Popular Politics and the English Reformation

This book is a study of popular responses to the English Reformation. It takes as its subject not the conversion of English subjects to a new religion but rather their political responses to a Reformation perceived as an act of state and hence, like all early modern acts of state, negotiated between government and people. These responses included not only resistance but also significant levels of accommodation, cooperation and collaboration as people attempted to co-opt state power for their own purposes. This study argues, then, that the English Reformation was not done to people, it was done with them in a dynamic process of engagement between government and people. As such, it answers the twenty-year-old scholarly dilemma of how the English Reformation could have succeeded despite the inherent conservatism of the English people, and it presents the first genuinely post-revisionist account of one of the central events of English history.

ETHAN H. SHAGAN is Assistant Professor of History at Northwestern University. He received his Ph.D. from Princeton University in 2000 and was a Junior Fellow of the Harvard University Society of Fellows. He has published articles in the English Historical Review, the Journal of British Studies, the Journal of Ecclesiastical History, and in numerous edited collections. This is his first book.
This is a series of monographs and studies covering many aspects of the history of the
British Isles between the late fiftteenth century and the early eighteenth century. It
includes the work of established scholars and pioneering work by a new generation of
scholars. It includes both reviews and revisions of major topics and books, which open
up new historical terrain or which reveal startling new perspectives on familiar subjects.
All the volumes set detailed research into our broader perspectives and the books are
intended for the use of students as well as of their teachers.

For a list of titles in the series, see end of book.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements  ix
List of abbreviations xi
Note on the text xiii

Introduction 1

PART I
The break with Rome and the crisis of conservatism
1 ‘Schismatics be now plain heretics’: debating the royal supremacy over the Church of England 29
2 The anatomy of opposition in early Reformation England: the case of Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent 61
3 Politics and the Pilgrimage of Grace revisited 89

PART II
Points of contact: the Henrician Reformation and the English people
4 Anticlericalism, popular politics and the Henrician Reformation 131
5 Selling the sacred: Reformation and dissolution at the Abbey of Hailes 162
6 ‘Open disputation was in alehouses’: religious debate in the diocese of Canterbury, c. 1543 197
Contents

PART III
Sites of Reformation: collaboration and popular politics under Edward VI

7 Resistance and collaboration in the dissolution of the chantries 235
8 The English people and the Edwardian Reformation 270

Conclusion 305

Bibliography 311
Index 327
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This seeds of this book were first planted in my mind in 1994 during a typically thought-provoking coffee break with Peter Lake. To attempt to acknowledge all of the help that I have received during the intervening years seems a hopeless task, and even at my most self-indulgent I could not possibly express here the gratitude that I owe to so many wonderful people. So let me begin by offering a pre-emptive pint of ale to all those friends, family and colleagues whose names do not appear here but who have supported me over the years; you know who you are, and I look forward to making good my debts.

My most profound thanks go to the three mentors who have trained me as a scholar: Peter Lake and Diarmaid MacCulloch saw this project through from beginning to end, while Tim Harris gave me the confidence to undertake so daunting a project in the first place. Any readers familiar with Tudor–Stuart historiography will see their fingerprints throughout this volume, but what readers will not see is that my occasional ability to transcend their interpretations and find my own voice is itself the greatest testament to their skill and generosity as teachers.

I also owe enormous thanks to the scholars and friends who read and commented upon various versions of the text. Entire drafts, either as thesis or typescript, were read by Tim Breen, Tony Grafton, Bill Heyck, Bill Jordan, Peter Lake, Diarmaid MacCulloch and Peter Marshall. Drafts of individual chapters or sections were read by Margaret Aston, Tom Freeman, Tim Harris, Amanda Jones, Michael Questier, Nicholas Tyacke and Diane Watt. Over the years, I have also benefited from countless conversations with colleagues (both in British history and in other fields) who pushed my thoughts in new directions. While I cannot express my gratitude here for all these conversations, I am especially grateful to Bernard Bailyn, Alastair Bellany, Philip Benedict, Brian Cowan, Natalie Davis, Jeff Dolven, Ken Fincham, Ben Frommer, Eric Klinenberg, Greg Lyon, Ian McNeely, Judith Maltby, Ed Muir, Richard Rex, Margaret Sena and Lisa Wolverton. The late Lawrence Stone provided both intellectual stimulation and personal encouragement for
x

Acknowledgements

which I will always be grateful. Simon Healy saved me from my own para-
noia by checking a key reference for me at the eleventh hour. I also received
enormously helpful guidance from the editors of this series and from William
Davies at Cambridge University Press; most especially, I am grateful for the
boundless generosity of John Morrill.

This book also would not have been possible without financial support
from a variety of institutions. Particular thanks go to Princeton University
and Northwestern University for numerous grants and extensive relief from
the more onerous responsibilities of academia. Research in London was
supported by a dissertation year fellowship from the North American Con-
ference on British Studies. Much of the writing was done in the uniquely
supportive atmosphere of the Harvard University Society of Fellows. And,
of course, the Michael and Rena Shagan Scholarship Fund made contribu-
tions over the years too numerous to mention.

I have had the privilege of presenting various portions of this book to a
wide range of scholarly groups. My particular thanks go to the history faculty
at Cambridge University, members of the British religious history seminar at
the Institute of Historical Research in London, and the University of Chicago
Renaissance Colloquium for their helpful comments. I also owe thanks to
various audiences at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, the North
American Conference on British Studies, and the British Studies Colloquium
at Princeton University.

It is a pleasure to thank the personnel at numerous libraries and archives.
The staffs of the record offices in Worcester, Gloucester, Kent, Oxford and
Stratford-upon-Avon were particularly helpful, as were the staffs of the
Dr Williams Library, the Bodleian Library, the Parker Library at Corpus
Christi College, Cambridge, and the Institute of Historical Research. I also
want to thank the staff of the British Library manuscript students room,
both at the British Museum and at St Pancras, and the staff of the Public
Record Office, both at Chancery Lane and at Kew. In particular, the staff of
the Map and Large Documents Room at Kew went above and beyond the
call of duty to make me happy and comfortable in a place where I feel like I
have spent more waking hours during the last decade than I have in my own
home.

The one debt which must be acknowledged beyond all others, however, is
to Sarah Paul. For eight years she has put up with, if not ‘a ménage à trois
with a dead archbishop’, then at least an extended roll in the hay with some
revolting peasants. With love and friendship, this book is for her.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIHR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCC</td>
<td>Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUL</td>
<td>Cambridge University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNB</td>
<td>The Dictionary of National Biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Texts Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHR</td>
<td>English Historical Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRO</td>
<td>Gloucestershire Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJ</td>
<td>Historical Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBS</td>
<td>Journal of British Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEH</td>
<td>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&amp;P</td>
<td>Past and Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCJ</td>
<td>The Sixteenth Century Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. P.</td>
<td>State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission, King Henry VIII. 11 vols. London, 1830–52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBGAS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRHS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRO</td>
<td>Worcestershire Record Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE ON THE TEXT

Throughout this text, spelling and punctuation have been modernised in all quotations except for the titles of books and places where the intended meaning is unclear. Parts of chapter 2 were previously published in my ‘Print, Orality and Communications in the Maid of Kent Affair’, *JEH*, 52 (2001), 21–33, used here with kind permission of Cambridge University Press.