresh himself. Whereunto he answered: Oh said he, I follow the example of the husbandmen of the country who having a ruinous house to dwell in, yet bestow as long as they may, to hold it up, and so do I now with this ruinous house of my body, and with Gods creatures in thanks to him, refresh the same as ye see. Then sitting with his said friends in godly talk, to their edification some put him in mind that though the fire, which he should suffer the next day should be of great heat unto his body, yet the comfort of Gods spirit should cool it to his everlasting refreshing. At this word said Tho. Bilney putting his hand toward the flame of the candle burning before them (as also he did divers times besides) and feeling the heat thereof, O (said he) I feel by experience, & have known it long by Philosophy, that fire by God's ordinance is naturally hot, but yet I am persuaded by Gods holy word, and by the experience of some spoken of in the same, that in the flame they felt no heat, and in the fire they felt no consumption: and I constantly believe, that howsoever the stubble of this my body shall be wasted by it, yet my soul and spirit shall be purged thereby: a pain for the time, whereupon notwithstanding followeth joy unspeakable. And here he much entreated of this place of scripture: [...] *Feare not, for I redeem thee, and called thee by the name thou art mine own. When thou goest through the water, I will be with thee, and the strong floods shall not overflow thee. When though walkest in the*

*fire, it shall not burn thee, and the flame shall not kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord the God the holy one of Israel.* Which he did most comfortably entreat of, as well in respect of himself, as applying it to the particular use of his friends there present, of whom, some took such sweet fruit therein, that they caused the whole said sentence to be fair written in Tables, & some in their books The comfort whereof (in divers of them) was never taken from them to their dying day.<sup>199</sup>

A description of the godly constancy of Thomas Bilney, who being in prison, oftentimes prooved the fire with his finger.



Figure 11. 1583 *Actes & Monuments* woodcut of Thomas Bilney on the eve of his death with one hand on the Bible and the other in the flame of a candle

The image of Bilney testing the fire with his finger while reading the Bible reinforces the connection between reading the Bible and performing acts of faith that runs throughout this account. Bilney's calm in the face of death is as striking to Foxe's readers as it is to Bilney's friends. The contrast between Bilney's calm demeanor and his dire situation is brought to a head in this section of the narrative as he and his friends consider the painful experience of

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.



burning at the stake. The text of Isaiah 43 is provided as the explanation of how Bilney overcomes fear and anxiety. So strong is the effect of these words on Bilney that he exchanges the role of the comforted for the role of the comforter in his interactions with his friends.

The account of Bilney's death continues the portrayal of an unjust victim rising above his situation in order to take on the role of preacher and shepherd. Just before he is burned, Bilney addresses the crowd and confesses his faith to them.<sup>200</sup> And in the subsequent account of Master Stafford, Bilney is praised for his impact in Norfolk where he was martyred and in Cambridge, where he left much good "fruit."<sup>201</sup> There is a sense here of the succession of martyrs. Bilney is credited with positively impacting the faith and actions of Master Stafford who in turn is credited in Foxe's account with converting a Roman Catholic priest to reformed beliefs.

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Foxe offers accounts of martyrs such as Bilney and Master Stafford in order to provide readers with examples to follow. The impact Foxe suggests Bilney has on Master Stafford parallels the impact on readers Foxe intends for his text. Foxe multiplies the effects of the witness of martyrs such as Bilney by preserving their words and actions in print. On one hand, Foxe values print for its ability to contain a truth, but on the other hand, he repeatedly depicts acts of reading leading to actions such as preaching or the patient suffering of persecution. Reading is not an end in itself, but rather a means of creating the impetus for Christian acts of faith in others. Certainly the fact that Foxe's martyrs are so often prompted to preach is a reflection of the reality of the time; not many could read for themselves, so

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 1012-1013.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 1013.

they needed to hear from others. Also, the theological commitments of reformers fostered not only a desire that Christians read the Bible, but also a desire that preaching play a central role in the communal religious life. In Foxe's *Actes & Monuments*, reading fuels the oral transmission of religious discourse.

Foxe's process of validating interpretation had the effect of rendering reading a communally-driven act. The best readers were those who best served the larger community of believers, and all valid interpretations were shared in common with the rest of the community. The communal context Foxe constructs for acts of faith—whether reading, preaching, or dying—reorients the gaze of his readers to a focus beyond the tumult of the present. Foxe constructs acts of faith as acts of participation in the historical community of believers dating back to the time of Christ. This is, perhaps, Foxe's most persuasive call to action. The Christian may rise above the petty and the mundane and participate in the cosmic struggle between God's people and Satan and the anti-Christ. Insofar as England takes up this cause, her status as a Christian nation is legitimated and the Church of Rome is defeated.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Common Words with which to Speak to God:

#### The Communal and Individual Significance of English Psalters in the Sixteenth Century

A central aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate the general desire in early modern England to maintain interpretive union among individual readers. Efforts to do so had an enormous impact on individual acts of reading, which were regularly situated within a communal context. Creating the perception that reading undertaken in private constitutes an act of communal participation was motivated, I argue, by a desire to maintain the stability of a national, united community of believers. As Targoff has noted, private and public religious practices were conflated in sixteenth-century England, as is demonstrated most dramatically in the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>202</sup> Targoff argues that

What emerges from the texts and instructions of the Book of Common Prayer is not the triumphant celebration of religious interiority that we so often associate with the Reformation [...] Instead, behind the introduction of a liturgy emphasizing the worshippers' active participation and consent lies the establishment's overarching desire to shape personal faith through public and standardized forms.<sup>203</sup>

As a result of Cranmer's reform of public worship forms, the gathered laity no longer undertake private, interior spiritual journeys of their own while a priest mediates on their behalf with words and gestures they do not understand; rather, the priest performs the service in order that the laity might understand his words and actions and be thinking about them rather than devising their own meditations and prayers as Roman Catholic Christians had

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<sup>202</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer*.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

been encouraged to do during corporate worship. This shift in public worship is significant because it erodes the distinction between public and private devotional practice.

As the religious climate in seventeenth-century England demonstrates, sixteenth-century attempts to maintain a national community bound and identified, in part, by religious belief and action failed in a certain sense. The histories of the schismatic religious groups present in seventeenth-century England, such as the Quakers, levelers, independents, and congregationalists need not be rehearsed here. Their existence alone indicates the lack of national religious agreement in the decades immediately following the publication of the first edition of the King James Bible in 1611—the event that serves as an endpoint to this study. I will argue that amid the many disputes over Church teaching and practice in the decades immediately following the Act of Supremacy, there existed a general, pressing optimism regarding the possibility of religious unity—an optimism that faded, or at least became more modest, during the seventeenth century.

Considering the hope for a unified Church in England and the disagreements about the beliefs and practices that might serve to define such a Church informs our understanding of the ways Bible reading was constructed and conceived at that time. In turn, a better understanding of early modern Bible reading practices may serve to inform our understanding of religious developments in England after 1611. Though *national* religious communion seemed less and less viable to seventeenth-century laity, clergy, and governors, groups of like-minded believers still worked to maintain the boundaries of their communities, even as they were confronted with controversies that called into question the very basis of their community's self-definition.

Our understanding of the seventeenth-century English religious climate is worth noting for one further reason; though the seventeenth century falls outside the scope of this project, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which our understanding of this period sometimes inappropriately informs the ways we view sixteenth-century England. For example, early modern psalm use often conjures up radical Protestant connotations. A central claim of this chapter is that this one-to-one association is incomplete—if not wholly inaccurate—within the context of sixteenth-century religious practice in England. Ian Green argues that “the metrical psalms were neither a puritan prerequisite nor a puritan monopoly” in early modern England.<sup>204</sup> The “Sternhold-Hopkins” Psalter, the most popular English Psalter of the early modern period, was used regularly for singing during corporate worship.<sup>205</sup> The Catholic, William Forest, who became chaplain to Mary I, left a metrical translation of the Psalms in manuscript.<sup>206</sup> Well into the seventeenth century, the Psalms were so thoroughly accepted by puritan and royalist alike that we are told metrical psalms were sung by royalists at York in 1644 during the civil wars.<sup>207</sup>

This chapter will consider the many iterations of the Psalms that flooded sixteenth-century culture as well as the dominant interpretive modes put forth in early modern preliminaries to editions of the Psalm and commentaries on the Psalms. The average member of the English laity would have been familiar with at least two versions of the Psalms: the metrical “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter, which was the standard for congregational singing<sup>208</sup> and Coverdale’s prose translation, which was bound with most editions of the liturgy and

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<sup>204</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 531.

<sup>205</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 67.

<sup>206</sup> Hallett Smith, “English Metrical Psalms in the Sixteenth Century and Their Literary Significance,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1946), 268.

<sup>207</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 531.

<sup>208</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 39.

was read at public worship according to the “Table for the Order of the Psalms, to be said at Morning and Evening Prayer.”<sup>209</sup> Unlike the Bible, the contest to create a dominant version of the Psalms was settled quickly when these two versions of the Psalms were attached to public worship. Coverdale’s translation predated the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter, but was considered less adequate for singing since it was in prose form. The English elite who sponsored the first printings of the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter soon came to loath its ploppy, predictable meter. But as the well-educated became more critical of this metrical version, the English masses embraced the easily-memorized and easily-sung translation. In addition to these two Psalters, which served as staples of corporate worship, numerous members of the court, reformers, and humanists produced their own translations of the Psalms. We will turn to one such example in the final chapter of this study.

Like the Bible prefaces examined in chapter one, the paratexts surrounding various editions of the Psalms provided an interpretive apparatus for sixteenth-century readers and situated individual acts of reading within a communal context. Unlike other books of the Bible whose influence waxed and waned throughout centuries of Christian history, the Psalms maintained a place of central significance. Our interest here will be with certain aspects of the Psalm tradition as it existed in sixteenth-century England. And yet, the influence of ancient and medieval Christians on early modern Christians is more palpable in the context of the Psalms than any other book of the Bible. From antiquity, the Psalms served as the basis for Christian homilies and books of exegesis. They were valued through use from the pulpit, in the schoolroom, and in the monastery up through the late Middle Ages.<sup>210</sup> This

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<sup>209</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 67.

<sup>210</sup> Michael P. Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song: The Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), xvi.

rich psalm culture influenced the relationship of early modern Christians to the Psalms in dramatic ways.

One characteristic historically assigned the Psalms that became especially important for sixteenth-century Christians in England was their multiple agency. While the Bible was valued throughout the history of the Christian Church as a document imparting God's will to his people, the words of the Psalms were historically recognized as the words of God, of King David, and of all Christians. The multiple agency historically assigned the words of the book of Psalms continued to inform the ways believers used this text in sixteenth-century England. The multiple agency early modern readers assigned the Psalms is relevant to the larger goals of this study in that such an approach to the Psalms both creates opportunities for readers to make meaning while at the same time limiting their possibilities for meaning-making—a dynamic impacting readers' conceptions of self and community in profound ways.

Literary studies of early modern psalm culture have often focused on the implications of the Psalms for budding early modern notions of self or individuality<sup>211</sup> and have neglected the larger communal context of private devotional psalm use. For example, Barbara Lewalski includes an examination of early modern psalm culture in her important volume, *Protestant Poetics*. There, she is primarily interested in understanding early modern psalm use in relation to the creation of sixteenth-century Protestant religious lyric. This aim leads her to focus on certain aspects of the psalm tradition that posit the Psalms as a model for interactions between individuals and God. For example, Lewalski interprets Henry Vaughan's version of Psalm 65 as a representation of the speaker's achievement, at last, of

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<sup>211</sup> In "Early Modern Collaboration and Theories of Authorship," *PMLA* 116 no. 3 (May, 2001) Heather Hirschfeld rehearses other major studies focusing on early modern notions of self and individuality.

appropriate praise that is “derived from the saints’ common store, the Psalter, but yet individual.”<sup>212</sup> Lewalski’s critical focus is useful for understanding the relation of the early modern psalm tradition to seventeenth-century lyric poetry, but it does not speak to prominent, mainstream elements of early modern psalm culture that ultimately situated individual devotional acts within a broader context of communal participation. Examining the modes of interpretation with which early modern Christians approached the Psalms reveals a conception of individual devotional reading as a practice of communal participation. In this chapter, we will examine the material existence of some of the most popular versions of the Psalms in mainstream sixteenth-century England as well as preliminaries and commentaries on the Psalms in order to understand how acts of reading, hearing, and singing these texts were constructed.

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Vernacular translations, paraphrases, and meditations on the Psalms were valued religious texts of the Reformation. The Psalms were embraced by reformers on all sides of the debate regarding the relationship of Scripture and Church tradition, since they were part of the Bible. Luther’s first lectures (1513) were on the Psalms, and his metrical psalms and hymns were among his first published works.<sup>213</sup> Calvin was also enthusiastic about the Psalms, since they provided texts from the Bible suitable for singing in place of hymns, which he rejected because they were written by men.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 52.

<sup>213</sup> Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 22.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-3. For a discussion of John Calvin’s significant contributions to the metrical psalms of Marot and Beze that became a central feature of Huguenot spirituality see also Francis Higman, “Music,” in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (New York: Routledge, 2000), 497-499.



In England, vernacular translations of the Psalms were read aloud during Morning and Evening Prayer, during communal worship, and in private they were the subject of personal moments of meditation. They were sung during public worship, as part of family devotional activities, and by individuals at work in the field or at the loom. The Psalms were commonly the basis for prayers of petition, penitence and praise. The language of the Psalm was metaphorically applied to the specific circumstances of an individual reader's life. The Psalms were most commonly used in the metrical form in early modern England,<sup>215</sup> but educated English men and women also composed various devotional and scholarly works based on the Psalms.

Material culture provides further evidence of the centrality of the Psalms in sixteenth-century England. Ninety English versions of the Psalms were published in the sixteenth century.<sup>216</sup> Rivkah Zim reminds us that these versions “include scholarly, devotional and literary versions of various kinds” and that “numerous versions survive in contemporary manuscripts” as well.<sup>217</sup> The most widely circulated version of the Psalms and perhaps the most widely circulated book in early modern England was the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter. Relying on the *Short-Title Catalogue*, Green estimates that 9 editions of the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter were published from 1562-69, 26 editions in the 1570s, 46 in the 1580s, 47 in the 1590s, and another 60 during the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>218</sup> Most copies of the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter were bound together with a Book of Common

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<sup>215</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 242.

<sup>216</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan, eds. “Literary Context” in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke: Volume II, The Psalms of David* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>217</sup> Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer 1535-1601* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-2.

<sup>218</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 509. In “English Metrical Psalms” Hallet Smith reports that *The Short-Title Catalog* “lists 280 editions of Sternhold and Hopkins down to 1640, exclusive of the Scottish psalters, which also contained many Old Version Psalms” (251).

Prayer, Bible or New Testament, and they often included liturgical material, such as metrical versions of different parts of the liturgy at the start and finish.<sup>219</sup>

In general, editions of the Psalms were smaller and therefore more affordable to purchase than copies of the Bible or New Testament. Gilby comments on the affordability of his translation of Theodora Beza's paraphrase of the Psalms in the preface to that volume: "now even the simplest poor man for a small piece of money may, by diligent reading in this book of that rare man Theodore Beza, attain to a better understanding of these holy Psalms of David."<sup>220</sup>

In addition to our knowledge of the great quantity of versions of the Psalms available in sixteenth-century England, surviving material evidence indicates the high value assigned the Psalms in day-to-day life. Women carried tiny Psalters in their pockets and stitched needlework covers for Psalters as gifts for daughters or friends. And the decorative covers that enclose copies of the "Sternhold Hopkins" version of the Psalms indicate the extent to which the book of Psalms was treasured as a sacred text.<sup>221</sup> The annotations and marks of long, diligent use present on myriad sixteenth-century Psalters that survive today also testify to the high importance placed on this book of the Bible. In discussing a 1586 Book of Common Prayer and Psalter bound together with a 1583 "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter, Sherman describes the many marginal notes left on these two Psalters by an unidentified early modern reader: short summaries of important points, verbatim copies of important phrases, verse numbers, running heads indicating the psalms contained on each page, lists of

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<sup>219</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 531.

<sup>220</sup> Theodore Beza, *The Psalms of David*, trans. Anthony Gilbie (London, 1581), fol. A5r, quoted in David Norton, *A History of the English Bible as Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>221</sup> Hannay "'So May I With the Psalmist Truly Say': Early Modern Englishwomen's Psalm Discourse," in *Write or Be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*, ed. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 107.

cross-references to related lines, and marginal labels for the seven penitential psalms, the seven consolatory psalms and the seven psalms of thanksgiving.<sup>222</sup> Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate the significance of the Psalms in sixteenth-century English culture.

The first English translation of the Psalms to become something of a standard was the prose translation by Coverdale that appeared in the Great Bible. By virtue of its inclusion in the Great Bible, Coverdale's translation of the Psalms was the official liturgical version of the Psalms in the sixteenth century. As such, it was read or sung during public services and copies of this Psalter were often bound together with the Common Prayer Book. Figure 12 is an example of the first page of a 1577 Coverdale Psalter which has been bound behind a Book of Common Prayer. In this particular edition of Coverdale's Psalms, a reader has numbered the verses of each psalm in the margins. This numbering would have been particularly helpful during the chanting of the psalms during the service. The printer has also divided the Psalter according to the monthly schedule for reading the Psalms at Morning and Evening Prayer.

The plain-song chant that suited Coverdale's prose Psalter did not satisfy English reformers who wished for the psalms to be sung often in both public and private worship settings. Thomas Becon (c.1512-1567) explains the Reformation appeal of psalm singing in the preface to his 1542 paraphrase of the Psalms. A prolific writer of the Reformation with strong Lutheran sensibilities, Becon was twice forced to recant under Henry VIII, was protected during the reign of Edward VI by Cranmer, and was exiled during Mary I's reign. Becon composed his Psalm paraphrase, as well as at least 8 other works, from the relative

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<sup>222</sup> Sherman, *Used Books*, 152.

security of sympathetic gentry households between 1541 and 1543. In it, he suggests the Psalms as a pious alternative to pagan literature:

Would God also that all fathers and mothers, all masters and mistresses would bring up their children & servants in the singing of these most Godly songs. Again, would God that all Schoolmasters & teachers of youth, would in stead of *Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, &c.* teach these verses of David.<sup>223</sup>

Lest the reader mistakenly interpret Becon's words for mere suggestion, he goes on to innumerate the many great benefits of learning the Psalms and, by implication, to delineate the many consequences of neglecting them:

For so should [all Christians] not only obtain eloquence, but also divine erudition, godly knowledge, spiritual wisdom, & increase in all kind of virtue, unto the great glory of God, the salvation of their own souls, the right institution of their own life, the great joy of their parents, the good report of their teachers, and to the high commodity of the Christian public weal.<sup>224</sup>

Becon's assertion of benefits to be gained by individuals who study and learn the Psalms (i.e., "eloquence, but also divine erudition, godly knowledge, spiritual wisdom, & increase in all kind of virtue, unto the great glory of God, the salvation of their own souls, the right institution of their own life") gives way to descriptions of communal benefit (i.e., "the great joy of their parents, the good report of their teachers, and to the high commodity of the Christian public weal"). Even though the painful personal experience of recantation had demonstrated the unstable state of the English religious institution to Becon, he nevertheless

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<sup>223</sup> Thomas Becon, *Dauids harpe ful of moost delectable armony, newly strynged and set in tune by Theodore Basille* (London, 1542; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 22 February 2009), Aviii v – Bi r, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rtf\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845970](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rtf_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845970).

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, Bi r.

envisions a nation ideologically united by Christian ideals—specifically, as expressed in the Psalms.

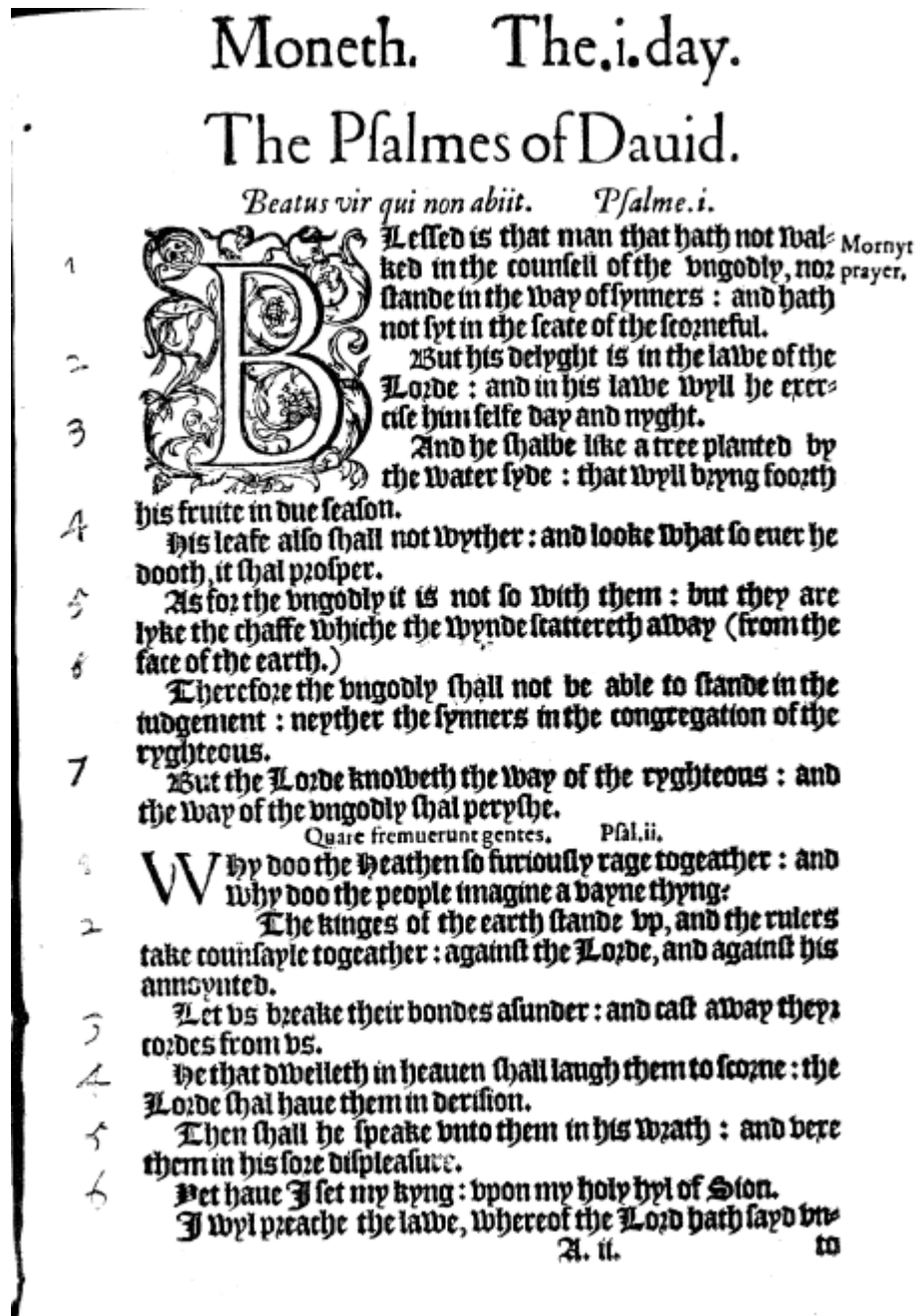


Figure 12. 1577 Coverdale's Psalter, Psalm 1

For Becon, and many other early modern Christians in England, the Psalms function as a sort of wisdom literature. The short, easily memorized phrases of the Psalms were heard, read, and sung throughout the life of a Christian and came to serve as commonplaces that informed the decisions and actions of the individuals that made up this community of believers. The Psalms provided an uncontested way of seeing things and thereby served to calibrate the expectations of the community regarding right conduct.

Becon was far from alone in suggesting that the Psalms should serve as a touchstone for English Christians, and a metrical translation of the Psalms would go a long way toward accomplishing wide familiarity with the Psalms among English laity by making them easier to memorize and sing. The “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter was begun by Thomas Sternhold, a groom of kings robes under Edward VI, who published a few metrical psalms. To these, a number of other contributors added metrical versions of other psalms until the first full version was published in 1562.<sup>225</sup> As we have already noted, the “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter was extremely successful in early modern England, and was used widely in both public and private worship. Though it was not the official liturgical Psalter of the Church of England, it was regularly used during public worship—a detail supported by the fact that most editions of this Psalter contained additional liturgical material at the start and finish, such as the Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, Veni Creator, Te Deum, Benedicite and Athanasian Creed.<sup>226</sup>

The title page of a 1569 “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter (Figure 13) includes two Bible passages declaring the purpose and worth of singing the Psalms. James V: “If any be afflicted, let him pray, and if any be merry, let him sing Psalms” and Colossians III: “Let the

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<sup>225</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 506.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 531.

Word of God dwell plenteously in you, in all wisdom, teaching and exhorting one an other in Psalms, Hymns and spiritual songs, and sing unto the Lord in your hearts.”<sup>227</sup> These passages highlight the application of the Psalms to the emotional experiences of the Christian—a central function envisioned for the Psalms during the early modern period. The title of the Palter also describes how this volume ought to be used. There, readers are told that these Psalms may be sung in church and in private houses and that doing so will provide reader or singer with comfort, rather than the corruption that “ungodly songs and ballads” yield. The contents of this volume, in line with the title, include the Psalter set to music. There are also parts of the liturgy set to music and prose prayers for various occasions in the day to day life of a Christian, such as prayers to be said in the morning and evening, mealtime prayers, a prayer before one begins work, and “a godly prayer to be said at all times.” These set prayers blur the line between public and private devotion by linking the words spoken or read in solitude by individual readers with one another. Though not necessarily physically present with the community of believers, these set texts place individual readers’ acts of private devotion within the context of the community of believers.

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<sup>227</sup> Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins, *The whole booke of Psalmes collected into Englishe metre [...]* (London, 1569; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 8 August 2008), A i r, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845970](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845970).

**THE  
WHOLE BOOKE OF  
PSALMES, COLLECTED INTO  
ENGLISHE METRE BY THOM. STERNH.  
IOHN HOPKINS AND OTHERS, CONFERRED  
with the Ebrue, with apt Notes to sing them withall.**

**¶** *Devoly set forth and allowed to be song in all Churches, of all the people together before and after Morning and Evening prayer: as also before and after the Sermon, and moreover in private houses, for their godly solace and comfort, laying apart all vngodly songes and balades, which tend onely to the nourishing of vyce, & corruptyng of youth.*

I A M E S. V.

*¶ IF ANY BE AFFLICTED, LET HIM PRAY,  
and if any be merry, let hym sing Psalmes.*

C O L L O S S. III.

**¶** *Let the word of God dwell plentuously in you, in all wisdome, teachyng and exhortyng one an other in Psalmes, Hymnes and spirituall songes, and sing vnto the Lord in your hartes.*



A T L O N D O N.

¶ *Imprinted by Iohn Daye, ouer Aldersgate.*

**¶ CVM PRIVILEGIO REGIÆ MAIESTATIS.  
per Decennium.**

Figure 13. 1569 “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter, title page

Early modern beliefs about the book of Psalms supported the application of psalms to every facet of life. Lewalski offers a useful summary of the diverse applications imagined for the Psalms by early modern English Christians in *Protestant Poetics*. The Psalms are considered a summary of the teachings of the Bible, a compendium of all possible human emotions and passions, a collection relating to the progress of the soul, words of prayer and



praise to God, and a catalogue of all lyric genres and styles appropriate to divine poetry.<sup>228</sup>

The complexity and diversity of the psalm tradition enabled and encouraged Christians to apply the Psalms to almost any situation they encountered. No other book of the Bible could be invoked more easily than the Psalms, since there was precedent for so many applications of this most sacred Christian text. Indeed, no other sacred Christian text was invoked more in late medieval and early modern England than the book of Psalms.

The significant cultural influence of the Psalms in early modern England was due in large part to the unique relationship Christians understood themselves to have with the words of this sacred text. Unlike other books of the Bible—understood to be the words of God delivered through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to Christians—the words of the Psalms were attributed to God through the Holy Spirit, to King David, *and* to Christian readers. Already in the fourth century CE, Basil referred to the Psalms as “the sweet voice, the only mouth of the spouse of Christ the church.”<sup>229</sup> An English translation of Basil’s words appears in Parker’s Psalter. While the interpretation of all the rest of the Christian Scriptures involved God speaking to humans, this single book of the Bible gave Christians words with which to speak to God. The multiple agency attributed to the words of the Psalms made possible the application of the Psalms to any situation in which the Christian may find him- or her-self.

The notion that the agency of the words of the Psalms was shared among believers (including David) with God was repeated throughout sixteenth-century treatises on this book of the Bible. As with the Bible preliminaries discussed in chapter one, these treatises (which often served as the preface to an edition of the Psalter) provided an interpretive frame with which to approach this sacred text. In *The Psalmes of David* (1581), Gilby asserts that the

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<sup>228</sup> Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 50-51. For a more detailed discussion of these aspects of the Psalm tradition, see Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 39-53.

<sup>229</sup> Matthew Parker, “Basilus in Psalmos,” quoted in Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 41.

book of Psalms is distinguished from other books of the Bible because there the Christian finds words with which to approach God: “whereas all other scriptures do teach us what God saith unto us, these prayers [. . .] do teach us, what we shall say unto God.”<sup>230</sup> This understanding of the nature of the Psalms grants readers (and translators) mutual agency with the Holy Spirit and the psalmist, “David.” Parker expresses a similar sentiment in his Prefatory “Of the vertue of Psalmes”:

In other books: where man doth look,  
but others words seeth he:  
As proper hath: this only book,  
most words his own to be.<sup>231</sup>

The notion that in “this only book” the Christian may consider “most words his own to be” grants the Psalms a special place in the Christian life. This aspect of the Psalm tradition was commonly depicted on decorative Psalm book covers as a tulip—the soul—reaching toward the Sun—God.<sup>232</sup> While other books of the Bible were important for learning God’s will, the Psalms provided Christians a means to approach God.

Dozens of early modern men and women took the opportunity afforded by this theological understanding of the Psalms to create translations of their own. Some of these translations were undertaken by courtier-poets, such as Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir Thomas Smith, the earl of Surrey, Sir Philip Sidney, and Mary Sidney Herbert, the countess of Pembroke, while others were composed by reformers, such as Sternhold, Whittingham,

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<sup>230</sup> Anthony Gilby, *The Psalmes of David* (1581), sig. a3 v, quoted in Trill, “Sixteenth-Century Women’s Writing: Mary Sidney’s Psalmes and the ‘Femininity’ of Translation,” in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. William Zunder and Suzanne Trill (New York: Longman, 1996), 148.

<sup>231</sup> Matthew Parker, *The Whole psalter translated into English Metre, which containeth an hundreth and fifty Psalmes* (1567), *STC* 2729, quoted in Hannay, et al, eds. “Literary Context” in *The Collected Works* vol 2, 7.

<sup>232</sup> Hannay, “So May I,” 107-108. This was one of the most common of such motifs.

Norton, and Parker.<sup>233</sup> The motives for undertaking such translations were diverse, but in many cases the line between translation and autobiographical writing is significantly blurred. For example, John Hooper, the Protestant martyr, wrote expositions of certain psalms of comfort.<sup>234</sup> While in prison, Sir Thomas More composed meditations based on psalms dealing with personal suffering and national calamity.<sup>235</sup> John Dudley, earl of Warwick and his brother Robert Dudley, later earl of Leicester, translated psalms as prayers of vengeance against their enemies.<sup>236</sup> Most of the psalm translations, paraphrases and meditations composed during this period were based only on select psalms—a fact that suggests writers were adapting specific portions of the Psalms to specific circumstances in their lives.

The Psalms were such a dominant part of English culture that they informed early modern language sensibilities. Hannibal Hamlin notes, for example, that Psalm 137 “gave William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and Milton specific language with which to express [...] alienation”<sup>237</sup>; and Psalm 51 provided the language of prayer for the liturgy, and therefore also the penitential poems of Anne Vaughan Lock, John Donne, and George Herbert, which were indebted to that liturgy.<sup>238</sup>

But one need not write in order to participate in the tradition of the multiple agency of the Psalms; readers (or hearers or singers) of the Psalms were also encouraged to consider the words of the Psalms their own. Margaret Hannay describes the multiple, shared agency of the Psalms in terms of mutually super-imposed subjectivity. When reading the Psalms, the subjectivity of the scripted speaker is superimposed on the reader, while at that same time the

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<sup>233</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 541.

<sup>234</sup> Zim, *English Metrical Psalms*, 81.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-3.

<sup>236</sup> Hannay, et al, eds. “Literary Context,” in *The Collected Works* vol. 2, 7.

<sup>237</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 15. Chapter 7 of Hamlin’s volume traces the influence of this Psalm in scenes of penitence and devotion in *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*.

<sup>238</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 14-5.

reader superimposes her own subjectivity on the scripted speaker.<sup>239</sup> Athanasius' discussion of Psalm 51 (historically regarded as the Psalm King David composed after being rebuked by the Prophet Nathan for committing adultery) is suggestive of what Hannay calls mutually super-imposed subjectivity. Athanasius writes that when the sinner recites this penitential Psalm, "so speaketh he the words of a penitent contrite heart, as they were his in deed."<sup>240</sup> Individual Christians of all rank and gender are empowered to speak with God as they are encouraged to read, speak and meditate on the Psalms. The Psalms provide the community of believers with a common resource by which they may speak to God, though this communication with the divine is achieved through different textual means in different genres. Even while the individual is empowered with the words with which to speak to God, she is also engaged in a religious act that is fundamentally communal in nature. Whereas the communal context we saw built around the reading of Bibles in chapter one was aimed at interpretive coherence among individual readers, and in *Actes & Monuments* communal reading was concerned with the spread of the Reformation through acts of witness and martyrdom, here we see reading constructed as a common means of generating expression fit for the divine. In reading the Psalms, the voice of reader and scripted speaker are adjoined in communicative union. Moreover, the Christian bent before God in the confession of personal sins shares communion with other Christians who comport themselves to the divine in the same way, with the same words. The Psalms grant individuals—such as the many early modern writers who composed their own translations of psalms—an authorial voice, even while granting the same authorial voice to myriad others. The historical understanding of shared agency in the Psalms at once creates the possibility for divine human expression and

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<sup>239</sup> Hannay, "So May I," 116.

<sup>240</sup> Athanasius, "Athanasius in Psalmos," ed. Matthew Parker, sig. C2, quoted in Anne Lake Prescott, "King David as a 'Right Poet': Sidney and the Psalmist," *English Literary Renaissance* 19, no.3 (1989): 139.

limits the potential for that expression by suggesting that the Psalms stand alone in this regard and exhaust all potential for human expression and meaning.

The limits of the shared language of the Psalms can be more clearly seen in early modern references to the Psalms as an “Anatomy of all the partes of the Soule,” as Arthur Golding put it in his translation of Calvin’s *Psalmes of David and Others* (1571). The idea that the Psalms catalogue all possible emotions suggests communal relationships between individual readers and the community of readers based on emotive experiences that may differ in degree but are essentially similar in kind. Golding writes that the Psalms reveal “all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anguishes, and finally all the troublesome motions wherewith mens minds are wont to be turmoiled.”<sup>241</sup> For Golding, the Psalms provide a catalogue of all possible human experience. Athanasius’s words, printed in the preface of Archbishop Parker’s 1567 metrical Psalter, indicate a similar belief. For Athanasius, the fact that all human emotions are represented in the Psalms is highly significant. Each believer can see his or her emotions—and therefore his or her sinfulness—reflected in the Psalms. This experience initiates the salvation process which enables believers to repent of their sins and to reform their lives:

[In the Psalms are] the motions, the mutations, the alterations of every mans heart and conscience described and lively painted out to [our] own sight, so that if a man list, he might easily gather out thereof certain considerations of himself as out of a bright

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<sup>241</sup> John Calvin, *Psalmes of David and Others*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1571), quoted in Beth Wynne Fisker, “Mary Sidney’s *Psalmes*: Education and Wisdom,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), 168.

glass and plain pattern set before his face, so thereby to reform himself as he read therein.<sup>242</sup>

Athanasius' description of the usefulness of the Psalms for initiating the salvation process demonstrates the extent to which the Psalms were considered a tool for ordering the experiences of sixteenth-century believers. The Psalms were useful for accomplishing one's salvation. They help the Christian assess the state of his soul and then assist him in reforming himself. Elsewhere, Athanasius again suggests that reading the Psalms is an autobiographical activity of sorts as he contrasts the Psalms with the other books of the Bible. Athanasius writes that elsewhere in the Bible

only we hear the precepts of the law, what ought to be done, and what undone, we hear the matter of prophecy [. . .] furthermore, we read the histories, whereby the acts of kings and holy fathers might be known and brought to remembrance, but in the books of the Psalms, over and above that, we learn and hear all these foresaid things sufficiently: there every one may see and perceive the motions and affections of his own heart and soul.<sup>243</sup>

For Athanasius, and for sixteenth-century English Christians, the Psalms provide readers a special agency. The same words attributed to King David are applied to the lives of readers so thoroughly that in the Psalms "every one may see and perceive the motions and affections of his own heart and soul," even while also seeing the inner workings of David's soul. Conceiving of the Psalms as an anatomy of the soul at once suggests that the diversity within the Psalms is so great as to be applicable to every person *and* that the experiences and emotions of all individuals are so similar that they can be depicted and reflected completely

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<sup>242</sup> Athanasius, "Athanasius in Psalmos," ed. Matthew Parker, quoted in Prescott, "King David as a 'Right Poet,'" 136-7.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

within one small book. Historical interpretations of the Psalms, therefore, effectively dictate emotional, psychological norms for the Christian community, since emotional and psychological states of being are deemed real and possible only if they can be understood within the context of the Psalms.

The Psalms were constructed as a cultural touchstone for early modern English Christians in one further sense. Because it was considered a miniature of the Bible, the book of Psalms provided Christians of all rank and gender access to the whole of Christian teaching and experience. Becon explains this notion in his *Dauids harpe ful of moost delectable armory* (1542): “the psalmody of David may well be called the treasure house of holy Scripture. For it containeth what so ever is necessary for a Christen man to know.”<sup>244</sup> The author of *The Forme of prayers, and Ministration of the Sacraments, &c, used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneva . . . 1556* concurs, arguing that “there are no songs more meet, than the psalms of the Prophet David, which the holy ghost hath framed to the same use, and commended to the church, as containing the effect of the whole scriptures.”<sup>245</sup> This notion can be traced back to Athanasius, whose comments on the matter were printed in Parker’s 1567 *Psalter* and versions of the “Sternhold Hopkins” psalter:

whatsoever was contained abroad in the whole Scripture, was fully reported in the

Psalter book [. . .] The books of the Psalms (being well resembled to a pleasant

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<sup>244</sup> Becon, *Dauids harpe ful [...]*, Avii v. James Kugel notes that this notion that the Psalms comprise a miniature Bible began to develop already when the Psalms were first being canonized as part of Scripture: “as the Psalms became Scripture, they did so with an interpretive strategy attached: they were not to be interpreted as a self-standing book of prayers or praises.” Kugel, “Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms,” in *The History of Jewish Spirituality*, ed. A. Green (Seabury-Winston, 1984), 136. Becon’s words suggest that by the sixteenth century the interpretive relationship of the Psalms and the rest of the Bible had become reciprocal; Christians could learn the Bible through the Psalms, just as the Psalms could be understood by reading the Bible.

<sup>245</sup> quoted in Smith, “English Metrical Psalms,” 253.

garden of all deliciousness) did universally by Meter express them all, by playing them as it were sweetly upon musical instruments.<sup>246</sup>

Passages of Basil's "Basilius in Psalmos" appearing in Parker's *Psalter* also assert the presence of all of Scripture in the Psalms:

The book of the psalms comprehend in it self, the whole commodity of all their doctrines aforesaid, for it propheciethe of things to come, it reciteth the histories, it showeth law for the governance of life, it teacheth what ought to be done, and to be short, it is a common storehouse of all good doctrine.

Though the notion that the Psalms were a short-hand of all of Scripture was not original to the early modern period, it was an especially attractive notion to reformers promoting the reading of vernacular Bibles in a culture with relatively low literacy rates. The regular use of the Psalms in public worship ensured that even the illiterate would be very familiar (and perhaps even have memorized) this book of the Bible.<sup>247</sup> Through the Psalms, even the illiterate had access to the whole of Scripture. Moreover, the practices of reading, singing, reciting, and meditating on the Psalms granted all Christians—regardless of class, gender or education—authorship of the divine canon. In a sense, Christians were granted agency over the whole of Christian teaching when they were granted agency in the Psalms.

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Anne Lake Prescott has suggested that for early modern Christians, the Psalms "not only incorporate what the rest of the Bible contains but also teach us about ourselves."<sup>248</sup> I

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<sup>246</sup> Athanasius, "Athanasius in Psalmos," ed. Matthew Parker, quoted in Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 41.

<sup>247</sup> Margaret Hannay writes that the "Psalms were used constantly for religious instruction. Such Psalm meditation was familiar from medieval practice, included in traditional books of hours, and encoded in the *Book of Common Prayer*. This daily meditation, often practiced as group recitation by the entire household, meant that the words of the Psalms were known from earliest childhood" (Hannay, "So May I," 108).

<sup>248</sup> Prescott, "King David as a 'Right Poet,'" 137.



would suggest that the Psalms also taught early modern Christians about the community of believers of which they were a part. Early modern commentaries on the book of Psalms certainly support this notion as they work to forge communal relationships and experiences among Christians that center on the religious practice of engaging the Psalms. On one hand, insofar as the Psalms were understood to represent the soul in conversation with God, or the life of the Christian, they were extremely personal in nature. But on the other hand, applying the Psalms to the circumstances of an individual Christian's life ultimately served as a reminder of what he or she shared in common with the larger Christian community. The Psalms provided the Christian with the words with which to invoke God; and at the moment at which the individual is granted an authorial voice in the Psalms, it is conflated with that of David and other Christians. The Psalmic speaker and reader are conflated during the reading, singing, or recitation of the Psalms; as Christians apply "David's" words to their own lives, they enter into a relationship of shared agency with David and other believers.

The Psalms, therefore, served an epideictic function in early modern England. Learned and revisited throughout the lives of believers, psalms resonated with Christians and came to serve as a lens through which believers viewed and made sense of their place in the world. Though the values conveyed in the Psalms were sometimes conveyed through very personal means, they reinforced the shared values of the English Christian community. The Psalms offered Christians an uncontested way of seeing things. In a certain sense, the Psalms served as a sort of paratext or preliminary for the rest of the Bible, since they were considered a summary of the whole Bible.

## CHAPTER FOUR

“while life shall last, his worth in song to show

I framed have a resolute decree”:

Mary Sidney Herbert and the Psalter as Mimetic Devotional Display

He that will sadly behold one with his eye

May see his own mirror and learn for to die.<sup>249</sup>

-John Baret

Viewers of the cadaver tomb of John Baret (d.1467) in the church of St. Mary, Bury St. Edmunds, are led to contemplate the transience of their lives and their own impending deaths. Baret’s words echo a theme prevalent in late medieval Christian lay-culture: Convert now! lest you die without faith and be damned. A successful cloth merchant, Baret commissioned his tomb in the 1450s. The limestone image of Baret as a thin, sickly man “seems designed to shock the viewer into action.”<sup>250</sup> For late medieval Christians, the fear of hell was real and the way to heaven long and hard, requiring the aid of the community in saying prayers and masses after one’s death for the progression of one’s soul to heaven. After Baret exhorts the living to prepare their souls for death, he pleads for his own soul:

Wrapped in a cellar as a full ruly wretch

No more of all mine good to me ward will stretch

From earth I came and on to earth I am brought

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<sup>249</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Suffolk*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 144-5, quoted in Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 307.

<sup>250</sup> Carol M. Richardson, Kim W. Woods and Michael W. Franklin, eds., *Renaissance Art Reconsidered: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 397.

This is my nature, for of earth I was wrought;  
Thus earth on to earth to gether now is net  
So endeth each creature Quoted John Baret  
Wherefore ye people in way of charity  
With your good prayers I pray you help me  
For like as I am right so shall ye all be  
Now God on my soul have mercy & pity. Amen.<sup>251</sup>

In Baret's inscription, a relationship of mutual support is established as the basis for community among believers, both living and dead. The dead provide palpable reminders of eventual, inescapable death and thereby encourage the living to prepare their souls for death; the living offer prayers for the dead to ease their pains as they journey to heaven. Baret's will also echoes this theme: it is filled with gifts in exchange for prayers and masses to be said on his behalf as well as instructions to care for the souls of other believers:

For what day God fortune that I decease that each week in the year I will Saint Mary priest say or do say a mass of Our Lady at Saint Mary altar in the said vestment, and after the gospel to stand at the altar's end and rehearse John Baret's name openly, saying *De profundis* for me, for my father and my mother, and for all Christian souls, and to have mind on us[...]<sup>252</sup>

Baret's concern for death—both his own and others'—was not unusual in late medieval England. On the contrary, for people of Baret's high social standing in particular, "such preparation did not suggest paranoia on the part of the living but was seen as a public service—an example to all to think about their lives and conduct so that they might be

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<sup>251</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 307-8.

<sup>252</sup> Richardson, et al, *Renaissance Art Reconsidered*, 399.

prepared for death.”<sup>253</sup> Duffy suggests that this late medieval interest in death should be understood in communal terms “as a means of prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living, and therefore as the most eloquent of testimonies to the permanent value of life in the world of time and change.”<sup>254</sup> Understood in this light, Baret’s focus is not on death so much as it is on that which unites Christians scattered across time—the process of working toward the common goal of attaining salvation.

More than one hundred years after Baret’s death—in the years following Henry VIII’s break from Rome—Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, confronts the relationship of Christian life and Christian death. All three of Herbert’s sisters died before reaching adulthood. Herbert lost a daughter, Katherine, on the same day in 1584 that she gave birth to her son Philip. But the most devastating period of loss she experienced came a few years later in 1586. Her father died in May of that year, and her mother died a few months later. Herbert became so ill herself in the months following the deaths of her parents that her brothers feared her death was imminent as well. She recovered from her illness, but in October of 1586 Philip Sidney, her beloved brother, lost his life to a battle wound. Herbert’s sense of loss must have been magnified by the fact that her family had been close, as is evidenced by the affectionate letters they wrote to one another and the great deal of time they spent together.<sup>255</sup>

Grappling with the meaning of Christian life and death permeates much of Herbert’s literary production. Her brother Philip’s death seemingly provided the impetus for all of her known writings postdating 1586. Two of the works she translated in the years directly following the deaths of her parents and brother relate to the *ars moriendi* tradition—Philip de

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>254</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 303.

<sup>255</sup> Zim, *English Metrical Psalms*, 186.

Mornay's *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort* (1576) and Francesco Petrarca's *Trionfo della Morte* (written, 1348, published 1470). In each of these works, Christian death is considered a lasting and desirable state, whereas life is considered a transient state fulfilled only through death. While Christian death is welcomed in each of these texts, Christian life, though fleeting, is embraced as an opportunity to serve God. As we shall see, for Herbert, the call to serve God in life is fulfilled by completing Philip's translation of the Psalms.

The devotional qualities of the Sidney Psalter are often unacknowledged or overshadowed by discussions of its influence on seventeenth-century lyric poetry. Early modern readers familiar with the Sidney Psalter praised it for its high literary quality. Joseph Hall, for example, while reflecting on his own translation of the Psalms, praises the Sidney Psalter and regrets that it remains unpublished. John Harrington echoes a similar sentiment in his *Treatise on Playe* where he laments, "me think it is pity they are unpublished, but lie still enclosed within those walls [of Wilton] like prisoners, though many have made great suit for their liberty."<sup>256</sup> Other contemporaries seeking Herbert's patronage, such as Michael Drayton, Francis Meres, Barnabe Barnes, Thomas Nashe, Gabriel Harvey, Nathaniel Baxter, Francis Osborne enthusiastically praise her poetic ability, though admittedly in rather vague terms.<sup>257</sup> And modern scholars interested in the Sidney Psalter have awarded Herbert and Sidney similar accolades. In his 1946 article, "English Metrical Psalms in the Sixteenth-Century and Their Literary Significance," Hallett Smith discusses Philip Sidney's Psalter as

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<sup>256</sup> For discussions of contemporary praise of the Sidney Psalms, see Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 89 (John Donne, Samuel Daniel, Joseph Hall and Sir John Harrington); Trill, "Sixteenth-Century Women's Writing," 149 (John Donne and Samuel Daniel); Hannay, et al, *The Collected Works*, vol.2, 9-10.

<sup>257</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan, eds. *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke: Volume I, Poems, Translations, and Correspondence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26-29.

“a School of English Versification.”<sup>258</sup> In the preface to J. C. A. Rathmell’s 1963 edition of the Sidney Psalms—the first published volume of this Psalter since 1823—Rathmell places special emphasis on Herbert’s literary legacy when he suggests that “[t]he significance of the Sidneian collection [...] is primarily literary; it represents one of the earliest and most ambitious attempts to grace English psalmody with the fully developed resources of the Elizabethan lyric.”<sup>259</sup> Three decades later Hamlin articulates a similar view of the Sidney Psalter in his 2004 study of early modern Psalm culture, claiming that “whatever else it may be, [the Sidney Psalter] is an essentially literary work. It was as a book of poems, rather than as a psalter with any sort of liturgical or devotional purpose (it had a negligible influence on seventeenth-century church psalms), that the Sidney Psalter had its greatest impact.”<sup>260</sup> That the Sidney Psalter’s influence is noticeably felt in the poetry of the decades following its production is undeniable. And yet, a limited focus on the Sidney Psalter’s poetic successors fails to acknowledge both the devotional impact Sidney and Herbert imagined for these texts and the impact on devotional practices they actually accomplished through these texts.

In addition to the scholarly focus on the impact of the Sidney Psalter on its literary successors, there are other factors that perhaps contribute to the relative lack of consideration of the Sidney Psalter as a devotional text. There are significant differences between the Sidney Psalter and other personal psalm translations of the period. As discussed in the previous chapter, most early modern men and women who engaged in psalm translation selected specific portions of the Psalms to translate that they felt were especially relevant to their present circumstances. But the Sidney Psalter is a complete versification of all 150

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<sup>258</sup> Smith, “English Metrical Psalms,” 269.

<sup>259</sup> J. C. A. Rathmell, ed. *The Psalms of Sir Philip Sidney and The Countess of Pembroke* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1963), xv.

<sup>260</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 131.

psalms. And relative to the other devotional psalms translated during this period, the Sidney Psalter is notably non-autobiographical and avoids the polemical language of so many of its sources.<sup>261</sup> This fact has perhaps suggested to some that Sidney and Herbert were more interested in poetic form than in engaging the content of the Psalms. But, as this chapter demonstrates, there is significant evidence to suggest that Sidney and Herbert's authorial decisions to translate the entire book of Psalms and to avoid religious debate while doing so indicates a desire to produce an English Psalter with a more universal devotional potential than those translations of psalms produced by contemporaries.

Wendy Wall argues that although the Sidney Psalms circulated exclusively in manuscript form until the nineteenth century, the eighteen surviving manuscript copies of Herbert's Psalms demonstrate that they "went on to become highly public texts, circulating widely enough to be read by contemporaries such as Donne, Lanyer, and Herbert."<sup>262</sup>

Harrington apparently used the Sidney Psalter for private meditation. Hannay notes that "[Harrington's] two manuscripts of the Sidneian *Psalms* are rubricated for Morning and Evening prayer, indicating that they too were read for devotional meditation and instruction just as one might turn to Coverdale's prose Psalms included in the *Book of Common*

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<sup>261</sup> Hannay, et al., eds. "Literary Context," in *The Collected Works* vol.2, 21. For example, unlike most of her sources, Herbert does not refer to the Church as the "True Jerusalem" or even use the word "Church" in her translation.

The editors of Herbert's collected works also note that despite the Sidneys' Protestant allegiances, they maintained close relationships with Roman Catholics: "Sir Henry's niece Jane Dormer, for example, continued to correspond with him after she married the Duke of Feria and moved to Spain; Philip Sidney visited the English priest Edmund Campion during his European journey; and Sir Tobie Matthew was apparently a regular visitor to Pembroke's house in Spa around 1614-16. By the time Pembroke had established that informal salon in Spa, one of her friends was the Countess of Barlemont, whose daughter was 'a *devota* designed to a convent'" (Hannay, et al, "Literary Context," in *The Collected Works* vol. 2, 26). Herbert's editors do note evidence suggesting that she and her companions at Spa were "occupied with more frivolous pursuits than discussion of Christian doctrine" (26). These relationships nevertheless suggest that the Sidney family was open to a broader view of Christianity than that implied by the polemics of many contemporary Protestant leaders and that Sidney and Herbert therefore viewed a broader Christian audience for their psalms.

<sup>262</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 312.

*Prayer.*”<sup>263</sup> Hannay adds Samuel Daniel, John Donne the younger, Francis Davison, Michael Drayton, Sir John Harrington of Kelston, Tobie Matthew, Thomas Moffet, and Edmund Spenser to the list of well-known contemporaries who claim to have read Herbert’s Psalter.<sup>264</sup> Great attention has been given to considerations of the impact the Sidney Psalter may have had on this literary coterie, but there is evidence that in addition to admiring the literary merits of the Sidney Psalms these readers also used them devotionally. For example, Hannay reports that Harrington’s two copies of the Sidney Psalter “have been rubricated for morning and evening prayer like the *Book of Common Prayer* and like the Psalms and prayers of by Elizabeth Tyrwhit framed for private and public devotional use in Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* (1582).”<sup>265</sup> And several of Herbert’s Psalms appear to have been set to music: Psalms 51 and 130 were set for soprano voice and lute in what may have been a collection compiled by an individual woman for her own performance; Herbert’s quantitative versions of Psalms 120-7 appear to have been simplified (by a later hand) for singing to the “Sternhold Hopkins” tunes that became so popular;<sup>266</sup> and her version of Psalm 97 seems to have been adapted for singing in *All the French Psalm Tunes with English Words*.<sup>267</sup> Rathmell suggests that in addition to circulating widely in court circles, the Sidney Psalter was likely also sung occasionally in private devotions. He notes, for example, that “a fragmentary manuscript in the British Museum, Add. MS. 15117, contains two of her psalms, 51 and 130, set to music for treble voice with tablature for lute.”<sup>268</sup> Though the Sidney Psalter was not published, it circulated widely in manuscript form. In short, there is

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<sup>263</sup> Hannay, “So may I,” 123.

<sup>264</sup> Margaret Hannay, “The Countess of Pembroke’s Agency in Print and Scribal Culture,” in *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38.

<sup>265</sup> Hannay, “The Countess of Pembroke’s Agency,” 37.

<sup>266</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol 2., 308-36.

<sup>267</sup> James P. Doelman, *King James and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 109.

<sup>268</sup> Rathmell, *The Psalms of Sir Philip Sidney and The Countess of Pembroke*.



significant material evidence to suggest that the Sidney Psalms were used devotionally by early modern English readers. One of the central claims of this chapter is that Herbert crafted her English psalms with devotional use in mind.

In this chapter, special attention will be paid to Herbert's role in revising and completing the Psalter begun by her brother. In a real sense, Herbert's Psalm translations were motivated by a desire to prolong the presence of the dead—her beloved brother, Philip, in particular—among the living.<sup>269</sup> Her verse Psalter allows her to eulogize her brother, to act on Sidney's imperative to claim value for the poet and the poetic form in the devotional setting, and to give the Psalter to the English-language world in a form befitting its content. Additionally, her verse translation constructs mimetic, communal relationships between herself and the larger community of believers—past, present, and future. Herbert uses her psalms as a means to teach, comfort and aid Christians (including herself) with the lessons of the saints gone before. Significantly, she envisions both textual and extra-textual consequence for her psalms. In addition to encouraging her readers to acquire certain textual stylistic sensibilities in her translation, she moves readers to imitate the actions and thoughts of those gone before. In seeking to understand Herbert's broader vision for her Psalter, herself as a Psalmist, her brother Philip and her readers, I will consider Sidney's goals for his Psalter, as these goals certainly informed the way Herbert approached the project of completing the translation. I will also examine several of Herbert's other compositions and the facts known to us about her life which provide clues as to her goals in completing the

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<sup>269</sup> Several scholars have noted Herbert's desire to honor her brother as her motivation for completing his Psalm translation. Zim, for example, has noted that both Christian and familial pieties seem to have motivated Herbert's decision to complete the verse translation of the Psalter begun by her brother. Zim notes that in Herbert's dedicatory poem, "To the Angell Spirit of Sir Philip Sidney," she refers to Philip's Psalms as "Immortall Monuments of thy [Philip's] faire fame," thus constructing the task of completing his Psalter as an act honoring both God *and* her brother. Zim suggests that Herbert's sense of personal loss may have prompted her to "turn to the Psalms for her own spiritual guidance and solace" (186).

Psalter. Comparisons of Herbert's Psalm translation with the English Psalters that served as her sources also provide a vantage-point from which we recognize Herbert's interpretation of this central Christian text as a communal touchstone for believers past, present, and future.

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After the loss of both of her parents and her brother Philip in 1586, Herbert spent two years in the country. When she returned to London, she immediately set about reigniting efforts to eulogize her brother. She mourns him in "The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda," and Thomas Moffet, Abraham Fraunce, and Edmund Spenser, among others, also composed elegies at her behest. A search for meaning in the face of death can be traced throughout Herbert's subsequent literary endeavors. In 1590 she translated Mornay's *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort*, and sometime later that decade she translated Petrarch's *Trionfo della Morte*.<sup>270</sup> In *Discourse* and "Triumph" we find inscribed Herbert's grapplings with the significance of death, life, and her Christian faith—issues which later inform her completion of the Sidney Psalter.

Examinations of Herbert's *Discourse* and "Triumph" have been confounded by the instability of "translation" as a category and examinations of the pervasive gender ideology of sixteenth-century England. Translating tracts on dying was a common and accepted activity for sixteenth-century women, since texts from the *ars moriendi* tradition were believed to provide valuable moral instruction and comfort considered especially appropriate for Christian women in particular. The editors of Herbert's collected works note that Seneca's writings, for example, "were apparently comforting to women" in the sixteenth

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<sup>270</sup> Herbert's translation was probably completed sometime during the 1580's. The only extant manuscript is a transcript of a copy Sir John Harrington sent to his cousin Lucy, Countess of Bedford, on 19 December 1600.

century.<sup>271</sup> They further note that the “virtues that he advocated, such as withdrawal from the illusory goods of this world, cultivation of inner virtue, and endurance of suffering, were virtues appropriate to private life and therefore open to women, who were barred from most forms of public service.”<sup>272</sup> Kim Walker characterizes Herbert’s decision to translate these tracts on death and dying in terms of compliance to sixteenth-century gender ideology.<sup>273</sup> This assertion diminishes the extent to which Herbert’s translation of these texts can be interpreted as an indication of her regard for their content. In light of her experiences with death, it is reasonable to suggest that Herbert’s decision to translate these tracts was motivated, as least in part, by a sincere desire to mourn her brother and other dead family members.

Attributing Herbert’s decision to translate these texts to a pressure to comply with sixteenth-century expectations of women also inaccurately diminishes the high value placed on *mimesis*, or *imitatio* in early modern England. Greene notes that the concept of imitation defined the humanist project of recovering and reinvigorating lost texts and cultures during the early modern period.<sup>274</sup> Imitation and mimesis played a dominant role in humanist education, where students were assigned various writing exercises called *translatio*, *paraphrasis*, *imitatio*, and *allusio*. Within the context of the schoolroom, these terms theoretically signified specific categories of writing, each calling for a diminished relation of the new text with the original. However, as Greene argues, these categories seemed arbitrary once students left the context of the classroom, since “parts of many imitations might well be

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<sup>271</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol I, 210.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Walker, *Women Writers*, 99-100.

<sup>274</sup> Greene, *The Light of Troy*.

regarded as translations, while most Renaissance ‘translations’ are already interpretations.”<sup>275</sup>

Hamlin notes a similar ambiguity in the introduction to his volume on early modern psalm culture, where he writes that the term “translation” is interchanged during the early modern period with other terms whose definitions are also in flux, such as “paraphrase” and “imitation.” For our purposes here, the terms *imitation* and *mimesis* can be understood in a general sense to signify the process of cultivating oneself—one’s ideas, writing, and actions—through an engagement with the writings of others. The process of formulating one’s own beliefs and practices through attention to the writings of others constructs a textually-based community of support between writer and reader.

In “Discourse” and *Triumph*, Herbert employs the mimetic process in the service of addressing grief over personal loss. Both of these tracts on life and death are designed, primarily, to prepare believers to “die well.” But they also provide comfort for the living confronting the deaths of loved ones by suggesting communion of the living with the dead and by framing a sense of purpose greater than one’s self for the living. Significantly, among all of the texts from the *ars moriendi* tradition available to Herbert, her choice to translate Mornay’s *Discourse* suggests a desire to connect with her brother, Philip, since Mornay was a close friend of Philip’s. The editors of Herbert’s collected works write that Mornay was “a friend and political ally of Sir Philip Sidney.”<sup>276</sup> Sidney and Mornay were both in Paris during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of Protestants in August of 1572 and both were rescued by the English ambassador, Sir Francis Walsingham. Mornay’s Wife, Charlotte d’Arbaleste wrote in her memoirs that Sidney and Walsingham were Mornay’s chief friends

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>276</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol 1, 208.

in England.<sup>277</sup> Mornay visited Sidney when he came to England in 1577 and 1578 on official business with the Queen and asked Sidney to serve as godfather for his daughter at that time.<sup>278</sup> Although there is no evidence of a direct link between Mornay and Herbert, it is highly possible that they were at least acquainted. At the very least, Herbert would have been aware of her brother Philip's close relationship with Mornay—a fact which likely impacted her decision to translate Mornay's tract on Christian life and death.

When translating *Discourse* and "Triumph," Herbert took painstaking care to maintain the integrity of the originals.<sup>279</sup> Her meticulous work demonstrates the high regard Herbert had for these texts. By engaging the works of Mornay and Petrarch not only as a reader, but also as a translator, Herbert takes these writings up as her own and works carefully to deliver them to an English audience. In both works, Christian faith ultimately renders death more desirable than life. However, life is not to be eschewed; rather, the hope and comfort granted Christians through the promise of the eternal life that follows death leads Christians to lead lives of service. For Herbert, service to God took the form of literary production.

In *Discourse*, the speaker wonders "Now what good, I pray you, is there in life, that we should so much eschew it? Nay what evil is there not in life? and what good is there not in death?"<sup>280</sup> The first section of *Discourse* includes descriptions of the frustrations and missteps characterizing the ages of human life. The seeming futility of life is contrasted with the freedom and hope of Christian death in the second section of *Discourse*. Whereas the

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Walker suggests that Herbert's translation of "Triumph" "encompasses the idiomatic but relatively literal renderings from the French [...]" ("Some inspired stile," 82). The editors of her collected works also note Herbert's faithfulness to the originals in both of these translations.

<sup>280</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol I, 230.

pursuit of rest is constantly frustrated in life, in death there is complete tranquility; whereas internal and external warfare plagues life, in death there is escape.

For Mornay (and Herbert) death is so appealing and life so unappealing that life is reconceived as continual dying and death as eternal living:

One only difference there is between this life, and that we call death: that during the one, we have always whereof to dye: and after the other, there remaineth only whereof to live. In sum, even he that thinketh death simply to be the end of man, ought not to fear it: in asmuch as who desireth to live longer, desireth to die longer: and who feareth soon to die, feareth (to speak properly) lest he may not longer die.<sup>281</sup>

Mornay's work functions primarily as a guide for the individual confronting his or her own death. As a Christian tract on dying, it also serves to comfort Christians, such as Herbert, who are grieving the loss of a loved one by assuring the living that those they have lost to Christian death are better off in death than they were in life. Though Mornay's *Discourse* draws on Seneca and the stoic philosophical tradition, his participation in the *ars moriendi* tradition is markedly Christian. Significantly, for Mornay there is no comfort in death without faith in God:

Now to end well this life, is only to end it willingly: following with full consent the will and direction of God, and not suffering us to be drawn by the necessity of destiny. To end it willingly, we must hope, and not fear death. To hope for it, we must certainly look after this life, for a better life. To look for that, we must fear God: whom whoso well feareth, feareth indeed nothing in this world, and hopes for all things in the other.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 248-9.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 252.

The Christian rejoices for dead believers who have attained for themselves the common goal of eternal life. Moreover, the desirability of death over life marks out a Christian mortal death followed by eternal life as the over-arching goal of Christian life on earth. This notion is summarized at the end of Herbert's translation of *Discourse* when the reader is instructed: "Die to live, Live to die."<sup>283</sup>

In "Triumph," death and life are similarly transposed when the character, 'Petrarch,' encounters his beloved, Laura, after her death. 'Petrarch' addresses Laura:

My Goddess, who me did, and doeth revive,  
Can I but know? (I sobbing answered)  
But art thou dead? Ah speak, or yet alive?<sup>284</sup>

'Petrarch's' wish for an encounter with a living Laura is at once frustrated and fulfilled as Laura replies:

Alive am I: And thou as yet art dead,  
And as thou art shalt so continue still  
Till by thy ending hour, thou hence be led.<sup>285</sup>

Though 'Petrarch' and Laura still occupy the opposite spheres of death and life, 'Petrarch' is comforted by the knowledge that Laura reaps the benefits of inhabiting the more desirable sphere—eternal life—whereas 'Petrarch' must await death before joining her for eternity. In "Triumph," Christianity facilitates the speaker's progression beyond his resignation to adversity and mortality. As 'Petrarch' mourns his beloved, Laura, it seems death has triumphed. But Fame triumphs over Death as Laura is celebrated. Then Time appears to

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 254. Just before this, Herbert's translation reads: "For as there is nothing more certaine than death, so is there nothing more uncertain than the hour of death, known only to God, the only Author of life and death, to whom we all ought endeavor both to live and die" (254).

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

triumph over Fame. But the Eternality of the Christian heaven ultimately conquers all.<sup>286</sup> For Laura and ‘Petrarch,’ the painful eschewing of love for one another is ultimately transformed into a hopeful longing for their blissful “meeting-day” reunion upon ‘Petrarch’s’ death.<sup>287</sup>

In both *Discourse* and “Triumph,” Christian faith not only comforts the Christian confronting death, but informs the Christian’s sense of purpose in life. During life, the inevitability of death provides strength, hope, and peace. Through the solitary act of dying, all Christians are united to enjoy the benefits of the eternal life to come: “God calleth home from his work, one in the morning, an other at noon, and an other at night. One he exerciseth till the first sweat, another he sunburneth, another he roasteth and drieth thoroughly. But of all his he leaves not one without, but brings them all to rest, and gives them all their hire, every one in his time.”<sup>288</sup> This assurance of reunion with the dead must have soothed Herbert as she grieved the loss of her parents and brother.

Mornay’s work also goes beyond pacifying the grief and anxiety surrounding death. In *Discourse* Mornay ignites readers with a sense of vocation during their lives: “To end, we ought neither to hate this life for the toils therein, for it is sloth and cowardice: nor love it for the delights, which is folly and vanity: but serve us of it, to serve God in it, who after it shall place us in true quietness, and replenish us with pleasure which shall nevermore perish.”<sup>289</sup> Though Christian death is to be embraced, Christian life ought never be eschewed, for in life the Christian seeks to offer herself in service to God. These communal, reciprocal

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<sup>286</sup> The coherence of the narrative of Petrarch’s poem has been debated, but Hannay, et al, argue that its basic sequence is clear: love triumphs over the poet when he falls in love with Laura; Chastity triumphs over Love when Laura will not yield to him; Death seems to triumph over Chastity when Laura dies; Fame triumphs over Death as Laura is celebrated; Time appears to triumph over fame; but Eternity conquers all (Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol. I, 256).

<sup>287</sup> Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: Volume I, The Psalmes of David*, Edited with Introduction and Commentary by Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan (1998; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 184-188.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 253-4.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.



relationships among Christians, both living and dying, were rooted in late medieval *ars moriendi* practice. The living helped the dying to their final rest, while the witness of the dead served as a moment of clarity and teaching for the living.

Herbert's translations of *Discourse* and "Triumph" inform our understanding of her approach to the Psalms. In addition to offering comfort after the loss of a loved one, *Discourse* and "Triumph" offer encouragement to act out one's Christian vocation. For Herbert, service to God took the form of literary production. In completing the Psalms, Herbert is comforted by the mimetic connection this text-based activity establishes between her, Sidney, and ultimately the greater Christian community. For Herbert, *living to die* meant remembering and communing, through literary production, with those who had already *died to live*, such as her brother. With her translations of *Discourse* and "Triumph," Herbert teaches herself and others how to live and die as Christians. Her completion of the psalm translation begun by Sidney reflects the goals outlined in *Discourse* and "Triumph" of achieving comfort and acting out Christian vocation.

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There is evidence to suggest that Sidney also understood his work translating the Psalms in vocational terms. Through her examination of devotional literature and poetic form in early modern England, Targoff demonstrates the extent to which Sidney understood his act of creating a verse translation of the psalms in terms of Christian vocation. Though there was "no obvious distinction between lay prayer and devotional poetry" in the centuries preceding the Reformation, the introduction of the vernacular Book of Common Prayer during the sixteenth century "permanently unsettled" the relationship between poetic and devotional

production.<sup>290</sup> Whereas late-medieval primers had provided vernacular versions of the ten commandments, creeds, and prayers in verse—a form much more easily memorized than prose—the prayers, creeds and other devotional texts in the Book of Common Prayer appear almost exclusively in prose form.<sup>291</sup> The poet’s concern for controlling language seemed to sixteenth-century reformers to overshadow a concern for God’s will. Moreover, late medieval devotional rhymes were intended to ease the burden of memorization for an uneducated laity and therefore were not considered elevated enough for the clergy to utter along with the laity, as the Book of Common Prayer required.<sup>292</sup> The very popular metrical “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter was considered the equivalent of a sacred ballad—not a poet’s virtuosic creation. In short, during the sixteenth century, poetic form came to be regarded as a predominantly secular and artificial form.

Around 1580, at a time when the separation of devotional material from poetic form seemed all but absolute, Sidney intervenes to legitimate the poet’s craft within the liturgical and devotional setting in his *Defense of Poetry*.<sup>293</sup> Targoff argues that when Sidney declares in his *Defense* that “the holy David’s Psalms are a divine poem” he is making an important polemical claim.<sup>294</sup> Although the Psalms had been regarded as poetry for centuries within the Christian as well as Jewish traditions, Sidney’s emphasis on the Psalms’ poetic form independent of their devotional content represented a challenge to the status quo.<sup>295</sup>

Prescott supports the claim that Sidney saw special value in applying the poet’s craft to the Psalms through her examination of Athanasius’ teachings alongside Sidney’s *Defense*.

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<sup>290</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 57.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

Prescott argues that though Sidney seems to dismiss David's poetic ability, an examination of Athanasius' then-familiar writings on the Psalms reveals striking parallels between Sidney's description of a "right poet" and Athanasius' conception of poetic agency in the Psalms.

Prescott writes that:

Sidney would have known much of a traditional set of *topoi* praising the psalms of David as a garden, treasury, mirror, and painting; a repository of lively images of an otherwise invisible excellence that inspires imitation, creates sweetness that 'steals' upon us, and conceals medicine good for children of all ages. Above all, the psalms outdo as efficacious teachers other works concerning abstract precept and particular event, in part because they give patterns, generally applicable forms that move the will and show the way. They even include images for avoidance as well as emulation.<sup>296</sup>

The highest value Sidney finds in the "right poet"—namely, the ability to put forth a Cyrus capable of making many Cyruses—is a virtue regularly attributed to the Psalms in early modern England. The project of versifying the Psalms, thus, becomes much more than a demonstration of poetic virtuosity; a verse Psalter, considered in this light, glorifies God and creates in its readers the ability to do the same. As Targoff notes, Sidney exalts David specifically for his poetic ability and boldly suggests that poetry "being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God."<sup>297</sup> Sidney's claims produced the difficult task for authors of texts both poetic and religious of justifying how a "predominantly secular and artificial art form could be devotionally efficacious."<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Prescott, "King David as a 'Right Poet,'" 146.

<sup>297</sup> Sidney, Sir Philip, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defense of Poesy)*, ed. Geoffrey Shephard, revised and expanded for this third edition by R. W. Maslen (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 84.

<sup>298</sup> Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 75.

Sidney's verse translation of Psalms 1-43, when understood in this light, emerges as a project designed to apply the poet's craft in service to God. Though this project was interrupted by his death in 1586, Herbert completed the project by revising Sidney's first 43 psalms and completing her own original translations of the remaining 107 psalms. As we have seen, the ideals embraced in her translation of *Discourse* and "Triumph" suggest that, like her brother, Herbert valued her work translating the psalms as an act of praise to God and service to fellow believers.

Herbert's attention to her brother's goals for his Psalter correlates with the mimetic relationship she envisioned her act of completing his Psalter to create between them. In a real way, Herbert's act of translation allowed her to connect mimetically with her brother. Within this textually-based, supportive community of believers, past believers influence and support the work of future Christians through poetic production. Several literary scholars have discussed the textual, mimetic relationship established between Sidney and Herbert by examining Herbert's completion of Sidney's Psalter in light of Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*. Zim asserts that Sidney's process of composing his translation of the Psalms is best understood in light of his *Defense of Poesie*, where he writes that poesy "is an art of imitation."<sup>299</sup> Zim argues that this connection can be demonstrated "by a close analysis of his process of imitation":

He meditated on the texts of the Psalms "weighing" them before he "practised" them, as the Genevan translators of 1559 had urged, in order to ensure that he understood them. He studied attentively the meaning and the style of the texts, and for this purpose consulted and collated several translations, paraphrases and learned

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<sup>299</sup> Prescott "King David as a 'Right Poet'"

commentaries. The search for “some worthy phrase” required the exercise of the “learned discretion” of a “right poet.”<sup>300</sup>

Sidney’s composition process is a demonstration of his deference for the Psalms and for the long Psalm tradition. Zim argues that sixteenth-century translation was aimed at representing the original author’s meaning and at showing proper concern for the original author’s style.<sup>301</sup> That this was Sidney’s goal is demonstrated, in part, by the fact that he consulted so many sources in crafting his translation.

When Herbert completed the Sidney Psalter, she demonstrated a similar regard for the original text of the Psalms by consulting almost every source on the Psalms available to her, including her brother’s translations. Comparisons of various versions of the first 43 Psalms demonstrate that “the Countess’s revisions of Sidney’s work were relatively limited and tentative. Her respect for Sidney’s achievement is evident not only in the pattern of her revisions of his work but also in the way she adopted his method for her own imitations of psalms.”<sup>302</sup> Beth Wynne Fisker examines Herbert’s revisions of Sidney’s translations of Psalms 1-43 and concludes that like her brother, Herbert’s process of learning to write and revise Psalm translations was mimetic. Whereas Sidney had learned his craft by first studying and understanding the meaning and worth of his sources, Herbert learned to translate the remaining 107 Psalms “[b]y first editing Philip’s works and translating those of others and by then revising the final irregular stanzas of some of Philip’s psalms.”<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Zim, *English Metrical Psalms*, 156.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>303</sup> Fisker, “To the Angell spirit...”: Mary Sidney’s Entry into the ‘World of Words,’” in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 266.

The editors of Herbert's collected works also discuss her revision of Sidney's first forty-three Psalms and note that "there is no way to prove whether [her changes] were original, or whether she was following her brother's intentions, given orally or in written form. Those changes, however, as recorded by Samuel Woodforde (MS B), parallel her revisions on her own psalms and may indicate that she learned her poetic craft from these endeavours."<sup>304</sup> In her dedicatory poem "Angel Spirit," Herbert describes the relationship of her own psalm translations to her brother and his translations. Though she completed the majority of the Psalter, she attributes the whole to him, arguing that he worked through her.<sup>305</sup>

While these studies help us understand how Sidney and Herbert viewed their task as translators, they do not acknowledge the ways in which Sidney and Herbert sought to extend the mimetic process beyond themselves. That is, they do not address the role that Herbert and Sidney envisioned for their readers. In her Psalms, we find Herbert's conception of a mimetic

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<sup>304</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol I, 8-9.

<sup>305</sup> Some have read Herbert's self-effacement in "Angel Spirit" as a consequence of sixteenth-century gender ideology. For example, in "Some inspired stile," Kim Walker suggests that Herbert's "activity is reduced in the poem to the appropriately feminine task of weaving a cloth from a framework established by her brother in the 'warp' of the web, an activity that is represented as inferior 'defraymnet' of debts, a familial payment of a dead man's dues" (78). However, Herbert's regard for her brother's work, as revealed through her composition process, supports her claim that she did not consider her work her own. Moreover, Philip Sidney's composition process suggests that he had a parallel regard for his sources. There are no surviving documents with Philip Sidney's reflections on his translation of the Psalms, but it is reasonable to infer from what we know about his writing process and his theory of imitation that, like his sister, he did not consider his Psalm translations his own virtuosic creations. Like Herbert, Sidney demonstrates a respect for the long tradition in which he is participating—a fact that cannot be dismissed as a result of early modern gender ideology.

Trill notes that current assertions of early modern gender ideology "suggest[] that women writers simply internalized and passively transcribed the ideas and values of the (predominantly) male-authored texts they translated" (148). Trill takes issue with this assertion, especially in the case of Herbert and her translation of the Psalms. She argues that Herbert's psalm translation does not fit any of the usual characteristics of a "feminine" translation: unlike other female translations of paraphrases of the Psalms, Herbert's is poetic (and Herbert boldly draws attention to the fact that it is poetic) (151); Herbert also "does not re-gender the personae of the psalmist or apply the Psalms to particular events in her life; rather, she translates them all and thus, as in the 'original,' she expresses the range of emotional states that a Christian could experience" (155). In other words, Herbert does not subordinate herself to the text in an extreme way, but asserts control over the text just as her brother, Philip, had in order to deliver the Psalms to an English-speaking audience in a form befitting their content.

relationship between herself and her brother inscribed, and we also find a similar relationship imagined for herself and her other sources, for her readers and herself, and for her readers and her brother. The final pages of this chapter will include examinations of select passages from Herbert's psalm translations. Dilating the lens with which we view the Sidney Psalter to include considerations of early modern verse as devotional material and of devotional material addressed to an audience of present as well as future reader-believers broadens our understanding of the intent and meaning of Herbert's work. Comparing certain aspects of Herbert's work with her sources also provides important context for understanding her translation.

The nature of translation is such that determining authorial intent and assigning authorial agency is to a certain extent an impossible task.<sup>306</sup> Determining the extent to which

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<sup>306</sup> Questions of agency and authorial intention have motivated many recent critical efforts to determine just how to categorize the Sidney Psalter. In "The Sidneys and the Psalms," *Studies in Philology* 42, no. 1 (1995) Theodore L. Steinberg argues that the term "translation" implies "a more literal reading than these psalms provide" and instead advocates thinking of the Sidney Psalms as paraphrases or poetic meditations (6). But the Sidney Psalms were regarded as a translation by contemporaries. In "Circulating the Sidney-Pembroke Psalter," in *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Debra Rienstra and Noel Kinnamon note that they are termed "translations" on the title page of one manuscript (56).

In *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), Schleiner argues that "The Countess of Pembroke's verse Psalms should also be considered original poems" (55). Schleiner draws on discourse pragmatics and models a taxonomy of translation after Genette's taxonomy of the paratextual (55ff). Schleiner's levels of translation range from the most to the least paratextual (most to least directly contingent upon and correlatable with the source text). She concludes that Herbert's psalms are at level 7: "A. A commentative, expansive paraphrase including new illustrative material by the translator [...] B. A condensed version representing, in the translator's view, the central gist of the source text, omitting material considered redundant or supplementary" (56-7). Imposing such definitions is anachronistic and implies that these categories were much neater in early modern England than they in fact were.

At the heart of these efforts to categorize the Sidney Psalter is the issue of authorial agency. The effort of translators to maintain the integrity of the original suggests that the translator's work is derivative. But as Hamlin notes, some of what we recognize today as masterpieces of early modern English literature were in fact translations (e.g., Thomas North's Plutarch). The focus of translators was not at slavish, meticulous reproduction, but the naturalization of classical texts. That is, translators sought to enter classical texts into English consciousness (7). The Psalms, by the time Sidney and Herbert their translation, had so thoroughly been integrated into English consciousness that they were in a real sense considered *English* works. That is, the English Psalms were not considered a crutch for those unable to read Hebrew; Hebrew was accessible to almost no one in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The official language of the Church of England was English, and the Psalms were arguably *the* central text of that church. To accept the connotation of translation as derivative in the context of sixteenth-century English Psalms translation would therefore be completely

Herbert believed and fully intended each of her words presents an impossible question. The time and care she invested in crafting an English verse Psalter attests to the high value she places on these texts. And yet, the nature of that value is elusive. On one hand, discovering the limits of Herbert's authorial agency in those passages of her translation where she closely parrots her sources is impossible. But on the other hand, those passages where subtle differences between her sources and her own text appear provide fertile critical ground.

And while Herbert works to maintain the integrity of the Psalms she translates, the metaphoric language and poetic devices she uses to render the text of the Psalms in English verse call her to at times fill in meanings, emphasize certain aspects of a passage, or choose one meaning amid ambiguity. The textual differences between Herbert's translation and the other English versions of the Psalms that she relied upon as sources tell us much about her interpretation of the Psalms.<sup>307</sup> In particular, this methodology reveals much about her conception of the relationships of believers both with God and Scripture and with one another.

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As for my self, my seely self, in me  
while life shall last, his worth in song to show  
I framed have a resolute decree,

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inaccurate. As Walker writes, Herbert's "writing deconstructs the conventional dichotomy between translation and 'original' (87). Trill examines the different roles conceived for female and male early modern translators and notes that translating was considered both an important part of a young man's education and a culturally valued mode of expression for adult men (145). By crafting herself as her brother Philip's Phoenix, Herbert was able to re-gender her act of translation and to cast it as a culturally valuable production.

<sup>307</sup> It is highly unlikely that either Herbert or Sidney worked at all from the Hebrew in composing their translation. Rather, like so many of their contemporaries, they relied heavily on English sources. As was noted in the first chapter of my dissertation, many early modern translations of the Bible were not what we would consider translations today (i.e. taken from another language into English). Rather, many early modern translators relied on English texts and, we would say, revised them.



and thankful be, till being I forgo.<sup>308</sup>

-Psalm 104, lines 97-104

Near the end of Herbert's translation of Psalm 104, the psalmic speaker "frame[s] a resolute decree" that she will spend her life showing God's worth in song. The last four lines of Herbert's thirteenth stanza suggest a communal function for the psalmist's act of praise that her English sources do not. In the corresponding passage of Coverdale's Psalter, for example, the psalmist declares:

I will sing unto the lord as long as I live: I will praise my God while I have my being.<sup>309</sup>

The "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter lilts:

(33) To this Lord and God,

    sing will I always:

So long as I live,

    my God praise will I.<sup>310</sup>

And the 1560 Geneva Bible's rendering of these lines closely parallels the Coverdale version:

(33) I will sing unto the Lord *all* my life: I will praise my God, while I live.<sup>311</sup>

As I have noted in earlier chapters, the Coverdale Psalter, the "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter, and the Psalter of the 1560 Geneva Bible were all generally well known in sixteenth-century

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<sup>308</sup> Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: Volume II, The Psalmes of David*, Edited with Introduction and Commentary by Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan (1998; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 161-62.

<sup>309</sup> *The Psalter or Psalmes of David, after the translation of the great Byble, poynted as it shalbe songue or sayde in Churches* (1577; Early English Books Online), Psalm 104, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:72799443](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:72799443) (accessed August 8, 2008).

<sup>310</sup> Sternhold and Hopkins, *The whole booke of Psalmes [...]*, Fiii r.

<sup>311</sup> William Whittingham, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament [...]* (Geneva, 1560; Early English Books Online, TCU Library, 23 January 2008), Tti v [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99837562](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99837562)

England.<sup>312</sup> And the close resemblance of passages of Herbert's translation to passages in these three Psalters suggests that they were most certainly very familiar to her. Her editors suggest that "she so frequently gives composite readings of these texts, she must have worked with them open before her."<sup>313</sup> In all three of these translations of Psalm 104 the psalmist commits to a life of singing God's praises. Herbert's translation echoes this sentiment while also building on it by specifying a function for the psalmist's praise. For Herbert, the purpose of singing God's praise is "to show" God's "worth" through "song" to an implied audience. The term "show," which does not appear in her sources, represents a significant addition, since it introduces into the text an otherwise unseen audience for the psalmist's act of praise; moreover, the relationship between the psalmist and his or her implied audience is conceived of as didactic in nature.

The Herbert speaker's passionate reference to self in line ninety-seven highlights a seemingly interminable mimetic chain of believers being shown and then showing God's praises one to another. Herbert underscores the agency of her psalmic speaker by replacing the "I" of her sources with a full verse line that includes five first-person references: "As for my self, my seely self, in me."<sup>314</sup> Herbert is herself the "me" when composing this translation, and with her verse she "shows" God's worth to her audience. But the well-established tradition of shared psalmic agency means that Herbert's reader is the self-

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<sup>312</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, the Coverdale Psalter was the most familiar version of the Psalms in sixteenth-century England by virtue of its appearance in both the Great Bible and, beginning in 1522, the Book of Common Prayer (Targoff, 66); the "Sternhold Hopkins" was also very well known. Smith suggests that "[i]t is perhaps fair to say that no English verse whatever was so familiar to English ears in the second half of the sixteenth century as the "Common Meter" of this translation" (251). And yet, many were dissatisfied with the quality of the verse of the "Sternhold Hopkins" version. Thomas Fuller, for example, remarked that the translators of the "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter were "men whose piety was better than their poetry" (qtd in Smith, 250); this sentiment was repeated regularly among the educated elite in early modern England. The Psalter appearing in the 1560 Geneva Bible was well-known by sixteenth-century Protestants as a revision or correction of the Coverdale Psalter. In addition to these English Psalters, Sidney also relied on French sources, though seemingly not heavily (Hannay, et al).

<sup>313</sup> Hannay, et al, eds, *The Collected Works*, vol. 2, 11.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 101

referencing speaker also. While reading this passage of Herbert's verse translation of the Psalms, then, the reader is being taught and is also committing to be the teacher, both the recipient of a message and perpetuator of that message. Herbert's commitment "while life shall last, his worth in song to show" becomes the commitment of the reader, also. The reader addresses a new audience, and the chain of mimetic "show" continues on. Also significant is the fact that the term "show" does not specify or limit the form praise to God may take. Herbert's demonstration of praise is a poetic translation of the Psalms, but the form of her readers' praise is not specified. Less skilled writers, and even the illiterate, are therefore also able to participate in this chain of taught and learned praise. The transience of the believer's earthly life is contrasted with the infinite enactment of praise for an eternal God carried out by a community of believers who, as a collective, are not bound by time.

Herbert's focus on time and timelessness is underscored by her re-assertion of the eternity of God at the close of Psalm 104. Her sources close with declarations of praise, but only Herbert specifies God's eternity: "praise him whom bands of time nor age can bind."<sup>315</sup> This reference to God's eternity contrasts with the transience of human life noted in lines 102 and 104 of stanza thirteen and in lines ninety-one through ninety-three in stanza twelve. Though this psalm is primarily a psalm of praise to God as creator and preserver, it includes a meditation on the fragility and mortality of God's creation if not sustained:

all darkened lie deprived of thy Raise,  
thou tak'st their breath, not one can longer stand.  
they die, they turn to former dust and sand,<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Text references to Herbert's translation are to Psalm, line, and page number of the Hannay, et al, *The Collected Works* edition of Herbert's Psalter. Psalm 104, line 112, page 162.

<sup>316</sup> Psalm 104, lines 91-93, page 161.

The stark reminder of the believer's dependence on God and the transience of life offered in Herbert's translation of this Psalm is an echo of her sources. And yet, it is reasonable to assume that Herbert would have been meditating on her personal experiences with the death of beloved family members as she composed these lines. The fact that Herbert chooses to re-emphasize God's eternity at the close of her translation, even though her sources do not, suggests that she found special comfort in this characteristic of the divine.

The mimetic community of believers conceived in Herbert's Psalm 104 differs in some significant ways from the community of believers implied by the engraving on John Baret's late medieval grave referenced at the start of this chapter. Baret's concern that the living help him with their prayers has no place in a post-Reformation belief system that rejects the doctrine of purgatory. And yet, Duffy's assertion that late medieval Christians' interest in death was aimed at "prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living" is just as accurate a description of Herbert's interest in death.<sup>317</sup> Like Barret, Herbert's conception of imitative praise and display connects believers, living and dead, in acts of faith designed to foster the faith of the living in preparation for death. There is a parallel between Barret's concern that the living repent before their time of grace has ended and Herbert's "show" of God's "worth"; both posit past believers as teachers of the living. Baret's means of maintaining a presence among the living was a cadaver tomb with an inscription at its head and the performance of speech-acts (prayers and masses) arranged through his will; Herbert's means of maintaining a presence among the living was text-based.

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<sup>317</sup> A concern for preserving a presence of the dead among the living seems also to have occupied Philip Sidney. Note, for example, his suggestion in the closing lines of his *Defense* that those who "cannot hear the planet-like music of Poetry" or those who carry a disdain for Poetry will have no means of being remembered: "yet thus much curse must I send you, in the behalf of all poets, that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet, and, when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph" (117).

For her, poetry provides a means of maintaining a presence in the community of living believers after death. This comparison, though somewhat cursory, demonstrates that the shift from late medieval to early modern devotional practice in England is most accurately described in terms of a shift from one conception of community to another, rather than as a shift from the communal to the individual. Herbert's translation of the Psalms provides one early modern conception of devotional community. The conception of community gleaned from Herbert's translation of the Psalms, as I have suggested, can be best described in mimetic terms.

In her translation of Psalm 75, we find Herbert's clearest statement of her conception of mimesis. By applying metaphoric language in the closing lines of her translation of Psalm 75, Herbert subtly alters the meaning of her sources and characterizes an imitative relationship between believers—past, present, and future. At the end of Psalm 75, a psalm celebrating God's justice, God is offered praise (in verse nine), and the wicked are condemned and the righteous exalted (in verse ten). The Coverdale Psalter, the "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter, and the Psalter of the 1560 Geneva Bible present these ideas in similarly straight-forward language:

But I will talk of the god of Jacob: and praise him for ever.

All the horns of the ungodly also will I break and the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. (Psalm 75, 1577 Book of Common Prayer Psalter<sup>318</sup>)

<sup>(9)</sup> But I will talk of God, I say,  
of Jacobs God therefore:  
And will not cease to celebrate,

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<sup>318</sup> *The Psalter*, G viii v.

his praise for evermore.

<sup>(10)</sup> In sunder break the horns of all,

ungodly men will I:

But then the horns of righteous men shall be exalted high.

(Psalm 75, 1569 “Sternhold Hopkins” Psalter<sup>319</sup>)

<sup>(9)</sup> But I will declare for ever, and sing praises unto the God of Jacob.

<sup>(10)</sup> All the horns of the wicked also will I break: *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

(Psalm 75, 1560 Geneva Bible<sup>320</sup>)

Herbert, while following the same general pattern, takes significant liberty in enlarging upon the themes presented in her sources. Her editorial emphases amount to a representation of the mimetic function she understands her joint translation of the Psalms to perform:

And I secure shall spend my happy times

in my, though lowly, never-dying rhymes,

singing with praise the god that Jacob loveth.

my princely care shall crop ill-doers low,

in glory plant, and make with glory grow

who right approves, and doth what right approveth.<sup>321</sup>

Here, in six verse lines, Herbert characterizes mimesis in the Psalms. In the second half of this stanza, the wicked are brought low and the righteous are exalted—a pattern consistent

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<sup>319</sup> Sternhold and Hopkins, *The whole booke of Psalmes [...]*, D viii v.

<sup>320</sup> Whittingham, *The Bible*, Rr.iii.

<sup>321</sup> Psalm 75, lines 25-30, page 100.

with the corresponding passages of her English sources. But at the close of Psalm 75, Herbert takes liberty in assigning a greater level of agency to the psalmic speaker than her sources. In all three of the contemporary renderings of the passage provided above, the psalmic “I” proclaims that he/she will break the horns of the wicked. Herbert alone, however, assigns agency to her psalmic speaker in exalting the righteous, while her sources reference the exaltation of the righteous in the passive voice (e.g., “the horns of the righteous shall be exalted”). Herbert characterizes the nature of her speaker’s act of exalting believers with a plant metaphor. She conceives of humans as plants that her speaker will either “crop [...] low” or “in glory plant, and make with glory grow.” The speaker’s “never-dying rhymes,” crafted with “princely care,” can “plant” and “grow” new believers to perpetuate the singing of praise for “the god that Jacob loveth.” Here, Herbert portrays Jacob modeling for her and her readers a proper regard for God.

By describing the community of believers rather than simply naming it as her sources do, Herbert draws further attention to the characteristics of this community. In place of naming “the righteous,” as the Coverdale, “Sternhold Hopkins,” and Geneva Psalters do, Herbert instead specifies the righteous as those “who right approves, and doth what right approveth”—those who approve what is right and who do what is approved as right. Here, alongside the agency of Herbert’s speaker—the gardener able to “crop low” the wicked or “make [the righteous] with glory grow”—we discover the agency of Herbert’s readers, empowered with the authority to approve and do what is right. Herbert’s characterization renders the community of believers active. And the notion that the psalmic speaker’s rhymes are “never-dying” points to the mimetic relationship among psalmic speakers, readers, and

writers facilitated by the Psalms themselves. Thus, Herbert's Psalms live forever, not merely on paper, but in the minds and actions of believers.

At the same time that Herbert conceives of a mimetic relationship between herself and her readers, she imagines a mimetic relationship between herself and her sources. By making explicit reference to Jacob's love for God—another subtle divergence from her sources—Herbert highlights the fact that like her readers, she, too, must credit her faith to a long chain of imitative models. All three of her English sources refer to the God of Jacob, but Herbert alone attributes to Jacob the act of loving God. Herbert's Jacob models a certain kind of relationship with God for other believers. Similar emphases on believers gone before can be found throughout Herbert's Psalter. This emphasis on past believers, in a sense, allows Herbert to negate her own agency by conflating it with past psalmists. In effect, she is not claiming authority for herself, the poet, but for the Christian tradition when she assigns the poet the ability to plant and make grow. This mimetic vision for her rhymes also shelters her from the suggestion that she has claimed too much authority for herself. This claim of reliance on the whole Christian tradition frees Herbert from the accusations that the poet is idolatrous and solves a critical question posed by Sidney in his *Defense of Poesy*—namely, the question of whether the poet's craft can be used in service to God.

In her translation of Psalm 75 printed above, Herbert makes bold reference to the poetic form of the psalmic speaker's words—an indication of her participation in the ongoing conversations about the relationship of poet and devotional text. Coverdale's Psalter refers to the psalmic speaker's praise as "talk," as does the "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter. And the Geneva version of Psalm 75 alludes to the speech-act ("declare") as well as the act of singing. Herbert's reference to "rhymes" represents a significant divergence. While Herbert



follows her sources in offering praise to Jacob's God in the final lines of this Psalm, she takes significant liberty in deviating from her sources not only by specifying a particular form of praise, but by delighting in it. As Targoff's study makes clear, such an explicit reference to poetic production in a devotional text is significant within the context of sixteenth-century England,<sup>322</sup> when an overwhelming majority of the laity's devotional literature appeared in prose form. Herbert's bold reference to the poetic form of the psalmic speaker's words here in Psalm 75 suggests that she had a rather thorough understanding of her brother's goals for the Psalter and in fact shared them.

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The Sidney Psalter differs significantly from the other texts examined in this study in that it was circulated exclusively in manuscript form and therefore enjoyed only a fraction of the audience of the widely circulated print Bibles, Psalters, and volumes of *Actes & Monuments* discussed in earlier chapters. And yet, the Sidney Psalter reflects some of the most pervasive attitudes and expectations regarding the act of reading in early modern England. Considering the communal context constructed for the act of reading religious texts in the vernacular in early modern England also leads us to reconsider the Sidney Psalter's devotional function.

Amidst all of the change surrounding Herbert, her act of Psalm translation served as an available means for spiritual grounding. Her religious beliefs were tied to a tradition far more deeply rooted than Genevan Protestantism. Psalm translation played a role in enabling

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<sup>322</sup> Relevant to discussion of poetic form of Psalms is the contemporary dissatisfaction with the "Sternhold Hopkins" Psalter. Also relevant is the notion of expressing national pride by "proving" the poetic worth and potential of the English language. John Donne's poem "Upon the translation of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney, and the Countess of Pembroke his sister" is the most well-known contemporary praise for the Sidney Psalter. There, Donne remarks that the Psalms are "[s]o well atty'rd abroad, so ill at home" (line 38, quoted in Trill 149), but that unlike other English Psalters, the Sidney Psalter represents "the highest matter in the noblest form" (149).

Herbert to confront the fleetingness of life as close relatives, including her brother, Philip, died around her. Faced with her own mortality, she finds purpose and intellectual longevity through the mimetic process of psalm translation. When translating, she communed with her brother. And by circulating her Psalms in manuscript form among an educated readership, she preserved her brother's place among that literary coterie and enlivened readers as agents within a mimetic chain. Thus, for Herbert, engagement with the Psalms provided comfort through personal devotion that was grounded by a mimetic exchange with Christian saints of the past, present, and future.

## CONCLUSION

It is important to note that any broad conclusions of this study are based on a collection of evidence that is itself particular. This study aims to balance broad with particular methods of enquiry by considering texts which are representative of mainstream religious practice in early modern England by virtue of the large audiences they attracted while also recognizing the distinct ways in which these texts shaped their readers.

The first broad implication of this study of the practices of mainstream sixteenth-century readers of religious texts has to do with our conception of the early modern reader of Reformation religious texts as solitary and independent. The material, textual, and paratextual evidence of mainstream encounters with vernacular religious texts available to us regularly contradicts the notion of an independent, solitary reader. Exploring the sites where readers' experiences of a text are framed reveals that the act of reading religious texts is regularly situated within a communal context. The importance of invoking the communal when reading changed according to the broader theological and commercial goals of various writers and printers. In the case of Bible preliminaries, reformers suggested a communal context for reading in order to maintain interpretive union among readers. The schedules assigning specific portions of Scripture to be read at certain times temporally regularized the experiences of readers who were spatially separated. Summaries of the Bible's teachings provided readers with expectations that would shape their interpretation of what they would encounter in the massive text of the Bible. And some authors of texts that came to be included as preliminary documents in widely circulated Bibles describe for readers what the experience of interpreting the Bible correctly would feel and look like. In each of these cases,

certain aspects of the larger religious community are suggested as standards by which individual interpretations of the Bible can be judged.

These preliminaries reflect various understandings of the Reformation tenet *sola scriptura* as they treat the question of how to interpret the Bible. The relation of readers, Biblical text and Church traditions one to another were formulated and re-formulated variously. At stake in these debates was the stability of the English Church and national identity. If interpretive coherence among individual Bible readers could be attained, then the Bible could serve to stabilize the English Church and nation.

In a certain sense, the book of Psalms served a purpose similar to the preliminaries examined in chapter one. The belief that within the Psalms were contained the teachings of the whole Bible rendered this book a short-hand compendium of Christian belief. As believers heard, sang, and read these texts throughout their lives, they became so familiar that they came to represent uncontested ways of seeing things. The Psalms provided believers with a lens through which they could understand the massive and diverse text of the Bible. Psalm culture also served as a basis for communal agreement by providing believers with a common language with which to speak to God, one another, and themselves about their beliefs, emotions, and lives. The belief in the multiple, shared agency of the Psalms both created and closed off spaces for meaningful expression by suggesting to readers (or hearers or singers) that these holy words of God were theirs also and that these words encompassed the whole of the Christian experience. The Sidney Psalter is a particular example of the sort of communal context afforded by early modern understandings of the Psalms. In this translation, the Psalms are themselves viewed as a conduit uniting the community of believers—past, present, and future—across time.

Foxe situates reading as an activity with somewhat different communal repercussions. Whereas many English Bibles were concerned with stabilizing the Church in England by providing the basis for common interpretation among individual readers, in *Actes & Monuments* Foxe views reading as a tool that can further purify the Church in England. Reading the Word of God is conceived of as an act of service to the larger faith community when readers are consistently portrayed publicly sharing the teachings of the Bible with others, even at the expense of their own lives. By tying the turbulence of the Reformation to the long history of the Christian Church, Foxe argues for the legitimacy of the Reformation. Foxe also uses stark comparisons between *true* believers and feigned believers, such as those that run the Church of Rome, to delegitimize that Church. In contrast to the violent means by which the Church of Rome maintains the unity of its community of believers, Foxe repeatedly portrays true believers reading and discussing the Word of God in a calm, reasonable manner in his volume. Such examples provide individual readers with communally accepted examples after which they may model their own actions.

The second broad implication of this study has to do with the way we understand the relationship of reading and non-textual acts. Whereas past studies have been interested in the imitative response of writers to the texts they read, this study suggests that reading was constructed as a tool for inciting non-textual actions as well. In the case of the Sidney Psalter, for example, we find Herbert responding in a textual way to her brother's death. By studying his psalm translations and revising them, she hones her own craft and then composes verse psalm translations herself. Thus, through Herbert, Sidney lives on to complete the Psalter he began. Herbert envisions similar relationships for herself and her other sources and for

herself and her readers in her psalms. Significantly, these relationships, while modeled on textual interactions, are not limited to textual forms of exchange. Verse may be Herbert's chosen mode of displaying God's goodness, but her readers may respond to her psalms with displays of God's goodness that take other forms.

The notion of reflecting the truths of the Bible in one's own life recurs throughout Bible preliminaries and in Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* as well. Foxe hails the printing press and the circulation of print texts as an important tool for reforming the church, for example, but for Foxe reading is not enough in itself; reading is valued only for its ability to move individuals to acts of faith and witness. Action is also conceived of as a sort of norm in Foxe. In addressing the question of how to tell the true church and true believers from the feigned, the manner in which individuals conduct themselves is repeatedly suggested as a measure of an individual's sincerity. True believers rely on their study of the Word of God and peaceful discussion as an effective means of attaining agreement about the truth and of identifying true believers—even in the face of violent death.

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## VITA

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ABSTRACT

ACTS OF FAITH:  
READING, RHETORIC AND THE CREATION OF COMMUNAL BELIEF IN  
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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This dissertation examines the construction of the act of reading sacred Christian texts in sixteenth-century England. The advent of print and the legalization of vernacular religious texts in England created new rhetorical spaces which both defined and were defined by a changing religious climate and by the interactions of oral, written, and print cultures. Theologians, translators, editors and printers worked to define what it meant to engage sacred texts as they worked to stabilize their visions of the Church of England or increase book sales.

Though scholars have reconstructed the reading practices of highly educated members of early modern English society by examining their book collections, marginalia, and other writings, significantly less has been done to understand the reading practices of the lower orders. Printing records reveal that the most popular books of the period were editions of English Psalters, complete Bibles, and Testaments of the Bible. John Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* did not sell at the rate of Bibles and Psalms, but it nevertheless entered into popular consciousness when it was ordered placed in all parish churches in 1571. My study considers the ways these popular books constructed relationships among readers and sacred texts. The paratexts of these widely circulated editions of sacred texts and the first four editions of Foxe's *Actes & Monuments* reveal multiple, often competing, conceptions of the act of reading. And yet, despite the different ends imagined for reading in these books, reading sacred texts is regularly constructed within a communal context. The final chapter of this study considers the theory of reading put forth in the Sidney Psalter. In this rather private text which circulated exclusively in manuscript form, the notion that reading sacred texts is a communal activity recurs and is put in the service of legitimating the poet's craft for devotional use.