Introduction

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This book owes its origins to a desire to bring together two divergent approaches to the English Reformation. Early writers, most notably John Strype, viewed the Reformation primarily as an event in political history; they collected and analyzed the documents which established the independent Church of England.[1] Writing in 1936, Sir Maurice Powicke went so far as to say that "the one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England is that it was an act of State."[2] The classic modern account of Reformation politics is that by A.G. Dickens, first published in 1964.[3] This approach remained dominant through the 1970s. Several of Sir Geoffrey Elton's magisterial works described the religious policies of Henry VIII's chief minister Thomas Cromwell,[4] while the statutes passed by Henry VIII's parliaments to regulate religion were studied by Stanford Lehmberg in his books *The Reformation Parliament* and *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII*.[5] Biographies of Thomas Cranmer naturally emphasized the primary role of the archbishop of Canterbury in enforcing reforms.[6]

Works of this sort see the Reformation as coming rapidly and being imposed from the top down. But another sort of historiography, gaining popularity in the 1980s, viewed Reformation as a slow process working its way up from the bottom as Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Calvinistic

[1] John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (London, 1721); *Annals of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (London, 1709–31).
[2] Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Reformation in England* (Oxford, 1941), 1.
[3] A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964; 2nd ed., University Park, PA, 1989).
[4] G.R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972); *Reform and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1973).
[5] Stanford E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation Parliament, 1529–1536* (Cambridge, 1970) and *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536–1547* (Cambridge, 1977).
[6] Jasper Ridley, *Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford, 1962); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1996).

views gradually gained acceptance by common people.[7] Another perspective on popular belief emphasized the reluctance of many men and women to abandon their traditional Catholic beliefs. J.J. Scarisbrick and Robert Whiting were among the early exponents of this argument; Scarisbrick providing a general account and Whiting a more specialized examination of the southwest of England.[8] The finest study of "Traditional Religion in England 1400–1500" – that is its subtitle – is *The Stripping of the Altars* by Eamon Duffy.[9]

Despite some attempts to draw these different approaches together,[10] they have tended to remain separate. Historians of official religion do indeed talk with their colleagues examining popular belief and culture,[11] but they have not yet attempted a synthesis of their work. It may be that the time has come for such a comprehensive new interpretation to gain acceptance. In any case, it was our hope that pulling together a series of essays by leaders of both camps might be an appropriate step in that direction.

Each section of this volume includes a study of a part of England. Interestingly enough, these are pieces of local or regional history, a fact suggesting the growing importance of local studies upon which more general future accounts can be based. Eamon Duffy considers the changes in a single church, Salle in Norfolk; Caroline Litzenberger deals primarily with the diocese of Gloucester and its bishop, John Hooper; and Nicholas Orme examines popular religion and the Reformation in Cornwall. Paul Seaver's study of state religion and Puritan resistance in the early seventeenth century, while it has a broader context, is based on events in London. All of these suggest fascinating comparisons and contrasts, some of them purely English but some with theoretical implications stretching far beyond the British Isles.

Memories of England's Reformation traveled around the globe, carried by the agents of Tudor–Stuart England's commercial outreach. During the period when Iran's Shah 'Abbâs I (ruled 1587–1629) was extending the trading network of his Shi'ite kingdom – while fighting wars with the Sunni sultans of the Ottoman Empire – Anthony Sherley arrived in

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[7] The distinction between these two approaches was first set out in "The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation" by Christopher Haig, in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Haig (Cambridge, 1987), 19–33.

[8] J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge, 1989).

[9] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1992).

[10] The most important is Christopher Haig, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993).

[11] Lehmberg and Scarisbrick were both students of Elton and for a time corresponded occasionally.

Iran as a merchant adventurer (1598). With an implicit bow to Elizabeth I's success in repressing Catholic worship in Protestant England, Sherley regarded with approval the shah's policy of enforced religious uniformity in Iran, dictated, he assumed, by reasons of state: "On the one hand, the shah thus eliminated internal division within his realm; on the other, he strengthens himself against the Turk."[12] Nearly sixty years later, Paul Rycaut began a long period of service as English consul in Smyrna. During England's Civil War, members of Rycaut's family lost their offices because of their adhesion to the royalist cause; Rycaut was reminded of these events by a zealous *mufti* who had persuaded the grand vizier (1662) to raze all Christian churches that had been rebuilt in Istanbul after the fire of 1660: "Thus we may see how troublesome Hypocrisie and Puritanism are in all places where they gain a superiority."[13]

As these comments suggest, observers of politics in the early modern era took it for granted that a state conscious of its own interests would or at least ought to guide the religious behavior of its subjects. Until fairly recently, similar assumptions about the primacy of state policy in religious affairs have informed historical writing about Europe's Protestant and Catholic Reformations. For example, Karl Brandi's *German History in the Age of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation* covers much of the same ground as his monumental *Emperor Charles V*, stressing conflicts between Charles V (ruled 1519–1555) and Germany's Protestant princes.[14]

But scholarship of the last four decades or so has made it abundantly clear that one cannot imagine the religious life of the people as simply decided for them by their rulers. The term "popular religion" seemed useful for differentiating the beliefs of ordinary men and women from those of the governing elite, until it was pointed out that the common folk and their betters often shared the same religion, even if each locality preserved usages frowned on by church authorities.[15] "Folk belief" is perhaps a better way of describing the whole complex of traditional thinking and ritual against which reformers of all persuasions directed their fire.

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[12] Antony Sherley, *Opmerckelijke Reistochten na Persien* (Leiden, 1706), 14; copy in the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

[13] Paul Rycaut, *A History of the Turkish Empire, from the Year 1623 to the Year 1673* (London, 1680), 104–5; copy in the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota. Cf. sig. B-Bv, where Rycaut mentions having served for eighteen years as consul in Smyrna, "prior to which my loyal family was banned from office."

[14] Kárl Brandi, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation und Gegenreformation* (Munich, 1928/1942/1960); *Kaiser Karl V* (Munich, 1938).

[15] William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, 1981).

But if the "lived" religion of the people was somehow different from the "official" religion promoted from on high, what was the relation between the two? As Willem Frijhoff notes in this volume, scholars pursuing "a narrative that tries to get hold of neglected dimensions" in religious history have conceptualized this relationship in several different ways. "Protestantization" is a good description of the aims of the reformers in Calvinist areas like the Dutch Republic, where the aim was to expunge altogether the idea that prayer and worship could ever be instruments for inducing the Lord God to intervene directly in human affairs. "Acculturation" points to the fact that religious reform was often a program of social elites, aiming to raise the uneducated and unwashed to their own higher level.[16] "Confessionalization" defines a paradigm especially appropriate for small and medium-sized princely territories in Germany – whether Lutheran, Calvinist, or Catholic – where civil and ecclesiastical authorities worked hand-in-glove to instruct the people in the doctrine of the chosen confession and to make them conform to its way of life.[17] But though each of these categories has merit, none of them recognizes the common folk who were the object of various meliorative ministrations as having an active will of their own. Hence three of the authors represented here – Willem Frijhoff, Caroline Litzenberger, and Susan Karant-Nunn – prefer to characterize the relationship between "lived" and "official" religion as a process of "accommodation," in which people took what they wanted from the message of reform, and reshaped it according to their own needs. But a clarification of concepts only permits the real questions to emerge more sharply. If (as seems to be the case) programs of religious change were pushed through most thoroughly where state and church authorities worked closely together, what was the basis of their collaboration? In particular, what was the state's perceived interest in religious reform? And if the objectives of state officials and zealous pastors differed – as surely they must have – how did they differ? As for the commoners, one would like to know which parts of the message of reform they found appealing, and why. But since most inhabitants of most European countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were illiterate peasants, how does one determine what they thought one way or the other? Perhaps the first step toward an answer is to accept the idea that the religious individualism

[16] Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400–1750*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Baton Rouge, 1985).
[17] Wolfgang Reinhard, Heinz Schilling, *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung* (Münster, 1995); Heinz Schilling, "Confessional Europe," in *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600*, Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy eds., 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994), II: 641–82.

of these early modern centuries seems now to have been overrated by earlier scholars – on this point see Eamon Duffy's essay. This means that questions about the beliefs and behavior of ordinary men and women have to focus on the communities in which they lived.[18] But here further questions arise: are we to believe that villages and small towns of four or five hundred years ago were communities in a moral sense, as well as a physical or legal sense? Or were they merely collections of warring factions and competing material interests, each seeking to cloak its private purposes under the mantle of the common good?

Paradoxical as it may seem, one can sometimes see complex issues more clearly by raising the complexity to a higher level. When Antony Sherley and Paul Rycaut compared their home country to one or another Islamic realm, they applied familiar categories to a new and unfamiliar situation, as travelers invariably do. But is it not also possible that each gained a sharper view of England's experience by observing what seemed to be analogous phenomena in a strange land? The premise of this volume is that students of religious history in a given area can indeed gain perspective from the findings of colleagues working on what seem to be analogous problems in different parts of the globe. The point is perhaps easiest to grasp in reference to the Christian tradition. Just as much has been gained by moving beyond the denominationally oriented historiography of an earlier era, as proponents of the "confessionalization" thesis do by discerning common patterns in Catholic and Protestant efforts at reform, there is much to be gained also by looking for common patterns at a deeper historical depth, between Eastern and Western Christianity. There are elements of religious life that transcend the limits of any particular tradition. China's imperial government shared with European states an interest in promoting orthodoxy, even if the respective definitions of orthodoxy were quite different; and its subjects shared with Europeans a remarkable facility for interpreting religious teachings in their own way.

The essays are grouped under three major headings. In keeping with the volume's focus, each section concludes with an essay on England. Part I, "Lived Religion and Official Religion," frames the basic contrast between the two. Richard Shek's "The Alternative Moral Universe of Religious Dissenters in Ming-Qing China" defines orthodoxy in China as having a "social-ethical" content that all of the officially approved

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[18] Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, ed. and tr. H.C. Erik Middlefort, Mark U. Edwards (Durham, N.C. 1982). Prof. Moeller's essay, originally published in German in 1961, launched a whole subfield of scholarship on the urban Reformation, especially in Germany.

religious traditions promoted; accordingly, adherents of the "Eternal Mother" tradition were persecuted for refusing to conform to these behavioral norms. Robert Crummey's "Ecclesiastical Elites and Popular Belief and Practice in Seventeenth-Century Russia" examines the complex reasons for resistance to the imposition of uniform service books by Tsar Aleksei and his reform-minded churchmen; the "Old Belief" movement rested on popular attachment to specifically Russian ritual gestures, the courage of martyrs, and apologetic writings circulated by dissident monastic communities. Willem Frijhoff's "The State, the Churches, Sociability, and Folk Belief in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic" distinguishes the aims of the Dutch Reformed Church from those of the magistrates; while the former struggled to root out the "instrumental religion" that was a legacy of the Catholic era, the latter supported the "official church" for reasons of social control, while seeking also to build "civic values" that transcended sectarian differences. Caroline Litzenberger's "Communal Ritual, Concealed Belief: Layers of Response to the Regulation of Ritual in Reformation England" centers on what the reformers sought to change, as exemplified by two episcopal visitations of the diocese of Gloucester; so as to school the people to trust in God's Word alone, no traditional gesture or cult object that suggested the old idea of the efficacious power of ritual was to be allowed to continue. In fact, since compliance depended on the cooperation of local parish leaders, worship spaces were changed a good deal less than ardent reformers desired.

Part II, "Forms of Religious Identity," gets at the collective aspect of religious behavior by looking at some of the ways in which shared belief and worship can form a sense of group identity. Romeyn Taylor's "Spirits of the Penumbra: Deities Worshiped in more than one Chinese Pantheon" starts from a distinction between popular religion broadly understood and no less than four forms of worship officially promoted by imperial officials (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and an officially sanctioned form of popular belief). The "spirits" of the title are witness to the flexibility of religious practice, as supernatural beings keep their names (but not much else) when cultivated in nonofficial places of worship. Frank Sysyn's "Orthodoxy and Revolt: The Role of Religion in the Seventeenth-Century Ukrainian Uprising Against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" traces the emergence of a sense of distinctiveness among Ruthenians or Orthodox Ukrainians to their disadvantaged position in the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania; when the accommodation with the state sought by church leaders was frustrated by the rising zeal of the Counter-Reformation, the hierarchy turned to the cossacks, defenders now not just of their own interest

but of the Ruthenian people and their faith. Raymond Mentzer's "The Huguenot Minority in Early Modern France" explores what it meant for France's Protestants to live under an increasingly hostile Catholic state: Huguenots lacked the state support that promoted implementation of moral reform in Calvinist lands, and their numbers were depleted through intermarriage. Yet official measures directed against them seem to have combined with their own internal discipline to create a community strong enough to withstand persecution, including Louis XIV's Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). Paul Seaver's "State Religion and Puritan Resistance in Early Seventeenth-Century England" examines a case in which state pressure was even less effective in discouraging beliefs deemed undesirable; efforts by England's bishops to discipline wayward Puritan preachers had the full backing of the crown, especially under Charles I (1625–1642), but failed utterly to suppress a movement that had strong social roots, especially among lay leaders at the parish level.

Part III, "The Social Articulation of Belief," gives examples of how religious belief is itself shaped and reconfigured by being implanted in a given social framework. Eve Levin's "False Miracles and Unattested Dead Bodies: Investigations into Popular Cults in Early Modern Russia" deals with eighteenth-century efforts to impose limits on the popular credulity that allowed saints to sprout up in great profusion; though supported in their efforts by Tsar Peter the Great, the churchmen who tried to channel popular belief within canonical rules of scrutiny were not always consistent among themselves, partly because of sharp divisions between men who quite consciously drew their ideas of reform from Protestant or Catholic sources. Susan Karant-Nunn's "Liturgical Rites: The Medium, the Message, the Messenger, and the Misunderstanding" broaches the question of how reforms of worship were received by ordinary men and women. If Lutheran pastors in Germany had the firm intention of counteracting all vestiges of the Catholic belief that ritual might influence God, their success was only partial, for worshipers clung stubbornly to their belief in the warding-off of evil through ritual, especially the ritual of baptism. Sara Nalle's "Self-Correction and Social Change in the Spanish Counter-Reformation" takes a more optimistic view of what the reformers could accomplish, at least in the sphere of behavior. In keeping with the new idea that sexual relations between engaged couples were sinful, one finds a decline in the rate for first children born sooner than nine months after marriage; and in keeping with an emphasis on the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, the faithful spent more on soul-masses for their dear departed and less on the elaborate funeral processions dating back to pre-Christian times. Eamon Duffy's "The

Disenchantment of Space: Salle Church and the Reformation" shows in detail what the Protestant program of worship meant at the parish level. Instead of a worship space marked by "multiple corrals" for gild and family chapels, there was but the one space, for the hearing of God's Word; instead of a congregation compartmentalized as the village itself was, with groups like plough-boys and village maidens each having a role, there was but the one parish community, in which no one but the traditional lay leaders had a specific function.

Finally, by way of an Epilogue, Nicholas Orme's "Popular Religion and the Reformation in England: A View from Cornwall" takes a long-term view of religious life in a part of England where many people still spoke the Celtic language of their ancestors. The Reformation had real popular support in Cornwall, and it changed the landscape of worship forever: as opposed to multiple chapels scattered throughout the parish, devoted to multiple saints, there was now only the parish church itself, in keeping with the reformers' aim of "emphasizing the community of the people of God, rather than allowing it to divide into coteries" centered on the cults of different saints. But people did not so readily abandon their social habits; well into the eighteenth century, each parish still had its annual church-ale, and the festival of the patron saint was still observed, albeit now in private houses, not in public.

Quite apart from the division of the volume into three parts, there are many points at which essays on different parts of the world link up with one another, of which three might be mentioned by way of illustration. The first is the tendency of ordinary worshipers to attach more importance than their religious superiors do to the "instrumental" or apotropaic properties of ritual action. To undermine this common belief was a major aim of Protestant reformers, regardless of their theological differences (Litzenberger, Karant-Nunn); Dutch Calvinists took the same view, while their Catholic rivals saw this aspect of folk belief as "recoverable, within an ecclesiastical strategy" of emphasizing Catholicism's distinctive features (Frijhoff). In Russia, where Christianity was "a religion of the sign, not the word," the fact that one was now commanded to make the sign of the cross with three fingers instead of two became a matter of utmost seriousness for seventeenth-century believers from all levels of society (Crummey). In the next century, the question of how vigorously to pursue the offensive against popular superstition was one that divided reformers of "Catholic" and "Protestant" sympathies (Levin). In China, officially approved teachers of religion, though often (at least in the Confucian tradition) deeply skeptical of popular superstition, were venerated among the people not as men of learning,

but as men "endowed with numinous powers to command the spirits" (Taylor).

Second, it seems that state attitudes toward religion may have something in common in different parts of the world. Russian historians have found it useful to adopt the paradigm of "confessionalization" (Crummey), developed by historians of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations in Germany as a way to describe the interest of the state in correct religious observance. The Chinese officials for whom orthodoxy had a "social-ethical content" (Shek) would perhaps not have found it so difficult to understand the magistrates in the Dutch Republic, whose commitment to the official church was more a matter of "social control" than of doctrine (Frijhoff).

Third, it is apparent that differing ways of worship express differing understandings of community, and vice versa. In China, where the pluralistic official religion "constituted the social order," it nonetheless "provided no socially inclusive space" where men and women and young and old of high and low social standing could all worship together (Taylor). This was surely one of the attractions of the cult of the Eternal Mother, for the bonds that socially heterogenous devotees formed among one another were "much stronger" than those formed among worshipers at the same temple or shrine, always segregated according to age or station (Shek). In Europe during roughly the same period, the long Catholic–Protestant struggle for the allegiance of the faithful turned in part on two competing visions of community, one in which the whole parish came together to form a single body of believers, the other in which the worshiping community was a coming-together of smaller communities defined by affinities of various kinds (Duffy, Litzenberger, Orme, Seaver).

Readers will no doubt find their own connections among the essays, perhaps even more intriguing than those just listed. Despite such parallels, however, this volume is not conceived as a step toward a generalized science of past belief; rather, it is a shared conviction among the authors represented here that our knowledge of the past advances by differentiation, not by homogenization. Our hope is thus that the consideration of phenomena that are properly analogous – that is, somewhat alike, but simply different – will help to bring out for each area those features that stand out more sharply by virtue of comparison.

PART I

Lived religion and official religion