Introduction

Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson

This book is by no means the first to explore relationships between writing and religion in early modern England. But it may be distinctive in its particular kind of focus. In one way or another, all the studies which follow respond to two observations which, though obvious enough in themselves, may offer food for further thought, especially when considered side by side.

The first is that, in many cases, early modern religious writing appears to have been, in the etymological sense of the term, communicational. In other words, it played a significant role in the creation or consolidation of a community. Sometimes this community was denominationally exclusive, which meant that the writing tended to shape or reinforce one particular kind of religious identity. Sometimes it was more inclusive: a community of readers, which cut across the religious borderlines pertaining in some other areas of social interaction. But in either case, the communicational outcome presumably correlated with features of a particular text as they functioned within a particular historical context. Similarities and differences between writing as communicationally exclusive and communicationally inclusive are one of the book's main lines of interest.[1]

Our second observation is that this distinction between exclusive and inclusive communication was partly a matter of how writers drew on and expanded the resources of cultural memory. In any particular case, key research questions could

---

[1] For communication as community-making, and with special reference to literary communication, see Roger D. Sell, *Literature as Communication: The Foundations of Mediating Criticism* (Amsterdam, 2000); 'A Historical but Non-determinist Pragmatics of Literary Communication', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 2 (2001): 1–32; *Mediating Criticism: Literary Education Humanized* (Amsterdam, 2001); (ed.) *Children's Literature as Communication: The ChiLPA Project* (Amsterdam, 2002); '*Henry V* and the Strength and Weakness of Words: Shakespearean Philology, Historicist Criticism, Communicative Pragmatics', in Gunnar Sorelius (ed.), *Shakespeare and Scandinavia: A Collection of Nordic Studies* (Newark, DE, 2002), pp. 108–41; 'Postmodernity, Literary Pragmatics, Mediating Criticism: Meanings within a Large Circle of Communicants', in Fotis Jannidis et al. (eds), *Regeln der Bedeutung: Zur Theorie de Bedeutung literarischer Texte* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 103–27; 'Blessings, Benefactions and Bear's Services: *Great Expectations* and Communicational Narratology', *The European Journal of English Studies*, 8 (2004): 49–30; 'Decency at a Discount? English Studies, Communication, Mediation', *The European English Messenger*, 13 (2004): 23–34; and 'What's Literary Communication and What's a Literary Community?', in Sonia Faessel and Michel Pérez (eds), *Emergent Literatures and Globalisation: Theory, Society, Politics* (Paris, 2004), pp. 39–45.

include the following: which range or ranges of memory does the writer seem to have been bringing into play? What does this suggest about the writer's aims as a community-maker? And how, under the stimulus of those aims, does shared memory seem to have come in for reshaping and further development?[2]

Within this overall framework of enquiry, there is considerable scope for variety. The book covers a denominational spectrum ranging from several varieties of Dissent, through *via media* Anglicanism, to Laudianism and Roman Catholicism, and there are also glances towards heresy and the mid-seventeenth century's new atheism. On a communicational spectrum, the religious writings discussed here represent every kind of possibility from the extremely exclusive to the extremely inclusive, as well as possibilities which are exclusively inclusive and inclusively exclusive – two oxymorons which will be explained in due course. As for the number of different genres examined, this, too, is very considerable, spanning the gamut from poetry, fictional prose, drama, court masque, sermons, devotional works, theological treatises, confessions of faith, church constitutions, tracts and letters to history-writing and translation.

Taking as its remit the years between the Elizabethan Settlement of 1558 and the so-called Act of Toleration in 1689, the book falls into four sections. Parts I and IV are in the nature of necessary bookends, holding discussion firmly within the framework of the main Protestant-Catholic polarity which, not least as a point of English law, obtained throughout the entire period. The two chapters of Part I introduce this polarity as it affected Christians unsympathetic to the official State religion. Part IV examines writers, private individuals and whole families as actually oscillating between the Protestant and Catholic poles, in two longitudinal studies which complement the shorter-term analyses of Parts II and III. Part II, comprising eight chapters, explores the sometimes far from cut-and-dried ways in which writers positioned themselves and their audiences in relation to the same Protestant-Catholic polarity during the years 1558–1631 (the year of Donne's death). Part III, with a further eight chapters, ranges from the beginnings of the

[2] For the approach to cultural memory outlined in the present introduction, see Anthony W. Johnson, 'Levity and Gravity: Ben Jonson and the Crisis of the Image', in Nils Holger Petersen, Claus Clüver and Nicolas Bell (eds), *Signs of Change: Transformations of Christian Traditions and Their Representations in the Arts, 1000–2000* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 51–67; 'Notes Towards a New Imagology', *European English Messenger*, 14 (2005): 50–8; 'New Methodologies: Imagology, Language, and English Philology', in Harry Anttila et al. (eds), *Linguistic Topics and Language Teaching* (Oulu, 2006), pp. 7–27; and Roger D. Sell, 'Literature, Cultural Memory, Scholarship', in Herbert Grabes (ed.), *Literature, Literary History, and Cultural Memory = REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 21 (2005): 349–64. See also Jan Assman, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995): 125–33; Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (eds), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, NH, 1999); D. Hervieu-Léger, *La Religion pour Mémoire* (Paris, 1993), trans. Simon Lee as *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), and the same author's 'Space and Religion: New Approaches to Religious Spatiality in Modernity', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26 (2002): 99–105.

Laudian or 'High-Church' movement in the 1620s to writers who were active between 1632 and 1689. During these last six decades of the period, the workings of the basic polarity became even less straightforward, with the increasing articulacy, not only of the Laudians, but of other groupings as well.

Part I, then, deals with Dissent and Catholicism, the two extremes between which religious life and writing took their bearings throughout the entire period. Yet although Dissenters and Catholics certainly were each other's polar opposites, there were also other oppositions, both between different Dissenting sects, and between the established Church of England and Dissenters and Catholics alike. Both Dissenters and Catholics were concerned to reject aspects of the officially sanctioned doctrines and practices, even at some risk of marginalizing themselves within society as a whole. In Chapter 1, Alan P.F. Sell's main point is in effect that under these circumstances Dissenting communication could be fruitfully exclusive, thereby promoting a strong sense of religious selfhood which made hardships and persecution a good bit easier to bear. By contrast, in Chapter 2, Arthur F. Marotti explores Catholic marginalization, not so much from the point of view of Catholics themselves, as in terms of the Protestant ideology by which their 'otherness' was defined and sustained within the general discourse of the period.

So Alan Sell focuses on religious writing itself, and on the ways in which, over thirteen decades, a number of different genres contributed to the various collective identities of Dissenters and Separatists. Local church covenants, for instance, were drawn up by groups who, believing that the Reformation had not gone far enough, sought a purer form of worship and a church order more in keeping with what they took to be the biblical pattern, even when this meant that they had to 'come out from among … [the worldly] and be separate' (2 Corinthians 6:17), so committing themselves to a life lived underground, in constant danger of official reprisals. Then there were religious tracts, many of them very openly polemical, such as the ecclesiological writings of Robert Browne, texts by the martyrs Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, which circulated during the sixteenth century, and some of the mid-seventeenth century's writing by Quakers. Another important mode of expression was in the form of letters, of which an abundance has survived, many of them written from prison. For the encouragement of saints beyond the prison walls, there were also more formal works of spiritual autobiography and biography, the latter sometimes fictional and allegorical, as with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Aids to Bible study, for instance by the Separatist Henry Ainsworth and the ejected divine Samuel Clark, had a hardly less central role, and the same was true of Puritan sermons, with their distinctively effective sequence of exegesis, exposition and application. Among the most important confessions of faith and catechisms were the *Westminster Confession* (1647), devised by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the Congregational *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), and some of the Baptist confessions, and there were also the Westminster *Shorter* and *Larger Catechisms*, and Thomas Watson's exposition of the *Shorter*. As for formal theological treatises, the most noteworthy were those

of John Owen (1616–83), who wrote both on technical points of theology and on pastoral matters, and was a leading exponent of the Congregational Way. After 1689, community-shaping by Dissenting writers was to become even richer, with the autobiographies of Baxter, Fox and Gratton, for instance, and with hymns for use by congregations. But even before that date, metrical psalms could be important, and Dissenting writing in general was already strongly consolidating 'its own' religious communities, even if in some cases its communicational reach was a good bit more inclusive: a writer like Owen was also widely read by theologians of other persuasions and in other countries, and the mythopoeic power of Bunyan was also starting to make its own lasting additions to the cultural memory of English speakers at large. The community brought about by Bunyan, one might say, was inclusively exclusive: though perhaps in the first instance a bonding between Dissenters, its ranks were soon swelled by many others in search of spiritual nourishment.

The sectarian divisions within English Protestantism discussed by Alan Sell were the main topic of early modern debates about religious toleration. The possibility of toleration for Catholics was raised more seldom, and with no official approval. This is the situation which Arthur Marotti explains by reference to a number of key documents in the domains of philosophy, law and polity. The obstacle to toleration here was twofold. First, Catholicism was allegedly corrupt and idolatrous. Secondly, it was seen as menacing to the interests of the English Protestant nation, both at home and abroad. So in spite of some radical Protestant support for the idea at the time of the English Revolution, seconded by strong English and Continental traditions of tolerationist theory, not even John Locke, who basically argued for a broad tolerance among Christians, could countenance an official English acceptance of Catholicism. The 1672 and 1687 Declarations of Indulgence by Charles II and James II, which did favour a limited toleration of Catholicism, ran into intractable opposition, and the so-called Toleration Act of 1689 did not extend to Catholics at all. Catholics who wished to remain in English-language communities could find a genuine toleration only in the New World. The Calvert family, themselves Catholics, who were granted the charter for Maryland in 1632, went on to develop the colony as a refuge for English co-religionists. William Penn, who supported James II's Declaration of Indulgence, established Pennsylvania as a haven for all monotheistic religions. And Roger Williams, a tolerationist thinker who advocated a strong separation of Church and State, went further still in Rhode Island, welcoming not only Catholicism, Judaism and other religions as well, but even atheism. In England, by contrast, Catholics were to remain officially intolerable until 1829, with consequences for their communal life, we might add, which were already becoming evident during the early modern period. One of the main building-blocks of their sense of personal identity was the cultural memory of an older, Catholic England within an entirely Catholic Europe. And whereas the desire for the restoration of the one true Church naturally inclined their writers to community-making of the most inclusive kind, they often

had to settle for an exclusiveness embracing only their fellow-religionists. Many of their texts circulated in manuscript rather than print, or were printed abroad.

If anything, then, Part I of the present volume suggests that England's legislated religious polarity became ever more firmly entrenched with the passing of the years. Through a closer examination of the period's first seven decades, Part II to some extent confirms that the polarization was very real and very sharp, as if many writers had actually wanted to reinforce the distinction between the Church of England and Catholicism that was officially enshrined in the recusancy laws. Spenser's ambition to become the national laureate of a Protestant England was quite unmistakable, and the sermons which Donne preached as Dean of St Paul's left no doubt as to his own religious and political correctness. On the other side of the fence, *The Crowne of Thornes*, the *magnum opus* of Sir John Beaumont, made no bones about its Counter-Reformation goals, and Elizabeth Cary's translation of Cardinal du Perron's critique of the Oath of the Allegiance could not have been a more obvious clue to her own position. Given all of which, we might well have expected the communicational gesture of much writing to be exclusively inclusive: the point being that, if you believe you have all truth and justice on your side, and if you also want everybody else to recognize this, then your communicational aim is at once to include them all in your own circle and absolutely to exclude the possibility of any other circle.

In practice, however, and not only within social life in general but in writing in particular, there was a lot more rubbing of shoulders between different versions of Christianity than the recusancy laws would strictly countenance. Religious differences, though perfectly clear, could be negotiated. In *The Faerie Queene*, at least one major passage was decidedly eirenic in temper, and in Jonson's masques the same impulse was at work on a literally spectacular scale. Even as Dean of St Paul's, Donne had not forgotten his own family's Catholic past, a cultural memory which tinged his homiletics with an empathetic understanding of those perhaps reluctant to be guided into the Protestant fold. As a much younger man, in Satire III he had been offering religious counsel that was even less coercive, arguably leaving denominational choices entirely to his readers themselves. And indeed, throughout these first seven decades of the period, writers often seemed to be assuming that it was perfectly possible to draw an audience into a communion of careful thought on spiritual and moral issues *without* seeming to specify any particular religious credentials as an entry requirement. Beaumont, no less than Jonson, could address himself to readers whose mind-set he took to be above all seriously humanistic and modern, and basically favourable to the Tudor-Stuart view of British history. By the same token, the unusually broad appeal of Shakespeare cannot rule out the possibility that he, too, felt some kind of personal affinity with the Old Religion.

In some ways, it is the most patriotically Protestant side of Spenser that is taken up by Lars-Håkan Svensson in Chapter 3. This was a Spenser whose communication tended towards the exclusively inclusive: a Spenser who wished to

draw all his readers into a Protestant embrace, vehemently denying the legitimacy of the rival allegiance, and in the process giving cultural memory of the English and European past an openly polemical twist. Svensson's main focus here is on the link between, on the one hand, Spenser's high level of ambition for both himself and his spiritually purified country and, on the other hand, *The Faerie Queene*'s rich intertextualities, which are clearly noticeable from the very beginning, with its recapitulation of the opening gambits of the *Aeneid* and *Orlando Furioso*. Among other things, the study suggests that, in Spenser, intertextual effects of the kind already examined by Gian Biagio Conte, Thomas H. Greene and Claes Schaar can also be seen in terms of cultural memory as conceived by Jan Assman and Mieke Bal. More particularly, *The Faerie Queene*'s opening canto shows how pagan ways of representing basic human truths could be harnessed to new, Christian uses, thereby surrounding the Protestantism of the poem's aesthetics and theology with a prestigious wealth of imaginative associations. This effect would hardly have been lost on the political and intellectual court-elite to whom Spenser was addressing himself, and on whose benevolence any would-be national laureate was bound to rely.

Yet both Spenser and his patrons must also have been hoping that *The Faerie Queene* would hold its own in international comparisons. And both in England and abroad, to Catholic readers prepared to overlook the animus so blatant in its religio-political allegory, the poem's intertextualities may also have seemed a strong asset. Perhaps its evocation of humanist cultural memory could, at one and the same time, both dignify its own Protestant orientation and offer intellectual and imaginative compensations for its lack of a Catholic one. If so, the intertextualities would not have been the only mitigation, since as Åke Bergvall demonstrates in Chapter 4, Spenser's strong religious concerns were sometimes at a very far remove from bigotry. His communicational gesture could also be more unreservedly inclusive.

Bergvall begins with two emblematic representations of the Christian Graces, those female embodiments of the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. One of them comes from canto x of *The Faerie Queene* Book I, and the other from an eighteenth-century altarpiece in the Church of Hammarö, Sweden. By studying the workings of the same type of image in the two different settings, Bergvall highlights what at first glance seems to be a major anomaly in the structure of Spenser's poem. It is as if there are two different story-lines in direct conflict with each other, each with its own predominant form of representation, one of them more 'textual' and 'Protestant', the other more 'pictorial' and 'Catholic'. But what is especially striking about Book I, canto x is that here these two modes actually merge, in what can be seen as a sustained attempt at ecumenical community-making. Whereas the first nine cantos and the fight with the dragon in canto xi are played out in a fallen world of religious and political conflict, the representation of the three Graces in the House of Holinesse reconciles opposite and discordant qualities, actually deconstructing standard Protestant-Catholic dichotomies between faith and works and between word and image. In a passage like this, Spenser's vision of community goes far beyond the fundamental religious polarity

of his own time, towards a scenario in which Catholic is no longer opposed to Protestant or Spanish to English, and in which pictures and words are no longer in opposition or used to purvey falsehood. Just as the Hammarö altarpiece combines a Protestant emphasis on a New Testament text with a Catholic image of Charity holding a Sacred Heart, so Spenser, at this high point, is seriously contemplating the possibility of communal unification.

Many writers were altogether less explicit about religion than Spenser, and in the case of dramatists this was more than understandable. Not only were they subject to officially sanctioned retribution, which could include bodily mutilation and imprisonment as well as mere censorship. The very essence of their professional undertaking was the most public kind of interaction with the most heterogeneous kind of audience, a circumstance which in itself was usually more than enough to prompt them to *self*-censorship. This was the only way to ensure that their communication would be adequately inclusive.

Even so, drama was finely tuned to religious ambience. Scholars are now increasingly agreed that our understanding of early modern theatre will be seriously limited if this often very oblique relationship is not factored in. As Thomas Rist explains in Chapter 5, many experts no longer recognize an absolute disjunction between a mediaeval-cum-religious theatre and a renaissance-cum-secular theatre. Instead, they tend to see the renaissance theatre as an institution still saturated with features carrying over from the earlier epoch. The development of this view was rather hesitant at first, not least, says Rist, because the then dominant paradigm of New Historicism entailed an inbuilt Protestant bias. For him, the turning-point came in 1999, with the conference on the 'Lancastrian Shakespeare' and the publication of Alison Shell's *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1559–1660*. By deliberately mediating early modern England through the perspective of Catholic sensibilities, these two ventures prompted a significant readjustment of the English literary canon, a process further accelerated by recent advances in our understanding of the Reformation itself. As far as Shakespeare is concerned, Rist offers biographical arguments for seeing him as one of the many who were neither zealously Reformed nor prepared to take great risks for the Old Religion either, a conclusion for which there may be textual support as well. Several individual plays allude to religious flashpoints – there is the mention of 'popish tricks and ceremonies' in *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, or the strong hint of religious division in *Henry VIII* – and certain religiously loaded motifs seem to be continuous from one play to another: such as questions to do with scepticism and ascetics, or with the cult of the Virgin, and the wider 'cult of the dead'. In engaging with such matters, present-day scholarship on Shakespeare's religious involvements is already working at the 'cultural micro-level',[3] combining detailed textual examination with up-to-date historical knowledge, within a research paradigm which is both 'literary' and 'historical'.

---

[3] Cf. Sell, 'Literature, Cultural Memory, Scholarship', p. 363.

If Shakespeare, faced with the basic Protestant-Catholic polarity, could be non-committal or ambiguous, the same applied to the youthful John Donne, even in Satire III, a poem which offered explicit advice on religious matters. As A.D. Cousins shows in Chapter 6, Satire III is controversial not only because of its genre characteristics and its function within the grouping of the Satires as a whole, but precisely because of its religious self-positioning. In a nutshell, his study asks whether the poem actually *was* Catholic or whether, by the time of its composition in the mid-1590s, Donne had already moved away from his own recusant background. All five Satires do clearly imply at least some sort of theology, and have frequent scriptural and other kinds of religious references as well. There is also general agreement that Satire III does advocate a rigorous quest for true religion – an inquiry of the kind which Donne, in *Pseudo-Martyr*, says he himself had undertaken before his conversion to the Church of England. But what Cousins now suggests is that the poem's rhetorical character is not so much that of a deliberative oration as of a *suasoria*. In other words, it is less a statement of Donne's own personal thoughts and feelings than an exercise in argumentation designed to challenge readers to make up their own minds. By the same token, Donne's own doctrinal allegiances defy clear definition here (as is also the case, says Cousins, with religious allusions in the Satires as a whole). In fact, Donne's proposed quest is outlined in terms which totally *ignore* the period's most important religious controversies. There is no discussion of the principles or authorities which may be relevant to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Nor is a stand taken on whether it is the Scriptures or the ecclesiastical tradition which should decide the true form of the Church. To some extent the poem does seem to urge a reliance on tradition ('[A]sk your father'). But to some extent, it also implies that tradition is, itself, hopelessly contaminated. So in Cousins's reading here, the power of cultural memory is at once affirmed and undermined, and the communication taking place is correspondingly inclusive. Even if, as Cousins suggests, Donne himself thought that the Church Militant should be dismantled and atomistically re-formed, both Catholic and Protestant readers may partly have agreed with him, albeit on different points.

Twenty to thirty years further on, Donne's chances of actually exerting an influence in religious affairs had improved immeasurably. His role as Dean of St Paul's was a central one; he was also delivering frequent sermons at Paul's Cross (the most influential public pulpit of the day); and in 1622 he had been commissioned to speak in defence of the King's *Directions to Preachers*. Clearly, too, he had long since made his own choice among the different varieties of Christianity. As Maria Salenius points out in Chapter 7, his sermons show a marked endeavour to shift his congregation away from the thought-world of the Old Religion towards one more appropriate to its official successor. Such consolidation was central to what he saw as his homiletic task, and to this he brought a shrewd understanding of community-making rhetoric. His auditors, first awakened by the use of the vernacular language, and then activated through common prayer, were finally to be joined with the preacher in a kind of communicational dyad, whose religious

interchanges would revolve around God as their central point of negotiation. He also seems to have realized, here, that the notion of God's providence would have to be accommodated to the period's major upheavals in politics, religion itself, and cosmology, and, further, that his own interventions in the chain of cultural memory would have to be very incisive, undermining the still-familiar concepts and metaphors of Catholicism in order to redefine them within the new, Reformation context. Yet as part of this larger strategy, he used the Scriptures not only as a text now calling for Reformist reinterpretation, but as a culturally established meeting-point which was reassuringly accessible to all comers. Although the sermons were developed from a much more explicit theological base than appeared in Satire III, he was just as concerned as ever that his communicational reach should be amply inclusive.

Even more radically inclusive were Jonson's masques. Despite Catholicism's ostensible intolerability, and despite the strong endorsement of official religion by the Dean of St Paul's and others, in the 1620s it was nevertheless possible for a court poet to create ameliorative spaces analogous to Spenser's House of Holinesse, and on a much larger scale. In Chapter 8, Anthony W. Johnson elucidates the dense historicity and extraordinary artistic and intellectual sophistication of *The Masque of Augurs* of 1622: the exact circumstances of its first production in the new Whitehall Banqueting House, its relation to a broader context of religious politics in Europe, and its numerological organization, apparently in tune with the latest discoveries in Keplerian cosmology. His main argument is that this masque and its performance were firmly based on that eirenic mode of thinking which ran from the Emperor Maximilian to Rudolph II (as well as to Kepler), and which also underlay James's own foreign policy. At this particular point in time, James was hoping, against the odds, to avert the threat of war by somehow reconciling his dynastic allegiance to the Protestant Palatinate with the diplomatic necessity of a Catholic alliance. His role in Jonson's masque as Jove's 'Prince of Peace', ratified by the auguries of a pre-Christian pantheon for an audience which included both the English court and the Spanish ambassador, was the court poet's own last-ditch attempt to forge an eirenic sense of community, a vision embodied in the Banqueting House itself and figured in the chief augur, Prince Charles. This ideological content was superimposed on the gathering actually present within the masquing hall, an effect achieved partly through the invocation of a Graeco-Roman poetic 'priesthood' as a strong counterweight to any doctrinal differences within the audience, and partly through a re-imagining of contemporary cosmology and the rituals of antiquity. As with the community-making intertextualities of Spenser, Jonson's masque was calculated to unite a sophisticated public through an appeal to shared learning. For those capable of appreciating it, what he and Jones had put together was an event which in its every dimension – architectural, literary, musical, choreographic, scenographic – was trying to forge an ecumenically peaceful community for the future.

Dreams of reconciliation were also nourished by English Catholic writers. But for them it was far less easy to make public their own terms and conditions, and in practice much of their work was written for the benefit of fellow-religionists only.

By the time his good friend Jonson was writing *The Masque of Augurs*, Sir John Beaumont had strong court connections of his own, and was often addressing his readers in the Jonsonian manner, as above all humanists, moderns, loyal subjects of the Stuart King, and ecumenically-minded Christians, almost as if his own Catholicism were immaterial. So much so that, as Roger D. Sell argues in Chapter 9, the appeal of his religious poems to non-Catholics could have extended well beyond the already growing Laudian party. Some features of Catholic imagery and devotional practice had in any case already started to re-emerge in Protestant writers, and Beaumont's own mode of address, both to the God of Christianity and to other Christians, was winningly sincere. Yet for all that, his primary audience was a smaller one made up of Catholics, whose communal identity he strongly reinforced, especially in the twelve-book *Crowne of Thornes*, a poem whose frankly Counter-Reformation aims and extravagantly baroque style placed it, even by flexible late-Jacobean standards, beyond the pale. It did also target yet another readership, consisting of Protestants in high places, whom Beaumont was hoping to usher into the Catholic fold as a preliminary to a total restoration of the one true Church. In some of the shorter poems he addressed to Buckingham and Charles, this same missionary task was vitiated by uncomfortable lurches between admonishment and flattery. But when, in *The Crowne of Thornes*, his exhortations to James and Charles were more uninhibited, this only made the *magnum opus* even less printable. Although its communicational ambition was very inclusive, the proselytizing goal actually made for an exclusive inclusiveness, and the combination of this explicit drift with prevailing historical circumstances meant that manuscript copies were likely to circulate mainly among Catholics.

At our present distance from him, Beaumont's alternation between disablingly sycophantic criticism and unprintable forthrightness can serve to highlight the unfailing indirectness in writings by the Catholic convert Elizabeth Cary, discussed by Gunilla Florby in Chapter 10. Cary's discretion may partly have reflected her position as a woman writer. But she did not steer clear of controversy. One of her most important works was the English version of a critique by Cardinal du Perron of the Oath of Allegiance, that measure which had been introduced in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, and publicly defended by none other than James himself. Appearing in 1630 with a dedication to Queen Henrietta Maria, Cary's translation not only formed a bridge between Queen and subject, but also envisaged community-building on a much larger scale. Coming at a time when many law-abiding English citizens lived in fear of a popish plot, it might have helped them understand that the country actually had nothing to fear from Catholics. In this way, it could have performed a mediating role similar to Henrietta Maria's own attempts to calm dissension by showing Catholicism in a positive light. And as it happens, such affinities between Cary and the Queen may have already come into play a little earlier, in 1627 or 1628, in connection with what Florby believes to be Cary's *History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II*. Assuming the attribution is correct, this had been Cary's account of a historical juncture which in important ways resembled the situation at court in the late 1620s, the most

obvious similarities being a destabilization of the King's authority by powerful favourites, a troubled royal marriage, and a conflict between King and nobles. But a telling interpolation on Cary's part had been her description of Queen Isabel, whom she showed in a far more positive light than had previous historians. Indeed, the mediaeval Queen's goodness and virtue were at first so strongly foregrounded that the final condemnation of her rebellion could come as something of a surprise. Perhaps this was Cary's way of cushioning a warning to her own Queen against religious zealotry. In any event, this slightly earlier work, too, had surely been trying to build diplomatic bridges between Catholics – or at least the Catholic Queen and her dependants – and Protestants, and more generally to raise the spiritual tone of life at court. While the translation of du Perron aimed to exploit the scope for English Catholic writers to engage in English religious conflicts without seeming to do so in their own person, the indirectness of the *History ... of Edward II* had been that of an implied historical parallel to the present day.

Despite her tact, Cary's attempt at inclusive communication from within a clearly Catholic positionality fared no better than Beaumont's. Copies of the translation of du Perron, publishable only abroad (in the event, in Douai), were officially destroyed on being brought into England, while the account of Edward II did not appear until many years later, and even then amid the considerable uncertainty as to its authorship. From the accession of Elizabeth I right up until the early years of Charles I and beyond, Catholic writers had little hope of forging a community outside their own religious grouping, not only when they were explicit about their own religious identity, not only when they seemed to expect their readers to be good Catholics as well, but even when their Catholic orientation and ambitions were, if still obvious, rather less insistent. Here the official intolerability of Catholicism drew a firm line.

But if that intolerant mind-set had been developed to its logical conclusion, the most acceptable kind of writing would have been exclusively inclusive: something like *The Faerie Queene* at its most Protestant and patriotic. In point of fact, readers clearly enjoyed writing that was altogether less tendentious, including eirenic moments in Spenser himself. There is no denying that religion did separate people into strongly antagonistic camps, and that exclusive and exclusively inclusive forms of written communication did sharpen the lines of battle. But what is equally clear is that other, more unreservedly inclusive kinds of writing were at the same time opening up new fora, where members of different religious groupings could come together and compare notes about matters of common human, and even common Christian concern. Indeed, it was to no small extent by way of written communication that the time's fundamental religious polarization became something that could actually be lived with. The plain fact is that writers of each and every denominational allegiance were free to forge bonds other than the exclusively denominational. In negotiating the divisiveness of Elizabethan and Jacobean ideology in its official manifestations, one of the things they could emphasize was a widely shared loyalty to the historically legitimated monarch, while simultaneously toning down the dynastic historiography's religious

dimension (as in Shakespeare's history plays and Beaumont's 'Bosworth Field'). Extensive common ground could also be established in cultural memory of a humanist cast (Spenser, Jonson, Beaumont), in a forward-looking modernity (the younger and the older Donne, Jonson, Beaumont), and in ecumenical Christianity and eirenicism (Spenser, Jonson, the Beaumont of the shorter religious poems). And a writer's chances of community-making could be still further enhanced through an empathetic – most of all, perhaps, an apostatical – insight into the sensibility of religious opponents (the Donne of the Sermons), or through an authorial public profile that, from the point of view of religion, was self-censoringly low (Donne in Satire III, Shakespeare).

As, in Part III of our volume, the focus gradually shifts from the 1620s and 1630s to the century's middle decades, the basic Protestant-Catholic polarity continues to demand attention, but with further strong qualifications. Throughout these years, new – or newly prominent – splinter groups were making the country's spiritual and devotional life even more complicated. A Catholic writer such as Francis Chetwinde could still in practice be writing for a narrow audience of fellow-religionists, drawing on their cultural memories of mediaeval superstition and legend, and condemning himself, in the process, to a long oblivion from which his writing's more humanistic features and genuine charm have still not brought reprieve. At the other end of the spectrum, as Alan Sell has shown in Part I, self-definition within Dissenting groups also continued unabated. In fact, a number of non-Catholic positions outside the official Church were now voiced even more energetically, by writers emulating the afflatus and denunciatory rage of Old Testament prophets. More fundamentally new, however, was the extent to which the middle ground of the official Church itself was now becoming more articulately diversified on its opposite wings. On the one hand, there was the full florescence of the Laudian High-Church party, followed, on the other hand, by the rise to political power of the plain-worship party. On this latter wing, moreover, diversification extended further still. Many of those who shared much the same political and religious position as Milton took a different line in the controversy about the episcopacy, and/or were much less drawn towards a heresy such as Socinianism. Even Marvell, one of Milton's greatest admirers, disagreed with him on an issue as fundamental as the nature of the ideal Christian community: a disjunction which resulted in very different views concerning the kinds of argument and rhetoric that writers might use in order to bring such a community about. In short, both outside and within the official Church, religion now entailed so many, and such vociferous communal and sub-communal divisions that the still persisting and more general opposition between Catholic and Protestant was somewhat obscured from view, becoming even less necessarily an explicit *casus belli* than it had been in much Elizabethan and Jacobean writing. One kind of response to the new centrifugal tendencies was the learned and well-travelled tolerance of Sir Thomas Browne, which was receptive even towards ideas and sensibilities quite outside the range of Christianity. And with the English Christian heartland now so confusingly

parcelled up, the communicational success of Herbert's *The Temple*, comparable only to that of the *Book of Common Prayer*, was all the more remarkable.

Even if a poem by Herbert or a prayer by Cranmer could be widely inclusive, no texts have ever been totally unlimited in communicational scope, and many English Protestants were not at all comfortable with the *Book of Common Prayer* itself. To their mind, its set form of worship promoted routine, mechanical practices which inhibited or excluded spontaneous prayer and heartfelt piety. As pointed out by Graham Parry in Chapter 11, it was therefore only to be expected that the manuals of prayer compiled by members of the late Jacobean and Caroline High-Church movement, particularly those by Lancelot Andrewes and John Cosin, would provoke an even stronger reaction among radical churchmen, who saw them, sure enough, as an outright reversion to popery. Some of these controversial devotional books certainly were in clear sympathy with Catholic values, for instance through their open acceptance of the Virgin Mary as an object of devotion. In the event, their strong emphasis on formal practice was even an inspiration to groupings of a virtually monastic character, and within micro-communities such as the circle at Little Gidding or the adherents of the London lay Laudian, William Austin, the singing of devotional madrigals also held a special place, just as Laudian ideas about worship were having a noticeable impact on church design and furnishings as well. All these religio-cultural innovations, so dear to one party within the official Church, aroused only anger and hostility among those determined to maintain the Elizabethan traditions of plain religion.

The far greater inclusiveness of Herbert is Helen Wilcox's topic in Chapter 12. Following its posthumous publication in 1633, *The Temple* went through eleven further editions by 1689, demonstrably appealing to a huge group of readers which cut right across the usual boundaries of denomination, gender, literary allegiance and political ideology. Several of the readers influenced were themselves writers: Henry Vaughan, Richard Baxter, Christopher Harvey, Izaak Walton, Oliver Heywood, Anne Clifford, Ralph Knevet, Nicholas Ferrar, Peter Sterry and Increase Mather. This bespeaks a knock-on impact within the culture at large that was very considerable indeed. What Wilcox asks, however, is whether Herbert's contribution to the shared cultural memory of an entire era really can be seen as the ground for a genuine community. Given that all his readers doubtless shaped their idea of him partly in their own image, is it actually appropriate to describe them as all belonging to a single grouping? In Wilcox's own view, we certainly can speak of a Herbertian community, and it certainly is a very large one. But her idea is also that the Herbertian community may be best thought of as two-tiered. First, there was the wider interpretative grouping, united by the textual source of their inspiration, even though they were often at odds with one another over their responses to it. And then there were smaller and less 'virtual' sub-communities for whom Herbert's work had some particular kind of valency. The four main groupings Wilcox identifies here are: certain families, who nurtured a shared respect for his writing; certain readers in certain geographical locations; correspondents linked through certain epistolary networks; and readers in agreement over certain

doctrinal points. All of these were early modern sub-communities of the word, within a larger community arising in response to the text of just the one poet.

If the Laudian devotional writers had a less extensive readership than Herbert, then that of Francis Chetwinde was far smaller still. Very little can now be known about either the man himself or those among whom his writing circulated in manuscript. But his poem ‘The New Hellicon’ (surviving in only a single manuscript) leaves no doubt as to his ideological position and literary aims. As Alison Shell explains in Chapter 13, a focus of special personal interest for Chetwinde was St Winifred’s Well at Holywell in Flintshire. Even in the mid-seventeenth century, this was still a popular destination for pilgrims wishing to be cured by its healing waters, or simply to pay homage to St Winifred, the heroine of an attractively implausible golden legend. Chetwinde believed that the well had cured his own deafness, and the poem was his tribute of gratitude. He was not, however, as naive as this may suggest, and he did not expect his readers to be unsophisticated either. The writing showed clear signs of a classical education, and of an intellect which may even have been sharpened by Jesuit mentors. On the one hand, its piety was ebulliently ludic, the central conceit being that the Muses, out of reverence for St Winifred, had travelled to Britain and taken up residence at Holywell. On the other hand, while invoking the bonding appeal of the mediaeval Catholic legend, the poem also explicitly confronted Protestant and modern challenges to superstition, and did so with a fair amount of intellectual agility. Deliberately blurring distinctions between fact and fiction, Chetwinde used allegory as a rallying call to other Catholic poets as well, appealing to a tradition of Catholic forbears in which he proudly placed not only Southwell and Beaumont, but also Jonson. This may tell us less about his attitude towards Jonson’s later apostasy than about his response to the doctrinal inclusiveness of Jonson’s address. Yet if even Southwell and Beaumont were less widely read than their sheer quality would have warranted, then a broadly Jonsonian appeal was well beyond the reach of a writer so nostalgically Catholic as Chetwinde himself. It is only now, reappearing in Shell’s pages, that he begins to stand a better chance.

At the same time as Chetwinde was occupied with ‘The New Hellicon’, Milton was making his debut as a prose polemicist in the controversy between Parliament and the bishops. In Chapter 14, Sharon Achinstein argues that the issues involved here cannot be understood simply in terms of ideas, but must be studied precisely in terms of community-making. In 1641, there was actually an ongoing discussion as to what ‘opposition’ to the Laudian church might really mean in practice. ‘Opposition’ had not yet rigidified into dogmas and slogans, and it is only by tracing the communicational history of this matter – in Parliament, in the press, in the pulpits – that we can fully understand the symbiotic relationship between community and belief. That Milton’s intervention significantly expanded the expressive range available to unorthodox communities is beyond all doubt. But the Smectymnuans he was supporting were not as ‘Presbyterian’ as has sometimes been supposed. From the winter to the spring of 1641 their goal, and Milton’s along with them, had been to bolster *moderates*: to find a middle ground between

the Laudianism they loathed and the radical Puritanism of those who, like Henry Burton, published unorthodox views and were persecuted for it. When Milton's early polemics are communicationally recontextualized like this, the fact that he did not 'come out' as an Independent in 1641 can no longer be put down to personal confusion or philosophical immaturity. On the contrary, his community-making manoeuvrings within a rapidly changing political landscape are revealed as strikingly adept. He was very quickly learning about changes in the methods for soliciting allegiance, and about the shifting modes of cementing and contesting community at a dramatic political turning-point. When he later dealt with issues of resistance and community in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*, these were lessons he would remember.

From the dispute about bishops right down until the end of the Commonwealth years, public interventions in religious affairs were also made by the writers claiming to be English prophets, who explicitly compared themselves with the Hebrew prophets of ancient Israel. As Achsah Guibbory points out in Chapter 15, these writers reflected the mid-century's extremes of ideological fragmentation. For they included the Ranter Abiezer Coppe, the Fifth Monarchists Anna Trapnel and John Rogers, the Welsh royalist prophet Arise Evans, the Quaker leader Margaret Fell, and even Milton (whose prophetic claims are discussed in more detail in Chapter 18). Believing that they were living in the 'end-times' foretold by the Bible, all of these writers modelled their role and their language on, for instance, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Hosea. In calling on the nation's leaders for justice, they wrote as if, having digested the Bible as the word of God, they had incorporated it as part of their own prophetic being, through which God could now speak again. This was their way of reconstituting the biblical verses that came into their minds under the stimulus of contemporary events. Operating as they did in an age of print, they aimed their message at a wide national, or even transnational audience. Reviled or persecuted, some of them actually identified with contemporary Jews, and their stance was always complicated to say the least. By setting themselves in opposition to their own society, and by preferring an association with the biblical prophets whom they saw as their spiritual ancestors, they were at one and the same time struggling to bring about their dream of community and behaving like lone wolves.

Some writerly community-makers found their bearings, not in Old Testament Israel, but in the continental Europe of their own time. In Chapter 16, Reid Barbour suggests that it had mainly been Sir Thomas Browne's time in Padua in 1632 that transformed him from a London-born, Winchester- and Oxford-educated gentleman into a spokesman for the intellectual and confessional problems of Europe at large. Padua's tradition of dangerous but inventive Aristotelian thought had challenged the fledgling doctor to rethink scholasticism. With the architecture of its famous anatomy theatre (not to mention its circular botanical garden), the city had also stimulated his hieroglyphic imagination. Its elaborate religious processions, its cultural sophistication and its lively mix of Jews and Christians had made him more charitable and tolerant. And the ambitious clinical programme and brilliant practitioners of its medical school had given him cause to reflect on professional

circumstances in England. In all these ways, the Padua of 1632 had destabilized, provoked and enlarged his habits of thought, with important consequences for the community of readers that grew up around his celebrated work of 1642/3. Much of the mood of the *Religio Medici* derived from what can be described as a successful cultural transplant: from the fact that Browne was able to uproot the mnemonic of Padua in 1632 from its hotbed of European intellectual ferment, so as to bring it to new life in markedly different, though equally fertile English soil.

There were strong European elements in the orientation of other mid-century writers as well. In the case of Milton, one of the most important points to note is his relationship with Socinianism, explored by Nigel Smith in Chapter 17. As a group of ideas which spread from their Italian and Polish sources across the German States and through the Dutch republic to England, Socinianism provides a tantalizing example of a current in European thought which, at the time, involved very clear links between a particular heresy, particular poets and particular places, but which in the cultural memory of subsequent times has become pretty much occluded. This means that Smith's first task is to resurface the contours of a forgotten aesthetic.[4] Faustus Socinus had himself been something of a poet, and it had been through an approach to the poetic which could view the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as merely rhetorical constructs that he struck his first blow for anti-Trinitarianism. But even if his predilection for verse carried over to some of his followers, the somewhat arid logic of Socinian argumentation was actually antipathetic to Christian poetics, Reformed and Counter-Reformation alike, which partly explains why the Socinian aesthetic was to disappear from view. To a mid-seventeenth-century anti-Trinitarian like Milton, however, nothing could have been more visible, and it is with a full sense of this that Smith now re-examines some of the thornier theological cruces in *Paradise Lost*, particularly certain apparent ambiguities about the agency of both Father and Son. To his first readers, Milton's general breadth of theological speculation, and his particular interest in the liberal theology of the Low Countries, might almost have suggested that his poem's true provenance was Amsterdam rather than London. Perhaps it was only his unrelenting insistence on the intolerability of Catholics that prevented them from reacting against some of his other views much more strongly. As the English religious centre fragmented, Catholics had sometimes come to serve the unifying function of a common enemy.

Milton's own ideas about religious community are discussed in Chapter 18 by Nicholas von Maltzahn, most particularly as they contrast with the views of Marvell. Marvell begins his poem about *Paradise Lost* by confessing his initial fear that its author 'would ruine … / The sacred Truths'. The disparity between this anxiety about threats to a past authority and Milton's own sense that it is one sacred truth – rather than plural 'Truths' – towards which Christians are communally working is very marked. At issue here were two radically different opinions about how

---

4 For more on resurfacing, see Johnson, 'Notes towards a New Imagology', pp. 54–5; and 'New Methodologies', p. 17.

communities are to be made, and about how cultural memory actually operates. For Marvell, it was memory that supplied a charter from the past, whether for groups or for nations. The political protection he sought for religious freedom therefore involved a historical recollection of what was normal within the culture in question. This meant that, in politics and poetics alike, his orientation was to the past and the particular, an accommodatory stance which contributed to his lasting reputation as 'the ingenious Mr. Andrew Marvell'. For Milton, on the other hand, the past was only a mere prelude to a great collective consummation of the Christian search for truth. This called for free deliberation and discussion on the part of 'all who in the worship persevere / Of Spirit and Truth' (*PL*, XII. ll. 532–3; John 4:23), a communicational process which was to be kept untrammelled by the interference of clerical 'popery' in any form, whether Roman or otherwise. For Milton, the real work of worship or sanctification required that ideas of community be centred on the future and the universal. This made for a far more bracing, and even challenging stance towards his own readers, who in their turn have often tried to dodge the full force of his compulsion to religious community, by assigning him the less exigent role of 'the learned Milton'. As a safely socialized figure, he could then be used to authorize an aestheticized *Paradise Lost*, for the delight of readers intimidated by his political reputation, and reluctant to recognize his urgent claims as a prophet.

Like Part II, then, Part III of the book traces developments in community-making and cultural memory through eight chronologically arranged case studies. Taken together, Parts II and III confirm that over the entire period from 1558 to 1689 the Protestant-Catholic opposition was as fundamental to the communal and cultural dealings of both writers and readers as are the north and south poles to those navigating at sea. To continue the simile, however, just as a ship may move eastwards or westwards, just as it may negotiate intricate landmasses or distracting weather conditions, so early modern writers and readers showed considerable flexibility. During the reigns of Elizabeth and James, writing certainly could reinforce the intolerance of the State's official ideology. But in the various specific ways illustrated in Chapters 3–10, it could also soften religious distinctions, bringing together reader communities that were religiously heterogeneous. Then from the accession of Charles I up until the so-called Act of Toleration, the situation became even less black and white, as the main Protestant-Catholic polarity was partly obscured by complications touched on in Chapters 11–18.

Above all, there was now the proliferation of newly articulate antagonisms between the opposite sides of the English Church's middle ground, antagonisms which became one aspect of the English Civil War. The *Book of Common Prayer* and the poetry of Herbert could still be very inclusive in their reach, and the erudite broadmindedness of Sir Thomas Browne was not without its following. But even if the battle-line between Catholic and Protestant was now less clear, contentiousness was definitely the keynote of the time. Although the plain-worship party accused the Laudians of popish practices, Catholics themselves could actually seem to stand apart from the main conflict. In this respect, Chetwinde, fading into oblivion with

his distinctive mix of humanist playfulness and superstitious legend, was typical enough. Some Laudian writers, by contrast, were communicationally exclusive in a much more prominent way, not only providing new forms of religious culture for their own sympathizers, but inviting angry criticism from Low-Church commentators, who in turn accentuated a very different sense of identity for Low-Church adherents themselves. The 'biblical' prophets, from whatever angle they entered these stormy waters, only added to the turbulence. And Milton, too, still widely seen as the mid-century's most significant writer, was more than willing to lace his words with prophetic fire. He was also both a superlatively pragmatic polemicist, and a thinker quite undaunted by, and even positively interested in, at least one heresy. For him, the only true path to Christian community was by way of vigorous debate, including the most vigilant scrutiny of received ideas: a position which was itself disputed, even by his own allies and admirers. Marvell's more conciliatory ideas may partly seem a throwback to the Donne of Satire III, or perhaps even a sign of things to come. But Marvell, too, was a man of his own time and, as such, perfectly capable of stating a disagreement, not only with Milton.

In Part IV, finally, period survey and case study are combined in two chapters which examine some of the ways in which writers, readers and whole families accommodated to the main Protestant-Catholic polarity throughout the entire period. In Chapter 19, David Robertson focuses on one particular detail of the period's literature. In Chapter 20, Harold Love traces several generations in the cultural life of two particular families.

David Robertson asks a very concrete question: how communally inclusive or exclusive was a text likely to be if it mentioned incense? For the very earliest Christians, incense had been partly associated with the Roman powers by whom they were being persecuted. Yet they also knew that incense had long been a metaphor for prayer, and after the conversion of Constantine began to introduce it into their own worship, though not as a major part of Christian ritual. Reformation Europe was more divided on the matter, since Luther's attitude was indifferent while Calvin positively objected to its use. The early Church of England banned incense from the Mass, and a number of non-literary texts saw this rejection as a marked break with the Catholic community. With respect to literary texts, however, the situation was more complicated. Shakespeare's references to incense are few and far between, and seem to have little or no politico-religious loading at all – unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the considerations brought forward by Rist. Other writers do seem to mention incense for a particular reason – Herrick, for instance, may be hinting his allegiance to an older tradition of worship and politics. But here as so often, what are we to make of Milton? As an iconoclast and a supporter of certain reforms, we might have expected him to find incense too conservative. Yet he actually seems to have taken it as a natural sign of prayer, with its due place in worship. Perhaps his appraisal of the olfactory was connected with his own encroaching blindness. Or perhaps he thought that reforms could be taken too far, and that his own community needed to reactivate the cultural memory of

incense in the Judeo-Christian tradition. On this, Bunyan might well have agreed with him. For on the question of incense, both Milton and Bunyan can actually be seen as sharing Herrick's view that the carnally aesthetic and the spiritual are not necessarily opposed, and that Protestant communities should keep an open mind as to which practices might prove fruitful to the devotional cultures of the future.

Communal linkages between religion, politics and aesthetics are again central in Harold Love's study of two culturally significant families in East Anglia, the Norths of Kirtling, Cambridgeshire and the L'Estranges of Hunstanton, Norfolk. Love's starting-point is that these two families both moved from Low-Church Anglicanism in the early years of the seventeenth century to a High-Tory, non-juring orientation in the later Stuart period. Both families included noteworthy literary figures, of whom the senior generations were clearly opposed to Laudian ritualism, while the younger generations were characterized less by their positive views (which may well have been Erastian) than by a hostility towards Puritans and Dissenters, matched in some cases by a 'softness' towards some aspects of Catholicism. Both families also belonged to a larger cultural community that was partly based on the domestic cultivation of viol consort music, a tradition which may sometimes have seemed notably High Church or even Catholic in resonance. Both were in point of fact patrons of the composer John Jenkins, whose music can perhaps be 'read' for cultural and political meanings that were rather different from those embodied in the more courtly work of William Lawes, for instance. Love explores a world in which the viol consort was a collective undertaking, apprehended as much through active performance as through listening. And as the function of the Church arguably became that of a State apparatus designed merely to underpin a power hierarchy, such music-making, in family settings like these, may well have helped to fill a spiritual vacuum.

Love's chapter, with its detailed linking of the period's spiritual life, not only to religion and writing, but also to politics and to other areas of cultural memory and practice as well, seems an appropriate conclusion to a book aiming at such depth and range of coverage. What cannot emerge from a brief editorial prospectus is our contributors' vividness of historical and textual illustration, their breadth of reference, and their theoretical and historiographical sophistication. In the pages which follow, these qualities speak for themselves, providing a wealth of detailed insights into particular writers, texts and readerships, in our view amply vindicating the attempt to suggest new connections within a field already much explored. As editors, we have not wanted to bring the terminologies of our eighteen colleagues into strict conformity with our own. Yet in richly various and complementary ways they have all illuminated precisely the issues to which we were hoping to draw attention.

In summarizing some of the most important findings, we must first squarely recognize that a text's way of resorting to cultural memory was by no means the only factor which could affect its communicational character. Three rather different considerations could also be especially important here.

For one thing, writers sometimes appealed to readers, not by drawing on the past, but by being temperamentally modern and forward-looking: *au fait* with the latest developments in science and philosophy, some of them exotic and exciting, like forbidden fruits. Beaumont's figurative language in 'Bosworth Field' foreshadowed the rational control of imagination as advocated by Thomas Sprat on behalf of the Royal Society. Jonson's *Masque of Augurs* would have had a particular fascination for spectators who knew something about contemporary cosmology. Every page of *Religio Medici* still breathed the intellectual ferment to which Browne had been exposed in Padua. And in Milton, the critique of tradition was hardly less than a *modus vivendi*: he readily took on board a heresy that was topical in continental Europe, and was in general less oriented to a reliance on ancient wisdom than to a final discovery of truth at some time in the future.

That some readers were alienated by Milton's anti-traditionalism is itself a pointer to the strength of cultural memory. Writers who went against its grain could be taking, as Marvell perhaps saw, a real communicational risk, whereas Donne, in offering Protestant reinterpretations of Catholic memories as Dean of St Paul's, found ways to be diplomatic. This brings us to our second point: In the early modern period no less than in any other age, the reception writers were accorded had a lot to do with their own communicational ethics. Not only in the sermons but also in Satire III, Donne was able to empathize even with those members of his audience who might disagree with him. Nor was he by any means alone in this. Shakespeare's approach in potentially sensitive areas was to adopt an ideologically low profile. Herbert, in his relations with both God and his fellow man, was genuinely humble and unassuming. These were all cases of a writer showing a congenial willingness to recognize the human autonomy of other people, and to meet them half-way. Some such deference may actually be a *sine qua non*, if communication is to be of the most broadly inclusive kind. Writers who seem to suggest that they alone hold the key to truth, or nourish the only genuine ambition to find it, may well be able to re-persuade their already persuaded fellow spirits, but with other readerships may be rather less successful. In point of fact, a display of very strong personal conviction is often the mark of more contentious writing, involving the divisiveness of community-making at its most exclusive. Not only Milton, but the other English Prophets, Spenser, the Laudians, and the Separatists could also show a certain proud rigidity, whereas the distinction of Herbert and Sir Thomas Browne lay partly in their very non-involvement in all the mid-century infighting.

Third, some of the writers discussed in this volume were very richly endowed with qualities which readers were likely to find admirable, pleasing, stimulating: a strong feel for language and style, a creative grasp of artistic form, a boldly fertile imagination and razor-sharp intellect. In Lars-Håkan Svensson's analysis of Spenser's allusiveness, or in Anthony Johnson's account of the structure of *The Masque of Augurs*, these qualities are very much to the fore. As editors, we see no contradiction between this literary emphasis, as one might call it, and our book's equally strong emphasis on social, political and ideological issues.

Quite the reverse, in fact. In seeking answers to our questions about relationships between writing, religion, community-making and cultural memory, we have had no choice but to recognize, on the one hand, that the texts which have come to be regarded as works of literature were no less involved in historical processes than any other writing and, on the other hand, that sheer quality of writing itself carried a communicational potential which could be decisive. If this is *not* taken into account, we see no way of fully explaining the wide inclusiveness of either *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Paradise Lost*, for instance, both of them works which in certain other respects were of a strongly exclusive tendency.

Bearing these three points in mind, then, we can readily grant that a text's communicational scope is unlikely to be the result of just some single factor. But with this major caveat duly noted, we can also confirm that the connections between the community-making of early modern religious writing and its uses of cultural memory indeed repay the very closest scholarly attention.

To begin with exclusive communication, this seems to have been enhanced by the ways in which, for instance, Dissenters invoked the authority of the remembered Bible in stipulating the correct church order, the English prophets assumed a role that would be recognized from Old Testament precedents, Chetwinde drew on the legends and superstitions of the Catholic Middle Ages, Beaumont (in *The Crowne of Thornes*) linked the hopes he held of Queen Henrietta Maria with memories of Mary Queen of Scots, and the Laudians so assiduously invoked the ceremonies of earlier days. In all such examples, it would seem that cultural memory was being used to strengthen some particular religious identity, and in effect to delegitimize religious identities of other kinds.

But as just noted, some community-making which was in many respects likely to have been exclusive actually turned out to be very inclusive. In a case such as *Pilgrim's Progress*, it would appear that this was not simply because its author had powerful literary gifts but, rather, because those gifts included an ability to tap a tradition of allegory which ran right back to the mediaeval morality plays and *Piers Plowman*. For seventeenth-century English Christians of every possible orientation, Bunyan was working in a mode which was deep-rooted and familiar.

Then there was writing which sought to be wide in its embrace, but which still refused to countenance positions other than its own. Here the use of cultural memory could be sharply selective and even tendentious. In Spenser, English history and Arthurian legend were given a polemically Protestant twist. Of Milton and his Smectymnuan allies in 1641–42 we could postulate, similarly, that their attempts to carve out a position in between the Laudians and the Puritan radicals were almost bound to combine inclusive rallying calls with gestures strongly dismissive of the extremism on both of that new position's flanks. So among other things, they were unlikely to draw on history to any great extent at all, for fear of invoking traditions actually prejudicial to the envisaged centre ground. As for Catholic writers, Beaumont, in trying to win high and mighty Protestants back to the older Church, unrealistically expected them to remember it just as fondly as he did, while Cary, in hinting a wide human relevance in the life-story of

Edward II, even acknowledged imperfections in the Catholic past, out of her vain desire to publicize and eradicate the analogous shortcomings of the Protestant present.

Lastly, there was more unreservedly inclusive community-making. Here a sense of common identity was promoted through an appeal to cultural memory of three main provenances. In texts such as Shakespeare's history plays or Beaumont's 'Bosworth Field', the English past was evoked in ways broadly compatible with Tudor-Stuart historiography, but with little or no specific detail about religious history. Secondly, in Spenser, in Jonson, and in Beaumont's shorter poems, there were humanist memories of the mythology and civilization of ancient Greece and Rome which invited learned readers to a shared mental space quite separate from nationality and religion. Third, in Herbert and in Donne, for instance, the language and narratives of the Bible were (to repeat our earlier phrasing) a culturally established meeting-point which was reassuringly accessible to all comers. As is especially clear from Donne's Satire III, the most inclusive religious writing tended at once to invoke religious tradition, and to be somewhat cautious about it: to invite readers to share religious memories, certainly, but not memories which restricted independent thought or were too specifically denominational.

When, in 1612, Henry Peacham designed the frontispiece which reappears on the present volume's cover, he figured a quilled hand emerging from the unknown to inscribe the words *MENTE VIDEBOR* ('By the mind I shall be seen').[5] Among the materials left from the early modern past, it is perhaps writing which most brings home the feel of life as lived by people then: their beliefs, their complex allegiances within their own present, their sense of where they came from. We today find ourselves in a world very unlike the one dreamed of by early modern Christians. When, in our new millennium, religion does make its presence felt, it is sometimes by continuing to entwine, in newly alarming ways, with civil and international strife. If the writings studied here do help our own readers to rediscover something of that earlier period's life-experience, we shall be more than content. But perhaps our book will also prompt fresh thought on similarities and differences, not only between groupings in early modern England, but between early modern England and our life today, and also between the communities still so very much at odds about the future. When human beings do need or wish to align themselves with a particular position, they can always find discoursal ways of doing so, and even of delegitimizing positions other than their own. This was no less clear during the so-called 'culture wars' in the United States of the mid-1990s than during the religious and civil strife of mid-seventeenth-century England. But as our book clearly suggests, different human groupings can also meet on common ground. And sometimes they can do so without bending to the hegemonic forces of a total consensus.

---

[5] Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (London, 1612).