FAITH AND FORGIVENESS:

ON THE INTERPRETATION OF BOOKS AND SOULS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores practices of forgiveness in post-Reformation England in light of the rejection of the Sacrament of Penance. I argue that forgiveness for 16th-century English Protestants was a communal technology and a means of knowledge production, one that was used to distinguish genuine members of the body of Christ from perceived antichristian interlopers. My research also shows that forgiving and reading, particularly Bible reading, are presented as acts of interpretation that must each culminate with Christian charity and faith in God. In this study, therefore, I examine literary representations of forgiveness and habits of reading with the purpose of tracing some of the connections between forgiving, reading, epistemology, and understandings of community in early modern England. Reading forgiveness as a hermeneutic technique, and not a purely theological concept, demonstrates that textual interpretation and forgiveness between people were of a piece in post-Reformation England. While early modern scholarship can tend to read texts purely as texts, my evidence exposes previously underappreciated links between Protestant textual interpretation and confessional practice, and it suggests that 16th-century English logocentrism is more focused on the unfolding of the textual logos in the world than we thought. This study reveals a fundamental interdependence and homology between interactions with text and community formation in post-Reformation England—and the reason for this connection between reading and living with others is that forgiveness is a defining feature for each.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Karen; my parents, Tom and Annie; and my siblings, Laurie Beth, Dave, and Julie. Without question, these are the people from whom I have asked and to whom I have extended forgiveness the most, and so it seems imperative that their names appear up front.

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It is a commonplace within early modern studies that the modern conception of authorship (the lone genius in his attic banging out classics on his—sometimes her, but usually his—typewriter) does not apply to the early modern period: texts were far more fluid and collaborative than the modern conception of authorship allows for. Similarly, the modern conception of authorship cannot account for the composition of this dissertation, not just because I am not a genius and I didn't write a word in an attic or on a typewriter, but because it took a village to get it written.

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CHPATER I

INTRODUCTION

The final rite in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* is A Commination against Sinners, with Certain Prayers to Be Used Divers Times in the Year. The rite's opening exhortation offers a definition of the rite itself:

> Brethren, in the primitive Church, there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as were notorious sinners were put to *open penance* and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others admonished by their example might be more afraid to offend. In the stead whereof, until the said discipline may be restored again (*which thing is much to be wished*) it is thought good, that at this time (in your presence) should be read the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the twenty-seventh chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture; and that ye should answer to every sentence, Amen. To the intent that you, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, may the rather be called to *earnest and true repentance*, and may walk more warely in these dangerous days, fleeing from such vices, for the which ye affirm with your own mouths, the curse of God to be due. (316, my emphasis)

Of course, private penance was not practiced as a sacrament within the Church of England during the Edwardian and Elizabethan periods, although the liturgical texts allow informal confession and it was no doubt practiced by recusants. Yet the opening of the Commination looks back with nostalgia on public penance, which was the standard

way penance was practiced in the early middle ages. The first evidence of private penance only emerges in 6th-century Ireland, and it did not become a requirement until Lateran IV in 1215.[1] Although early modern English Protestants are noted for their tendencies to substitute "repentance" for "penance" and to look inward toward the conscience, *The Book of Common Prayer* nonetheless attempts to bypass private penance (which was, by all accounts, more interior and oriented towards the conscience than public penance) and to establish a connection with penance's more exterior, more communal iteration. Perhaps this attempt is made in bad faith and is only meant to appease the more traditional members of the Church of England. Still, this passage has the effect of creating a bridge to traditional forms of penance even as it puts a different practice in the place of penance. In short, the passage looks back as it moves forward.

Despite the scholarly focus on the discontinuities between pre- and post-Reformation England, there was still a good deal of continuity—and, interestingly, this continuity was clearly recognized by the people who lived in the 16th century, as demonstrated by the Commination. One of the discontinuities that we generally take for granted is that pre-Reformation religion was exterior and that post-Reformation religion was interior. In what follows, I give a brief sketch focusing on penance that shows that there was a strong sense of a spiritual interior before the Reformation and a good deal of outward-facing religious expression after the Reformation. Ultimately, I want to show that it would be an oversimplification to say that the interior or the exterior was the essential site of spiritual meaning for either time period, and since these time periods are not essentially different, there is room for continuity as well as change.

Penance was a salient means by which forgiveness was practiced and experienced in the late middle ages—and not only between a penitent and God but also between human beings. In "The Reformation of Penance," Debora Shuger notes that (in at least one iteration of the Sacrament of Penance) it was expected that penitents would come to confession after repenting their misdeeds and making restitution for any harm that they caused (569). The satisfaction made as a part of penance often required acts of charity, such as almsgiving. Forgiveness in the world between human beings was fundamentally connected with forgiveness from God. They were neither discrete nor easily separable. While forgiveness had to be performed, a person's interior had long been thought of as an essential site of forgiveness, and John Bossy argues that penance became more and more inward, personal, and psychological over time.[2] For quite some time before the Reformation, schoolmen had debated over whether the performance of the sacrament effected forgiveness or if it was the penitent's contrition that was the cause of forgiveness—but no one contested that both were necessary.[3] Writing in the early 15th century, Margery Kempe reports that "owr Lord" tells her that "thu schalt have mor meryte in hevyn for o yer of thynkyng in thi mende than for an hundryd yer of preyng wyth thi mowth" (ln. 2065, 2091-92). First published in the early 16th century, Margaret Beaufort's translation of *The myrroure of golde for the Synfull soule* says that "there be thre maners of penau*n*ce / that is co*n*tricuon with herte / confessyon with mouthe / and satysfaccyon with warkes," but it also attributes to Augustine the view that "contrycyon of herte is more worthe / then all the pylgrymages of the worlde" (Civ^{r}, Civ^{v}). Penance was a thoroughly interior practice in the late middle ages.

The Protestant emphasis on conscience is clearly related to this understanding of the Sacrament of Penance, but Protestant understandings of repentance and forgiveness are also very clearly outward-facing. William Tyndale condemns the Sacrament of Penance in no uncertain terms, but he also says, “If we love God we have a commandment to love our neighbour also, as saith John in his epistle. And if we have offended him, to make amends, or if we have not wherewith, to ask him forgiveness, and to do and suffer all things for his sake, to win him to God and to nourish peace and unity” (85). For Tyndale, forgiveness from God is an interior phenomenon, beginning with death and shame at the hands of the law and ending with peace and reconciliation through Christ. Yet it also requires this social practice with one’s neighbors as a necessary reflection—and, as Tyndale often emphasizes, it is a reflection of spiritual work that the Holy Spirit has worked on a person, not something that has any merit or any value in and of itself. In *The Lamentation of a Sinner*, Katherine Parr performs public penance when she is “forced and constrained with my heart and words to confess and declare to the world, how ingrate, negligent, unkind, and stubborn I have been to God my Creator,” which is motivated “partly by the hate I owe to sin, . . . partly by the love I owe to all Christians” (447). She closes the book by saying that “if we sought God’s glory, as we should do in all things, we should not be ashamed to confess ourselves to digress from God’s precepts and ordinances, when it is manifest we have done, and daily do,” adding that confession and amendment will prevent a person’s sins from being exposed on the last day (484). Even the thoroughly Calvinist poet Anne Locke (whose poems were first published anonymously along with a translation of

Calvin's sermons on Isaiah 38) suggests that penitence should be outward-facing. In her sonnet sequence *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: VVritten in Maner of a Paraphrase vpon the 51. Psalme of Dauid*, she writes,

> Lord, of thy mercy if thou me withdraw
> From gaping throte of depe deuouring hell,
> Loe, I shall preach the iustice of thy law:
> By mercy saued, thy mercy shall I tell.
> The wicked I wyll teache thyne only way,
> Thy wayes to take, and mans deuise to flee,
> And suche as lewd delight hath ledde astray,
> To rue theyr errour and returne to thee.
> So shall the profe of myne example preache
> The bitter frute of lust and foule delight:
> So shall my pardon by thy mercy teache
> The way to finde swete mercy in thy sight.
> Hyue mercy, Lorde, in me example make
> Of lawe and mercy, for thy mercies sake. (H7^{r})

As with late medieval penance, Protestant repentance still required works and, in a sense, auricular confession.

Due to the emphatic rejection of penance by Protestants, the Reformation may appear to be, at first glance, a watershed moment in the history of forgiveness, but that would overemphasize the discontinuities between pre- and post-Reformation religion.

We can develop a more nuanced understanding of the Protestant Reformation if we keep in mind David C. Steinmetz's reminder that "the Reformation, insofar as it was a religious and theological event, had the character of a civil war. It began as an internal controversy within Latin Christendom between Catholic insiders" ("Divided" 245).[4] Early modern English Protestants recognized that their faith was part of a tradition, one that they desperately wanted to hold on to, and their understandings of repentance, penitence, and forgiveness clearly draw on that tradition, occasionally with self-awareness. That's not to say that understandings of forgiveness did not change at all, of course. I am simply saying that the changes were more of an evolution than a clean break.

Considering that forgiveness was a contentious subject, debates about forgiveness that emerge during this period are a remarkably fruitful window into early modern people's understanding of their own moment and the way that they lived with others on a day-to-day basis. These debates circled around some questions that have been central to our understanding of the period for quite some time, namely, how we form communities and how we read. I argue that the ways that these questions were addressed and answered during the early modern period become clearer when we focus on forgiveness.

Forgiveness in Early Modern England: An Overview

A few brief words are in order touching on the general commonalities concerning forgiveness in the texts I examine. Forgiveness in these texts functions within what I call

a teleological cosmology. Individuals must love God above all else and recognize that all people and all things must move towards him as their telos. As a consequence of God's love for them and their love for God, these individuals must (for God's sake) place others ahead of themselves. Therefore, the cosmology has a three-tiered structure: the self must be lowest, others must be placed next, and God must be the ultimate destination held ahead of all else.

This love for others and for God must persist through situations in which one suffers harm—and, more than that, it must characterize one's response to harm. Indeed, "loving enemies" and "forgiving" are terms that can be interchangeable.[5] The one essential feature of loving or forgiving an enemy is to act in the enemy's best interest, specifically in hopes that she will recognize God as the telos of all things and consequently act within the teleological cosmology. This course of action on the part of the forgiver can have a variety of manifestations. It certainly entails forgoing revenge, but it is not incompatible with punishment. It certainly entails a proscription against embracing hostile feelings, but it is not incompatible with all negative feelings that may arise as a result of harm. Ideally, it would involve the reincorporation of the offender into the body of the faithful. However, such reincorporation can only take place as a result of bilateral forgiveness, meaning the offender has repented. Still, Christians are responsible for forgiving unilaterally when the offender has not repented, which entails either lovingly refraining from exacting revenge or lovingly punishing the offender. Each of these actions is taken in the hopes of either inspiring repentance or protecting the community from violence. In short, forgiving in these early modern texts most often

requires a forgiver to place (for God's sake) the spiritual wellbeing of others ahead of her own feelings of resentment or desire for revenge.

One absolutely central idea that emerges time and again in this dissertation is that, for the early modern authors I survey, forgiveness on the part of victims and repentance on the part of offenders serve as two defining features of the community of the faithful—in other words, it is *responses* to harm that define the community, not the avoidance of harm altogether. The imperative to forgive often appears when referencing (1) the request in the Lord's Prayer that God "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" and (2) Matthew 6:14-15, the verses immediately following the Lord's Prayer, which say that God will forgive those who forgive others and he will not forgive those who do not forgive others. The imperative to repent has plenty of biblical precedent. Of course, repentance is central to the Hebrew scriptures, particularly the Prophets, and it is also a central message of John the Baptist. In either case, early modern English writers often interpret the twin imperative to repent and to forgive through the lenses of faith in God's promised forgiveness, the love of God, and the hope of eternal life—which, not coincidentally, are tied to the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses of scripture in late-medieval biblical hermeneutics.

In order to establish the connection between forgiveness and reading, I will need to discuss late medieval biblical hermeneutics briefly. According to the four senses of scripture, often called the quadriga, scripture can be interpreted literally, allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically. The literal sense refers to that function of language by which the words point to historical things, people, and events. The allegorical sense

refers to occasions when one thing stands in the place of another thing, such as the connection between Moses' 40 day fast on Mount Sinai as he records the law, Elijah's 40 day journey to Horeb after killing Jezebel's Baalish prophets, and Jesus' 40 day fast in the wilderness before the Sermon on the Mount. The allegorical sense is often connected with the things that are essential to the Christian faith. The tropological sense refers to occasions when scripture prefigures Christ or when scripture directs the actions of Christians, since Christians are under the obligation to act as Christ acts. Finally, the anagogical sense refers to occasions in which a physical or temporal thing represents something spiritual or something to come. It is therefore connected with hope. Medieval exegetes tend to associate the literal sense with the letter and the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses with the spirit. According to Augustine, all correct biblical interpretation will necessarily lead to charity, but it would be easy to see how the tropological sense could have a particularly close relationship with charity, considering that the tropological sense is closely tied to actions.

Conventional histories of the Reformation hold that Protestants discarded the quadriga in favor of literal interpretation, but David C. Steinmetz has shown that they did not in fact disregard the spiritual senses of scripture. After all, even Protestants would read Moses on Sinai, Elijah at Horeb, and Jesus in the wilderness as events that inform one another, which would traditionally have been understood to be either an allegorical or tropological reading. Instead of simply doing away with the spiritual sense of scripture, Steinmetz argues, Protestants incorporated them into the literal sense. He writes, "What the Protestants advocated was not letter in the historical-critical sense, the

reconstructed story behind the story as presented, and not letter in the sense of mere narrative line, though the narrative line was crucial to their exegesis. What they advocated was a letter pregnant with spiritual significance, a letter big-bellied with meanings formerly relegated by the quadriga to allegory or tropology" ("Divided" 249). Steinmetz even says that this trend of packing spiritual meaning into the literal sense could be traced back to Nicholas of Lyra, who suggested that the literal sense might be usefully divided between the literal-historical sense (referring to things, people, and events) and the literal-prophetic sense (referring to things that prefigure Christ).[6]

The point I'm making here is threefold. First, Protestants did not disregard scriptural interpretation that rested on the pillars of faith, hope, and love. Second, interpretation resting on the pillars of faith, hope, and love was traditionally understood to be spiritual (and not literal) interpretation. Third, to bring us back to the beginning of this introduction, we can usefully see Protestant interpretation of people and actions—especially forgiveness—as also resting on faith, hope, and love. Moreover, Protestant critiques of Roman hermeneutics, liturgy, and theology often accuse the Church of Rome of acting in their own interests instead of promoting faith in God and love for others, which is simply to accuse the Church of Rome of failing to act within the appropriate teleological cosmology. In short, scriptural interpretation and interpersonal interpretation, if you will, have homologous structures, and we might even add the action of interpreting the church (who belongs, who does not, and so forth) to that list. However, I should add that much of what I am attributing to Protestants was fully available to Catholics. I am attributing these positions to Protestants simply because I

studied texts by Protestants. It is not my intention to determine what distinguishes the two confessions.

There is still one more connection I want to draw between scriptural interpretation and forgiveness. The conventional narrative about the Reformation holds that it changed the relationship between the individual and the church. As Bernhard Poschmann shows, the early church held that being a member of the community was essential to salvation.[7] Protestants, of course, generally challenged anything resembling a communal soteriology. They saw the church or congregation as an essential support for individual Christians, no doubt, but they saw grace as being communicated to individual directly through Christ instead of through the institution of the church. This narrative is true for the most part, but it can also occlude just how communal early Protestantism was. Protestants understood the Bible to show them their duty to God, their temporal rulers, and their neighbor. In other words, Bible reading was set in and centered on the community. As I have already suggested, important defining features of the community of the faithful are repentance on the part of offenders and forgiveness on the part of victims.

To summarize, I contend that reading, forgiving, and living in community were interrelated and imbricated concepts in 16th-century Protestant texts. Specifically, I am arguing that reading was a communal practice, and that community interactions centered on forgiveness; thus, all three terms are nested inside one another. I am constructing this image of 16th-century English Protestantism in contradistinction to the still widely held view that Protestantism was largely (perhaps entirely) individualist and "literalist"

(which is often used pejoratively or dismissively). The features of 16th-century Protestantism that I am pointing out have very clear precedent in pre-Reformation Christianity, although it is not within the scope of my project to excavate these precedents. Moreover, because there are indeed precedents, these features are not essentially Protestant and unavailable to Catholic Christianity. Again, my goal is simply to show that they were central to Protestant faith, not to show how unique they are.

The Relevance of Forgiveness to Early Modern Scholarship

It is my intention to participate in the now blossoming discussion of early modern English literature and religion. Shuger has noted that recently this discourse has been characterized by "[e]xclusive focus on and exaggeration of the changes wrought by the Reformation on the fabric of traditional English Christianity" ("Reformation" 571). I would add that there is also a growing trend of casting the changes wrought by the Reformation in a less than positive light. To a certain extent, this trend is welcome. Although the impulse to valorize or demonize the Reformation is as old as Reformation historiography, the current trend began as a response to Whiggish Reformation historiography that tended to view the Reformation as the inevitable logocentric response to decadent, superstitious late-medieval Roman Catholicism. *The English Reformation* by A.G. Dickens serves as a useful example of this Whiggish historiography. Naturally, revisionist historians offered a necessary corrective, showing the wisdom, beauty, and popularity of late-medieval religion. The work of Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy are useful examples of the revisionist response. Moreover,

there still exists the well-established trend of determining whether the consequences of the Reformation were positive or negative, as evinced by Max Weber's seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and, more recently, *The Unintended Reformation* by Brad S. Gregory.[8]

However, some scholars have combined these two trends and have walked a little farther down the path than I find justifiable. For example, in *Burning to Read*, James Simpson sets out to show that liberalism is not, as some have held, descended from the Protestant Reformation but rather from the more reformist Catholics Thomas More and Erasmus. He argues that the Protestant Reformation led to the emergence of fundamentalism, which he calls "the liberal tradition's principal enemy" (3).[9] Similarly, in *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, Sarah Beckwith suggests that although the Reformation avoided the pitfall of magical, performative speech acts that she associates with Roman Catholicism, the Protestant rethinking of the language of penance and forgiveness entails what she calls "the eradication of the human," by which she means the near total disregard for human actions and interactions.[10] The Reformation historiography by both Simpson and Beckwith sets up the Reformation as the antagonist and another figure as the protagonist: in Simpson's book, it is More and Erasmus; in Beckwith's book, Shakespeare is the protagonist who rescues forgiveness from the spiritual, religious, immaterial realm and reintroduces it to human beings. In short, this current trend in Reformation historiography views the Reformation as a loss.[11]

In an effort to respond productively to this trend, I make it my goal to produce the kind of scholarship Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti call for in their article "The

Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies." In this piece, Jackson and Marotti criticize early new historicists, notably Stephen Greenblatt, for treating religion in the early modern period as though it were a vessel for politics or economic power. The authors say that new historicism in the 1980s and 1990s was heavily influenced by the linguistic turn in poststructuralism and Jacques Derrida's work in the 1970s and 1980s in particular, but they also accuse new historicists of failing to take seriously Derrida's work on religion in the 1990s, which serves as a necessary counterbalance to the linguistic turn. After all, the linguistic turn gave critics the vocabulary to identify homology between different structures: just as language relies on difference and chains of signifiers, so too do the formation of subjectivity and culture more broadly. This scholarly disposition naturally lends itself to finding interactions between different structures, like religion, politics, and economics. Derrida's work on religion, by contrast, centers on the notion of alterity, an insurmountable otherness. Drawing on the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, the authors contend that any approach to alterity is necessarily ethical and religious: the other whom the self can encounter face-to-face always has something of the absolutely other, God, in her. To summarize—and to relate this theoretical discussion back to early modern studies—Jackson and Marotti say that early modern scholarship should aspire to produce work that recognizes alterity, both the alterity of early modern religion and early modern encounters with alterity, which are always imbricated with religious and ethical questions.

Forgiveness is a perfect starting point from which to produce scholarship centered on the notion of alterity for two reasons. First, forgiveness is itself a mechanism

for working through alterity. A person in need of forgiveness is in some respect estranged from someone else or the community at large. This offending person is therefore other, and forgiveness is a mechanism for reintegrating that person and repairing communal bonds or integrity. I should say, rather, that it is one piece of the mosaic that communities have recourse to in case of harm, accompanied by such other pieces as law, casuistry (or the application of general law to specific instances), justice, restitution, satisfaction, and expiation. In short, forgiveness is a concept with clear religious roots and its purpose is dealing with alterity, as Jackson and Marotti have suggested of religion generally. Second, the early modern conception of forgiveness is different from our own. (I will say much more about this difference and about the scholarly discourse on forgiveness shortly.) In other words, it is other for us, as Jackson and Marotti have suggested of early modern religion generally.

It is my goal to understand how theories of forgiveness and hermeneutics operated in early modern England. Although it is not my goal to apologize for the Reformation, Christianity, or religion as a whole, I proceed from the assumption that the logic and lived experience of these things offered something to people and made sense to them for one reason or another, and so I work to learn why it made sense and what it offered them. I recognize the skeletons that reformed Christianity has in its closet, but I also recognize that religion offered people the means to experience and express joy, beauty, grief, and redemption. I do not intend to condemn the work by Simpson and Beckwith. It is certainly valuable to show how intellectual and religious developments led to positive or negative consequences. I also recognize that early modern reformed

Christians occasionally deserve criticism and condemnation. However, I do not think that this kind of story is the only one that should be told about the Reformation. My approach is different in that it is grounded in Jackson and Marotti's focus on alterity. This theoretical orientation requires respect and generosity for those who lived and practiced reformed religion, as you might expect in a dissertation about forgiveness, because it presupposes that the religion and the forgiveness practiced in early modern England is other for me. Other scholars who have addressed religion in this way include Shuger, Jackson, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Robert Stillman, Nancy Bradley Warren, and Nandra Perry.[12]

Scholarly Approaches to Forgiveness

Although forgiveness has only recently become a subject of interest in literature departments, it has for some time been the subject of scholarly inquiry in other academic disciplines, and it would be irresponsible not to gesture towards this scholarship. This work has been invaluable to me: it has given me rigor and systematicity that I could not have had otherwise. However, I should also note at the outset that I have not found within this scholarship a representation of forgiveness that either engages with forgiveness in precisely the way that I do or that accounts for all of the nuances that I encounter in my primary texts. For these reasons, I tend to engage with this scholarship only peripherally throughout the rest of this dissertation.

Recent scholarship on the history of forgiveness has reached the conclusion that pre-modern forgiveness is other for those of us in the modern world. In *Before*

Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea, David Konstan argues that our modern conception does not appear until after Immanuel Kant. I agree that we cannot assume that we have precisely the same definition of "forgiveness" as people who lived during the early modern period, as the brief description of early modern forgiveness at the beginning of this chapter shows. However, it seems to me that Konstan is working with an unnecessarily narrow definition of "forgiveness." His definition is drawn from the academic discussion of forgiveness within the discipline of analytic philosophy, and Konstan especially depends on *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* by Charles Griswold. In *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics*, Linda Radzik gives the following definition of "forgiveness" for this academic discourse: "According to what one might call the standard account, to forgive is to overcome or forswear resentment and other negative emotions (e.g., anger, hatred, contempt, disappointment), which are held toward the wrongdoer in virtue of the offense" (117). Many writers, such as Griswold, add that this forswearing of resentment generally is the product of repentance and reformation on the part of the offender.[13] This is the definition that Konstan argues does not appear until after Kant.

As Radzik observes in her essay "Joseph Butler on Forgiveness," this definition is often traced back to the 18th-century philosopher Bishop Joseph Butler in his book *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*. However, Radzik and Griswold point out that Butler does not define forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment, although he does theorize forgiveness in affective terms. Rather, Butler defines forgiveness as withholding revenge, the choice not to allow feelings of resentment to become (in his

words) "*settled and deliberate*," and, as Radzik shows, the choice to love an offender in spite of their offence (8.4). Butler's definition thus differs significantly from the definition employed in the contemporary literature on forgiveness—and is actually quite a lot closer to the early modern definition of forgiveness. Given that Butler addresses forgiveness in sermons, I find it likely that he was engaging as much with the early modern homiletic tradition as much as he was engaging with philosophy or theology, and thus it would be a worthwhile enterprise to map the parallels between Butler's representation of forgiveness and those presented in early modern sermons, such as *The Book of Homilies* or John Donne's sermons, in which I have noticed some intriguing parallels. These similarities suggest to me that it is possible that the early modern understanding of forgiveness held sway quite close to the life of Kant and, indeed, in the work of an author that J.B. Schneewind identifies as an noteworthy component of the rhizome that produced modern moral philosophy (which culminates with Kant in Schneewind's book).[14]

These intertextual relations between the early modern period and Butler (if they are as strong as I think they are) could suggest that the current definition within the analytic literature on forgiveness is ultimately related to understandings of forgiveness that circulated in the early modern period. However, the differences between representations of forgiveness in the early modern period and in Butler's work on the one hand and the analytic definition of forgiveness on the other could also suggest that the analytic definition of forgiveness is too limiting.

Of course, the definition of forgiveness within this particular academic discussion is one that modern English speakers would recognize as a definition of forgiveness, but it seems unnecessarily reductive to claim that forgiveness abides by a rigorous definition, since it can be used to describe a great variety of interactions and situations.[15] The *OED* defines the verb "forgive" variously as "To give, grant"; "To give up, cease to harbour (resentment, wrath). Also, to give up one's resolve (*to* do something)"; "To remit (a debt); to give up resentment or claim to requital for, pardon (an offence)"; "To give up resentment against, pardon (an offender). … Also (now *rarely*) to abandon one's claim against (a debtor)"; and "To make excuse or apology for, regard indulgently."[16] There are two distinct lines of reasoning implied by these definitions. First, "to forgive" can mean to withhold a penalty or to render a debt null; second, it can mean to give up negative feelings for someone else. In other words, "to forgive" can have a valence within the realm of what might usefully be called justice (giving to each their due), and it can also have an affective valence—and these two valences need not necessarily coincide. For instance, it seems perfectly reasonable that a person might choose either to withhold a penalty but retain negative emotions or to mete out a penalty and give up negative emotions. There can also be different factors motivating forgiveness. Forgiveness can be motivated by expiation, such as penance or reparations, or it can be unconditional.[17] Furthermore, most definitions of forgiveness take for granted that to forgive is different from to pardon and that to forgive a debt is different from to forgive a person or an offense. However, there is still a good deal of cross-pollination between all of these concepts, leading to the imprecision of the term

"forgiveness." For example, we still talk about convicts "paying their debt to society," and Shuger points out that "'[g]uilt' and 'debt,' in German, are the same word (*Schuld*); indeed, the word *guilt* almost certainly derives from *Geld*," referring to the Anglo-Saxon practice of exacting penalties in the form of monetary payment ("Reformation" 560). We can reasonably assume that something of this legacy still exists in our understandings of justice and forgiveness. Similarly, although a presidential pardon is an identifiable entity in the world and a presidential forgiveness is not, the *OED* suggests that *perdonare* (the Latin word that gives us "pardon") and "to forgive" have the exact same prefix and stem, as *perdonare* is made up of the words *per* (for) and *donare* (to give).

Critical theorists discuss forgiveness in a way that is markedly different from the manner in which analytic philosophers discuss forgiveness. Although I find the rigor that analytic philosophers tend to employ in defining forgiveness misleading, I do appreciate that this academic discourse does have a sense that forgiveness is a process and that it tends to approach forgiveness pragmatically. These are attributes that can at times be lacking in discussions of forgiveness rooted in critical theory, particularly those in the tradition following Jacques Derrida's *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*.

These discussions of forgiveness can occasionally treat forgiveness as a somewhat magical phenomenon, as Radzik notes, and that description uncontroversially applies to Derrida's essay.[18] Derrida says that forgiveness cannot be a matter of economic exchange; in other words, it cannot be a matter of withholding a penalty. Rather, for Derrida forgiveness at its core is defined by forgiving the unforgivable—the unforgivable being an offense so heinous, so unthinkable, that there is not even a penalty

designated for it. Forgiveness in these circumstances is an act of madness. Derrida calls this version of forgiveness Abrahamic forgiveness because (he says) of its association with Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This representation of forgiveness is unquestionably miraculous, considering that forgiveness can have no cause or reason.

Similarly, Hannah Arendt uses the word "miracle" explicitly with respect to forgiveness. She says that Jesus "likened the power to forgive to the more general power of performing miracles, putting both on the same level and within the reach of man," adding,

> Jesus himself saw the human root of this power to perform miracles in faith—which we leave out of our considerations. In our context, the only point that matters is that the power to perform miracles is not considered to be divine—faith will move mountains and faith will forgive; the one is no less a miracle than the other, and the reply of the apostles when Jesus demanded of them to forgive seven times a day was: "Lord, increase our faith." (247, 247 fn. 84)

This characterization of the power to forgive as miraculous notwithstanding, Arendt describes forgiveness in very interpersonal and communal terms. She says that we act without knowing the consequences of our actions, and so forgiveness is that mechanism by which we remake our communal bonds in the face of harm (that was perpetrated unknowingly, drawing on Jesus' statement that "they know not what they do"). Unlike Derrida, she says it is impossible to forgive what can't be punished.

To summarize, Derrida and Arendt focus on forgiveness's ability to create common ground almost ex nihilo through a choice or a speech act. These theorizations

of forgiveness offer us a means for "creat[ing] new conditions of being," to borrow Marian Eide's words (1).

By comparison, the analytic definition of forgiveness seems very mundane, but this very mundanity is a strength in some ways. On the one hand, critical theory often appreciates the incredible power of forgiveness, power that I think can best be described as spiritual. However, critical theory can also focus on this spiritual power of forgiveness at the expense of the processes and procedures people have traditionally used to effect forgiveness—as well as the complexity and multiple forms that forgiveness can take. On the other hand, analytic philosophy can do justice to the processes, procedures, and lived experience of forgiveness as process, and it can also account for the complexity and multiple forms of forgiveness as process, although it can also be too limiting in its description. However, the effect that analytic philosophy tends to attribute to forgiveness is far too modest and it is only one of a range of effects that forgiveness can have.

Emmanuel Levinas's essay "Toward the Other" offers an effective compromise between these two positions, and it also more closely resembles the early modern accounts of forgiveness that I examine than either of the other two academic approaches to forgiveness.[19] This essay is a Talmudic reading, meaning, of course, that it is decidedly rooted in Judaism. Levinas's essay and the Talmudic text he reads offer very specific steps and instruction about how to seek and offer forgiveness. For example, they say that forgiveness is contingent upon repentance, and therefore (against Derrida) they indicate that forgiveness is not unconditional. Moreover, they both say that a transgressor must seek forgiveness directly from the victim and may do so up to three

times if the victim refuses; however, if the victim denies all three times, then the victim herself is in the wrong. Like the analytic discourse on forgiveness, then, Levinas focuses on the form of forgiveness. The centrality of repentance in Levinas's account of form of forgiveness cannot be overstated. Still, although he says that "[t]here is nothing magical about [forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*]" because it depends upon repentance, he still considers forgiveness as a means for (to borrow Eide's words again) creating new conditions of being, especially with respect to the community and Israel as a nation in particular (15). The general sense that his essay gives is that forgiveness is a means for reestablishing the bonds of community that have been damaged by harm. This process surely entails affect, but it is not reducible to it.

Similarly, Michael L. Morgan and Louis E. Newman agree that unconditional forgiveness is practically (or actually) absent from the Hebrew Scriptures.[20] Some argue that Genesis 20:16-17 offers an example of unconditional forgiveness. In this passage, Abimelech gives reparations to Abraham for his offense of marrying Sarah, and Abraham forgives Abimelech, in spite of the fact that the text does not include an account of Abimelech verbally repenting to Abraham. Considering that unconditional forgiveness in the Hebrew Scriptures rests on such slender evidence, Derrida's claim that unconditional forgiveness is Abrahamic seems suspect. Furthermore, even John Calvin, a salient Christian defender of unconditionality, says in Book III of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* that when God confers his grace on Christians, these Christians will necessarily recognize their sins and repent, adding that ". . . to confess privately to God is part of true repentance *which cannot be omitted*. For there is nothing more

vnreasonable than to looke to haue God to pardon vs the sinnes in which we flatter our selues and doe hide them by hypocrisie, least he should bring them to light" (290, my emphasis). In other words, repentance is still an integral part of forgiveness for Calvin; it is simply a consequence of grace that has already been conferred rather than something that causes a dispensation of grace, as participation in the Sacrament of Penance might.

In sum, scholarship on and philosophical treatments of forgiveness over the last 50 years or so is investigating a phenomenon that did not exist in precisely the same form in early modern religious discourse, although there are certainly parallels. I see my research making one main contribution to the conversation about the history of forgiveness, which I stated at the beginning of this introduction but I think bears repeating. In early modern English Protestant religious texts, forgiveness can be most succinctly defined as loving and therefore wishing the best for a person in spite of any harm they may have caused; to forgive is a universal imperative; if the transgressor repents, the victim and the community are to understand the transgressor as a member of the body of the faithful; if the transgressor does not repent, the victim and the community are to love her nonetheless, but they ought to punish the person in hopes of inspiring repentance.[21]

Project Description, Or, Chapter Summaries

My dissertation proceeds chronologically, beginning with William Tyndale and ending with Philip Sidney. Throughout this project, I address forgiveness as a social practice and the relationship between forgiveness and reading, either when texts espouse

forgiveness or when reading and forgiving have similar structures. In each chapter and in the dissertation as a whole, I aim to offer an exploration (not a comprehensive picture) of the relationship between religious treatments of forgiveness and literary culture in 16th-century England.

Chapter 1 is concerned with Tyndale's work. Critics have long taken interest in his emphasis on the importance of individual interactions with scripture and, in particular, his views of literal biblical interpretation. Some have simply noted that his definition of "literal" interpretation is "spiritual" and others have found his hermeneutics contradictory or unsatisfactory in one way or another. I argue that this emphasis on text provides a limited view of Tyndale's theorization of interpretation. In response, I offer a reading of his hermeneutics that is informed by a reading of his conception of forgiveness. His views of hermeneutics and forgiveness take parallel forms: his literal interpretation has important features in common with his representation of congregational forgiveness, and his critique of Roman hermeneutics has the same form as his critique of Roman penance. What emerges is the conclusion that Tyndale's critique of Roman hermeneutics actually has very little to do with the specific means by which meaning is extracted from words—and that, therefore, critics' emphasis on textuality in Tyndale's work is not as representative as it might first appear. Rather, his critique is based on the argument that Roman hermeneutics and Roman penance are not destined for the correct telos, that their consequences in the world invalidate them. I argue that Tyndale's "literal" hermeneutics make the case that the primary signification of the words of scripture operates in reference to his conception of the nature of the

cosmos: people are to place themselves lowest, others ahead of themselves, and God ahead of all else. Tyndale applies a particular narrative structure both to individual encounters with this cosmology and to scripture. Namely, Christians first experience death by the law and then life through the gospel, and this progression reconciles them with God through his act of forgiveness made possible by Christ's sacrifice. This narrative structure is what I call Tyndale's literal-spiritual sense of scripture. Since, in his estimation, Roman hermeneutics and penance tend towards the political and financial gain of the Church of Rome, they do not tend towards the telos of the cosmos, God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. Tyndale offers a picture of right reading and right forgiving, defined in contradistinction to Roman reading and Roman penance, in which each always works to promote mutual love and mutual forgiveness within the body of Christ, not any one person's or institution's benefit. I conclude by showing that although he seems to indicate that right reading and right forgiving will be fairly straightforward for communities with right faith, the paratexts to the successive editions of his biblical translation show that right reading, at least, did not turn out to be as straightforward as he imagined.

Chapter 2 argues that *The Examinations of Anne Askew* reveal that the theory and practice of forgiveness intersect with ideas about knowledge and community. Critics often approach Askew's *Examinations* in one of two ways. On the one hand, some excavate Askew's authorial voice, both from her interrogators (whom she is required to answer but from whom she also tries to conceal information), and from Protestant hagiographers John Bale and John Foxe (her avowed allies who nonetheless appropriate

her narrative for their own ends). On the other hand, some place Askew within a social network by viewing her as a reader of a rhizome of texts (by others) and a speaker with a particular audience in mind. Taking the second approach, this chapter argues that Askew's choice to forgive her interrogators makes a statement about belonging and non-belonging: it positions Askew as a true member of the body of Christ (who may therefore forgive) and her interrogators as people outside of the body of Christ (who are therefore in need of forgiveness). In essence, Askew's forgiveness rests on the estimation—the interpretation—that her interrogators and the Anglo-Catholic Church are damned, that they are the other church against which the true church defines itself. Askew supports this interpretation using two main lines of reasoning. First, she intimates that her interrogators and the Anglo-Catholic Church are harmful and selfish. To be more specific, she suggests that they do not operate within the divine cosmology that places the self on the lowest plane, others next, and then faith in God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice at the top; instead, the Church uses violence to protect its own interests. Second, she argues that her interrogators see physical and temporal things as ends, which means they don't reach the true spiritual end. She accuses her interrogators of idolatry because they set up the Eucharist and the words of scripture as ends without seeing that they signify faith in God through Christ. By contrast, Askew and Bale make the case that she is a true Christian because she reads towards the spiritual telos, which is demonstrated by her choice to put others ahead of herself. Unlike her selfish, harmful interrogators, Askew demonstrates her selflessness and harmlessness by forgiving her enemies, in accord with a true understanding of the cosmos.

Chapter 3 addresses the view that 16th-century English Protestants were "people of the book" and some characterizations that accompany this view: Protestants are inward-looking, endlessly anxious about the relationship between signs and referents, and individuals primarily and members of a community secondarily. Against this view, I argue that *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Book of Homilies* are strikingly communal in their orientation and that their treatments of forgiveness bring this emphasis to the fore. Forgiveness in these texts is not a purely abstract or theological concept but a concrete practice shared among people. I outline three different patterns relating to forgiveness that emerge from these texts. First, forgiveness is a cycle that begins with the tension of unresolved differences, turns on the moment of forgiveness, and ends with the peace of reconciliation. Second, forgiveness is part of the dialectic between individuals and groups: it can focus on one person's relationship to others or to the community, or it can focus on the unity and health of the community. Third, forgiveness is often a part of a progression that moves from text, to actions, to community formation. These texts are often thought of as having a studied ambiguity on certain doctrinal and liturgical issues, allowing for a range of beliefs and practices. The central place of forgiveness in these texts means that it serves as a unifying principle.

Chapter 4 argues that Sidney's *Old Arcadia* dramatizes forgiveness. Within the context of the Elizabethan Church of England, forgiveness for one's neighbor was established liturgically as an indispensable reflection of God's forgiveness for oneself, and both of these acts of forgiveness were imbued with the power to transform sinners into members of the communion of saints. Sidney's *Old Arcadia* ends with Basilius

pardoning and therefore transforming Gynecia, Pyrocles, and Musidorus despite their crimes—a problematic scene of forgiveness that has long occupied commentators. Significantly, Basilius does not explicitly pardon the offenders in the trial scene; rather, he asks Gynecia to pardon him, and she never responds. This moment of silence forces the reader to determine whether the characters are genuinely forgiven and transformed by an act of unmerited grace, or if the characters simply use the trappings of forgiveness to hide their misdeeds. This chapter contends, first, that the trial scene in Book V incorporates some of the same hopes and fears as those woven into the Church of England's representation of forgiveness and, second, that the final scene offers Mary Sidney Herbert, the romance's primary intended audience, to forgive both Gynecia, a problematic character, and Sidney himself, the author of a potentially problematic text.

In my conclusion, I close by arguing that we can best understand the moral decision occasioned by *The Old Arcadia* in light of the ethical poetics in Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*. This text defends literature in English (mirroring Tyndale's defense of the Bible in English); it urges readers to reach beyond the text to the fore-conceit of the poet (resembling Askew's insistence that readers strive to ascertain the true spiritual meaning of signs); and it imagines ethical and political ends for reading and writing (reflecting the ends of *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Book of Homilies*).

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[1] See Thomas N. Tentler, pgs. 3-27, and Poschmann, pgs. 122-93.

[2] See "The Social History of Penance in the Age of the Reformation."

[3] See Tentler, pgs. 250-73, and Poschmann, pgs. 155-93.

[4] In "Reformation and Grace," he also says, "The Reformation began, almost accidentally, as a debate over the word 'penitence'" (75).

[5] This insight came to me thanks to Linda Radzik's essay "Joseph Butler on Forgiveness." Radzik's essay argues that forgiveness in Butler's work does not merely involve wishing that justice will

be done in a given situation; more than that, it entails loving the offender in spite of her offense. I will have occasion to discuss Joseph Butler at greater length later in this introduction.

[6] See Steinmetz, “Divided,” pg. 249.

[7] In his discussion of penance in the post-apostolic age, Poschmann writes, “Given the universal recognition of the significance of the Church as the community of salvation, readmission into the Church is also a guarantee of God’s forgiveness” (25).

[8] Weber argues that Protestantism and capitalism inform one another. To give two examples, he contends that the early Protestant understanding of a vocation as a calling from God migrated to the capitalist understanding of labor, and he also suggests that Protestant notions of frugality and austerity have become virtues within capitalism. Gregory argues that the Protestant Reformation was a decisive historical moment that set the stage for much of Western history that came after it. Specifically, he argues that the Protestant Reformation led to pluralism and relativism. For example, he contends that the Protestant doctrine *sola scriptura* led to a proliferation of belief, which has led to “the Kingdom of Whatever” (112). See pgs. 96-109. He also argues that the doctrine of *sola scriptura* parallels reason alone as a philosophical orientation, which he says was just as ineffective at producing consensus as scripture alone. See pgs. 112-128.

[9] Simpson writes, “In short, the liberal tradition’s derivation of itself from the sixteenth-century Reformation requires careful revision. The liberal tradition damagingly traces its origin, I contend, from exactly the source that in fact produced the liberal tradition’s principal enemy (that is, fundamentalism)” (3). Simpson goes further, arguing that literalism itself is a key brick in the path to fundamentalism. See his later essay “Sixteenth-Century Fundamentalism and the Specter of Ambiguity, or The Literal Sense is Always a Fiction.”

[10] Beckwith writes, “Some Reformation theology, for example, insisted that it was only by eradicating all human mediations that we could be sure of the God-sidedness of grace; all human interventions stain and contaminate and infringe the sovereignty of God. The theological warrant comes along with the eradication of the human—and human acknowledgement. Forgiveness was not the province of priesthood; rather it was a speech act that had already happened. Luther’s assurance was quickly undermined by the disastrous pastoral implications of the Calvinist understanding of double predestination; and Protestant ‘practical divinity’ had to find ways of dealing with the epistemological fallout of this doctrine, one that rapidly became intellectualized as a problem of knowledge: how will we know if we are saved? The epistemological anxieties notoriously focused on this unknown but quite fundamental aspect of an unmediated relation with God.” (6)

[11] In my view, the risk that this style of historiography runs is reading history backwards, attributing issues, problems, and moral failings to the fountainheads that really only appeared much later. Simpson calls the Reformation the parent of the “enemy” of liberalism and Beckwith says that Calvinist double predestination has “disastrous pastoral implications,” but each of these estimations is made in light of much later developments, not in light of the historical moment with its unique problems and opportunities that inspired the Reformation and double predestination (Simpson 3, Beckwith 6).

[12] See Shuger’s books *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* and *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity*; *Shakespeare and Abraham* by Jackson; *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* by Lupton; *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* by Stillman; *The Embodied Word* by Warren; and *Imitatio Christi* by Perry.

[13] Indeed, this definition serves as the starting point of many philosophical discussions of the subject, but, of course, that does not mean that there is no recognition of variety or that the definition has not been challenged. To give a general example, in “What Is Forgiveness?,” the first essay in *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian* edited by Griswold and Konstan, Adam Morton gives a basic taxonomy of forgiveness as we would understand it in the 21st-century Anglophone world, but he also concedes that “[f]orgiveness has many varieties, all of which can come about in many ways” (14). More specifically, in *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing*, Margaret R. Holmgren defines forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment, but she says that forgiveness need not be predicated on repentance. She argues that victims can give up resentment because clinging to resentment continues the hold that the offender has over the victim. Giving up resentment is therefore in the victim’s best

interests. Similarly, in her book *Forgiveness and Revenge*, Trudy Govier does not entirely accept the definition of forgiveness as the choice to forswear resentment as a response to repentance or reformation. Although she does discuss sentimentalist issues with respect to forgiveness, she tends to define it as the choice not to characterize an offender solely on the grounds of their offense but rather to continue to see them as a complex moral agent who is capable of making new choices in the future.

[14] For Schneewind's discussion Butler, see pgs. 342-353.

[15] Again, Morton, to his credit, recognizes that forgiveness can take multiple forms and is related to other concepts, and Radzik makes a similar concession. In a coauthored piece by Claire Katz and Radzik, Katz raises a question about the distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. Radzik notes that forgiveness in the philosophical literature is often oriented towards feelings, and she defines reconciliation as action-oriented. Radzik notes that Katz suggests that "this distinction is likely artificial (since our emotions and behaviors are not neatly separable," and ultimately Radzik is "inclined to agree with her" (157).

[16] See definitions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 in the *OED*'s entry on "Forgive, v."

[17] I am borrowing the distinction between unconditional forgiveness and forgiveness through expiation from *On Cosmopolitanism and On Forgiveness*.

[18] Radzik says that her "position here contrasts with the sometimes magical way in which forgiveness is discussed—as if forgiveness by itself could eliminate guilt and put the past to rest, like the hand of God, which grants absolution and leaves the soul sparkling clean" (*Making* 120).

[19] Also see "Forgiveness and Perfection: Maimonides, Aquinas, and Medieval Departures from Aristotle" by Jonathan Jacobs. In this essay, Jacobs usefully puts the Jewish tradition, the Christian tradition, and Western philosophy in conversation.

[20] Jennifer Wright Knust even suggests that Jesus' statement of forgiveness from the cross is best understood as conditional.

[21] The idea that everything can be done forgivingly—even punishment—is potentially quite beautiful, but it is also very clearly subject to abuses. For example, in her forthcoming article "'Mercy as well as Extremity': Forts, Fences and Fellow-Feeling in New England Settlement," Ana Schwartz argues that piteous circumstances (such as subjugation) are a precondition for pity and mercy, and therefore the mercy offered to indigenous people by 17th-century New England colonists was very closely tied to the subjugation of those indigenous people. In essence, colonists were able to think of themselves as merciful even as (or precisely because) they oppressed indigenous people. (My sincerest thanks to Dr. Schwartz for sharing a copy of her article with me before publication.) I would note that this connection between mercy and oppression proceeds very logically from the idea that punishment should be exercised charitably and forgivingly. Abuses like the ones Schwartz discusses raise an important question: how are othered people allowed to participate in or excluded from forgiveness? Bilateral forgiveness necessarily takes place between people who mutually recognize one another, at least to some degree, but unilateral forgiveness has an entirely different power dynamic. If unilateral forgiveness is extended to people who are thought of as outsiders, then it will surely intersect with religious prejudices (anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in particular), racial othering, and gendered othering. Unfortunately, I was not able to address this question within the scope of this dissertation, but these are some issues that I hope to take into consideration in the future.

CHAPTER II

LITERAL READING, "A PROPER COMMODITY OF CONFESSION," AND GRASSROOTS FORGIVENESS: WILLIAM TYNDALE'S COMPLAINT

William Tyndale is, in many ways, a bellwether for the English Reformations, as many critics have already noted.[1] As an early spokesperson positioned at the intersection of Christian humanism and Lutheranism, Tyndale wrote about a number of issues that would be foundational to the formation of English Christianity, including institutional authority, the voice of the laity, translation, vernacular scriptures, and literalist hermeneutics. To be sure, Tyndale is not some sort of fountainhead of English Christianity; however, because he wrote at a time of great mechanical, literary, and institutional change, his work contains the seeds of issues and ideas that would continue to attract attention for at least the next century. In short, Tyndale has a privileged place within the rhizome of early modern English religion, theology, and literature.

Forgiveness was a central topic in Tyndale's work, as it was in much of the work produced during the Protestant Reformation. A nuanced understanding of Tyndale's view of forgiveness and central place of forgiveness within his cosmology helps to reveal his texts' order and process, to borrow some of Tyndale's vocabulary. Ultimately, one driving force of the Protestant Reformation was a disagreement about (1) the divinely ordained means by which God forgives human beings and (2) how human behavior (including forgiveness) is influenced by the discovery and establishment of God's means for forgiving human beings.[2] To be more specific, Roman Catholics held

that the Church of Rome was God's means for forgiving humanity, and reformers held that the Church of Rome was an antichristian establishment that distracted people from the true spiritual, literary means of God's forgiveness—and these opposing views entailed different ideas about the structures of authority that governed human interactions, again, including forgiveness. Moreover, each side of the Reformation used textual analysis to study the means of God's forgiveness; hence, forgiveness was inherently, at least in part, a textual phenomenon. I will show in this chapter that forgiveness and hermeneutics take the same form in Tyndale's work. I do not want to suggest that this formal similarity shows that forgiveness is somehow a derivative of hermeneutics; rather, I will argue that forgiveness and hermeneutics are two individual battlegrounds that were a part of a much broader argument.

My analysis of Tyndale's views of forgiveness will proceed in four stages. Each will function according to one thesis: that when Tyndale speaks of literal reading, he is working based on the assumption that the cosmos moves toward God (through faith in Christ) as a telos and that this movement begins with death according to the law and ends with life in the gospel, the good news of forgiveness through Christ's atoning sacrifice. The movement toward God, as evinced by his forgiveness of humankind, is thus the defining structural feature of the universe. To read literally, then, is to read according to this teleological cosmology, which, for Tyndale, is the true, literal, and spiritual nature of the universe, and any reading of text, matter, or history must function within these boundaries to be legitimate. Furthermore, the character of the hermeneut is of paramount importance. In order to show that a reading of scripture works in

accordance with this teleological cosmology, hermeneuts must show that they are reading towards love for God and others and not towards a love of themselves—thus, for example, the reformist commonplace that Roman hermeneutics are self-serving.

In the first part, I give a reading of Tyndale's hermeneutic in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*. In the second, I show how Tyndale's hermeneutic has the same structure as his critique of the Roman sacrament of penance, also in *The Obedience*. Tyndale's critique of Roman hermeneutics and his critique of penance both center on his accusations of Roman financial and political abuses that were enabled by their control of the scripture and their "proper commodity of confession," as one marginal gloss puts it (94). In the third, I explore how Tyndale began to formulate a praxis of forgiveness-as-reading in *The Obedience* and his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. In the fourth, I turn to the prefatory material of Tyndale's translations to explore some of the practical obstacles that Tyndale's theory of reading encountered when it was put into practice. This fourth part is related to forgiveness because, as parts one, two, and three show, Tyndale's theory of forgiveness shares many formal qualities with his theory of reading; therefore, the obstacles encountered by Tyndale's theory of reading set the stage for some of the obstacles encountered by those who practiced (or attempted to practice) a theory of forgiveness similar to Tyndale's later in the 16th century.

Others have glossed Tyndale's theory of literal reading too quickly—perhaps surprisingly so and perhaps predictably so, considering the politically and religiously charged nature of literal Bible reading in our own century. However, Tyndale's use of the term "literal" is not at all transparent, and careful scrutiny is required to excavate its

meaning, no doubt in part because Tyndale did not define it especially clearly or succinctly. Tyndale's definition of the term has inspired a range of responses, with some assuming that the definition is relatively straightforward and others dismissing it (occasionally with unveiled hostility) as untenable. For example, Brian Cummings and David Daniell simply state that Tyndale's literal sense is spiritual.[3] David Weil Baker treats the term "literal" as if it were more or less self-explanatory, saying, "To believe . . . in a Bible story literally does presuppose seeing it as factual," which sets up a misleading dichotomy between literal and allegorical reading, two approaches that often live together happily (676). Refreshingly, however, Baker does take this analysis a step further; he argues that Tyndale's literal reading applies to more texts than just scripture and that it entails a "feeling faith," which requires a spiritual, affective experience to the text, beyond simply knowing the history recorded there.[4] James Kearney also gives a compelling reading of Tyndale's literal sense, although one that does not quite escape the gravity of perceived importance of text. He writes that, in Tyndale's work, the letter and the spirit "are part of a single movement, a movement from divinely authored text to divinely authorized reader" (78). Other commentators have found Tyndale's "literal" interpretation less than satisfying for a number of reasons: that Tyndale's literal reading appears to be allegorical reading in disguise, that Tyndale allegorizes in his own interest (the very thing he accuses the Roman Church of doing), that Tyndale's literal sense is more about politics than hermeneutics and gives rise to repressive fundamentalism, or that "Tyndale's notion of the literal sense by no means amounts to a coherent theory of interpretation; more often than not it is merely a

stick to beat a reading he dislikes" (Greenblatt 100).[5] While these readings usefully point out some of the difficulties that Tyndale's theory of literalism must necessarily address, these readings are too focused on the signification of individual words or text generally—so focused, in fact, that they entirely miss the broader picture Tyndale is painting. This broader picture is that the universe and history have a relatively simple order and structure (all things return to God), that this order and structure is revealed directly and literally in scripture, and that the institution of the Church of Rome moves contrary to that structure for its own gain.[6] In order to correct these abuses, Tyndale argues that Christians must read the scriptures and form communities in such a way that forgiveness is the defining feature of the body of Christ. I argue that reading Tyndale's hermeneutic next to his theory of forgiveness reveals his teleological cosmology, giving us this broader view that also, coincidentally, reveals that text is not as central to Tyndale's thought as it might appear at first glance.

The Literal-Spiritual Sense of Scripture: Tyndale's Hermeneutics

Tyndale presents his argument for literal biblical interpretation in a section of *The Obedience of a Christian Man* entitled "The four senses of the scripture." Tyndale begins this section by naming the four senses of scripture (the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical), by lamenting that "the literal sense is becoming nothing at all," and by claiming that "the scripture hath but one sense which is the literal sense" (156). However, immediately after he makes this claim, he concedes that the scriptures use allegory and figurative language. For example, he says that the clause "Christ is a

lamb" does not refer to "a lamb that beareth wool," and the clause "Christ is a vine" does not refer to a plant that "beareth grapes"; rather, Tyndale says that these expressions "are allegories borrowed of worldly matter to express spiritual things" (157). The first refers to Christ as a paschal lamb who takes the faults of others, and the second refers to Christ as the source of life that Christians (the branches) draw on. These significations, Tyndale would have us believe, are the literal sense of the allegories; to be more specific, just as "look ere thou leap" literally means "do nothing suddenly or without advisement," so "Christ is a lamb" literally means that Christ is a sacrifice that atones for others (156, 157). Thus, Tyndale says, "The scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles or allegories as all other speeches do, but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense which thou must seek out diligently" (156). In short, whatever meaning is behind the allegory is, according to Tyndale, the literal meaning of the allegory, even if that meaning is achieved through allegorical interpretation and not through literal interpretation.

Tyndale's dismissal of the fourfold interpretation of scripture makes it seem like he has a methodological problem with the biblical hermeneutics of the late-medieval Church of Rome, but this brief survey of the first few paragraphs of "The four senses of scripture" shows that he has no problem with using allegorical interpretation, aside from the fact that he finds the tropological and anagogical senses superfluous. Moreover, it would seem that he wants to use whatever hermeneutical lens seems most appropriate (whether it be literal or allegorical) and call the outcome the "literal" meaning—thus the confusion with respect to the definition of what Tyndale means by "literal." However, I

argue that Tyndale does in fact have a method to his literal interpretation, but that this method is confused by the fact that he is redefining the word "literal" and using it as a technical term with a very precise meaning: he is arguing that the scriptures tell a spiritual story and therefore that the literal or historical meaning of the scriptures relates to that spiritual narrative. The story or event that scripture relates is literally spiritual and spiritually literal. Tyndale accomplishes this redefinition of the term "literal" by repurposing hermeneutical concepts from Augustine and Aquinas, which we will have occasion to examine. For reasons that will be clear at the end of this discussion, I will use the term "literal-spiritual" to refer to Tyndale's technical use of the term "literal." While Tyndale's literalism is no doubt founded in allegory and concerned with power and politics, that does not mean that he somehow missed the mark. Instead, Tyndale's literalism actually seems pretty reasonable when read next to Augustine and Aquinas. Interpretation for these thinkers is never limited to words on a page; instead they recognize that it is set within a broader cosmos and that it is especially interested in human behavior.

It seems likely that part of the reason that Tyndale's hermeneutics have been the object of critical derision is due to Tyndale's organization, in particular his choice to begin his discussion of hermeneutics with individual words and phrases. Naturally, the signification of individual words and phrases is particularly interesting to literary critics in a milieu characterized by deconstruction—and Tyndale's treatment of the subject would seem to nestle nicely into a deconstructionist literary analysis, considering the

fluidity and seeming arbitrariness that Tyndale ascribes to the meaning of the words and phrases of scripture.

However, Tyndale's treatment of the signification of individual words and phrases should not be treated as primary, the fact that he discusses it first notwithstanding. If we focus too much on individual words and phrases, it is easy to lose sight of how thoroughly Augustinian Tyndale's hermeneutic is in at least three respects. First, the signification of words and phrases, as Tyndale describes it, relies heavily on their immediate context and, second, their context within all of sacred scripture more generally. Third, the signification of words and phrases is teleological; just as Augustine says that proper biblical interpretation must always culminate in increased *caritatem* for God and for neighbors, so Tyndale says that correct biblical interpretation must always culminate in faith and Christ (notice the change of terms, however). These constrictions are what provide the structure for signification within Tyndale's system, and they are what he hopes will curtail the uncontrollable proliferation of meaning at the hands of Roman allegory.

Tyndale begins introducing Augustinian hermeneutical principles immediately after he makes the argument that the meaning of allegories and figurative language is the "literal" meaning. He writes, "When we have found out the literal sense of the scripture by the process of the text or by a like text of another place, then go we, and as the scripture borroweth similitudes of worldly things even so we again borrow similitudes or allegories of the scriptures and apply them to our purposes, which allegories are no sense of the scripture: but free things besides the scripture altogether in the liberty of the

Spirit" (158). The opening relative clause introduces two Augustinian principles: "the process of the text" refers to the movement, progress, and immediate context of an individual text, and "by a like text of another place" refers to using different texts of scripture to interpret one another.[7]

It is important to note that Tyndale does not give the exposition or interpretation the same status as scripture itself, as illustrated by the relative clause "which allegories are no sense of the scripture: but free things besides the scripture altogether in the liberty of the Spirit." Tyndale goes on to explain that the purpose of allegory in scripture is to provide "an example or a similitude of the scripture to declare a text or a conclusion of the scripture more expressly, and to root it and grave it in the heart" (158-159). In other words, an allegory cannot have a one-of-a-kind meaning but must express an idea that is also stated elsewhere, and the purpose of the allegory is didactic. Tyndale suggests that the didactic quality of allegory speaks to a person's passions: "For a similitude or an example doth print a thing much deeper in the wits of a man than doth a plain speaking, and leaveth behind him as it were a sting to prick him forward and to awake him with all" (159). As Philip Sidney will argue a little more than a half-century later in his *Defense of Poesy*, Tyndale makes the case that a literary illustration of a concept moves readers through their passions to change their behavior. Tyndale adds the stipulation that the reader of the allegory must be able to "prove with an open text that which the allegory doth express," which is to say that the reader is to show how the allegory simply represents an idea that is stated explicitly elsewhere (159). Tyndale's final word of warning is that "allegories prove nothing, therefore are they to be used soberly and

seldom and only where the text offereth thee an allegory" (159). To summarize, Tyndale's discussion of allegorical interpretation that we have seen so far reveals the first two principles of his literal-spiritual hermeneutic: first, it must agree with "the process of the text," or the passage's immediate surroundings; and second, it must illustrate a principle that is stated explicitly somewhere else within scripture. Finally, his discussion reveals that the unique purpose of allegory is to make a concept more affectively immediate to readers.

Tyndale gives an illustration of how allegorical interpretation may be properly employed to reach the literal sense of the text: "thou hast the story of Peter how he smote off Malchus's ear and how Christ healed it again" (158).[8] Tyndale says that Peter and his sword represent the law and its purpose of revealing sin and thereby wounding the conscience, and he says that Christ represents the gospel, which is "life, mercy and forgiveness freely, and all together an healing plaster" (158). Tyndale points out that this allegory illustrates Pauline theology as expressed in Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.

This illustration is significant because the literal-spiritual meaning of this allegory, death at the hands of the law and life through Christ, serves as the telos of Tyndale's biblical hermeneutics and the third foundational principle of Tyndale's literal-spiritual hermeneutic. He writes, "All the scripture is either the promises and testament of God in Christ and stories pertaining hereunto, to strengthen thy faith: either the law and stories pertaining thereto to fear them from evil doing. There is no story nor gest, seem it never so simple or so vile unto the world, but that thou shalt find therein spirit

and life and edifying in the literal sense" (162). The law and gospel is the whole literal-spiritual sense for Tyndale, and any interpretation of any individual passage must reflect either the law or the gospel. He is even more explicit a little later on: "The scriptures spring out of God and flow unto Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ. Thou must therefore go along by the scripture as by a line, until thou come at Christ, which is the way's end and resting place" (169-170). He repeats the same idea again: "And remember that Christ is the end of all thing. He only is our resting place and he is our peace (Ephesians second chapter)" (179). Clearly, Tyndale is of the opinion that there is a telos of scripture, and that the way to that telos moves through death at the hands of the law and arrives at life through faith in Christ.[9] This is the literal-spiritual narrative of scripture—everything else in scripture, all physical events, only have their meaning in relation to this literal-spiritual narrative. Methodologically, this teleological reading of the scriptures has clear precedent in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. Augustine, of course, argues that *caritas* for God first and for neighbors second is the telos of the scriptures.[10] Tyndale uses the same logic, but, like a good Lutheran and proponent of *sola fide*, he prioritizes faith over love.

Tyndale's literal-spiritual sense turns out to have much in common with the literal sense as Aquinas describes it. Here is the passage from *Summa Theologica* in which Aquinas presents his version of the fourfold sense of scripture:

> I answer that, The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has

> the property, that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division. For as the Apostle says (Heb. 10:1) the Old Law is a figure of the New Law, and Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. i) "the New Law itself is a figure of future glory." Again, in the New Law, whatever our Head has done is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense. Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Writ is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says (Confess. xii), if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Writ should have several senses. (Aquinas I.1.10)[11]

In this passage, Aquinas creates a chain of signifiers: a word of scripture signifies a thing or event (*res*, *rei*), and that thing or event signifies whatever spiritual meaning God invests in it. Aquinas sets up God as both the author of scripture and the author of the cosmos, and he indicates that the interpretation of the cosmos leads to the spiritual sense. However, it is important to note that Aquinas says the spiritual sense of scripture "*super*

litteralem fundatur"—"is based on the literal" or "is founded on the literal." Moreover, he contends that God is the author of the scriptures and that he "comprehends all things by His intellect"; therefore, each individual word may have more than one sense, since it has been written by a being that senses all things at once and, one would guess, by virtue of being connected to a thing or event that may be interpreted in more than one way.

Keeping this passage in mind, Tyndale is being a faithful practitioner of scholasticism when he says, "And that literal sense is the *root and ground of all*, and the anchor that never faileth whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err or go out of the way" (156, my emphasis). Tyndale, like Aquinas, makes the literal sense the foundation of biblical hermeneutics; not only is he a good Augustinian, he is also a good Thomist, as he paraphrases Aquinas to his Roman opponents.

Where Tyndale differs from Aquinas, however, is in attributing spiritual meaning to words. While Aquinas says that there is an intervening *res* between the words and the spiritual meaning, Tyndale says that the words themselves point directly to the spiritual meaning, and he reinterprets 2 Corinthians 3 with this principle in mind. He writes:

> Paul by the letter meaneth Moses' law. . . . For the letter (that is to say the law) killeth: but the spirit giveth life (that is to say the spirit of God which entereth your hearts when ye believe the glad tidings that are preached you in Christ). . . . Thus seest thou that the letter signifieth not the literal sense and the spirit the spiritual sense. . . . God is a spirit and all his words are spiritual. His literal sense is spiritual and all his words are spiritual. (160, 161, 162)

Tyndale is making the case that the referent of the words of scripture is spiritual, not physical. They do not first point to a thing and then to spiritual meaning; rather, the spiritual meaning that they point to is the thing. He suggests that the spiritual meaning amounts to a spiritual history and that death through the law and life through the gospel are its plot points. Therefore, while the word "literal" is ordinarily taken to refer to a physical or historical thing, Tyndale deploys it here to refer to a spiritual thing, hence my term literal-spiritual.

Along with Aquinas, however, Tyndale maintains that Christians must move beyond the ordinary things (*res*) signified by scripture to this literal-spiritual understanding of scripture. As Baker points out, Tyndale says on a number of occasions that even devils believe that events recounted in scripture actually took place, and much good it does them.[12] For example, in his *Answer to More*, Tyndale says that "the devil's faith" and "the pope's faith" consist of the belief "that there is a God, and that Christ is, and all the story of the bible" (197). Yet neither the devil nor the pope, Tyndale maintains, have access to the literal-spiritual referent of scripture, even though this referent is immediately apparent to Christians in the words of scripture themselves, not the *res* signified by the words.

So while Tyndale's literalist hermeneutics may appear at first glance to be radical, they aren't innovative at all—or even particularly new. Like Augustine, Tyndale says that scripture must be interpreted contextually (both based on a passage's local context and its global context as a part of scripture) and teleologically. Like Aquinas, Tyndale makes the literal sense the ground of all interpretation. Tyndale only introduces

a few moderate revisions—although he leaves Augustine's contextual hermeneutics untouched. The telos of Tyndale's hermeneutics is God through faith in Christ, whereas the telos of Augustine's hermeneutics is *caritas* for God and for neighbors. Moreover, he takes out a step from Aquinas' hermeneutics: Aquinas says that words signify things and that the things signify spiritual meaning, but Tyndale says that words themselves signify spiritual meaning. Tyndale's revision of Aquinas might even be said to be an Augustinian revision, since Tyndale places much more emphasis on the telos. In short, Tyndale is not at all trying to revolutionize biblical hermeneutics; he simply repackages Augustinian and Thomistic hermeneutics.

* * *

Reading Tyndale's hermeneutic within this context reveals that it is not even especially concerned with the signification of words. His hermeneutic is actually concerned with wealth, power, and international politics. Recall that Tyndale says at the beginning of "The four senses of scripture" that "the literal sense is becoming nothing at all"; he also tells us *how* the literal sense is becoming nothing at all: "For the Pope hath taken it clean away and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies and feigned lies. And partly driveth men from it with violence of sword" (156). Tyndale's real problem with Roman hermeneutics is that they have supported and, in part, led to immense wealth, power, and influence for the papacy.

Ultimately, Tyndale's test for determining the validity of a hermeneutic is how that hermeneutic is deployed politically and, what is also an Augustinian principle, the

character of the hermeneut[13]; he is far less concerned with methods for interpreting individual words and phrases—he seems perfectly content to repeat what Augustine and Aquinas have already said. In other words, Tyndale expects a legitimate hermeneutic to materially and measurably bring creation closer to God, its telos. For that reason, it would be a tremendous injustice to Tyndale's text to think about his hermeneutics as existing solely between a reader, the page, and the Holy Spirit. His hermeneutics exist in the world between and among people, and they are concerned with justice and especially economic justice.

Indeed, Tyndale's primary methodological complaint about Roman hermeneutics is that it culminates with the papacy's wealth and power instead of with life in God through faith in Christ. After saying that his reader must "go along by the scripture as by a line, until thou come at Christ" (the correct telos of Tyndale's hermeneutic), he explains why he finds Roman interpretation objectionable:

> If any man therefore use the scripture to draw thee from Christ and to nosel thee in anything save in Christ, the same is a false prophet. And that thou mayest perceive what Peter meaneth [in 2 Peter 1], it followeth in the text. There were false prophets among the people (whose prophecies were belly wisdom) as there shall be false teachers among you: which shall privily bring in damnable sects (as thou seest how we are divided into monstros sects or orders of religion) even denying the Lord that hath brought them. (For every one of them taketh on him to sell thee for money that which God in Christ promiseth freely) and many shall follow their damnable ways, by whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (as

> thou seest how the way of truth is become heresy, seditious or cause of insurrection and breaking of the King's peace and treason unto His Highness). And through covetousness with feigned words shall they make merchandise of you. Covetousness is the conclusion: for covetousness and ambition that is to say, lucre and desire of honour is the final end of all false prophets and of all false teachers. Look upon the Pope's false doctrine, what is the end thereof and what seek they thereby? (170)

Tyndale accuses the Church of Rome of reading towards the wrong telos and therefore committing idolatry. Furthermore, he argues that the Church of Rome, like all false prophets, is misleading others by misreading scripture for their own financial gain. He says that proponents of the Church of Rome "sell thee for money that which God in Christ promiseth freely" and that "through covetousness with feigned words shall they make merchandise of you." In short, Tyndale accuses the Roman Church of inserting itself between parishioners and the promises of God for the purpose of profiting off of the parishioners' spiritual effort, which Tyndale takes for granted should be directed towards God, not Roman coffers.

This teleological misdirection is really the foundation of all of the other problems arising from Roman hermeneutics, according to Tyndale's reading of the situation. He suggests that disconnecting the text from its telos allows for meaning to proliferate and, through this proliferation, the Church was able to construct all of the other devices by which it maintains its wealth and power. According to Tyndale, the textual mechanism that the Church uses to create this self-serving proliferation of meaning is allegory:

> The greatest cause of which captivity and the decay of the faith and this blindness wherein we now are, sprang first of allegories. For Origen and those of his time drew all the scripture unto allegories. Whose example they that came after followed so long, till at the last they forgot the order and process of the text, supposing that the scripture served but to feign allegories upon. Insomuch that twenty doctors expound one text twenty ways, as children make descant upon plain song. Then came our sophisters with their anagogical and chopological [Tyndale's dismissive name for tropological] sense and with an antetheme of half an inch, out of which some of them draw a thread of nine days long. Yea thou shalt find enough that will preach Christ, and prove whatsoever point of the faith that thou wilt, as well out of a fable of Ovid or any other poet, as out of Saint John's gospel or Paul's epistles. (160)

In this passage, Tyndale accuses the Church of forgetting "the order and process of the text" because of their penchant for allegory. Again, Tyndale has already told us his view of the order and process of the text and what telos it tends towards (God through faith in Christ); in this passage, therefore, he is again accusing the Church of reading towards the wrong telos—and of forgetting their Augustine. Moreover, recall that Tyndale has already described how to perform allegorical interpretation correctly: a narrative, literary, or figurative text may be shown to illustrate a concept that is stated explicitly elsewhere, but this allegorical interpretation is not to be elevated to the same level as scripture. We may reasonably infer, then, that Tyndale suspects that Roman allegory was not used to show how some texts illustrate concepts that are stated explicitly elsewhere,

was therefore not directed towards the correct telos, and was attributed with too much prestige and authority. This specific misuse of allegory was co-opted by the Roman Church and directed to its own telos, that of wealth and power.

To review, Tyndale's literal-spiritual interpretation of scripture has much in common with Augustinian hermeneutics and Thomistic hermeneutics. Like Augustine, Tyndale argues that a text must be interpreted within its immediate context, the global context of scripture, and the telos of scripture. Like Aquinas, Tyndale prioritizes the literal sense of scripture as foundational. However, unlike Aquinas, Tyndale says that the words of scripture are spiritual and therefore have spiritual meaning; the words do not need to point first to an intervening thing or event. More than that, for Tyndale, scripture recounts a literal-spiritual history consisting of death through the law and life through faith in Christ—and, significantly, it is through this history that readers are to arrive at the correct telos of the scriptures. Tyndale's literal-spiritual interpretation does not dismiss allegorical interpretation. Any interpretation that considers the text's contexts and the telos and process of the scriptures (as outlined by Tyndale) can be said to be a literal interpretation, according to Tyndale's definition of the term. The reason that these interpretations can be called literal, Tyndale implies, is that the scriptures tell a spiritual narrative; for that reason, any individual passage of scripture must correspond to some portion of that narrative, the scriptures' true, primary, or literal narrative.

Tyndale's problem with Roman hermeneutics and hermeneuts is that they have the wrong telos and demonstrate a selfish, unchristian, and uncharitable character. He argues that their hermeneutics culminate with the papacy's accumulation of wealth and

power, not with God, Christ, and faith. He does not, surprisingly, have much to complain about with respect to the specific processes by which Roman hermeneuts extract meaning from words. In fact, Tyndale is perfectly content to preserve allegorical interpretation, so long as the interpretation abides by his Augustinian and Thomistic principles. In short, the argument that is being played out here, as Tyndale sees it, is about how wealth, power, and control can take advantage of faith. The argument is not all that much about words; rather, it is about how much good an interpretation produces in the world.

Tyndale and the Economy of Penance

Tyndale's critique of Roman hermeneutics is inseparable from his critique of the Roman doctrines of Purgatory, clerical celibacy, and, most importantly for our purposes, confession. When Tyndale begins a paragraph in "The four senses of scripture" with a discussion of biblical hermeneutics, he consistently ends the paragraph with a discussion of either confession or forgiveness (because, after all, the main thing at issue within this whole debate is the legitimate path to the forgiveness of sins). Take, for example, this passage that we have already analyzed in part:

> God is a spirit and all his words are spiritual. When thou readest (Matthew 1) she shall bear a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus: For he shall save his people from their sins. This literal sense is spiritual and everlasting life unto as many as believe it. And the literal sense of these words (Matthew 5) blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy, are spiritual and life. Whereby they that are

> merciful may of right by the truth and promise of God challenge mercy. And like it is of these words (Matthew 6), If you forgive other men their sins your heavenly father shall forgive you yours. And so is it of all the promises of God. Finally all God's words are spiritual, if thou have eyes of God to see the right meaning of the text and whereunto the scripture pertaineth and the final end and cause thereof. (162)

Tyndale suggests that the literal-spiritual sense of scripture will lead its readers to Jesus and that these readers will be merciful and forgive others. To reiterate, mercy and forgiveness are the practical, performed outcomes of literal reading. However, his final conditional clause "if thou have the eyes of God to see the right meaning" suggests that there are some who do not see the literal-spiritual sense, and we may safely infer that Tyndale is referring to the Church of Rome.

Tyndale is more explicit in his critique of the Church of Rome when he argues that Roman hermeneutics lead not to forgiveness but to confession:

> The scripture is that wherewith God draweth us unto him and not wherewith we should be led from him. The scriptures spring out of God and flow unto Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ. Thou must therefore go along by the scripture as by a line, until thou come at Christ, which is the way's end and resting place. . . . Look upon the Pope's false doctrine, what is the end thereof and what seek they thereby? Wherefore serveth Purgatory but to purge thy purse and to poll thee and rob thee and thy heirs of house and lands and of all thou hast, that they may be in honour. Serveth not pardons for the same purpose? Whereto

> pertaineth praying to saints but to offer unto their bellies? Wherefore serveth confession, but to sit in thy conscience and to make thee fear and tremble at whatsoever they dream and that thou worship them as Gods: and so forth in all their traditions, ceremonies, and conjurations they serve not the Lord: but their bellies. And of their false expounding the scripture and drawing it contrary unto the example of Christ and the Apostles and holy Prophets unto their damnable covetousness and filthy ambition take an example. (169-170)

This paragraph begins with the telos of Tyndale's hermeneutics and then uses Roman traditions (including Purgatory, pardons, prayers to saints, and confession) to argue that Roman hermeneutics are directed towards the "bellies" of the proponents of the papacy. These issues are of a piece in Tyndale's text: the way that meaning is extracted from text is inseparable from the way that forgiveness is practiced in the world.

Tyndale moves from biblical interpretation to the practice of forgiveness on yet another occasion:

> Forasmuch now as thou partly seest the falsehood of our prelates, how all their study is to deceive us and to keep us in darkness, to sit as gods in our conscience and handle us at their pleasure and to lead us whither they lust: therefore, I rede thee, get thee to God's word and thereby try all doctrine and against that receive nothing. Neither any exposition contrary unto the open texts, neither contrary to the general articles of the faith, neither contrary to the living and practicing of Christ and of his Apostles. And when they cry fathers fathers, remember that it were the fathers that both blinded and robbed the whole world and brought us

> into this captivity wherein these enforce to keep us still. . . . And as for the holy doctors as Augustine, Jerome, Cyprian, Chrisostom and Bede, will they not hear. If they wrote anything negligently (as they were men) that draw they clean contrary to their meaning and thereof triumph they. Those doctors knew of none authority that one bishop should have above another, neither thought or once dreamed that ever any such should be, or of any such whispering [Tyndale's dismissive name for auricular confession] or of pardons, or scouring of Purgatory, as they have feigned. (175-176)[14]

Again, Tyndale suggests that Roman ceremonies are the product of misdirected biblical hermeneutics for the purpose of the "triumph" of the Church of Rome and the "captivity" of christendom. This misinterpretation, moreover, has the consequence of allowing the Church to possess the "conscience" of individual Christians. Tyndale consistently maintains that the conscience has the ability to feel the promises of God; therefore, to possess the conscience is to possess the ability of someone else to interpret their own forgiveness. To reiterate, Tyndale's text presents the interpretation of text and the hermeneutical practice of forgiveness as inseparable.

More than inseparable, in fact, Tyndale's *Obedience* treats hermeneutics and forgiveness as having the same form. In what he holds are their corrupt Roman forms, he says that the Church has illegitimately inserted themselves between parishioners and spirit. In the case of hermeneutics, Tyndale accuses the Church of inserting itself into reading practice, putting obstacles between readers and God's spiritual meaning (like the *res* of Aquinas), which Tyndale maintains is immediately present in the words

themselves. In the case of forgiveness, Tyndale accuses the Church of placing itself between confessants and God's forgiveness, which Tyndale says God gives freely but which the Church has managed to turn into profit. In both cases, then, Tyndale sees an institutional barrier where meaning and forgiveness should be immediately accessible.

Of particular importance for the forgiveness of sins and institutional authority is the power of the keys, which Tyndale addresses at some length. His central claim is that the Pope does not have the power "to send whom he will to hell, and to damn whom he lusteth" (173). Tyndale has a much more interpersonal interpretation of the power to bind and loose. Tyndale argues that Matthew 18 does not give the disciples the authority to damn and redeem indiscriminately (as he suggests the Pope presumes to do); Tyndale says that, instead, the text gives the disciples to bind by "rebuk[ing] men of their sins by preaching the law" and to loose by "forgiving of sin to them that repent through preaching of the promises which God hath made in Christ in whom only we have all forgiveness of sins," to which Tyndale also adds the stipulation that "A man must first sin against God's law ere the Pope can bind him" (173). In other words, Tyndale is arguing here that the Church of Rome can do no more than communicate the spiritual narrative of scripture to its congregants, which consists of law and gospel. Moreover, Tyndale argues that the Church's misinterpretation is the product of irresponsible biblical hermeneutics. He says that "of this text maketh the Pope what he will, and expoundeth it contrary to all the scripture" (172). After reiterating the Augustinian principle that "the scripture giveth record to himself and ever expoundeth itself by another open text," Tyndale says that the Pope's "exposition [is] false doctrine" if he

cannot produce an “open text” to validate it—and, of course, Tyndale produces plenty of “open texts” to support his reading and to undermine the reading of the Roman Church (172).[15]

This one moment of misinterpretation, Tyndale would have us believe, spawns many more moments of misinterpretation; however, instead of being nothing more than biblical, textual misinterpretations, they are moments when individual Christians fail to interpret their own relationships with the divine. Just as Tyndale argues that Roman hermeneutics disassociate the text from its proper telos, so he suggests that confession disassociates the interpretative mechanic of forgiveness from its proper telos. As we have already seen, Tyndale says that “Christ is the end of all thing”; to this teleological statement, Tyndale adds that “he [Christ] only is our resting place and he is our peace. . . . Thou shalt never have rest in thy soul neither shall the worm of conscience ever cease to gnaw thine heart till thou come at Christ: till thou hear the glad tidings, how that God for his sake hath forgiven thee all freely” (179). Of course, Tyndale repeatedly accuses the Roman Church of depriving parishioners of the correct telos and inserting itself between parishioners and the promises of God, and the same is true here. “If thou trust in confession, then shalt thou think. Have I told all? Have I told all the circumstances? Did I repent enough? Had I as great sorrow in my repentance for my sins as I had pleasure in doing them? Likewise in our holy pardons and pilgrimage, gets thou no rest.” (179).[16] In this passage, Tyndale argues that confession breeds uncertainty and takes peace of mind from confessants—and he has evidence to suggest that those who actually practice confession do not find peace in it either: “For thou seest that the very

gods themselves which sell their pardon so good cheap, or some whiles give them freely for glory sake, trust not therein themselves. They build colleges and make perpetuities to be prayed for forever and lade the lips of their beadsmen or chaplains with so many masses and diriges and so long service, that I have known of some that have bid the devil take their founders' souls for very impatience and weariness of so painful labour" (179-180). If confession and pardons are so effective, Tyndale asks, what's with all the private masses?

The uncertainty that Tyndale suggests is created by confession has a clear counterpart in the uncertainty created by illegitimate biblical hermeneutics. For example, Tyndale describes the dangers of reading for "man's wisdom" (as he says Roman exegetes do) instead of for faith:

> For reasons and similitudes of man's wisdom make no faith, but wavering and uncertainty [*sic*] opinions only: one draweth in this way with his argument another that, and of what principle thou provest black another proveth white, and so am I ever uncertain, as if thou tell me of a thing done in a far land and another tell me the contrary, I wot not what to believe. But faith is wrought by the power of God, that is, when God's word is preached, the Spirit entereth thine heart and maketh thy soul feel it and maketh thee so sure of it, that neither adversity nor persecution, nor death, neither hell, nor the powers of hell, neither all the pains of hell could once prevail against thee or move thee from the sure rock of God's word, that thou shouldest not believe that which God hath sworn. (165)

Considering the cosmological implications of the word "faith" here, Tyndale suggests that these illegitimate interpretations misread not just the text but the whole universe. They make the whole world and all of life uncertain.

The solution to the uncertainty produced by confession and illegitimate biblical hermeneutics, in Tyndale's thinking, is the immediacy of spiritual referents. To illustrate the significance of the immediacy of faith, consider how Tyndale revisits the analogy of the person who has heard two conflicting accounts of what has happened "in a far land" in his *Answer to More*. In this later text, Tyndale draws a distinction between historical faith and feeling faith. Historical faith, Tyndale tells us, "hangeth of the truth and honesty of the teller, or of the common fame and consent of many" (50). By analogy, Tyndale says he would believe an honest person who told him that "the Turk had won a city," but if another person who seems more honest tells him something contradictory, he would "think immediately that he [the first person] lied, and lose my faith again" (51). By contrast, feeling faith draws on direct, personal experience: "And a feeling faith is as if a man were there present when it was won, and there were wounded, and had there lost all that he had, and were taken prisoner there also: that man should so believe, that all the world could not turn him from his faith" (51). With historical faith, there must be an intermediary, someone to relate the story; with feeling faith, the knowledge is direct, unmediated.[17]

Returning to *The Obedience*, we can see that Tyndale is making essentially the same argument: neither Roman confession nor Roman hermeneutics give parishioners direct, unmediated access to spiritual referents because they do not function within the

correct cosmology and they do not culminate with the correct telos. For Tyndale, the reason that Roman confession and Roman hermeneutics do not signify correctly is that Roman prelates put an intervening thing or event between the signifier and the referent. Between the words of scripture and the promises of God they insert their own wisdom, and between a contrite sinner and God's forgiveness they put the ritual of confession. If they did not obstruct an ordinary person's access to these literal-spiritual referents, Tyndale suggests, they would immediately understand the order of the universe because, as we have seen, Tyndale says "faith is wrought by the power of God, that is, when God's word is preached, the Spirit entereth thine heart and maketh thy soul feel it and maketh thee . . . sure of it"—and God, Christ, and faith are the correct telos and orienting points of the cosmos (165). In short, Tyndale argues that the Roman Church corrupted all interpretation (whether it be biblical hermeneutics or forgiveness) by inserting themselves where they do not belong. If they hadn't, the order and destination of the cosmos would be immediately, experientially present to everyone. This situation is, in other words, far more than a matter of words on a page.

Naturally, money and political power are the factors that make this situation concerned with more than words. Being the mediator between people and forgiveness turns out to be a pretty profitable position, as Tyndale argues in a series of sections entitled "Of penance," "Of confession," "Of contrition," "Satisfaction," and "Absolution." He contends that confession is illegitimate because all words from which "penance" is derived are best understood to mean "repentance" and because Roman confession did not exist in the early church.[18] However, as with hermeneutics, Tyndale

says that the purpose of penance is to support the power of the Church of Rome: "Of repentance they have made penance, to blind the people. . ." (115). One group of people that Tyndale says the Church has blinded is "kings and tyrants," who, once they "came to themselves and had conscience of their wicked deeds," "the bishop coupled them, not to Christ: but unto the Pope and preached the Pope unto them, and made them submit themselves and also their realms unto the holy father the Pope and to take penance" (115). This penance, in Tyndale's view, entails a whole bunch of material, financial, and political support: "such injunctions as the Pope and bishops would command them to do, to build abbeys, to endote them with livelihood, to be prayed for forever: and to give them exemptions and privilege and licence to do what they lust unpunished" (115). This is one of Tyndale's more conspiratorial lines of reasoning with respect to penance (which he reiterates a number of times): the papacy has used it to essentially blackmail political rulers.

Another group of people that Tyndale says have been held captive by the Sacrament of Penance are ordinary people, and, again, he says that the ultimate goal of the Church of Rome is financial. One means that Tyndale says that the Church uses to take advantage of people is the distinction between contrition (sorrow that is motivated by the knowledge that sins offend God) and attrition (sorrow that is motivated by the knowledge of the penalty for sins)[19]:

> Contrition and repentance are both one and nothing else but a sorrowful and a mourning heart. And because that God hath promised mercy unto a contrite heart, that is, to a sorrowful and repentant heart, they to beguile God's word and

> to establish their wicked tradition, have feigned that new word attrition saying: thou canst not know whether thy sorrow or repentance be contrition or attrition, except thou be shriven. When thou art shriven, then it is true contrition. O foxy Pharisee, that is thy leaven, of which Christ so diligently had us beware (Matthew 6). And the very prophecy of Peter, through covetousness with feigned words *shall they make merchandise of you* (2 Peter 2). With such glosses corrupt they God's word, to sit in the consciences of the people, to lead them captive, and to make a prey of them: *buying and selling their sins, to satisfy their unsatiable covetousness*. (119-120, my emphasis)

Similarly, Tyndale argues that the Roman doctrine of forgiveness *a pena et a culpa* (of the penalty and of the guilt or shame) to supplement God's forgiveness of the offence, in Tyndale's formulation, is also an invention for the sake of the greed of the papacy: "But the Pope for money forgiveth both [*a pena et a culpa*], and hath more power than God and is more merciful than God. . . . How then came this foul monster to be lord over Christ's merits, so that he hath the power to sell that which God giveth freely? . . . And thus is sin the profitablest merchandise in the world" (125-26). In short, Tyndale's critique (which doesn't seem to be a strong enough word) of penance, like his critique of Roman hermeneutics, is based on a material, financial analysis, not a purely theological analysis. Indeed, it is the material, financial analysis that Tyndale uses to try the theological doctrine, not the other way around.

“Easy and Natural” Congregational Forgiveness

Tyndale’s revised version of forgiveness also has much in common with Augustinian hermeneutics. As Tyndale does with respect to hermeneutics, he advises congregants to read moral situations teleologically: just as they should always read the scriptures toward faith, Christ, and God, so they are to read offenders toward that same end. Furthermore, Tyndale also advises congregants to read moral situations within the same cosmos as they read the scriptures: they are to see themselves at the lowest level, their neighbors between themselves and God, and God at the top of the cosmos. Tyndale suggests that, to people with access to the scripture and good preaching, this cosmology will be immediately apparent. Because God has shown mercy and forgiveness to humanity and because nature culminates with God, the way for humanity to approach God is through the avenue of mercy and forgiveness—these are the defining features of the cosmos, as those who can read it aright can see. Tyndale intimates that people will unavoidably act in accord with this cosmological structure because of the miraculous, supernatural force of God’s grace; he seems to be under the impression that people will naturally treat each other forgivingly, provided that they have access to the scriptures and good preaching.

There are parallels between the teleological hermeneutics of forgiveness and textual hermeneutics because Tyndale (like Augustine, for that matter) doesn’t make a distinction between reading a page and reading the cosmos—the two are inseparable: when you do one, you’re necessarily doing the other. As far as practical matters are concerned, Tyndale is most immediately occupied with removing the financial,

transactional components of forgiveness. It should no longer be a matter of exchanging capital for forgiveness; instead, he proposes a sort of credit economy, where everyone acts in response to knowledge about another person's character rather than in response to the person's actions. As we will see, Tyndale says that all human beings deserve love. Because faith reveals to people that God has loved them when they did not deserve love, they invariably love other human beings even though these others often do not deserve love; love between human beings is thus connected to and follows God's love for humanity. Tyndale imagines two possible responses when one person offends another. On the one hand, the offender may be a member of the body of Christ, and she will demonstrate as much by submitting herself to the law and by forgiving others when she is offended. (A salient feature of the true church, according to Tyndale, is the reciprocal forgiveness between its members.) In this situation, the offender deserves forgiveness in affect and forgiveness from penalties, since she will do whatever she needs to do to make the situation right. On the other hand, the offender may not be a member of the body of Christ, and she will demonstrate as much by hating the law and avenging herself. This offender deserves forgiveness in affect; Tyndale does not allow anyone to hold a grudge. However, Tyndale holds that this person should be punished (lovingly) according to the letter of the law for her own edification and for the protection of victims. In either case, the offender must be loved in accordance with the teleological cosmology characterized by God's love for undeserving human beings.

In *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, Tyndale discusses both sides of forgiveness: receiving forgiveness and giving forgiveness. There is one fundamental

consistency with respect to forgiveness in all of its forms, namely, anyone who repents and asks for forgiveness always receives it from God through Christ and should receive it from all people as well, if they (the people in the position to forgive) want to receive forgiveness from God. The connection between a person's forgiveness for others with God's forgiveness for that person dictates all of human interaction. That doesn't mean that Tyndale dismisses penalties for offenders or reparations paid to victims, but it does mean that eternal forgiveness is freely granted to everyone who asks and that everyone who has been granted eternal forgiveness will necessarily freely forgive those who ask them for forgiveness. For that reason, receiving forgiveness and giving forgiveness are conceptually separable but inseparable in practice.

Tyndale is tasked with the challenge of rehabilitating the power of the keys, however. How can he attribute these powers of forgiveness to just anyone when it would appear that the church has the unique power to bind and to loose? He seems to hedge a bit on this point:

> The truth is, when any man hath trespassed against God: If he repent and knowledge his trespass, God promiseth forgiveness without ear shrift. If he that hath offended his neighbour repent and knowledge his fault asking forgiveness, if his neighbor forgive him, God forgiveth him also, by his holy promise (Matthew 18). Likewise if he that sinneth openly, when he is rebuked, repent and turn, then if the congregation forgive him God forgiveth him. And so forth: whosoever repenteth and when he is rebuked knowlegeth his fault is forgiven. (120)

This passage seems slightly contradictory. On the one hand, it says that God forgives anyone who asks for forgiveness without the sacrament of penance. On the other hand, it makes it sound like God's forgiveness for offenders is contingent upon the victim's forgiveness for the offenders or the congregation's forgiveness for offenders. It is worth noting that Tyndale connects God's forgiveness with the *congregation's* forgiveness for offenders rather than the *Church's* forgiveness for offenders. Of course, this is a not so subtle way of divesting authority from the Roman clergy and investing it in local congregations.

This passage with its democratic vision of forgiveness sits uneasily with Tyndale's other descriptions of forgiveness. For example, he says that if you have offended someone, you are obligated to "make him amends or satisfaction or at the least way if thou be not able, ask him forgiveness" (121). Tyndale indicates that it is the victim's duty to forgive you: "and if he will have mercy of God, he is bound to forgive thee"; furthermore, even if the victim does not forgive you, God will forgive you: "If he will not: yet God forgiveth thee, if thou thus submit thyself" (121). This passage does not give any human beings any agency at all in the process of forgiveness; a person can either forgive along with God or forgiveness can happen quite apart from the victim. To give another example, Tyndale says, "If any man have sinned, yet if he repent and believe the promise, we are sure by God's word that he is loosed and forgiven in Christ" (124). The use of the word "loose" is particularly noteworthy here, since Tyndale ascribes the power to loose to Christ and not to the Church—nor the congregation, for that matter. It would seem that this passage serves as another example that Christ

forgives without the participation of human agents. There are other occasions on which Tyndale states that Christ alone, not the Church, has the power to forgive: “Thou sayest I forgive thee thy sins, and the scripture saith (John the first) that Christ only forgiveth and taketh away the sins of the world. And Paul and Peter and all the Apostles preach that all is forgiven in Christ and for Christ’s sake. God’s word only looseth, and thou in preaching that mightest loose also and else not” (122). This passage accords with Tyndale’s reinterpretation of the power of the keys in his discussion of hermeneutics: the power to loose is no more than the power to preach the gospel, and the power to bind is no more than to preach the law. Tyndale’s ascription of the power to bind and loose to the congregation may simply be lip service given to those who are accustomed to the Church having the power to bind and loose; however, in practice, Tyndale does not give the congregation any such agency. The congregation only has the agency to preach the law and the gospel and to determine whether the person is sincere and therefore whether Christ has forgiven the person.

Although Tyndale does not in fact give the congregation the power to bind and loose, it is reasonable to read Tyndale’s half-hearted allusion to the Church’s power to bind and loose in light of Tyndale’s concern for giving readers a way to know whether or not they have been forgiven. In other words, we can read Tyndale’s statement that “if the congregation forgive him God forgiveth him” not as cause and effect but as a visible sign (the congregation’s forgiveness) and spiritual truth (God’s forgiveness), which would, much to Tyndale’s chagrin, turn penance back into a sacrament (120).[20] The

congregation's forgiveness thus becomes a way for offenders to know whether God has forgiven them.

Clearly, Tyndale's dismissal of confession left him with the task of giving his readers ways of knowing (in lieu of confession) the state of their souls. One sign that he presents as a way for people to know if God has forgiven them is whether they are capable of forgiving others. This way of knowing and experiencing forgiveness is teleological because all acts of forgiveness point back to Christ, faith, and God. One's awareness of forgiveness from God is always grounded in affect:

> If thou repent and believe the promises then God's truth justifieth thee, that is, forgiveth thee thy sins and sealeth thee with his Holy Spirit and maketh thee heir of everlasting life through Christ's deservings. Now if thou have true faith so seest thou the exceeding and infinite love and mercy which God hath showed thee freely in Christ: then must thou needs love again: and love cannot but compel thee to work and boldly to confess and knowledge thy Lord Christ and the trust which thou hast in his word. And this knowledge maketh thee safe, that is, declareth that thou art safe already and certified thine heart and maketh thee feel that thy faith is right and that God's spirit is in thee, as all other good works do. For if when it cometh unto the point, thou have no lust to work nor power to confess, how couldest thou presume to think that God's Spirit is in thee? (117)

This passage says that a person's knowledge of God's forgiveness is grounded in feeling and in the person's willingness to perform works of love. There are other passages that illustrate this same idea. Here is another example: "When a man feeleth that his heart

consenteth unto the law of God, and feeleth himself meek, patient, courteous and merciful to his neighbour, altered and fashioned like unto Christ, why should he doubt but that God hath forgiven him and chosen him and put his spirit in him, though he never cram his sin into the priest's ear?" (118). Again, the proof that someone has been forgiven is in their affective certainty and in their desire to act lovingly towards their neighbors. In other words, Tyndale suggests that being forgiven puts a person into a harmonious relationship with nature.

He does give some pragmatic, congregational advice about forgiveness, and this advice also serves to instruct congregations about how to discipline sinning congregants. Tyndale writes,

> Understand therefore, the power of excommunication is this. If any man sin openly and amendeth not where he is warned: then ought he to be rebuked openly before all the parish. And the priest ought to prove by the scripture, that all such have no part with Christ. For Christ serveth not but for them that love the law of God and consent that it is good holy and righteous. And repent sorrowing and mourning for power and strength to fulfil it. And all the parish ought to be warned, to avoid the company of all such, and to take them as heathen people. This is not done that he should perish, but to save him, to make him ashamed and to kill the lusts of the flesh, that the spirit might come unto the knowledge of the truth. And we ought to pity him and to have compassion on him and with all diligence to pray unto God for him, to give him grace to repent and to come to the right way again, and not to use such tyranny over God and man, commanding

God to curse. And if he repent we ought with all mercy to receive him in again.

This mayest thou see Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2. (127)

Notice that Tyndale gives the congregation the same advice about interpreting others that he gives for interpreting oneself: the way to be certain that someone is forgiven and a part of the communion of saints is if one "love the law of God and consent that it is good holy and righteous" and if one "repent sorrowing and mourning for power and strength to fill it." It is this humility and self-debasement that characterizes the members of the true church—which also accords with Tyndale's Augustinian hermeneutics. The cosmologies between the two realms are the same. Just as people must understand themselves to be below others and everyone to be below God as they interpret scripture, so must people understand themselves to be below others and everyone to be below God as they interpret themselves and others. If they naturally submit to this cosmology and if the people around them submit to this cosmology, then Tyndale says that they can be certain that they have been forgiven.

This passage also gives us important information about how Tyndale imagines his readers will be able to know the true church: it will be characterized by universal submission to the law and mutual forgiveness between its members. The true church, according to Tyndale's definition, can be best defined as a network of reciprocal forgiveness. If the members of a given community do not submit to punishment and if they do not forgive those who have offended them, then this community is not part of the true church. Forgiveness thus becomes a litmus test, a way of differentiating between insider and outsider. As we will see, Tyndale does hold that Christians must forgive

everyone; however, he also holds that Christians should forgive outsiders in a different way from the way that they forgive other Christians.

Tyndale's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, first printed in 1532 or 1533, gives more practical advice about how to perform forgiveness, which proceeds logically from Tyndale's cosmology. The full title of the text is revealing for a few reasons: *An Exposition Uppon the V. VI. VII. Chapters of Matthew, Which Three Chapters Are the Keye and the Dore of the Scripture, And the Restoring Agayne of Moses Law Corrupte by the Scribes and Pharises. And the Exposition Is the Restoring Agayne of Christes Lawe Corrupte by the Papistes*.[21] First, the title presents the text as a reading of a reading—it reads Christ's rereading of Moses' law and, just as Christ was reading the law to correct those who had distorted the meaning of the law, so Tyndale presents his reading as a necessary corrective to the distortion of Christ's teaching at the hands of the Church of Rome. Thus, this is a self-consciously hermeneutical enterprise. Second, Tyndale presents his text as a self-consciously legal enterprise and, for that reason, it is concerned with human behavior. Third, since Tyndale presents this text as "the Keye and Dore of the Scripture," the title shows that understanding the scripture entails understanding behavior. More than that, then, the title demonstrates the fundamental unity and inseparability of textual hermeneutics and the interpretation of people, actions, and souls.

Tyndale's commentary is primarily concerned with outlining the means by which God forgives individual Christians; to be more specific, he maintains that God forgives Christians by grace through faith by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. The main problem that

he is addressing is his perception, which should be familiar by now, that the Church of Rome has claimed too much agency in this process of forgiveness for its own gain. In response, Tyndale affords the church the ability to do no more than cultivate faith in people by preaching the law and the gospel. The Church, in Tyndale's formulation, cannot claim that either its performance of the sacraments or its decrees have any eternal significance; its primary role is to propagate information. Since the Church did, in Tyndale's estimation, overstate its power, he argues that its actions have disrupted the signification and interpretation not only of text but also of actions. To reiterate, he contends that their actions distracted people from the true telos and cosmology of all of creation.

Even though this broader, cosmological-teleological argument is Tyndale's main focus in his commentary, he certainly indicates that reorienting people within a Christian cosmos will influence particular actions. Naturally enough for a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Tyndale's text emphasizes the importance of forgiving others because of God's act of forgiveness. After all, Matthew 6:14-15 says, "For if ye forgive men their faults, your heavenly father shall forgive you also. But and if ye do not forgive men their faults, no more shall your Father forgive your faults" (265). There are at least three connections between God's forgiveness for people and people's forgiveness for one another. First, the magnitude of the debt forgiven by God is always portrayed as exceeding the magnitude of the debt people owe to one another; therefore, it would be hypocritical not to forgive one another in light of the forgiveness people receive from God. Second, acts of forgiveness between people can serve as imitations of God,

reflecting the cosmos instituted by God through his forgiveness for human beings. Third, and most importantly for our purposes, Christians' forgiveness and God's forgiveness are fundamentally connected in a way that Tyndale urgently needed to theorize. He clearly responds to those who are under the impression that Matthew 6:14-15 indicates that God will forgive *because* Christians forgive, which would mean that a Christian's actions merit forgiveness. As a good Lutheran, Tyndale needs to explain the connection between a Christian's forgiveness and God's forgiveness in such a way that the Christian's actions do not earn anything. Tyndale's solution is to argue that Christians' forgiveness reflects God's forgiveness and, importantly, allows them to know that God has forgiven them.[22]

Tyndale explicitly sets up this way of knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness in contradistinction to his account of the Church's means for assuring people that they have been forgiven:

> For Christ (which is a man to be believed) sheweth us here a more sure way; yea, and that a sensible way, by which we may feel that we be pardoned, and our sins forgiven. We can have no experience of the pope's things, whether they be so or no. He can with all his pardons deliver no man of any purgatory that God putteth us unto in this world. . . . But here Christ maketh thee sure of pardon; for if thou canst forgive thy brother, God hath bound himself to forgive thee. (262)

Tyndale expands on this idea later. He says, "Finally, our works which God commandeth, and unto which he annexed his promises that he will reward them, are as it were very sacraments, and visible and sensible signs, tokens, earnest obligations,

witnesses, testimonies, and a sure certifying of our souls, that God hath and will do according to his promise, to strength our weak faith, and to keep the promise in mind" (268). He is sure to point out that the works signify justification and that they themselves do not justify people, which he compares to the way that the "outward washing" of baptism "justifieth us not" but rather is a "visible sign or sacrament" of justification (268). He continues:

> And the washing doth testify [justification through faith in Christ], and certify us of it, as the pope's letters do certify the believers of the pope's pardons. Now the letters help not or hinder, but that the pardons were as good without them, as with them, save only to stablish weak souls, that could not believe except they read the letters, looked on the seal, and saw the print of St. Peter's keys. (268-69)

Instead of relying on the pope, paper, and the keys, Tyndale encourages people to look to their own actions as their means of knowing that God has forgiven them. He is introducing his audience to a different way of knowing, one that he suggests gives Christians more immediate access to spiritual referents unencumbered by Roman signification.

This way of knowing also leads away from text ("the *print* of St. Peter's keys"); Tyndale indicates that his readers should interpret their own actions to determine if they are forgiven, and they should also interpret the actions of others to determine whether they are forgiven. He writes that "forgiveness of thy sins be annexed to thy work and forgiving thy brother" and that "the righteousness of the heart is felt and known by the work" (265). Therefore, actions serve as evidence that a person has been forgiven: "For

except a man be proved and tried, it cannot be known, neither to himself or other men, that he is righteous and in the true faith" (265). The actions, then, indicate to others the state of the actor's soul. Tyndale also associates the "good work" he describes here with forgiveness: "If any man hate his brother, be thou sure that the same man is in darkness, and hath not the light of true faith, nor seeth what Christ hath done. If a man so love that he can forgive his brother, assure thyself that he is in the light of the true faith, and seeth what mercy is shewed him in Christ" (266). In other words, people are supposed to judge whether someone else has been forgiven by witnessing whether they forgive others. As in *The Obedience*, the true church is characterized here as a network of reciprocal forgiveness.

Critically, Tyndale argues that those who are forgiven cannot help but act as a forgiven person should; it is unavoidable that they will love and forgive their neighbors. He says that if a person experiences "the love of God in Christ," then "he could not but love his brother for so kind a father's sake" (266). He further develops the idea that good actions are the natural consequence of forgiveness a little later. He gives a list of good actions that are "yet more sensible and surer sacraments, and surances of his goodness, even in our ownselves," including "if we love and give alms to our neighbour, if we have compassion and pray for him, if we be merciful and forgive him, if we deny ourselves, and fast, and withdraw all pleasures from the flesh, for love of the life to come, and to keep the commandments of God" (269). He then describes the facility with which a forgiven person will perform these actions: "For when such things being before impossible, and now are easy and natural, we feel and are sure that we be altered, and a

new creature, shapen in righteousness after the image of Christ and God our Father, seeing his laws of righteousness are written in our hearts" (269). In short, Tyndale says that good actions will be "easy and natural" for a person who has experienced forgiveness from God and that the ease of these actions will allow a person to sense and therefore know that they are forgiven.

There are three observations that I'd like to draw from Tyndale's description of forgiveness, which comprises an ethics of sorts. To review, Tyndale says that virtuous actions, including forgiveness, give the agents of the actions sensible proof that they have been forgiven; the actions give observers proof that the agents have been forgiven; the affect that accompanies these actions or the facility with which the agent can perform the actions are further proof of the divine aid conferred upon the agents; and Tyndale explicitly juxtaposes this system of the interpretation of the state of souls with papal authority, which he accuses of presuming to influence and speak to spiritual matters beyond its actual capacity to do so. The first important conclusion to be drawn here is that Tyndale's ethics primarily deal with authority. Instead of directing readers to defer to clerical or institutional authority, he directs people and congregations to make determinations about the spiritual wellbeing of themselves and their congregants. Second, Tyndale's discussion of ethics is concerned with epistemology. As with my first observation, Tyndale's epistemology is a challenge to papal authority. The pope's decrees are only useful to "stablish weak souls"; they do not give any authoritative information about the state of a soul (268). Perhaps more significantly, however, Tyndale's epistemology moves the site of meaning from the action itself to a spiritual

plane. Specifically, knowledge of the spiritual condition of a soul that produces a physical action is essential. Furthermore, as striking is Tyndale's repeated assertion that affect is a source of knowledge. Recall that Tyndale directs his audience to observe "If any man hate his brother" or "If a man so love that he can forgive his brother" to determine the state of their souls (266). It might seem natural to associate knowledge with reason and therefore to contrast it with emotion, but, for Tyndale, affect is a more reliable source of knowledge than reason. Reason, in Tyndale's estimation, seems more likely to produce pride and idolatry. Third, Tyndale's discussion of ethics has consequences for perceptions of community. Rather than relying on a source of authority to delineate the boundaries of the community (which is simply a toothless way of saying that an authority does not determine who is in and who is out), Tyndale requires each individual to make for themselves the determination both (1) if they themselves are insiders or outsiders and (2) if those around them are insiders or outsiders—which, exasperatingly, requires individual interpreters to interrogate their own emotional states as they perform actions and to make inferences about the affective states of those around them and to determine who those around them love.

Naturally, here's where things get complicated. I should say at the outset that Tyndale does not attempt to give a comprehensive casuistry or code of ethics; the aim of *The Obedience* and his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount seems much closer to making Tyndale's teleological-cosmological argument and giving some broad-strokes sketches of how this argument would influence individual actions.[23] However, it is unavoidable that Tyndale should give some concrete examples of how human action

would be influenced by this teleological cosmology, and the main trouble is that forgiveness is quite fungible.

At the most fundamental level, Tyndale recommends that his readers refrain from avenging themselves when they suffer a wrong. He gives a practical justification for this policy: “Yea, and though there were no life to come, it were not the less right that I loved my brother, and forgave him to-day, seeing I shall sin against him to-morrow” (253). Moreover, he says that “the temporal regiment was ordained” to ensure that “no man avenge himself” (236). He tells his readers that the appropriate action in light of the Beatitude “Blessed are the merciful” is “lovingly to forgive them that offended thee, as soon as they knowledge their misdoing and ask thee mercy”; he continues:

> And to be merciful is to interpret all to the best; and to look through the fingers at many things; and not to make a grievous sin of every small trifle; and to suffer and forbear, in his own cause, the malice of them that will not repent nor be aknown of their wickedness, as long as he can suffer it, and as long as it ought to be suffered; and when he can no longer, then to complain to them that have authority to forbid wrong. (201-202)

There are three important things to note about these passages. First, Tyndale says that a Christian must always forgive when someone asks for forgiveness. Second, Tyndale also requires that Christians interpret others forgivingly (“look through the fingers at many things”). Third, he requires Christians to “suffer and forbear” in the face of abuse—that is, he denies them the right to avenge themselves. The right or duty to avenge is left purely in the hands of those in the temporal regiment.

However, as a good Lutheran (again), Tyndale is always careful to draw a distinction between a person's actions as a Christian and their actions as a person with responsibilities within the temporal regiment. As a Christian, on the one hand, a person "mayest neither hate nor be angry, and much less fight or avenge; but must after the ensample of Christ humble thyself, forsake and deny thyself, and hate thyself, and cast thyself away, and be meek and patient, and let every man go over thee, and tread thee under foot and do thee wrong; and yet love them, and pray for them, as Christ did for his crucifiers. For love is all; and what is not of love, that is damnable, and cast out of that kingdom" (238). As a person within the temporal regiment, on the other hand, "thou art a person in respect of other; thou art an husband, father, mother, master, mistress, lord, ruler, or wife, son, daughter, servant, subject, &c. And there thou must do according to thine office" (239). Tyndale expects his readers both to lovingly forgive and to carry out whatever punishments the law requires them to carry out in the event that one of their subordinates violates the law. As he puts it, "Even so, when thou art a temporal person, thou puttest not off the spiritual. Therefore thou must ever love; but when love will not help, thou must with love execute the office of the temporal person, or sin against God" (240).

In short, Tyndale says that it is the Christian's duty to always forgive affectively, which means that Christians have the responsibility to always love regardless of whether someone abuses them or whether it is a Christian's responsibility to punish someone—both of these things must be done in love. Naturally, lovingly refraining from avenging oneself and lovingly carrying out legal punishments look nothing alike. What they have

in common, in Tyndale's view, is that they both ought to be done within the right cosmos and towards the right telos; in other words, the actions, whether refraining from avenging or carrying out legal punishments, must be done by the right person with the right motivation. Consequently, when Tyndale maligns the actions of Roman Catholics, he must call their motivations into question. Take this passage, for example: "Their holiness is to forbid that God ordained to be received with thanksgiving, as meat and matrimony. And their own works they maintain, and let God's decay. Break theirs, and they persecute to the death: but break God's, and they either look through the fingers, or else give thee a flap with a fox-tail, for a little money" (299). In this passage, Tyndale describes one action, forgiving interpretation or "looking through the fingers," that he had said was a Christian obligation; however, he is describing generous interpretation "for a little money" instead of for love and mercy. Therefore, the action is performed with self-interest, not within the right cosmos and toward the right telos. The reciprocal forgiveness that characterizes the true church must therefore be properly motivated as well.

The result of this system for the interpretation of actions is a hermeneutic circle. After discussing the roles of faith, hope, and love in the Prologue unto the Reader at the beginning of the commentary, Tyndale gives this advice to his readers:

> Go to then, and desire God to print this profession in thine heart, and to increase it daily more and more; that thou mayest be full shapen like unto the image of Christ, in knowledge and love, and meek thyself, and creep low by the ground, and cleave fast to the rock of this profession, and tie to thy ship this anchor of

> faith in Christ's blood with the cable of love, to cast it out against all tempests; and so set up thy sail, and get thee to the main sea of God's word. (193)

Before embarking on the voyage through "the main sea of God's word," Tyndale tells his readers that the outcome will be the impression of the profession of faith that results from the appropriate interpretation of the scripture. As we have seen, during the course of his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, Tyndale arrives at the conclusion that Christians know that they have this profession of faith when they can perform works of Christian love with the appropriate affect and purpose and the appropriate facility: "For when such things being before impossible, and now are easy and natural, we feel and are sure that we be altered, and a new creature, shapen in righteousness after the image of Christ and God our Father, seeing his laws of righteousness are written in our hearts" (269). Of course, at the beginning of the journey, a Christian must begin with the text before moving on to works of love; thus, interpretation leads to action.

By the end of the commentary, Tyndale tells his audience to judge actions, which necessarily entails correct biblical interpretation:

> Be not deceived with visors, nor yet with miracles. But go to, and judge their works; for "the spiritual judgeth all things," saith Paul. Who is that spiritual? Not such as we now call men of holy church; but all that have the true interpretation of the law written in their hearts, the right faith of Christ, and the true intent of works, which God biddeth us work: he is spiritual, and judgeth all things, and is judged of no man. . . . A man, all the while he consenteth to the flesh, and before he be born again in Christ, is called soul [*sic*] or carnal: but when he is renewed

> in Christ through the word of life, and hath the love of God and of his neighbour, and the faith of Christ written in his heart, he is called spirit or spiritual. The Lord of all mercy send us preachers with power; that is to say, true expounders of the word of God, and speakers to the heart of man; and deliver us from scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, and all false prophets! Amen. (300, 303-04)

The commentary begins with the instruction to "get thee to the main sea of God's word" to understand the "profession in thine heart"; the passage above combines the "true interpretation of the law," "the right faith of Christ," "the true intent of works," and judging the actions and intentions of others. Therefore, the commentary itself simulates a hermeneutic circle: those who read rightly will act rightly, and those who act rightly will read rightly. Moreover, the commentary moves from text, to action, to interpretation of action, and back to text with its concluding desire for "true expounders of the word of God," virtuous actors and producers of written or spoken texts that guide the interpretation of scripture, the foundational text of this whole cycle.

Still, the hurdle inherent to this system of interpretation is in determining intention. Interpreting actions, in Tyndale's formulation, requires the interpreter to have access to the agent's motivations for performing the action; the interpreter may not draw any conclusions from the actions themselves. Therefore, the very same action may be performed for Christian and non-Christian ends. As we saw, judging someone's actions charitably (or, to use Tyndale's words, looking through the fingers) is something that Tyndale can approve of or disapprove of. The problem Tyndale encounters here, then, is the same as that encountered by contritionists: how is it possible to measure or observe

intention and the authenticity of an affect or a spiritual state of being? Tyndale seems to be under the impression that this determination will be fairly straightforward in a community defined by faith and committed to the proper hermeneutic circle.

The Trouble with Reading in Tyndale's Prefaces to Biblical Translations

Unfortunately, Tyndale didn't live long enough for him to see Protestantism grow, and for that reason we don't have the opportunity to see how he would have adjusted his theory of forgiveness or if he would have produced a robust praxis to accompany his theory. However, the paratexts to each successive translation he produced do serve as a record of how his views of reading changed over time, and, keeping in mind that reading and forgiveness operate within the same cosmology for Tyndale, we can make a few inferences about how Tyndale's views of forgiveness would have developed based on how his views of reading developed. The texts that I will be referring to are the incomplete 1525 New Testament, often called *The Cologne Fragment*; the completed 1526 New Testament; the 1530 Pentateuch; and the 1534 New Testament. It is my contention that the *Cologne Fragment* and the 1526 New Testament show great optimism about the potential for community engagement and collaboration with respect to Bible reading, teaching, and translating. These texts are hopeful that the communities will be orderly—those who should teach will teach and those who should learn will learn—and that the text will shape its readers rather than the other way around. This theory of reading is relatively symmetrical to Tyndale's theory of forgiveness in a penance-free congregation. The 1530 Pentateuch and the 1534 New Testament,

however, are significantly less optimistic that an appropriate structure of authority within the community and between the text and the reader will arise organically. This development ultimately led Tyndale to regulate interactions with Scripture—which is not a salient concern in the 1525 and 1526 texts—by taking steps to exclude certain readers from feeling empowered to teach the text and from collaborating with Tyndale in the production of the text.

Tyndale opens his 1525 New Testament with an epistle to the reader that is humble and inviting. He writes:

> I have here translated (brethren and susiers moost dere and tenderly beloved in Christ) the new Testament for youre spirituall edyfying / consolacion / and solas: Exhortyng instantly and besechynge those that are better sene in the tongs then y / and that have hyer gyfts of grace to interpret the sence of the scripture / and meanynge of the spyrite / then y to consydre and pondre my laboure / and that with the spyrite of mekenes. And yf they perceyve in ‘eny places that y have not attayned the very sence of the tonge / or meanynge of the scripture / or have not geven the right englysshe worde / that they put to there hands to amende it / remembrynge that so is there duetie to doo. For we have not receyved the gyfts of god for oureseles only / or forto hyde them: but forto bestowe them unto the honouringe of god and christ / and edyfyinge of the congregacion which is the body of christ. (A2^{r})

There are a few important components in this quotation First, this opening treats the publication of the New Testament as a happy occasion; it assumes that the New

Testament will be good for the audience, bringing them “spirituall edyfying / consolacion / and solas.” Second, it assumes that the audience will be on Tyndale’s side; the epistle calls the readers “brethren and susiers [*sic*] moost dere and tenderly beloved in Christ,” and it even goes so far as to say that it is the learned readers *duty* to correct the translation if they believe that there is an error.

The completed 1526 New Testament takes much the same tone. In the epistle to the reader at the end this New Testament, Tyndale also shows great faith in his audience, assuming that they will be able to correct the text and to expound it for one another. His epistle indicates that one audience Tyndale intends to reach with this translation is “the common people,” but he is not under the impression that they will be able to read the text and immediately know what it means. Hence, he recognizes a need “to make [the text] more apt for the weak stomachs” (29). To fill this need, he wants to produce textual tools, including a table of technical terms and definitions. However, he was not able to produce this table for this translation, so he once again leans on his educated readers: he asks “them that are learned, and able, to remember their duty, and to help them [those with weak stomachs] thereunto, and to bestow unto the edifying of Christ's body, which is the congregation of them that believe, those gifts which they have received of God for the same purpose” (29). As in the 1525 *Cologne Fragment*, the 1526 New Testament also assumes that the audience will be gracious, friendly, and reliable. It imagines the community that he’s sending this New Testament to as one that is supportive and properly organized between teachers and learners, and one that basically has accurate biblical knowledge.

These two early translations rely heavily on the community for producing, disseminating, and teaching the Scripture. Tyndale invites his readers to contribute to the text itself by correcting errors, and he also invites them to help disseminate the text by teaching and, presumably, reading to others—as many common people, including plowboys, would likely have been illiterate.[24] The point here is that these texts demonstrate that Tyndale thought of Scripture as collaborative and especially communal. The Scriptures for Tyndale were texts to be read aloud, spoken about, and shared within a community. Moreover, he takes for granted (1) that this community and its shared body of knowledge provides the context for the Scriptures and guides individual interpretation and (2) that his translation will be found to be consonant with that community and that body of knowledge. For that reason, the tone of these paratexts is more or less "come one, come all"; they give the impression that Tyndale believed he was sending his work out among friends.

However, there is a drastic change in tone in Tyndale's 1530 Pentateuch. In the epistle to the reader in this text, Tyndale writes:

> When I had translated the newe testament / I added a pistle unto the latter end / In which I desyred them [that] were learned to amend if ought were founde amysse. But oure malicious and wylye hypocrytes . . . are so stuburne and hard herted in their weked abhominacio*n*s that it is not possible for them to amend any thinge atall (as we see by dayly experience when their both lyvinges and doinges are rebuked with the truth) . . . . (A1^{v})

Clearly, Tyndale received some contributions that he found to be, shall we say, less than helpful. These contributions entirely changed his disposition towards his audience. Instead of appealing to his audience for help, he begins to single out portions of his audience for special treatment. In this case, he has singled out the "malicious and wylye hypocrytes," presumably the clergy and scholars still committed to the Church of Rome. Notice that Tyndale attacks the people responsible for the interpretation rather than the interpretations themselves, as with his critique of Roman hermeneutics and penance. The general point here, however, is that he begins to actively discourage certain groups of people from engaging with the communal collaboration he had encouraged in his early translations.

Moreover, his 1534 New Testament begins by defending his translation from his audience. The following passage appears after the first sentence of the prologue to this text:

> If ought seme chaunged or not all to gether agreynge with the Greke / let the fynder of y*e* faute consider the Hebrue Phrase or maner of speche lefte in the Greke wordes. Whose preterperfectence and presenttense is ofte both one / and the futuretence is the optative mode also / and the futuretence is ofte the imperatyve mode in the actyve voyce / and in the passyve ever. (* i[v])

What we have here is a grammar lesson, which I'd suggest is a rhetorical tool that Tyndale uses to exclude readers from the process of collaboration in two ways. First, the grammar lesson preemptively addresses some concerns that readers may have; in essence, it gives the readers less freedom to amend and correct the text, as he asks his

readers to do in his earlier translations. Second, it establishes Tyndale's authority and discourages some would-be translators from thinking that they might be able to contribute to this text. A little later in this prologue, he invites, in a manner of speaking, readers who disapprove of his translation to go ahead and do it themselves: "If anye man fynde fautes ether with the tra*n*slacion or ought besyde (which is easyer for manye to do / then so well to have translated it them selves of their awne pregnant wyttes / at the begynnynge wtthoute forensample) to the same it shalbe lawfull to tra*n*slate it them selves and to put what they lust thereto" (* i^{v}). He concludes the prefatory matter to this translation by scolding one collaborator named George Joye who had taken it upon himself to remove all mentions of the word "resurrection" from Tyndale's 1526 New Testament and then reprint it (without consistently putting his own name on the title page) as a "diligent correctio*n*," which Tyndale seems to have found particularly aggravating (* * iiii^{v}).

To summarize, the tone in these passages from the 1530 Pentateuch and the 1534 New Testament are markedly different from the tone in the 1525 *Cologne Fragment* and the 1526 New Testament. Recall that Tyndale opens the *Cologne Fragment* by telling his "brethren and susiers [*sic*] moost dere and tenderly beloved in Christ" that he translated the New Testament for their "spirituall edyfying / consolacion / and solas," and he invites contributions from his audience in his 1526 New Testament. The 1530 Pentateuch, on the other hand, calls a portion of his audience "malicious and wylye hypocrytes," and the 1534 New Testament actively erects barriers to prevent readers from editing the text.

Over time, therefore, Tyndale found it necessary to provide more structure, to buttress his own authority and the authority of the text, and to limit the range of individual interaction available to readers. Tyndale depicts the act of reading Scripture as an interaction that incorporates the text, the reader, and a community of readers more broadly. He indicates that personal encounters with scripture need to be guided by a learned audience, and sometimes members of the audience need to be reminded that they aren't as learned as they think they are. These are the basic dynamics of authority that Tyndale is negotiating: the imperative to make the text widely accessible to a broad audience on the one hand and the need to structure individual interaction with the text on the other. That's not to say that Tyndale became less committed to individual interaction with Scripture; he went to the stake for his dedication to producing vernacular Bibles. It rather suggests that there was a broader range of interactions with the text than Tyndale had anticipated. Consequently, Tyndale moved to limit readers' independence in their interactions with scripture. In other words, the teleological cosmology that Tyndale saw explicitly in scripture was not as immediately apparent to his readers as he expected it to be. Tyndale expected the act of discerning true spiritual meaning in other people during the process of forgiveness to be analogous to discerning true spiritual meaning in text: armed with the scripture in the vernacular, the right understanding of the cosmos, the Holy Spirit, and a congregation of like-minded Christians, the determination, he suggests, should be relatively straightforward. As later generations of English Protestants would learn, reading people is at least as fraught as reading text.

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Reading Tyndale's hermeneutics next to his critique of penance and his views of forgiveness shows that they all take the same form and that they exist within the same teleological cosmology; the structure of that teleological cosmology follows the structure of scripture according to Pauline theology: the law brings death, and the gospel brings life for those who pursue the telos of God through faith and Christ. Therefore, Tyndale's alleged privileging of the text and disregard for human traditions and institutions have been far overstated. Even his faith in the text of scripture has been overstated, because as the prefatory matter to his translations shows, Tyndale imagined his texts to be entering communities that would teach the members the correct understanding of the text. Tyndale attacked a specific institution and its financial and political power: the Church of Rome. He presented a correct understanding of the cosmos, grounded in what he presented as the correct understanding of scripture, as the antidote to the Church of Rome. He was under the impression that the plot of the text was relatively straightforward and easy to understand. He had hoped that releasing the corrupt institution's hold on parishioners by doing away with Roman allegory and penance would lead to a community characterized by reciprocal forgiveness and middle-of-the-road, uncontroversial hermeneutics. However, Tyndale's disregard for the institution of the Church required some other means of authenticating spiritual experience, which ended up being interior, spiritual, and unobservable. This means of authentication, shared by many Protestants after Tyndale, required excruciating interrogation of one's own motivations and sincerity as well as the motivations and sincerity of others.

[1] Jamie H. Ferguson argues that the argument between Thomas More and Tyndale "lend[s] a sense of urgency to the basic opposition between textual autonomy and interpretive tradition in both religious and literary culture through the ensuing century" (991). Mark Rankin and Douglas FitzHenry Jones establish Tyndale's legacy during the late 16th century and into the 17th century. Rankin argues that Tyndale's *The Practice of the Prelates* had a significant influence on John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* by showing the two authors use strikingly similar analogies and turns of phrase. Rankin shows that Tyndale's political thought metastasized through Foxe's work; see Rankin, "John Foxe and the Earliest Readers of William Tyndale's *The Practyse of Prelates* (1530)." Jones argues that members of the Family of Love (and others in the 1570s and 1580s) were concerned with Tyndale's legacy because they were each interested in establishing themselves as true literalist readers. Jones calls Tyndale "one of the heroes of early English Protestantism" and he says that the writers of the works he examines "shared a similar English milieu in which Tyndale was a touchstone for the marginalized Elizabethan Protestant" (916, 917). See Jones, "Debating the Literal Sense in England: The Scripture-Learned and the Family of Love." Brian Cummings argues that Tyndale is writing at the moment when theology was first being written in English, meaning that Tyndale was operating on the ground floor of the English vocabulary and grammar of theology. See Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Finally, and perhaps most famously, David Daniell argues that Tyndale's language was enormously influential on later English Bibles and therefore later English literature. See Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*.

[2] In my view, this debate over the means by which God's forgiveness is mediated to human beings is what David C. Steinmetz is getting at in "Reformation and Grace" when he says, "The Reformation began, almost accidentally, as a debate over the word 'penitence'" (75).

[3] See *Grammar and Grace*, pgs. 195-96. Daniell's biography of Tyndale includes a short but very reasonable summary of the "Fourfold Senses of Scripture" in *The Obedience* in which he says that Tyndale's version of the literal sense acknowledges allegory and that "proper interpretation is not wild, but applies the matter to the basis of Christ and the faith" (239). See *William Tyndale: A Biography*, pgs. 238-241. "Reading Tyndale's *Obedience* in Whole and in Part" by Susan M. Felch and Clare Costley King'oo is also relevant here. They also note that Tyndale argues for the abandonment of the tropological, allegorical, and anagogical senses, but I'd say that they take Tyndale too much at his word on that point.

[4] Against Baker, Jamie H. Ferguson argues that Tyndale's dismissal of the tradition indicates that Tyndale disregards all human traditions and treats scripture as a document that "functions independently of history" (1003).

[5] In "From the Allegorical to the Literal (and Back Again)," Mary Jane Barnett argues that Tyndale cannot call his hermeneutics literal (full stop) because scripture uses allegory; therefore, she says he must add a modifier to the term "literal," which she calls "true literal." Barnett concludes that Tyndale's means for achieving this true literal sense is through allegory. Douglas H. Parker accuses Tyndale of allegorizing in his own interest in "Tyndale's Biblical Hermeneutics." In "Sixteenth Century Fundamentalism and the Specter of Ambiguity, or the Literal Sense Is Always a Fiction," James Simpson argues argues that Tyndale does not stick to the literal sense; he (and Luther) must struggle with a text that is actually quite difficult. The appeal to the literal sense is actually sociological (about power and resources), academic, and polemical. Simpson concludes that Tyndale "can't do without allegory; he can't do without Scriptural ambiguity" (150). In *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and Its Reformation Opponents* (a work that Simpson's later article draws on), Simpson is also quite cynical about the literal sense in the work of Protestant Reformers, suggesting that it leads to fundamentalism rather than liberalism and that it leads to shame and oppression rather than the liberation of the individual. As my parenthetical citation suggests, Stephen Greenblatt makes the argument quoted within the body of my text.

[6] I am arguing, against Ferguson, that Tyndale does not dismiss all human traditions and history but rather a specific tradition and history, that of the Church of Rome.

[7] Consider, for example, this passage from *On Christian Doctrine*: "When words used literally cause ambiguity in Scripture, we must first determine whether we have mispunctuated or misconstrued

[with reference to Latin, 'mispronounced'] them. When investigation reveals an uncertainty as to how a locution should be pointed or construed, the rule of faith should be consulted as it is found in the more open places of the Scriptures and in the authority of the Church. . . . But if both meanings, or all of them, in the event that there are several, remain ambiguous after the faith has been consulted, then it is necessary to examine the context of the preceding and following parts surrounding the ambiguous place, so that we may determine which of the meanings among those which suggest themselves it would allow to be consistent" (Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* III.II.2). In this passage, Augustine recommends using the "open" places of scripture to interpret the more difficult passages, and he also recommends looking at the difficult passages' immediate context. Here is another passage in which Augustine recommends using the corpus of scripture to interpret difficult passages: "When, however, from a single passage in the Scripture not one but two or more meanings are elicited, even if what he who wrote the passage intended remains hidden, there is no danger if any of the meanings may be seen to be congruous with the truth taught in other passages of the Holy Scriptures" (Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* III.XXVII.38).

[8] Although all four Gospels record the event, John 18 is the only one to say that Peter is the attacker and that the name of the victim is Malchus, and Luke 22 is the only one to say that Jesus healed the victim. Matthew 26 and Mark 14 only say that an unnamed companion of Jesus cuts off the ear of an unnamed servant of the high priest.

[9] My argument here has much in common with "The Semiotics of Narrative in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*" by Matthew DeCoursey. DeCoursey argues that Tyndale moves beyond philology to narrative, maintaining that biblical narrative must be understood with respect to a few fundamental plot points: promise, trial, fulfillment for the elect and law, council, punishment for the wicked.

[10] Augustine presents his teleological hermeneutics clearly in Book I of *On Christian Doctrine*: "The sum of all we have said since we began to speak of things thus comes to this: it is to be understood that the plentitude and the end of the Law and of all the sacred Scriptures is the love of a Being which is to be enjoyed and of a being that can share that enjoyment with us, since there is no need for a precept that anyone should love himself. That we might know this and have the means to implement it, the whole temporal dispensation was made by divine Providence for our salvation. We should use it, not with an abiding but with a transitory love and delight like that in a road or in vehicles or in other instruments, or, if it may be expressed more accurately, so that we love those things by which we are carried along for the sake of that toward which we are carried. Whoever, therefore, thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love of God and of our neighbor does not understand it at all. . . . Therefore, when anyone knows the end of the commandments to be charity 'from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith,' and has related all of his understanding of the Divine Scriptures to these three, he may approach the treatment of these books with security" (Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* I.XXV.39-XXVI.40, I.XL.44). In short, Augustine says that any biblical interpretation must be contextualized within this cosmology that begins with the self at the lowest level, moves to the other at the second level, and culminates with God at the highest level.

[11] Here is the Latin text: "Respondeo dicendum quod auctor sacrae Scripturae est Deus, in cuius potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet (quod etiam homo facere potest), sed etiam res ipsas. Et ideo, cum in omnibus scientiis voces significent, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res significatae per voces, etiam significant aliquid. Illa ergo prima significatio, qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum sensum, qui est sensus historicus vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis; qui super litteralem fundatur, et eum supponit. Hic autem sensus spiritualis trifariam dividitur. Sicut enim dicit apostolus, ad Hebr. VII, lex vetus figura est novae legis, et ipsa nova lex, ut dicit Dionysius in ecclesiastica hierarchia, est figura futurae gloriae, in nova etiam lege, ea quae in capite sunt gesta, sunt signa eorum quae nos agere debemus. Secundum ergo quod ea quae sunt veteris legis, significant ea quae sunt novae legis, est sensus allegoricus, secundum vero quod ea quae in Christo sunt facta, vel in his quae Christum significant, sunt signa eorum quae nos agere debemus, est sensus moralis, prout vero significant ea quae sunt in aeterna gloria, est sensus anagogicus. Quia vero sensus litteralis est, quem auctor intendit, auctor autem sacrae Scripturae Deus est, qui omnia simul suo intellectu comprehendit, non est inconveniens, ut dicit Augustinus XII

confessionum, si etiam secundum litteralem sensum in una littera Scripturae plures sint sensus" (Aquinas I.1.10).

[12] Baker writes: "For even the devil, as Tyndale notes in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 'believeth that Christ died but not that he did for his sins.' Likewise, in his 1531 *Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John* Tyndale argues that there is a 'great difference between believing that there is a God, and that Christ is a God and man, and to believe in God and Christ, God and man, and in the promises of mercy that are in him.' The former is 'common to good and bad, and unto the devils also, and is called an historical faith and belief,' while the latter is 'proper unto the sons of God, and is their life.' Such a hodgepodge of good and bad might also subscribe to the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, which, however, Tyndale does not reject. Instead, he argues in the *Answer* that this doctrine is 'never so true,' but yet 'none article of our faith to be saved by.' Therefore it is to be credited with 'a story faith, because we see no cause reasonable to think the contrary'" (675).

[13] Book I, chapter XL of *On Christian Doctrine* uses 1 Timothy 1:5 to argue that a legitimate Christian reader must interpret "from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith" towards Christian charity for God and for other people (I.XL.44). Therefore, in order for interpretation to be correct, the hermeneut must have the right character.

[14] Here is another passage where Tyndale uses "whispering" to refer to confession: "They of the old law had no confession in the ear. Neither the Apostles nor they that followed many hundred years after knew of any such whispering" (120).

[15] "Whatsoever thou bindest on earth, it shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou loosest on earth it shall be loosed in heaven. Of this text maketh the Pope what he will, and expoundeth it contrary to all the scripture, contrary to Christ's practising, and the Apostles, and all the prophets. Now the scripture giveth record to himself and ever expoundeth itself by another open text. If the Pope then cannot bring for his exposition the practising of Christ or of the Apostles and prophets or an open text, then is his exposition false doctrine. Christ expoundeth himself (Matthew 18) saying: If thy brother sin against thee, rebuke him betwixt him and thee alone. If he hear thee thou hast won thy brother: but if he hear thee not then take with thee one or two and so forth as it standeth in the text. He concludeth saying to them all whatsoever ye bind in earth it shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever ye loose on earth it shall be loosed in heaven. Where binding is but to rebuke them that sin and loosing is to forgive them that repent. And (John 20), Whose sins ye forgive they are forgiven and whose sins ye hold they are holden. And Paul (1 Corinthians 5) bindeth, and (2 Corinthians 2) looseth after the same manner. . . . Wherefore then this binding is to be understood as Christ interpreteth it in the places above rehearsed and as the Apostles practised it and is nothing but to rebuke men of their sins by preaching the law. A man must first sin against God's law ere the Pope can bind him: yea and a man must first sin against God's law ere he need to fear the Pope's curse. For cursing and binding are both one and nothing save to rebuke a man of his sins by God's law. It followeth also that the loosing is of like manner, and is nothing but forgiving of sin to them that repent through preaching of the promises which God hath made in Christ in whom only we have all forgiveness of sins, as Christ interpreteth it and as the Apostles and prophets practised it" (172, 173).

[16] In this passage, Tyndale is raising doubts about how effective confession is at forgiving sins. Naturally, other reformers shared this concern. Thomas N. Tentler shows that the Swiss reformers were particularly disinclined to see anything redeeming in the institution; however, Tentler also shows that Luther did not want to completely do away with confession, although he would agree with Tyndale that he did not think that the performance of confession effected purification. Still, Luther thought the practice of confession should be maintained as a consolation for sinners. See Tentler, pages 349-63. Similarly, Ronald K. Rittgers notes that Luther preserves the practice of confession, even though he does not give it sacramental status. Rittgers suggests that, for Luther, confession does not impact the penalty (*pena*) for sin, but it can help sinners manage their guilt (*culpa*). See Rittgers, "Embracing the 'True Relic' of Christ: Suffering, Penance, and Private Confession in the Thought of Martin Luther." It is also worth noting that Tyndale, as with Protestant polemicists generally, tends to assume that the confessant is more or less powerless relative to the confessor, but Patrick J. O'Banion argues that that was not necessarily the case. In "'A Priest Who Appears Good': Manuals of Confession and the Construction of Clerical Identity in Early Modern Spain," O'Banion says, "Penitents [in early modern Spain] were able to exercise a degree of

power over their confessors by challenging them with the theological authority of manuals, purchasing *cruzada* indulgences, withholding their confessions, or making only incomplete confessions" (345).

[17] I am using the reading of Tyndale's distinction between historical faith and feeling faith that is presented in Baker's excellent article "The Historical Faith of William Tyndale: Non-Salvific Reading of Scripture at the Outset of the English Reformation."

[18] Of course, Tyndale also addresses the term penance in his *Answer to More*, in which he makes the case that the word "knowledge" (as in "to acknowledge") should replace English renderings of "confession" and that "repentance" should replace "penance" in the New Testament. See, for example, *Answer*, pages 22-24. In *The Obedience*, Tyndale does tell one story about how confession was discarded in the early church in Constantinople because a deacon slept with "one of the chief wives of the city" (118).

[19] The distinction between contrition and attrition is an important one in the history of penance. Contritionists held that it is the contrition of the confessant that absolved. Attritionists, noting the difficulty of defining and verifying true contrition, held that it was the sacrament of penance that absolved, some going so far as to say that even a confessants attrition counted as contrition because of the sacrament. See Tentler, especially 22-27 and 250-273. R. Emmet McLaughlin fascinatingly tells the history of the historiography of penance, showing how conversations about contrition and attrition map onto later scholarly conversations about the sacrament of penance. He also describes Tentler and his position in his historical milieu. Rob Meens also describes the history of the historiography of penance; he argues that there was no such text as the "Roman penitential" and thus that penance was not uniform throughout christendom. Joseph Goering argues that the disagreement between contritionists and attritionists is best described as a conversation, similar to an academic conversation. He cautions that emphasizing the division between these two ways of thinking would be a mistake and that practitioners of penance would likely have seen the two theories as simply different approaches to the sacrament. Finally, in "Penitential Theology and Law at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century," Henry Ansgar Kelly uses the work of Geoffrey Chaucer to ask how confession would have influenced the everyday life of parishioners. In reading "The Parson's Tale," Kelly notes that the Parson does not talk about attrition or contrition but says that the penitent must confess all sins she can remember and must go to confession soon after sinning.

[20] This reading of Tyndale is undoubtedly Lutheran, both (1) in its understanding of the relationship between the congregation's forgiveness and God's forgiveness and (2) in its understanding of penance as a means of quieting disturbed consciences. Interestingly, there are similarities between Luther's view of confession and the contritionist view of confession. Both view confession as pointing to a spiritual truth rather than itself performing the absolution. According to Tentler, Luther's view that penance is a lifelong practice accords in some respects with Lombardist contritionism. See pages 353-54.

[21] Tyndale did write another text called *A Pathway Into the Holy Scriptures*. This text is a revised and expanded version of Tyndale's Prologue to the 1525 Cologne Fragment. The Introductory Notice to *A Pathway* printed in the 1965 Fortress Press edition hypothesizes that *A Pathway* was composed and printed sometime between 1525 and 1532, since Thomas More mentions the text in his 1532 *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*. See page 2 of *The Work of William Tyndale*. I chose not to discuss *A Pathway* because it does not discuss forgiveness, interpersonal relationships, or actions as thoroughly as the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount does, even though *A Pathway* does discuss (1) the relationships between the law and the gospel and (2) a view of actions as proceeding from (rather than effecting) a salvific relationship with the divine.

[22] This is also Luther's solution in his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, first published in 1532 (XXI). This is how Luther glosses Matthew 6:14-15: "By . . . connecting the forgiveness of sin with our forgiving, [Jesus] had the special purpose of making mutual love a Christian obligation, and the continual forgiveness of the neighbor the primary and foremost duty of Christians, second only to faith and the reception of forgiveness. . . . But how is it that by these words He establishes such a close connection between forgiveness and our works when he says: 'If you forgive your neighbor, you will be forgiven,' and vice versa? That does not seem to make forgiveness dependent upon faith. Answer: As I have often said elsewhere, the forgiveness of sins takes place in two ways: first inwardly, through the Gospel and the Word of God, which is received by faith in the heart toward God; second, outwardly

through works, about which 2 Peter 1:10 says in its instructions regarding good works: 'Dear brethren, be zealous to confirm your calling and election.' He means to say that we should confirm our possession of faith and the forgiveness of sin by showing our works, making the tree manifest by means of its fruit and making it evident that this is a sound tree and not a bad one (Matt. 7:17). Where there is a genuine faith, there good works will certainly follow, too. In this way a man is pious and upright, both inwardly and outwardly, both before God and before men. For this follows as the fruit by which I assure myself and others that I have a genuine faith; this is the only way I can know or see this" (149-50). In short, Luther makes the case that Matthew 6:14-15 indicates that forgiveness for others reflects God's forgiveness for Christians; it does not indicate, according to Luther, that forgiveness for others merits God's forgiveness.

[23] Tyndale is certainly not alone in refraining from giving a comprehensive casuistry. In a discussion of anger in his *Ethics*, Aristotle says that "it is not easy to define how, with whom, at what, and how long one should be angry, and at what point right action ceases and wrong action begins" (98). Moreover, Aristotle's ethics is thoroughly contextual: he tells his readers to consider the agent and the circumstances when judging an action.

[24] Heidi Brayman Hackel surveys some of the studies about literacy in early modern England. She settles on Henry Stanley Bennett's estimate that between 1% – 60% of the population was literate in the late 15th century and early 16th century. Hackel notes that the trouble with estimating literacy rates is that reading and writing are distinct skills and that reading is an "invisible" skill—there is nothing inherently left behind after an act of reading to attest to the fact that a person has read a document. For that reason, it is very difficult, if not nearly impossible, to know for sure who could read and who could not. See *Reading material in early modern England: print, gender, and literacy*, especially pages 54-68.

CHAPTER III

DAMNED BY A MARTYR'S FORGIVENESS: KNOWLEDGE, COMMUNITY, AND SPIRITUAL REFERENTS IN *THE EXAMINATIONS OF ANNE ASKEW*

It is a commonplace within Reformation historiography that a fundamental issue dividing Protestants and the Church of Rome was the authority of the individual versus the authority of the Church, and *The Examinations of Anne Askew* can certainly fall neatly within that narrative.[1] Although this summary of the conflict is useful in many ways, it can also prevent us from seeing other dimensions of the conflict. Reading *The Examinations* and other Reformation texts through the lens of forgiveness offers a way to explore some of these other dimensions. The reason that forgiveness offers this insight is, importantly, that forgiveness is at its heart a communal technology for knowledge production—forgiveness allows members of a community to *know* who is in good standing, who is in *community*, with whom. Therefore, reading Protestant texts with an eye towards how forgiveness is understood and practiced reveals how they forged community. And because there were undoubtedly Protestant communities and not simply unattached, isolated Protestant individuals, we can see that the conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics (or, in Askew's case, more radical Protestants and the Henrician Church of England) was also a conflict between groups, not simply between the individual and the institution. This observation will not come as a surprise for students of martyrology, but it is a timely observation for students of reading and

hermeneutics, whose dialogue often still assumes the individual-versus-institution division. One goal of this chapter is to bridge the gap between these two conversations.

If we read *The Examinations of Anne Askew* as a text concerned with groups instead of only the personal character of Anne Askew, what emerges is a system of evaluation and interpretation that has a great deal in common with Tyndale's teleological cosmology. *The Examinations* reveal that one of the means by which groups sought to authenticate themselves was by proving that its members were more harmless and more selfless than the members of the other group, who were necessarily violent and self-interested. Therefore, as we saw in Chapter 1, the character of each participant is very much at issue. Askew and her hagiographers work to prove that she has the proper Christian character because she is harmless and selfless and that her Anglo-Catholic interrogators do not have Christian character because they harmed her for selfish reasons—in other words, Askew and her hagiographers work to show that she has moral authority, and her choice to forgive her interrogators is among the most important pieces of evidence that Askew is an authentic Christian. This division of the selfless and harmless from the selfish and harmful (or, to put it another way, between those who may forgive from those who may be forgiven) offers sure knowledge about who has true faith, a true Christian, and who is an outsider, an antichristian. This rhetorical posture works within the forgiving cosmology inherent to Tyndale's hermeneutics: in order to be capable interpreters of scripture, readers must put themselves lowest, others ahead of themselves, and God ahead of everyone and everything. For Askew and her hagiographers, then, the proof that Askew is the authorized, faith-full reader is in her

ability to put her interrogators ahead of herself by forgiving them. Ironically, however, to forgive an offense for which the offender has not asked for forgiveness is often the same as to accuse, and therefore Askew must also claim the moral high ground from which she can accuse her interrogators of sin.

In the last chapter, we saw that Tyndale's critique of the Church of Rome is grounded on the claim that it misuses its authority for its own gain. He also argues that the Roman Church interprets scripture advantageously to validate its status and therefore is not a legitimate mediator of God's forgiveness. Tyndale hopes that the Church of Rome will be replaced by Christian congregations defined by mutual forgiveness between its members. He also imagines a Christian hermeneutic (of the cosmos and of text) characterized by forgiveness, where each hermeneut interprets through the final end of all things, God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. Tyndale does not support individual, private interpretation, but instead he views interpretation as something best performed within a community of like-minded Christians, although that community should certainly be structured with some members leading and others following. This community, as Tyndale imagines it, has much in common with the Roman notion that the Church's central function is to grant forgiveness. He simply defines "church" differently. For Tyndale, it is a body of believers who read (scripture, the world, and each other) using the proper lens, characterized by forgiveness. The inherent difficulty in Tyndale's system is differentiating insiders from outsiders. Although Tyndale anticipated that right reading, right acting, right classification of others, and right forgiving would proceed naturally from right faith, we have seen that right reading (or

reading that Tyndale would have approved of) turned out to be more complicated than Tyndale expected.

Askew, her *Examinations*, and her legacy as a martyr offers a window into how Tyndale's theories of forgiveness, community, knowledge production, and hermeneutics played out on the ground. Askew's *Examinations* reveals that forgiveness necessarily involves understandings of community and knowledge production. In this chapter, we will explore how Anne Askew resisted the Church of England in the mid-1540s (which I will refer to as the Anglo-Catholic Church) as its officials tried to assert its authority to make true statements about the spiritual realm and to differentiate between insider and outsider. We will also explore how John Bale makes his case that Askew is the true insider and that her knowledge is the true knowledge.

Critics have long focused on Askew herself as opposed to the community to which she belonged. After all, Askew's texts were appropriated by others within her community—Bale and Foxe in particular—for ends that are not entirely the same as Askew's.[2] This recognition has led to fruitful efforts to recover Askew's authentic voice as an independent speaker and Bible reader. However, others have also argued that it is also productive to read Askew's *Examinations* as located within a rhizome and a community. Some of these critics suggest that searching for Reformation or early modern readers and writers who are self-consciously independent and individual is effectively to search for notions of authorship and readership that are only just beginning to emerge in the 16th century.[3] I argue that Reformation readers and writers were not as preoccupied with finding a reading of scripture that was the most stable and least subject

to interpretation—at least not as preoccupied as 21st-century commentators are. Rather, I argue that they also saw themselves as collectively and congregationally searching for a spiritual meaning that is none other than Christian love or charity validated by the promotion and practice of forgiveness. In other words, the goal of reading was to form a forgiving church. *The Examinations of Anne Askew* itself and the critical discussion around her texts are two manifestations of the productive tension, inherent in many early modern and Reformation texts, between readers and writers who were simultaneously authorized individuals on the one hand and members of congregations and communities on the other. This essay simply focuses on the latter term.[4]

"Forgeve them that violence": Askew's Forgiveness as Rhetorical Coup

The colophon of *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe, latelye martyred in Smythfelde, by the wycked Synagoge of Antichrist, with the Elucydacyon of Johan Bale* indicates that the text was first printed in 1546 in the city of "Marpurg" (Askew 71). The colophons of a number of books by William Tyndale indicate that they were printed in that same city. Moreover, both Tyndale's texts and *The first examinacyon* were printed using the same type: the so-called Marburg type. John N. King argues that Bale wanted to give the appearance that the book was printed in Marburg (even though it probably wasn't) in order to present himself "as the apostolic successor to William Tyndale, who had issued a series of Antwerp imprints under 'Marburg' colophons" (King 72).[5] Clearly, Bale wanted to give his readers the impression that this text would be a continuation of the work by Tyndale.

Tyndale, Bale, and Foxe all participated in the project of demarcating the boundaries of the true church. Tyndale, as we have seen, wanted to discredit the Church of Rome as the arbiter of the insider-outsider divide, giving the authority instead to Bible-reading Christians who lived in godly communities defined by its network of reciprocal forgiveness. He even calls the pope the antichrist, as Luther does. Bale constructs his knowledge project within a commentary on Revelation called *The Image of Both Churches*. Similarly, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* is concerned with showing that a true remnant always existed in England throughout the reign of the Church of Rome and that reformist martyrs are genuine Christians.

In other words, each of these writers was occupied with determining who was an insider and who was an outsider. This determination necessarily entailed establishing and validating a protocol for making knowledge—which had to be defined in contradistinction to Roman or Anglo-Catholic means of making knowledge. Fundamentally, this knowledge project was about establishing one side as genuinely forgiven and the other side as self-interested and antichristian pretenders. Of course, one of the battlegrounds on which the Reformation was fought was the Sacrament of Penance. More broadly, however, this conflict reveals that forgiveness, knowledge production, and community are all imbricated.

Askew was fully a participant in the battle over forgiveness, knowledge production, and community. The authorities who were trying to arrest her wanted to discover her confessional loyalties not simply as an end in itself but also to learn about the confessional loyalties of Katherine Parr and her circle, especially considering Henry

VIII's poor health and the religio-political maneuvering around the time of his death.[6] In other words, the authorities were trying to discover what group affiliation Askew and her associates had. Askew's strategy was to occupy the rhetorical space where reformist thought and Anglo-Catholic thought overlapped, which entailed a good deal of vagueness, silence, and irony, as other commentators have already noted.[7] Still, her *Examinations* give a number of clear indications that she is loyal to the reformist means of producing knowledge and the reformist community, including her suspicion for confessors and her willingness to forgive her interrogators. Through these statements and intimations, she suggests that her interrogators are not part of her community and that they are a part of the Other group against which her group defines itself.

Askew locates herself within a community, one that she defines in contradistinction to the Anglo-Catholic Church. She begins her *first examinacyon* by saying that she wrote it to "satisfie your expectation, good people" (19). Various texts in her *lattre examinacyon* are also addressed, explicitly or implicitly, to others: there is a letter to her more conservative friend about the Eucharist at the beginning (88); "The summe of my examynacyon afore the kynges counsell at Grenewyche" begins by responding to "Your request" (91); and there is a letter to John Lassells, a reformer whom she addresses as her "frynde most derelye beloved in God," in which she reassures him that she has not recanted (133).[8] In her *first examinacyon*, she gives us an indication of which clergy she esteems to be part of her community. When asked if she would like to confess to a priest, she asks "that I myght have one of these iii. that is to saye, doctor Crome, syr Gyllam, or Huntyngton" (33). In her footnotes, Beilin says that,

although it is unclear who “syr Gyllam” (Sir William) is, Doctor Edward Crome and John Huntingdon were both reformists, although Crome recanted.[9] Moreover, Edmund Bonner (“my lorde of London”) accuses Askew of reading a “boke . . . of [reformer] Johan frithes makynge,” a charge Askew never denies in favor of simply accusing Bonner of condemning the book before he knew what it said (40, 42).[10] Finally, we should note that the reason Askew was racked was “bycause I confessed no ladyes nor gentyllwomen to be of my opynyon” (127). Taken together, these passages indicate that neither Askew nor her interrogators saw her as an entirely autonomous, free-floating agent; rather, both saw her as a part of a community.[11] It is worth noting that the doctrinal positions (choosing to confess directly to God, perhaps with guidance from clergy, and denying transubstantiation in particular) are reformist positions and not entirely original to Askew, although she has certainly internalized the positions because she offers her own expressions of them.[12] The point is that *The Examinations* is an emphatically social and communal text.[13] The broader context of the examinations includes two communities. The examinations are not simply a standoff between an institution and a rogue individual.

That’s not to say that Askew’s agency as an authoritative speaker is not at issue during her examinations, however. I would simply restructure the terms of the dispute. Instead of framing it as Askew’s reading of scripture and Askew’s voice against those of the Anglo-Catholic establishment (or, conversely, those of Bale and Foxe), it may also be productively framed as a dispute over whether Askew has the agency to choose which community is the true church—and if she has the authority to defend that choice by

apologizing for reformist doctrine and by denigrating Anglo-Catholic doctrine. In short, the disagreement is over whether she has the ability to choose a mode of meaning making and to practice it.

A broad issue that separates reformist from Anglo-Catholic is the means by which God's forgiveness is communicated to human beings: is it mediated and regulated by the institution of the church, or is it communicated directly to individual Christians? This top-down theoretical question also changes bottom-up human behavior. If God's forgiveness is mediated through the institution of the church, then it makes sense for human beings to approach the church as the mediators and arbiters of forgiveness. If God's forgiveness is communicated directly to individual Christians, however, then it makes sense for Christians to seek forgiveness directly from God in a manner unregulated by any human institutions. Of course, as Tyndale and many other reformers pointed out, the Church of Rome had certainly leveraged its position as the arbiter of forgiveness to its own financial and political advantage, and Bale suggests that the Anglo-Catholic Church is guilty of that same abuse. In Askew's situation, her interrogators cannot appear to be anything but self-interested, since it is their own authority that they are appealing to and their own power and interests that they are protecting. Because Askew identified as a Protestant insider and suffered torture and execution as a result, Bale and Foxe memorialize her as the icon of the true Christian, the evidence that their side of the argument is the decent, authentically Christian side and that the other side is the murderous, idolatrous side. My main point, then, is that Askew

and her *Examinations* become the evidence of the dividing line between the two sides, the place where black meets white.

Askew performs this selflessness by closing her *lattre examinacyon* with a prayer for her persecutors in which she asks God to forgive them:

> And lorde I hartelye desyre of the, that thu wylte of thy most mercyfull goodnesse, forgeve them that vyolence, whych they do and have done unto me. Open also thu their blynde hartes, that they maye herafter do that thynge in thy syght, whych is onlye acceptable before the. And to sett fourth thy veryte aryght, without all vayne fantasyes of synnefull men. So be it. O lorde, so be it. By me Anne Askewe. (147-48)

Of course, there is plenty of precedent for a Christian martyr to pray for those that harm her. Bale points to Steven and Christ as two of her forebears in this respect. However, Askew's request that God forgive her persecutors is also something of a rhetorical coup. After all, in order to ask God to forgive someone else, one must be in the right and must have a right relationship with God. Conversely, those on the other side of the situation must be in the wrong and must not have a right relationship with God, which Askew states outright when she asks God to "open also thu their blynde hartes" and to keep them from "vayne fantasyes of synnefull men." Askew's reconstruction of the rhetorical situation is striking, especially considering that she was interrogated and tortured by a room full of clergy. She sets herself up as the innocent party and the true Christian with access to the spiritual truth, and her opponents as the damned and also the fantasy-harboring sinful men. Through this request for forgiveness, Askew begins at rock

bottom, the least powerful position in the room, and yet seizes the most powerful position in the situation. Offering forgiveness indeed entails knowledge and community in this situation—no longer are the clergy in the room privy to spiritual truth, and they're not even true Christians anymore. With one little prayer for forgiveness, Askew sets the 16th-century Church of England on its ear.[14]

Throughout her *Examinations*, Askew challenges the knowledge production of her interrogators and offers contrasting readings, and her forgiving selflessness, as contrasted with her opponents' violent selfishness, serves as the basis for her self-assertion. The Eucharist is undoubtedly the main focus of her interrogation. However, also at issue is confession, which will be more significant for our purposes. In either case, Askew attacks the doctrine and practice of the Anglo-Catholic Church by reinterpreting scripture.[15] In other words, she establishes herself as an authority without any need of their hermeneutical guidance—but she still locates herself within a community, just not the same community as her interrogators. Ultimately, she assumes that the officials' attempt to produce knowledge through confession will be harmful to her, not just benignly misguided.

Confession comes up twice in *The first examinacyon* and once in *The lattre examinacyon*. On the first occasion, we see how Askew views confession in theory. A member of the quest asks Askew what she thinks of confession. She responds, "I answered hym my meanynge, whych was as Saynt James sayth, that everye man ought to acknowlege hys fautes to other, and the one to praye for the other" (23). With its conspicuous lack of any references to priests, contrition, satisfaction, or absolution,

Askew views confession as best practiced outside of the institution of the Church in an unregulated sphere. The practice as she describes it here sounds rather informal, a thing Christians do to support one another, not a sacrament that sets a confessant right with God. It sounds far more like a tool for the congregation than a practice within the remit of the episcopacy. Still, Askew's statement is sufficiently vague—strategically vague—enough both to satisfy the quest that she recognizes confession and also to leave room for the reformist view that true efficacious confession takes place between a Christian and God without the mediation of a priest.

On the second occasion, we learn more about how she views confession practically. The topic arises during a conversation between Askew and an unnamed priest.

> Thirdly he asked me, if I were shryven, I tolde hym no. Then he sayd, he wolde brynge one to me, for to shryve me. And I tolde hym, so that I myght have one of these iii. that is to saye, doctor Crome, syr Gyllam, or Huntyngton, I was contented, bycause I knewe them to be men of wysdome. As for yow or anye other, I will not dysprayse, bycause I knowe ye not. Then he sayd, I wolde not have yow thynke, but that I or an other that shall be brought yow, shall be as honest as they. For if we were not, ye maye be sure, the Kynge wolde not suffer us to preache. Then I answered by the saynge of Salomon. By commonynge with the wyse, I maye lerne wysdome, but by talkynge with a fole, I shall take skathe, Prover. i. (32-33)

One's status as a state-appointed priest offers little evidence for Askew that the person is wise or honest. The institution does not inspire confidence in her; only first hand knowledge of the person's character will do. Perhaps the most telling portion of this passage, however, is "the saynge of Salomon." Askew is probably citing Proverbs 13:20, not Proverbs 1 (although, to be fair, Proverbs 1 discusses the same theme): "He that goeth in the co*m*pany of wyse men, shalbe wyse: but who so is a companyon of fooles, shalbe hurte" (xxi^{r}).[16] This reference indicates how highly she regards Roman clergy: she believes them to be no more than fools. Moreover, she does not expect to receive forgiveness or absolution from the priest. Rather, she expects to be harmed by the practice, perhaps because she suspects that the priest will misuse the information she gives him. In short, this passage shows that the status of the institution is what is at issue in this passage. The priest takes it to be a mark of validation to exist within the institution of the Church, but Askew takes it to be a mark of foolishness.

On the third occasion, which takes place during *The lattre examinacyon*, Askew is more direct and unequivocal in her dismissal of confession. "After that they wylled me to have a prest. And than I smyled. Then they asked me, if it were not good? I sayd, I wolde confesse my fawtes to God. For I was sure that he wolde heare me with faver" (112). In this passage, Askew asserts her ability to directly address God without the mediation of the Church, and, by doing so, she also asserts her right relationship with God and indirectly challenges and undermines the relationship between God and the Church of England. Of course, this statement marks her unequivocally as a member of the reformist community. Furthermore, her statement, "For I was sure that *he* wolde

heare me with faver" implies that the priest will not hear her with favor. Askew thus reiterates her suspicion that confession is not just devoid of eternal significance but that it is also potentially harmful. Askew thus asserts her devotion to a particular body of knowledge and a particular understanding of communal ties.

These three passages indicate that Askew does not see the Anglo-Catholic clergy as existing in the same network of reciprocal forgiveness with her, the importance of which we discussed in chapter 1. Moreover, Askew views the sacrament of penance as potentially harmful, echoing Tyndale's suspicions that the Church of Rome used confession to blackmail confessants. The various officials and Askew exist within different communities with different bodies of knowledge, and their differing means for understanding and practicing forgiveness illustrate that point. Where Anglo-Catholics see forgiveness as mediated through confession by the church, Askew, citing James, argues that forgiveness exists between people who pray for one another.

Askew prefers for all of the proceedings to happen publicly instead of within the confines of private confession. She even declines to speak privately to Church officials, much less allow them to hear her confession. "Then the Byshopp [of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner] sayd, he wolde speake with me famylyarlye. I sayd, so ded Judas whan he unfryndelye betrayed Christ. Then desyered the Byshopp to speake with me alone. But that I refused. He asked me, whye? I sayd, that in the mouthe of two or thre wytnesses everye matter shuld stande, after Christes and Paules doctryne. Math. 18 and 2. Cor. 13" (97). On one level, this confrontation is clearly about community membership. Askew's parallel between Judas and Gardiner challenges his Christian

credentials and labels him a wolf in sheep's clothing, a vicious outsider posing as an insider. More than that, however, Askew's reluctance to speak with Gardiner privately reveals her anxiety about power. Whatever else it may be, confession is a ritual with immense power. In performing the sacrament, sins are absolved (disagreements about the mechanics of how exactly that happens aside), and confessants are effectively transformed as a result. A person's identity and classification are shaped in the confessional pew. Specifically, confessants submit themselves to the identity and classification that arises between themselves and their confessors. Similarly, by refusing to speak with Gardiner "famylyarlye," preferring instead to speak in front of witnesses, Askew recognizes that her identity and classification are at stake, and she asserts her own capacity for defining her identity and classification with respect to the divine. She is the prototypical reformed Christian who, armed with scripture and supported by others like her, claims the ability to describe objectively her relationship with the spiritual realm rather than relying on the dictates and decisions of the Church.

In order to validate her forgiveness of her interrogators, she also has to demonstrate that they and their community are not the legitimate forgiven community. Toward that end, not only does she refuse to submit herself to the authority of the Church, she also assumes the authority to scrutinize the Church in the way that the Church officials want to scrutinize her, as demonstrated by her criticism of her sentence. "Then the Byshopp sayd, I shuld be brente. I answered, that I had serched all the scriptures yet coulde I never fynde there that eyther Christ or hys Apostles put anye creature to deathe. Well, well, sayd I, God wyl laughe your threttenynges to scorne, Psal.

2. Then was I commaunded to stande a syde" (98). Askew refuses to accept the interpellation of the agents of state power. Instead, she claims authority as an agent capable of turning the mirror of scripture on the state itself and the Church itself. Askew's reading of her sentence is multifaceted, encompassing a particular understanding of text, spirit, and the material plane. In citing Psalm 2 and using that text to make an inference about God's impending judgment on the proceedings, she marshalls passages from scripture to support a particular understanding of the spiritual. She uses this understanding of text and spirit to make determinations about the role of the church in the world, and she judges the Anglo-Catholic Church against that understanding. The order to "stande a syde" recognizes her claim of agency and attempts to relegate her to the sidelines again in an attempt to designate her a spectator instead of a player. However, it is no more than an assertion of pure power without confronting the substantive claims Askew has made.

In fact, Askew's hermeneutics are inseparable from her refusal to submit herself to state authority, and, as we will see, forgiveness is at the center of her reformist hermeneutics. Immediately following Askew's assertion that neither Jesus nor the apostles performed executions, Askew includes her account of a conversation about the interpretation of the Eucharist. William Pagett asks her "how I coulde avoyde the verye wordes of Christ. Take, eate. Thys is my bodye, whych shall be broken for yow" (99). Askew responds that this passage is properly understood to employ figurative language:

> I answered, that Christes meanynge was there, as in these other places of the scripture. I am the dore, Joan. 10. I am the vyne, Joan. 15. Beholde the lambe of

> God, Joan. 1. The rocke stone was Christ. 1 Cor. 10. and soch other lyke. Ye maye not here (sayd I) take Christ for the materyall thynge that he is sygnyfyed by. For than ye wyll make hym a verye dore, a vyne, a lambe, and a stone, cleane contrarye to the holye Ghostes meanynge. All these in dede do sygnyfye Christ, lyke as the breade doth hys bodye in that place. And though he ded saye there. Take, eate thys in remembraunce of me. Yet ded he not byd them hange up that breade in a boxe, and make it a God, or bowe to it. (99)

Askew proves herself to be an adept Augustinian hermeneut, using other passages of scripture that are clearly figurative to make the case that a less transparent passage is figurative as well. Moreover, she accuses Pagett and other Anglo-Catholics of mistaking the signifier for the referent, which forms the basis of their "slenderlye conceyved fantasye" conceived of "manns ydell wytte" and devoid of God's "heavenlye veryte" (101). In short, she accuses her interrogators of being inept hermeneuts who misunderstand signification.

Her critique of Anglo-Catholic hermeneutics leads her to accuse her interrogators of idolatry resulting from an improper understanding of signification—an improper understanding that we will see, after a modest detour, is amended by forgiveness. After she refuses to sign a "byll of the sacrament" that is presented to her, she writes her own confession of faith (102). In this confession, she compares the clause "Thys is my bodye" with Jesus' declaration that he would "breake downe the temple, and in iii. dayes buylde it up agayne" in John 2 (103). Askew notes that Jesus was referring to "hys owne bodye by the temple . . . not the stonye temple it selfe" (103). Importantly, she believes

that her Anglo-Catholic opponents cannot correctly understand the Eucharist because their hermeneutics are clouded or, to be more precise, veiled: "Although there be manye that can not perceyve the true meanynge therof, for the vayle that Moses put over hys face before the chyldren of Israel, that they shuld not se the clerenesse therof, Exo. 34. and 2. Cor. 3. I perceyve the same vayle remayneth to thys daye. But whan God shall take it awaye, than shall these blynde men se" (104). Exodus 34 contains the account of the second giving of the law, after Moses destroys the first tablets during the golden calf incident. As he comes down from Mount Sinai to the Israelites, they see that his face is shining. For that reason, he puts a veil over his face when he talks to them but removes it when he talks to God. In 2 Corinthians 3, a passage of central importance for our purposes, Paul argues (1) that the veil of Moses prevents his Jewish contemporaries from seeing the glory of God, (2) that Jesus removes this veil, and (3) that the ministry of Jesus and his apostles brings righteousness and transforms people into the image of God. Moreover, Paul indicates in 2 Corinthians 3:14 that the veil of Moses amounts to a misinterpretation of text: "But their myndes were blinded. For untill this daye remayneth the same coueri*n*g untake*n* a waye in the lecture of the olde testament, which vayle shalbe put a waye in Christ" (lxxii[r]). In short, Paul is making the case that Jews cannot see that the Hebrew Scriptures point to Christ as the unique means by which God communicates his glory and righteousness to human beings, which communication transforms them into his image.

Similar to Paul's condemnation of Jews, Askew is accusing her Anglo-Catholic interrogators of misinterpretation and misunderstanding signification. She begins her

"confessyon" with "I fynde in the Scriptures," making the claim that the text of scripture offers the most authoritative information about Christ (103). Furthermore, in the second half of her "confessyon," she cites the tale of Bel in Daniel 14 (not generally included in modern Protestant Bibles) and Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 as support for the claim that God "dwelleth in nothynge materyall," which shows that she believes that her Anglo-Catholic opponents have misunderstood the relationship between the physical and the spiritual (106). Therefore, on the one hand, Askew accuses her Anglo-Catholic opponents of placing the spiritual referent within a material object. On the other hand, she insists that the spiritual referent is separate from the signifier and that the text and the Eucharist each point to the spiritual referent, but she does not suggest that either fully embodies it.

Askew's critique of Anglo-Catholic hermeneutics is very Tyndalian. Significantly, 2 Corinthians 3 is also where Paul says that the letter kills but the spirit brings life. Askew refers directly to the distinction between the letter and spirit in the letter printed in her *lattre examinacyon* that presents the reformist view of communion to a friend who holds a conservative view of the Eucharist. This allusion to 2 Corinthians 3 is illuminating because of the biblical references after it:

> Therfor it is mete, that in prayers we call unto God, to grafte in our foreheades, the true meanynge of the holye Ghost concernynge thys communyon. For S. Paule doth saye that the letter slayeth. The sprete is it onlye that geveth lyfe. 2. Cor. 3. Marke wele the vi. Chaptre of Johan, where all is applyed unto faythe. Note also the fort chaptre of S. Paules first epistle to the Corynthes, and in the

> ende therof ye shall fynde playnelye, that the thynges whych are seane are temporall, but they that are not seane are everlastynge. Yea, loke in the third chaptre to the Hebrues, and ye shall fynde that Christ as a sonne and no servaunt, ruleth over hys howse (whose howse are we, and not the dead temple) if we holde fast the confydence and rejoysynge of that hope of the ende. Wherfor as sayth the holye Ghost. To daye if yow shall heare hys voyce, harden not your hartes, &c, Psalm 94. (90-91)

The four biblical allusions we will need to examine are John 6, 2 Corinthians 4 (not 1 Corinthians 4), Hebrews 3, and Psalm 95 (not 94, according to the Great Bible's numbering). All of these passages direct the reader's attention to spiritual things instead of physical things. Therefore, when Askew cites 2 Corinthians 3, she is actually directing her audience away from words themselves and towards spiritual meaning.

Before exploring Askew's allusions, it will be helpful for me to reiterate my point and to establish the stakes of my discussion. Askew indicates that spiritual meaning is directly and literally apprehensible from signs. Tony Lilly argues that Askew's hermeneutic is contradictory: "It turns out that Askew's justification here *for* figurative reading (of the Eucharistic 'body' and 'blood') is based on a reading *of* figures (the metaphors 'letter' and 'spirit') as if they were literal" (85). Since Paul uses "letter" in 2 Corinthians 3 to refer metonymically to the Jewish law, Lilly would have us believe, then Askew is interpreting a metaphor as if it were literal in order to interpret literal language as if it were a metaphor. I argue, by contrast, that Askew's hermeneutic is best understood in a Tyndalian vein. Askew and Tyndale are not searching for which

"letters" are figurative and which signify literally (as we would understand the word "literal"). Rather, they see all of the words of scripture as literally signifying spiritual meaning. They are not looking for one set of words that operate by one set of rules ("literal") and another set of words that operate by a different set of rules ("figurative"). To put that idea another way, they are not trying to differentiate between words that signify things, words that signify abstractions, or words that signify things metaphorically, at a remove. For both Tyndale and Askew, in fact, all signs refer literally to the spirit—that is their first signification. A secondary concern might be the specific means by which each sign signifies, but the first and most global concern about signification is not at issue. The error that they are wary of, then, is stopping at a signifier (whether it be a word, the Eucharist, or the law) without reaching the spiritual referent. This, therefore, is Askew's argument: just as Paul argues that his Jewish contemporaries stop at the law without seeing that it points to Christ, Askew's Anglo-Catholic contemporaries stop at the words of scripture or the physical Eucharist without reaching the spiritual referent. The contrasting modes of reading for Askew and Tyndale are spiritual reading and idolatrous reading, not literal reading and figurative reading. And the tests of spiritual reading are whether the interpretation promotes forgiveness and the hermeneut practices forgiveness, not what the hermeneut does with any given figure.

Askew's first allusion is John 6, an eventful chapter. It includes the account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus telling the Jews that he is the bread of life, which is greater than manna. The gist of the chapter is that Jesus' various audiences, including his disciples,

mistake the sign for the referent. Jesus performs miracles to reveal who he is (which the five thousand recognize initially), and he gives them physical food to illustrate that he himself is eternal food. He says in verse 40 that "And this is y*e* will of him that sent me: that euery one which seeth the sonne and beleueth on him, haue euerlasting lyfe"—in other words, it is Jesus' purpose to inspire faith and belief in his audience (xxxix[v]). However, instead of recognizing the referents of Jesus' signs, his audience only ends up wanting more of the signs themselves: "Jesus a*n*swered the*m* and sayde: verely verely I saye unto you: ye seke me, not because ye sawe the myracles but because ye dyd eate of y*e* loaues, and were fylled. Laboure not for the meate which perissheth, but for that which endured unto euerlastinge lyfe, which meate the sonne of man shall geue unto you. For him hath God the father sealed" (xxxix[r]).

Askew's second allusion is probably to the end of 2 Corinthians 4, not 1 Corinthians 4. Verses 17-18 of 2 Corinthians 4 say, "For oure tribulacion which is momentary and light prepareth an excedi*n*ge & an eternall wa[yght?] of glorye unto us, whill we loke not on the thinges which are sene, but on the thinges which are not sene. For y*e* thinges which are sene, are te*m*porall: but thynges which are not sene, are eternall" (lxxii[r]). (Askew, if you recall, cites Paul's statement that "thynges whych are seane are temporall, but they that are not seane are everlastynge.") As with John 6, the reader's attention is directed away from visible, temporal, physical things and towards spiritual things.

Furthermore, Hebrews 3 (Askew's third allusion) says that its readers will be Jesus' household if, as Askew says, "we holde fast the confydence and rejoysynge of

that hope of the ende"—again, directing our attention to spiritual things and things to come. Hebrews 3 cites Psalm 95, Askew's fourth allusion. Psalm 95 includes the verse (in Askew's words), "To daye if yow shall heare hys voyce, harden not your hartes" (Askew 91). (This quotation is the reason I conclude that Askew intended to direct the reader's attention to Psalm 95, not Psalm 94.) Psalm 95 says that its readers should not harden their hearts as the Israelites did "as in y*e* prouokacio*n* & as i*n* y*e* date of te*m*ptacyon in the wildernes" (xix^{v}). Instead of "prouokacio*n*" and "te*m*ptacyon," many translations use the words Meribah and Massah, referring to the account in Exodus 17 of how the Israelites lost faith in the wilderness because they had no water.[17] Therefore, Hebrews 3 and Psalm 95 also direct their readers' attention, either directly or by allusion, away from physical and temporal things and towards eternal things. As with John 6 and 2 Corinthians 4, these chapters direct readers to interpret all material circumstances in light of faith. Whether the reader's circumstances are analogous to the 5,000 or the Israelites in Meribah and Massah, the reader should interpret those circumstances as leading to faith in God.

We may now return to 2 Corinthians 3, keeping in that all of the other biblical allusions direct readers' attention away from the physical and temporal and towards the spiritual, the eternal, or things to come. Viewed in this light, it would appear that "the letter" is also among physical and temporal things, since it is defined against the spirit. Askew, then, makes the argument that her Anglo-Catholic interrogators are analogous to the Jews that Paul criticizes. Each group has the words, Askew implies, but neither see that Christ is the end of those words. She is therefore directing her reader away from the

impression that the words are the things. The word is not the thing, Askew suggests; the spirit is the thing.

Askew's understanding of 2 Corinthians 3 has much in common with Tyndale's understanding of 2 Corinthians 3. In Chapter 1, I discussed how Tyndale interprets 2 Corinthians 3 (1) against St. Thomas Aquinas and (2) in the development of his (Tyndale's) concept of literal biblical interpretation, which I call the literal-spiritual sense. As we saw, Aquinas argues, first, that the literal sense denotes when words signify things and that the spiritual sense is tied to the allegorical, tropological, or anagogical interpretation of those things that are signified by the words. He goes on to argue, second, that 2 Corinthians 3 indicates that the literal sense kills but the spiritual sense brings life. In short, Aquinas says that proper biblical hermeneutics must move from word to thing to spirit. Conversely, Tyndale argues that Paul is not referring to all words when he says that the letter kills; rather, he is referring metonymically to the law, which is, after all, what Moses is receiving when he must be veiled. Tyndale interprets 2 Corinthians 3 through the framework of the law and the gospel. He maintains that all of the words of scripture contain either the law (and death) or the gospel (and life) and, moreover, that these spiritual meanings are contained directly in the words themselves. There is no need to move from word to thing to spirit; the words themselves point to the spiritual narrative. Tyndale argues that the literal sense of scripture points directly to this spiritual narrative and that those who cannot see this spiritual signification misunderstand not just the text but also the cosmos.

Askew maintains that the Eucharist signifies Christ. Since the sign points directly to that referent, it is not necessary for communicants to move from word to thing (Eucharist) and from there to spirit. In this instance, the veil in 2 Corinthians 3, then, is the insertion of a physical thing into the hermeneutical process, making a one-step process into a two-step process. Like Tyndale's critique of Roman hermeneutics, Askew's critique of Anglo-Catholic hermeneutics suggests that this hermeneutical error leads to a misunderstanding of the cosmos, both physically and spiritually. A reference to 2 Corinthians 3 also suggests that Askew sees a hermeneutical error as the origin of the Anglo-Catholic misunderstanding of the cosmos. In Askew's reading, it has led the Anglo-Catholic Church to mistake the physical thing or the words themselves for the spiritual referent. They only see the veil, Askew suggests, not Christ. As with Tyndale, it is impossible to separate Askew's understanding of text from her understanding of the physical plane and the spiritual plane.

In an effort to correct her Anglo-Catholic interrogators, Askew very clearly takes on the mantle of a prophet, as Diane Watt has argued. Her prophetic speech is significant because, as Tyndale tells us in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, the word "prophet" "in the new testament is taken for an expounder and an interpreter of scripture" (297). Askew thus reinterprets scripture in order to convey to the Anglo-Catholic clergy the word of God concerning the nature of the relationship between text, the physical world, and spirit. In quoting Stephen's sermon, she cites Acts 7:48-51, including one passage that says that God "wyll be in nothynge that is made with handes of men" and another condemning "styffnecked people . . . that wyll alwayes resyst the

holye Ghost" (106). However, she stops short of citing verse 52, which says, "Whych of the Prophetes haue not youre fathers persecuted?" (xlix^{v}). She goes on to cite Luke 21 and its prophecy that followers of Christ will be thrown in prison. However, Luke 21:15 also includes the promise that "I wyll geue you a mouth & wysdome, where agaynste, all your aduersaries shall not be able to speake nor resist" (xxxiiii^{r-v}). Of course, a prophet is one who delivers the word of God to others, and thus this promise from Christ that he will speak through those who have been imprisoned is a promise of the gift of prophecy. She also cites chapters from three prophetic books: Amos 6 (which accuses the elite of corrupting the law for their own gain), Isaiah 59 (which accuses the elites of performing acts of violence and disregarding true judgment), and Hosea 14 (which tells Israel to return to God and predicts that Ephraim will abandon idolatry). In each case, the speaker is a prophet who is delivering the word of God concerning the true path to godliness. By quoting these passages, Askew becomes a prophet by ventriloquy.

In the process of speaking prophetically about the nature of the universe, Askew asks for forgiveness: "Oh forgeve us all our synnes and receyve us gracyouslye. As for the workes of our handes, we wyll nomore call upon them. For it is thu lorde that arte our God. Thu shewest ever mercye unto the fatherlesse" (108). As with her ventriloquy of the prophets, this statement also serves to give information about the cosmos. It suggests that human beings are offenders who can only be incorporated into the communion of saints by an act of forgiveness through God's grace; it suggests that human actions are inadequate to the task of this reincorporation; it suggests that human beings are all inherently sinful; it suggests that Askew believes that she can approach

God directly for forgiveness; and, finally, it suggests that the nature of humanity within the cosmos is that of an offender who must seek forgiveness from God. Rhetorically, this statement allows Askew to emphasize her selflessness and her powerlessness. In essence, Askew corrects her interrogators by showing them that forgiveness is the key to biblical hermeneutics and the nature of the cosmos. That is, her hermeneutic leads her to diminish herself. In her treatment of the Anglo-Catholic hermeneutic, Askew suggests that Anglo-Catholic interpretation leads to vanity and consolidation of power, resulting in unjust condemnation and punishment of the faithful.

Still, Askew's *Examinations* reiterate rather than resolve some of the difficulties inherent in Tyndale's system. Tyndale suggests that performing actions in the appropriate spiritual state was the validation of the actions, not necessarily the actions themselves, which means that the same action can be performed appropriately or inappropriately, depending on the motivations of the agent. Consequently, harming a person in return can be done forgivingly and as punishment or unforgivingly and as vengeance. Moreover, forgiveness can be extended genuinely or it can be done with self-interest. Similarly, Askew must accuse her accusers, which is at odds with her lowly position. It's hard not to see some smugness in Askew's statement that "I understande, the counsell is not a lyttle dyspleased, that it shulde be reported abroade, that I was racked in the towre. They saye now, that they ded there, was but to fear me. Wherby I perceyve, they are ashamed of their uncomelye doynges, and feare moch least the kynges mageste shuld have infourmacyon therof" (134). Further, in her confession, she must assert both her guilt and her innocence:

> I Anne Askewe, of good memorye, although my mercyfull father hath geven me the breade of adversyte, and the water of trouble, yet not so moch as my synnes hath deserved, confesse my selfe here a synner before the trone of hys heavenlye mageste desyerynge hys eternall mercye. And for so moch as I am by the lawe unryghtouslye condempned for an evyll doer concernynge opynyons, I take the same most mercyfull God of myn, whych hath made both heaven and earthe, to recorde, that I holde no opynyons contrarye to hys most holye worde. (138)

Essentially, what she is saying here is that she is a sinner, but she is not guilty of the sin that her interrogators accuse her of—she is supremely confident that she is the true Christian insider and that she is in the right. She lowers herself by describing her sinfulness and then uses that lowly position as a place from which to claim the moral high ground from which she can defend the soundness of her doctrine. She accuses by forgiving. Only the most harmless self-described sinners, the lowest of the low, can claim the moral high ground from which to forgive and therefore judge the impurity of themselves and others.

Askew draws on this lowliness, as made manifest by her selflessness and harmlessness, when she asks God to forgive her interrogators, which she does in three passages.

> I understande, the counsell is not a lyttle dyspleased, that it shulde be reported abroade, that I was racked in the towre. They saye now, that they ded there, was but to fear me. Wherby I perceyve, they are ashamed of their uncomelye doynges, and feare moch least the kynges mageste shuld have infourmacyon

> therof. Wherfor they wolde no man to noyse it. Well, their crueltye God forgeve them. Your hart in Christ Jesu. Fare wele, and praye. (134)

There a second instance in Askew's letter to John Lassells (a passage we have already examined):

> And lorde I hartelye desyre of the, that thu wylte of thy most mercyfull goodnesse, forgeve them that vyolence, whych they do and have done unto me. Open also thu their blynde hartes, that they maye herafter do that thynge in thy syght, whych is onlye acceptable before the. And to sett fourth thy veryte aryght, without all vayne fantasyes of synnefull men. So be it. O lorde, so be it. By me Anne Askewe. (147-48)

The third is in "The Balade whych Anne Askewe made and sange whan she was in Newgate":

> Yet lorde I the desyre
>
> For that they do to me
>
> Lete them not tast the hyre
>
> Of their inyquyte. (150, lines 53-56)

Askew is able to condemn her interrogators because of their "crueltye," their "vyolence," and their "inyquyte." Askew, by contrast, must be harmless and nonviolent. Furthermore, she asserts that she knows God's "veryte aryght," but that her interrogators have only "vayne fantasyes of synnefull men." That is, Askew presents herself as reproducing God's verity instead of her own but her opponents as presenting their own ideas instead of God's verity. Therefore, Askew diminishes herself and accuses her

opponents of aggrandizing themselves and their ideas. Whoever is the most harmless and the most selfless is the most Christian in this rhetorical situation, and Askew proves both by forgiving her opponents. After all, only the harmless person in a situation in which harm has been visited on someone can forgive, and only a selfless person would forgive.[18] Furthermore, this act of forgiveness serves as the ultimate validation of Askew's cosmology and her knowledge of her place in it: it is her place, as a human person within this divinely structured cosmos, to forgive.

"O blessyd woman, and undoubted cytyzen of heaven": Bale's Commentary

Indisputably, a main purpose of Bale's edition of Askew's text is to demonstrate that she is the true Christian and that her interrogators are antichristian.[19] He writes, "Styll are these frutes of inestymable wholsomnesse, declarynge thys woman a most perfyght and innocent membre of Jesus Christ," and, "O blessyd woman, and undoubted cytyzen of heaven" (143, 147). He repeats this same sort of sentiment at least three more times.[20] Since Askew's interrogators have all of the security and prestige of a state-sponsored church behind them, Bale's task is to prove Askew's legitimacy in spite of official condemnation by the agents of state power. His means for this proof are similar to Askew's: he must show that she is selfless and harmless and that her interrogators are selfish and harmful, which Foxe echoes. Jesus' statement in Matthew 7 that "you will know the tree by its fruit" is clearly important to both Bale and Foxe, both of whom cite it in their prefatory material to Askew's *Examinations*, the implications being that the "fruit" of a good tree is suffering and the "fruit" of a bad tree is violence.[21] In Bale's

edition, which will be the focus of this section, the ultimate proof of one's status as a Christian is the ability to read and to act within the appropriate teleological cosmology (oneself, others, God), and this proof has clear affinities with Askew's own account of her *Examinations*.

A key component of existing within this cosmology for Bale is the authenticity and legitimacy of one's repentance. As a sign of true knowledge of one's place within the teleological cosmology, one must genuinely admit their shortcomings to others and to God in an appeal for forgiveness. The hallmarks of a right reader and a true Christian are repentance (seeking forgiveness) and, because of one's lowly position as a person who must seek forgiveness, freely offering forgiveness. Being unrepentant (or impenitent) and withholding forgiveness are the hallmarks of an idolater, one who does not understand the teleological cosmology, the structure and destination of human life. The validation of Askew's penitence and the invalidation of her interrogator's practice of confession go hand-in-hand with the proof that Askew is selfless and harmless and that the Anglo-Catholic interrogators are selfish and harmful.

At the end of *The first examinacyon*, Bale attacks the repentance of Askew's Anglo-Catholic interrogators by challenging their selflessness and harmlessness:

> Here has thu (gentyll reader) the first examynacyon of the faythfull martyr of Christ Anne Askewe wyth my symple elucydacyon upon the same. Wherin thu mayst clerely beholde our Byshoppes and prestes so spirytuallye to be occupyed now a dayes, as is the gredye wolfe that ravenouslye ronneth upon hys praye. For the tyrannouse behaver in their cruell predecessours have they no maner of

> shame. Neyther yet repent they their owne blasphemouse treason agaynst God and hys veryte, what though their most wretched conscyences do daylye accuse them therof. The kyngedome of God, whych is a true faythe in hys worde, or a perfyght knowlege of the gospell, do not they seke to upholde. But vyolentlye they speake yll of it, trouble it, persecute it, chace it, and bannish it, bycause it is of hym and from within Luce 17. The kyngedome of the pope whych cometh with outwarde observacyon of dayes, persones, places, tymes, meates, garmentes, and ceremonyes, they magnyfye above the mone, bycause it is from without, and to their peculiar advauntage in the loyterynge reigne of ydelnesse. (66)

Bale likens the bishops and priests to a "gredye wolfe"; he contends that they do not "repent they their owne blasphemouse treason"; and he argues that they "vyolentlye" persecute "perfyght knowlege of the gospell" for "their peculiar advauntage in the loyterynge reigne of ydelnesse." Thus, he portrays the clergy as selfish, harmful, and unrepentant.

By contrast, Bale portrays Askew as selfless, harmless, and genuinely repentant, which he discusses as he contrasts Askew and Saint Thomas à Beckett. Bale says, "Thys Becket in all hys floryshynge doynges, harkened to the pope, defended hys pompouse kyngedome, supported hys churches excesse, and wretchedlye dyed for the synnefull lybertees of the same" (80). In this passage, Bale leads us to believe that Beckett's sacrifice was for an institution selfishly intent upon political power, or "the synnefull lybertees" and the "excesse" of the "pompouse kyngedome" of the Pope. Bale ascribes an entirely different motivation to Askew: "Anne Askewe and her sort, gave dylygent

hede to their lorde Jesus Christ, sought the kyngedome of heaven in daylye repentaunce, myghtelye detested all ydolatrouse worshyppynges, and in conclusyon suffered most tryumphaunt deathe for the same. . . . The cause of Anne Askewe and her companyons, was neyther madnesse nor moneye, but the onlye sekynge of their lorde God a ryght." (80-81). Bale here ascribes to Askew the proper self-awareness of human sinfulness, saying that she "sought the kyngedome of heaven in daylye repentaunce." Furthermore, he also attributes a sense of selflessness to her when he says that she "myghtelye detested all ydolatrouse worshyppynges," since that suggests that she knows that all signification must tend towards God instead of human beings. Finally, he says outright that she was not motivated by "madnesse nor moneye." In short, Bale's description of the rhetorical situation and the power dynamics of the situation paints Askew as selfless, harmless, and repentant.

In order to validate Askew's repentance and invalidate her interrogators' penitence, Bale must also validate Askew's means for practicing repentance and invalidate Anglo-Catholic confession. When Askew is asked about confession, she says, "I answered hym my meanynge, whych was as Saynt James sayth, that everye man ought to acknowlege hys fautes to other, and the one to praye for the other" (23). Bale glosses this statement thus: "Thys confessyon onlye do, the scripture appoynt us, Jac. 5. as we have offended our neyber: But yf we have offended God, we must sorowfullye acknowlege it before hym. And he (sayth Saynt Johan, 1. Johan. 1. [*sic*] hath faythfullye promysed to forgeve us our synnes, yf we so do, and to clense us from all unryghtousnesse" (23) "Thys confessyon" refers to Askew's description of confession:

"everye man ought to acknowlege hys fautes to other, and the one to praye for the other." Askew's definition of confession and Bale's definition of confession are certainly not identical. Askew's definition here, unlike Bale's definition, does not specify that one person should confess to another only when the first person has offended the second person. However, Askew does say elsewhere that she will confess her sins directly to God, as we have seen, and Bale also says that priests may offer "godlye counsell," but with a caveat: "If the lawe of truthe be in the prestes mouthe, he ys to be sought unto for godlye counsell, Mala. 2. But yf he be a blasphemouse hypocryte or superstycyouse fole, he ys to be shourned as a most pestilent poyson" (23). So while the specifics of their definitions of confession may vary slightly, they agree that confession has a social function but that confession to a priest is not the primary means by which sins are forgiven. Instead, they see confession as existing within a community of Christians, serving to reconcile people to one another or as a means for seeking guidance.

This arrangement assumes that members of Christian communities will have roughly equal power. Some may be in a position to offer counsel, but none have the authority over others to mediate or oversee the forgiveness of sins. Predictably, Askew and Bale both cite scripture as the support for their organization of Christian communities—but, importantly, Bale and Askew are each describing Christian *communities* and not simply how atomized Christian individuals seek forgiveness for their own offenses. Moreover, Askew and Bale each describe Christians as either aiding one another or in a position of supplication.

These passages concerning confession offer a succinct view of at least one possible reformist understanding of confession and at least one possible reformist rejection of Roman confession. The passages suggest that the reformist version of confession exists for the wellbeing of Christians, but that the traditional version is administered by people who are “a most pestilent poyson.” Essentially, the proof of the reformist interpretation of scripture is, once again, in the social effects of the hermeneutic and the character of the hermeneut rather than in the interpretation itself. To be more specific, Bale supports his interpretation by saying that it leads to harmlessness and selflessness, as opposed to the Roman interpretation, which he says is harmful and, as we will see, selfish.

Bale maintains that Askew holds to this communal definition of confession, even when she performs it privately. After she indicates that she “wolde confesse my fawtes to God” instead of a priest and is “condempned without a quest,” Bale reminds us that “prestes of godlye knowlege she ded not refuse,” and that she “instauntlye desyred to be instructed [by ‘prestes of godlye knowlege’], and it was denyed her” (112). Therefore, Bale asks, “What shuld she than els do, but returne unto her lorde God? in whome she knewe to be habundaunce of mercye for all them whych do from the hart repent, Deutro. 30” (112). Bale, like Tyndale, emphasizes a repentant person’s affective or spiritual state as the sine qua non of repentance, which is essentially the contritionist approach to the Sacrament of Penance—that it is the penitent’s contrition and not the sacrament itself that absolves. Ideally, this emotional and spiritual state should be encouraged and guided by Christian community, but Bale says that, instead of godly priests, Askew only had

access to "the other sort of prestes, [and] she ded not amys to laugh both them and their maynteners to scorne" (112).

Bale contrasts this means for understanding forgiveness with his representation of Anglo-Catholic confession upheld by "the other sort of prestes." Again, he frames confession as a selfish and harmful means for winning political power and exploiting the weak. In glossing the priest's offer to provide someone to shrive Askew, Bale first names the priest as an "adversarye" and then compares him to a "ravenynge lyon" intent upon devouring "thys lambe" (33). Second, he says that the priest "tempteth . . . her with Confessyon, whych hath bene soche a bayte of theirs, as hath brought into their nettes and snares the myghtyest prynces of the worlde, both kynges and emprours" (33). Bale, like Tyndale, sees confession as a means of gaining political power by coercing temporal rulers. By the word "tempt," Bale meant that the priest intended to deceive Askew. He goes on to say that the priest used confession to gain information rather than to help her seek absolution: "If she had bene confessed to hym, he had knowne whych waye she had bene bent. If she had utterlye refused confessyon, he had more matter to accuse her of" (33). Bale is suggesting again that the priest has something to gain by the Sacrament of Penance in order to take advantage of the weak and the needy: "But as Esaye sayth. The hypocryte ymagyneth abhomynacyon agaynst God, to famysh the hungrye, and witholde drynke from the thirstye. Yet shall not the eyes of the seynge be dymme, nor the eares of the hearynge be deffe, Esa. 32" (33-34). In Bale's description, the Sacrament of Penance cannot be a genuine form of repentance because "the other sort of prestes" who oversee it practice the sacrament for their own gain and to harm those who need aid—and thus

he supports the reformist interpretation by arguing that it leads to selflessness and harmlessness and that the Anglo-Catholic practice is selfish and harmful.

Askew's act of forgiveness towards her interrogators, according to Bale's gloss at the end of *The lattre examinacyon*, becomes an important proof of her status as a member of the body of Christ and the validation of her hermeneutic. What I intend to show here is that Bale recognizes her act of forgiveness as a rhetorical coup that affords her the most privileged position in her situation. In order to show the sincerity of her forgiveness, he must demonstrate that she is operating properly within the Christian cosmology. He says, "She confessed with David that on God she had cast her care, and that in hym was all her hartes delyght. Psal. 60" (148). Of course, Bale's use of the word "confess" does not refer to a confession as in an admission of guilt but most likely refers to a confession as in a statement of faith. Still, Bale depicts Askew's statement of faith as oriented towards God rather than towards her own interests. He continues, "She desyred hym also, never to fayle her in thys harde conflict, but stronglye to assist her, and in no case to permytt her to be overcommen of the flatterynge worlde, neyther yet to geve place to hys enemyes. And I doubt it not, but these are most evydent sygnes that she was hys faythfull servaunt" (148). Bale shows that his purpose is to validate Askew as God's "faythfull servaunt." The evidence that Bale marshalls includes Askew's selfless devotion (as we saw in the first passage), her suffering (as opposed to the violence employed by the Anglo-Catholics), and her steadfast devotion when the "flatterynge worlde" would have her act in her own interests rather than for God. Bale offers still more evidence that Askew "sheweth the nature of Christes lyvelye membre,

and of a perfyght christen martyr" when he observes that "she desyreth their [her interrogators] hartes to be opened, that they maye trulye beleve and be saved, Acto. 16" (148). Moreover, and most tellingly for our purposes, another piece of evidence pointing to Askew's status is that "she desyreth God to forgeve her enemyes as Christ desyred hym in the tyme of hys passyon, Luce 23. And as holye Steven also ded for the tyme of hys deathe, Acto 7" (148). In her desire that her interrogators' hearts be turned and that they be forgiven, Bale argues that Askew knows the proper order and flow of the universe miraculously structured around forgiveness because she puts others ahead of herself with God as the telos. He refers to Askew's desire as "thys supernaturall affect of charyte" and says that it was given to her "only of the sprete of Christ, whych wylleth not the deathe of a frowarde synner, but rather that he be from hys wyckednesse turned, and so lyve Ezech. 33" (148). Her forgiveness is selfless and an example of the "supernaturall affect of charyte," as opposed to Anglo-Catholic penance, which Bale represents as self-interested, politically motivated, and false. This statement is her rhetorical coup that reflects (or perhaps performs) her spiritual inspiration and purity. For that reason, Bale concludes, "Thus is she a Saynt canonysed in Christes bloude, though she never have other canonysacyon of pope, prest, nor Byshopp" (148).

* * *

One of the issues inherent in *The Examinations of Anne Askew* is certainly an assertion of the powers of the individual—the power to read and seek forgiveness outside of the institutional authority of the church. However, reading *The Examinations*

through the lens of forgiveness also shows that the situation playing out here is much more than the authority of the individual versus the authority of the Church.

For one thing, Askew and Bale each suggest that the mark of a genuinely authorized reader is the diminution of self. These readers will seek forgiveness (directly from God and from those they have offended) and freely offer forgiveness to those who have offended them. Bale and Askew contrast these selfless readers with the institution of the Church and the clergy who claim authority for themselves to dictate the terms of the forgiveness of others. Bale and Askew consistently depict this institution and these officers as self-interested, greedy, and violent. In other words, Askew and Bale represent them as trying to afford themselves the most power in any given situation. The authorized reformist means for claiming power is actually through diminishing oneself: admitting one's shortcomings and flaws and seeking forgiveness.

For another thing, Askew and Bale consistently imagine the authorized Christian reader as existing within a community of like-minded Christians. Reading is here, just as we saw in Tyndale's work, authorized or challenged in a community setting, not simply a private, atomizing activity. Bale praises Askew as a person who is quick to seek guidance from learned clergy but also quick to judge clergy with learning considered by the other members of Askew's community to be illegitimate. Askew treats her interrogators as agents of an Other, hostile community. Bale wants to prove that Askew exists within the proper, selfless, harmless community. Moreover, our first point, the diminution of self, serves as the proof of one's membership within the proper, selfless, harmless community—and, importantly, these character traits also take a central position

alongside (and perhaps eclipsing) the reading practices and doctrinal positions that Askew takes. As with Tyndale, Askew and Bale perform a political analysis of the Anglo-Catholic institution as much as a textual or scholarly analysis. Askew and Bale assume Tyndale's cosmology in their description of the power dynamics inherent to this community: each member must put others ahead of themselves and God ahead of everything. By contrast, they describe their opponents as claiming authority for themselves, of putting themselves before others, and by using violent means to do so. Therefore, Askew and Bale suggest that their authorities are going against the flow of nature and committing idolatry as a result. The contrasting natures of the reformist community and the Anglo-Catholic community (in Bale's description) are Bale's proof that the hermeneutics of the reformist community are legitimate and that the hermeneutics of the Anglo-Catholics are illegitimate.

More than a standoff between the authorized individual and the authorized institution, this situation involves complicated power dynamics, specifically with regard to knowledge production and to community. The terms of these power dynamics, from the perspective of the reformists, ironically afford power to those selves that are most selfless and the least likely to use violence to defend or assert their rights or authority. The most powerful are, in a few words, those who are most ready to seek and give forgiveness.

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[1] Such assumptions often come to the surface in considerations of early modern reading. Take, for example, this statement from James Simpson's Book *Burning to Read*: "Even more profoundly, the Lutheran moment has left a deep commitment to the liberties and heroism of individual conscience informed by its *reading*. No longer blocked and oppressed by a mediating institution, the individual Christian is finally able to read the Biblical text for him- or herself. Given the intimate connection between

reading and liberty, a connection that underwrites all sites of reading, both professional and private, in Western culture, the Lutheran moment is hailed as an irreversible advance in the West. Thanks to Luther's brilliant textual polemic and courageous intervention, the private reader can ever afterward read in liberty, discovering the immense liberties and pleasures of private reading unobstructed by oppressive and threatening institutional demands" (23-24). This is, of course, a reading of the Reformation that Simpson ultimately rejects, suggesting that the Reformation produced fundamentalism instead of liberated individuals. In *The Unintended Reformation*, Brad S. Gregory takes a similar approach to reading in the Reformation. He suggests that the reformers moved away from an institutional model of reading to a more individual model, using *sola scriptura* as the means to create consensus. Gregory ultimately argues that scripture alone created pluralism instead of consensus (and that reason alone also proved to be unable to create consensus during the Enlightenment).

[2] See "Anne Askew, John Bale, and Protestant History" by Thomas Betteridge; "The Death of the Author (and the Appropriation of Her Text): The Case of Anne Askew's *Examinations*" by Kimberly Anne Coles; "Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'" by Thomas S. Freeman and Sarah Elizabeth Wall; "Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint" by Theresa D. Kemp; "Framing the Reformation Woman Writer: John Bale's Prefaces to Askew's *Examinations*" by Patricia Pender; "The Double Life of Anne: John Bale's *Examinations* and *Diue Anne Vitam*" by Oliver Wort; and *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* by Diane Watt. Also relevant here are "Performing Sanctity in Late Medieval England: Parish Guilds, Saint's Plays, and the *Second Nun's Tale*" by Catherine Sanok; "Gender and the Rhetoric of Martyrdom in Jean Crespin's *Histoire des vrays tesmoins*" by Nikki Shepardson; and "Creating the Image of a Martyr: John Porter, Bible Reader" by Ronald E. Shields and James H. Forse. These three pieces all illustrate how stories about martyrs, especially those about women martyrs, can be appropriated and distorted in order to support an ideology, even one that can be seen as antithetical to the principles for which the martyr suffered.

[3] See "Authenticity and Excess in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*" by Clare Costley King'oo; "Reading Bale Reading Askew: Contested Collaboration in *The Examinations*" by Patricia Pender; and "Burning books and burning martyrs in the *Examinations* of Anne Askew" by Kate Roddy. Also relevant here are *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* by Susannah Brietz Monta and "The Emergence of a Feminine Spirituality in the *Book of Martyrs*" by Ellen Macek.

[4] Watt, Gertz-Robinson, and Luckyj demonstrate how different critics have focused either on the individual writer or the social context. Watt writes: "In the Reformation, as in the Middle Ages, the woman who assumed a public role could find herself in conflict with the established Church. Askew's characterization of herself as 'harmless as a dove, wise as a serpent' undermines the conventional portrayal of the pious Protestant woman as chaste, silent and obedient. It is drawn from Scripture and Reformation teaching which emphasizes that women and men are equal before God and that anyone can be transformed by the Spirit. As inspired prophet and preacher, Askew assumed the authority to denounce error and interpret the will of God. Refusing the submissive role traditionally allocated to women, she is portrayed in the the *Examinations* as forthright in her beliefs, and steadfast in her faith. Yet Askew acknowledged her trust in certain male clerics of her sect while she lived, and after her death her text owed its publication and survival to others, who in creating a Protestant martyr, glossed over her powerful and independent personality" (117). Watt, like many other critics, explores here the intersection of Askew's personal voice with the fact that she situates herself within a community and suffers appropriation and distortion even at the hands of those who present themselves as her allies. Gertz-Robinson also addresses this intersection in "Stepping into the pulpit? Women's Preaching in *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *The Examinations of Anne Askew*," although she is more interested in how Askew's speeches constitute preaching, not prophecy: "Both Kempe and Askew seem to be straddling this divide, aware that truth rests in texts of scripture as much as personal revelation, yet eager to represent the efficacy of textual authority within oral, and thus communal contexts. Their narratives entrust the written word within the service of the spoken, casting their teaching not in the formally arranged manner of a treatise, but as a speech made before a public audience" (474). Luckyj, on the other hand, tends to focus on community and the gender of those who Askew is in community with: "Unlike Fell, however, Askew's prime concern is not to justify her own act of speaking and defy Pauline teaching; rather her emphasis shifts away from herself to a

collective of 'poor women,' all presumably (like herself) falsely accused of crimes they never committed (public speaking). . . . Askew herself, however, eschews irony and exemplarity to identify her own plight with that of her gender. Like those 'poor women,' she seeks not to 'preach' but to avoid betraying 'the law' (in her case, the law of the reformed Church). . . . Askew's own account does not indicate that she sought to undermine Paul's teaching; indeed, her reverence for scriptures makes this a most unlikely possibility. Instead, she offers early modern men and women a living testimonial to the complex possibilities inherent in women's silence. . ." (123-24).

[5] Beilin cites *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Reformation* by John N. King in her introduction to the collection of Askew's works. She also cites "Notes on English Books Printed Abroad, 1525-48" by Robert Steele. Steele indicates that a number of texts published by Bale were printed using "the type . . . of the 'Marburg' Press of Tyndale on a new body"; see 230-36 in Steele and xlvi in Beilin's introduction.

[6] See Beilin's introduction to Askew's *Examinations*, pgs. xxvii-xxviii.

[7] See "Feminine Irony and the Art of Linguistic Cooperation in Anne Askew's Sixteenth-Century *Examinacyons*" by Tarez Samra Graban; "Scripted Silence, Reticence, and Agency in Anne Askew's *Examinations*" by Joan Pong Linton; and *'A moving Rhetoricke': Gender and silence in early modern England* by Christina Luckyj.

[8] Beilin's note on Line 1143 notes that Lassells was a reformer. Askew's use of the term "frynde" may be ironic, since it would appear that Lassells has accused her of recanting. The tone of the letter seems perhaps annoyed and defensive.

[9] See Askew, pg. 33, footnotes for lines 351 and 352, and pg. 168, footnotes for line 78 and 79.

[10] Askew records the rest of her conversation with Bonner about her book thus: "Then I asked hym, if he were not ashamed for to judge of the boke before he sawe it within, or yet knewe the truthe therof. I sayd also that soche unadvysed and hastye judgement, is a token apparent of a verye slendre wytt. Then I opened the boke and shewed it hym. He sayd, he thought it had bene an other for he coulde fynde no faulte therin. Then I desyred hym, nomore to be so swyft in judgement, tyll he throughlye knewe the truthe. And so he departed" (42-43). While it is certainly unclear who wrote the book Askew is reading here, I read this exchange as Askew condemning the Anglo-Catholic establishment for condemning reformist thought before they had sufficiently learned what it had to say. Askew suggests that if the authorities only judged her books after they had seen them within, to adapt her phrase, the officials would be forced to conclude that they "coulde fynde no faulte therin." This reading of the conversation also makes the exchange part of a recurring theme of Askew's (and other reformists, to be sure), namely, that Anglo-Catholics are misled by appearances and superficial understandings of text. In short, I suggest that this exchange can be read not to disconfirm that Frith is the author but to indicate that Bonner dismisses it before he knew what it was about simply because it was written by a reformist martyr. In any event, Askew does not deny that it was written by Frith, which allows her to leave open the possibility that she agrees with Frith's work. It seems to me that this exchange is another moment of strategic silence on Askew's part that, much like many of her other moments of silence, allows her to present herself as orthodox in the eyes of the Anglo-Catholics without condemning reformist thought or figures—and, additionally, this specific moment of silence has the benefit of making it look like Bonner has dismissed a book (potentially containing the thought of a reformist figure) before he had studied it.

[11] Likewise, Roddy argues that the idea that scripture or other texts can be transmitted by way of other people (like Askew) shows that even *sola scriptura* depends on community (112).

[12] Some critics disagree. For example, Kemp focuses on "Askew's skill at producing her own theological and scriptural interpretations" (1040).

[13] King'oo's focus on readership also brings the communal nature of *The Examinations* into relief: "In the *first examinacyon*, the text of the letter begins: 'To satisfie your expectation, good people'; Bale states that Askew composed this account 'at the instant desyre of serten faythfull men and women,' intimating that Askew's addressees were the same co-religionists who furnished her with crucial supplies during her incarceration (*first ex.*, A1^{r})" (30).

[14] Of course, since Askew's prayer for her interrogators is an imitation of Christ, this rhetorical approach was fully available to Catholic martyrs as well. In short, there is nothing essentially Protestant

about Askew's act. As Monta reminds us, "people who differed from each other violently in terms of doctrinal precepts held in common key conceptual vocabularies" (30).

[15] In "'Except that they had offended the Lawe': Gender and Jurisprudence in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*," Paula McQuade argues that Askew in her accounts of her interrogations also draws attention to the illegality of her treatment. For more on the legal dimensions of *The Examinations*, also see "Before the Right to Remain Silent: The Examinations of Anne Askew and Elizabeth Young" by Penelope Geng and "Mixing Canon and Common Law in Religious Prosecutions under Henry VIII and Edward VI: Bishop Bonner, Anne Askew, and Beyond" by Henry Ansgar Kelly.

[16] I should note three things about my Bible references. First, the 1539 Great Bible that I am using numbers the folios, not the individual pages. Second, the pagination in this Bible is not continuous across the Old and New Testaments. Third, the 1539 Great Bible does not include verse numbers. I have taken my verse numbers from *The Oxford Study Bible*.

[17] See Psalm 95 in *The Oxford Study Bible*, for example.

[18] In *Redeeming Eve*, Beilin notes that there is a undertone of aggression in Askew's choice to forgive her interrogators in her balad: "But the ballad concludes with the same prayer that ended *The lattre examinacyon*, essentially that of the forgiving Christian. . . . As a Christian soldier, Askew must take up the good fight and rely on the promise of mercy. No longer in direct confrontation with the Church hierarchy, she depicts herself in her ballad not as a 'poor woman,' but as a visionary and a fighter" (46).

[19] Of course, another indisputable purpose of Bale's edition is to demonstrate that Askew is a true martyr and that Roman Catholic martyrs are false, as Monta argues in her book.

[20] "And in thys she shewed her selfe to be a naturall membre of Christes mystycall bodye" (91). "Where coulde be seane a more clere and open experyment of Christes dere membre, than in her myghtye sufferynges?" (129). "Not a fewe of most evydent argumentes are therin, to prove her the true servaunt of God" (139).

[21] From Bale: "Marke wele the communycacyons here both of her and of her examyners, so provynge their spretes as S. Johan the Apostle geveth yow counsell. 1 Jo. 4. And than shall ye knowe the tree by his frute, and the man by hys worke" (19). From Foxe: "Here next foloweth the same yeare the true examinations of Anne Askew, which here thou shalt have gentle reder according as she wrote them with her own hande, at the instante desire of certaine faithfull men and women, by the which (if thou marke dilligently) the communications bothe of her, and of her examiners thou maist easelly perceivethe tre by the frute and the man by his work" (165). As Brad S. Gregory reminds us in *Salvation at Stake*, the fact that Askew physically suffered was also a crucial piece of evidence (or another crucial piece of fruit) that Bale uses to argue for her status as a true martyr: "Working from the same scriptural and historical template, Christians in all three traditions [Protestant, Anabaptist, and Roman Catholic] understood persecution as a sign of divine favor. The world's violent scorn for latter-day martyrs highlighted their approval by God, as had been true for the Hebrew prophets, Christ's apostles, and the early Christian martyrs. Writers sometimes implied that only God's sustenance could explain their martyrs steadfastness. John Bale, for example, stated that only Christ himself suffering in Anne Askewe, a 'young, tender, weak, and sick woman,' had enabled her to endure the torture to which she was subjected" (322-23).

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK": FORGIVENESS, GOOD WORKS, AND COMMUNITY IN *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* AND *THE BOOK OF HOMILIES*

This chapter responds to a stereotypical image of Protestants who are "of the book," one that has garnered criticism in recent years, to be sure, but that still subsists to some extent in the imagination of early modern English scholarship.[1] These imagined Protestants have a few characteristics, characteristics that are possibly most often applied to Puritans, but that can also be applied to *The Book of Common Prayer* (*BCP*), indebted as it was to reformations that were in conversation with continental reformers. First, these imagined Protestants encounter the divine primarily (or perhaps exclusively) through the medium of text; we often imagine them pouring over text or hanging on every word of a sermon or the scripture as it is read aloud. Second (and a consequence of the first characteristic), they are emphatically concerned with the intricacies of interpretation, signs, signification, and distinguishing between surface and essence, appearance and reality. Third, they are less preoccupied with performing good works than they are with trying to determine whether they are elect, perhaps by interpreting the state of their souls (just as they interpret text) and looking for divine inspiration in their past actions. Fourth, they are more likely to identify a person's interior as the essential spiritual space than they are a community or congregation.[2]

I do not intend to dismiss all of these assumed characteristics; they are certainly helpful and accurate at least to some degree, depending on the figure, text, group, or time and place under consideration. In addition, I also do not intend to show how much of the counter-image I offer is endemic to England and how much of it is derived or translated from traditional religion and texts. However, I do intend to show that if the *BCP* and *The Book of Homilies* (*BH*)—as they existed in Elizabethan England—espouse these stereotypical characteristics, they do so only in conjunction with a number of other, more urgent concerns.[3] To be more direct, the *BCP* and the *BH* offer a strikingly different vision of what it means to be a person "of the book." If parishioners who follow the *BCP* and *BH* pore over scripture and wring their hands over the intricacies of interpretation, they do so in the service of learning how to act rightly and to live in charity with those around them. In the *BCP* and *BH*, interpretation takes place within the teleological cosmology that we saw in Tyndale's work (or a very similar one) and is therefore concerned with interpreting the cosmos, both physical and spiritual. Interpretation in these texts is not preoccupied with self-interrogation and a never-ending, anxiety-inducing hermeneutic circle. The *BCP* and *BH* indicate that good works depend on God's inspiration and aid, but the texts are also concerned with motivating their audience to act rightly, which suggests that the concerns of these texts are somewhat removed from the more theoretical concern over whether good actions cultivate faith or proceed from an *a priori* gift of unconditional election.[4] In short, prayer book parishioners who are "of the book" do not see the book as only a microscope for interrogating one's soul, perhaps in private but definitely in a person's interior; rather,

they see the book and the interpretation thereof as communal and as offering guidance about how to act.[5]

In her book *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, Sarah Beckwith argues that Reformation theology created a break between human interiority and exteriority. The causes of this split are the Lutheran emphasis on faith and grace, as opposed to works, and Calvinist double predestination. She suggests that these doctrines move devotion from outward, communal, action-oriented spaces to inscrutable, unverifiable inward spaces. Among the casualties of this split are forgiveness; if "[s]ome Reformation theology . . . insisted that it was only by eradicating all human mediations [including penance] that we could be sure of the God-sidedness of grace," then "[t]he theological warrant comes along with the eradication of the human—and human acknowledgement" (6). It is up to Shakespeare, we are told, to reintroduce the human and rescue forgiveness from the Protestant Reformation. She writes, "Shakespeare utterly abjures the eradication of the human in reformed versions of grace. . . . It is human response that is, for him, rather the medium of grace" (143-44).

Beckwith reads "An Homilie of the worthy receiuing and reuerend esteeming of the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ" in the *BH* as an illustration of this "reformed" split between the inner and outer:

> Finally, the homilist stresses how important it is "to prove, and try ourselves unfeignedly, without flattering ourselves, whether we be plants of that fruitful olive, living branches of the true vine." Thus our feeding, our sustenance becomes dependent not so much on the participation in the supper and our

> enaction of the body of Christ together but on a process of introspection whereby we could check our own worthiness. It is just this eradication of a receiving community in the very act of self-knowledge and self-recognition that becomes so exceedingly problematical in this homily and where its confident tones of dispelling the darkness of ignorance only intensify and undermine its most heart-felt aims. Self-scrutiny that has lost its pastoral context in the specter of popish abuse is subject to relentlessly circular intensifications, restless anxieties of uncertainty, cravings for an impossible assurance. The religious subject begins to be gripped by an interminable problem of knowledge. (45)

In short, the primacy of the individual's examination of her own soul entails the "eradication of a receiving community."

However, the second part of this same sermon paints a strikingly different picture of the self-examination before reception of the sacrament: "Wherefore (O man) tender thine owne saluation, examine and try thy good will and loue towards the children of GOD, the members of Christ, the heires of the heauenly heritage: yea, towards the image of GOD, the excellent creature thine owne soule" (204). Instead of a purely internal examination, the homily requires an examination of each person's relationship with others. It goes on to describe (in detail!) the practices of reconciliation that must precede Communion:

> If thou haue offended, now be reconciled. If thou haue caused any to stumble in the way of GOD, now set them vp againe. If thou haue disquieted thy brother, now pacifie him. If thou haue wronged him, now relieue him. If thou haue

> defrauded him, now restore him. If thou haue nourished spite, now imbrace friendship. If thou haue fostered hatred and malice, now openly shew thy loue and charity, yea be prest and ready to procure they neighbours health of soule, wealth, commoditie, and pleasures, as thine owne. Deserve not the heauie and dreadful burden of GODS displeasure for thine euill will towards thy neighbour, so vnreuerently to approch to this table of the Lord. *Last of all, as there is here the mysterie of peace, and the Sacrament of Christian societie, whereby wee vnderstand what sincere loue ought to be betweixt the true communicants*: So heere be the tokens of purnesse and innocencie of life, whereby we may perceiue that we ought to purge our owne soule from all vncleannesse, iniquitie, and wickednesse, lest when we receiue the mysticall bread (as Origen saith) we eate it in an vncleane place, that is, in a soule defiled and polluted with sinne. (204, my emphasis)

This passage describes repentance and restitution for wrongs committed as well as the replacing of negative feelings ("hatred and malice") with positive ones ("loue and charity"), which entails with it a concern for spiritual, affective, and material wellbeing. The purpose of these practices is to foster Christian community and the "sincere loue" that characterizes it. Although the words "forgive" or "forgiveness" do not appear in this passage, this is precisely what it is describing—and, moreover, it is describing forgiveness between human beings, which has emphatically not been relegated to inaccessible, unverifiable realms of spirit that are known only to God.[6] Forgiveness,

even in “reformed” practice, is still made manifest in flesh and blood, between human beings.

In what follows, I will read the 1559 *BCP* and select homilies from the Elizabethan *BH*, focusing on the theory and practice of forgiveness and with a special eye towards its relationship with repentance, community, and actions. In my view, the practices of “human” forgiveness that Beckwith attributes to Shakespeare are stagings (not departures or corrections) of the practices of forgiveness already available within the Church of England. It is beyond the scope of my present project to excavate the continuities and discontinuities between forgiveness in these texts and pre-Reformation liturgical, homiletic, or devotional texts; however, I do want to acknowledge that forgiveness in the Church of England, as I describe it, tends to have more in common with representations of pre-Reformation religion or, in Eamon Duffy’s words, traditional religion and that therefore my reading goes against the grain of recent Reformation historiography.[7] Specifically, scholars have been occupied with showing the wisdom of traditional religion, the violence of the Reformation, and the popular resistance to the Reformation. I am certainly sympathetic to these trends; I am fully persuaded that many babies were thrown out with the bathwater in the 16th century. However, I also agree with Debora Shuger’s estimation that “[e]xclusive focus on and exaggeration of the changes wrought by the Reformation on the fabric of traditional English Christianity has become endemic of late” (571). Following this train of thought, I am inclined to see the Reformation’s theological and ecclesiological changes as more modest in their original intent, whatever their long-term consequences may have been.[8] To name two examples

that are pertinent to this chapter, the rejection of penance was intended to challenge the Church's institutional authority, not end the practice of articulating one's offenses (even to a clergyperson) and seeking reconciliation, and reformed theologies of works were generally intended to switch the cause-and-effect relationship of grace and works to account for a monergist soteriology (as opposed to the more traditional synergism), not disregard entirely the significance of works. I am not alone in these views. Indeed, the interiority and self-examination that Beckwith attributes to Protestant Christianity has been attributed to 15th-century practices of satisfaction by John Bossy, and Nandra Perry has already explored the significance of works for Protestants.[9]

Forgiveness in English liturgy is a process that has distinct progressions or movements, and we will return regularly to three of them. First, we will see that forgiveness has a narrative or poetic structure: it begins with the tension of unabsolved offenses or unreconciled differences; then, there is the turn of forgiveness; finally, there is the comfort of reconciliation. This structure appears in a number of rites in the *BCP* and *BH*. In this chapter, we will see that Holy Communion, Morning Prayer, and the Litany each work to validate or inspire penitence (depending on the disposition of each congregant) at the beginning, to encourage the congregation to accept God's forgiveness in the middle, and to comfort the congregation and inspire them to do good works at the end. The *BCP* thus frames forgiveness as an affective, cyclical process, not a singular, performative event that is apprehended only through the intellect. The second progression is the dialectic between the individual and the group. Forgiveness can focus on an individual (her relationship with God or with others) or it can focus on the

community (its unity and harmony). These focuses are indelibly interconnected, and a focus on one can often result in a concern for the other. Some rites, such as Morning Prayer and the Visitation of the Sick (which we will look at briefly at the end of the chapter), focus primarily on individuals. Other rites, such as the Litany and Holy Communion, focus on bodies of believers: the congregation, the holy catholic church, and the communion of the saints. These rites are supposed to care for the health of groups of people—to make sure that all of the members are reconciled to one another and, as a whole, to God. The third progression is the movement from text, to actions, to community formation, to which we turn our attention now.

Practical Hermeneutics in *The Book of Homilies*

The poetic structure of forgiveness matches the narrative structure of the scripture as Tyndale describes it. As we saw in chapter 1, Tyndale, following St. Paul, says that the scripture begins with death through the law and ends with life through the gospel. By opening with penitence before closing by offering the relief of forgiveness, the liturgy of the Church of England essentially takes its congregants through the same narrative. I argue that the *BCP* and *BH* use this narrative and the teleological cosmology to structure interactions with scripture and to show the connections between these textual encounters and proper actions. Therefore, while faith is one goal of encounters with scripture, faith is not the only end; rather, a properly oriented soul is supposed to produce works out in the world.[10] Text permeates into the world; it is not to be experienced only privately and interiorly. Specifically, the *BH*'s two sermons on Bible

reading emphasize the responsibilities between neighbors as one of scripture's primary extensions into the world, showing that community is a focus for religious life and Bible reading.

The *BH* deals explicitly with how one ought to interact with scripture. The 1562 preface says that the book is motivated by the fact that not all English clergy were able to write sermons, and therefore the purpose of the book is to ensure that the people are taught "the word of God, which is the onely foode of the soule" and "their duety towards God, their Prince, and their neighbors, according to the mind of the holy Ghost, expressed in the Scriptures" (a2[r]). The preface closes with a similar sentiment. It orders that "the Lords Prayer, the Articles of the fayth, and the ten Commandements, bee openly read vnto the people, . . . that all [the Queen's] people . . . may learne how to inuocate and call vpon the name of God, and know what duety they owe both to God and man: so that they may pray, beleeue, and worke according to knowledge, while they shall liue heere, and after this life be with him that with his blood hath bought vs all" ([a3[r]]). In sum, the preface takes into consideration individual souls, each person's responsibility to those around her, her responsibilities as a citizen, and her responsibilities to God. The preface does not emphasize individual interactions with scripture or the state of individual souls over the communal or collective aspects of life.

The sermons themselves also show the interdependence between Bible reading, the cultivation of individual souls, and collective life—and, more than that, it uses the teleological cosmology characteristic of Tyndale's forgiving congregation. "A Frvitfvll Exhortation to the reading and knowledge of holy Scripture," the first sermon in the *BH*,

opens by saying that “vnto a Christian man there can bee nothing either more necessarie or profitable, then the knowledge of holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is conteyned GODS true word, setting foorth his glory, and also mans duety” (1). It uses teleological language when it says that studying scripture is “the right and perfect way vnto GOD,” suggesting that God is the end point of Bible reading (1). Moreover, it follows the cosmological structure when it says that in the scriptures “we may learne to know our selues, how vile and miserable we be” and that the scriptures teach “what honour is due vnto GOD, what mercy and charity to our neighbor” (2, 3). “Mercy” is a term that Tyndale often used alongside or interchangeably with “forgiveness.” Hence, the sermon deploys the same teleological cosmology that Tyndale uses, and it has the same outcome: charitable and merciful behavior towards others. Similarly, “The second part of the Sermon of the knowledge of holy Scripture” describes the appropriate manner with which scripture is to be read: “Read it humbly with a meeke and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorifie GOD, and not your selfe, with the knowledge of it: and read it not without dayly praying to GOD, that he would direct your reading to good effect” (5). The “good effect” that the congregation is supposed to pray for is undefined; it could simply be the hope that the readers come away with the right understanding of the text, and it could also be a hope for a more concrete effect. However, the references to “mans duety” and the “mercy and charity to our neighbor” certainly indicate that right action is one outcome of a proper understanding of the text. The text translates directly to action. Clearly, there is a particular kind of character that these sermons seek to cultivate, one that puts others ahead of themselves and is quick to act in response to Bible reading.[11]

It is with this general orientation that I think we ought to approach a particularly interesting passage from the first sermon on Bible reading:

> And in reading of GODS word, hee most profiteth not alwayes, that is most ready in turning of the booke, or in saying of it without the booke, but hee that is most turned into it, that is most inspired with the holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into that thing which hee readeth: he that is dayly lesse and lesse proud, lesse wrathfull, lesse couetous, and lesse desirous of worldly and vaine pleasures: he that dayly (forsaking his old vicious life) increaseth in vertue more and more (3).

Naturally, the passage is appealing to critics in the 20th and 21st centuries because of the imperative to be "turned into" the book, a statement that seems to confirm one particularly prominent narrative about the Protestant Reformation: that, as a movement, it required Christians themselves to be structured by individual encounters with scripture. John N. King glosses this passage in this way: "By its very nature faith is personal. Cranmer's homily on faith leaves responsibility for conforming to the new doctrine with the individual. . ." (133). Of course, this reading and the narrative it taps into is useful in many ways, but it is also subject to overstatement. For example, it can lead to the assumptions that Protestant or Reformation reading habits were entirely individual as opposed to corporate and that they were focused on the state of souls as opposed to action. Ultimately, the argument hinges on what exactly is "that thing which hee readeth" or "the booke" that a person ought to be changed into. As I have been showing, this "booke" is not purely a textual microscope with which to examine souls

that is uninterested in human actions; rather, it is a social tool that is superlatively interested in the actions of the community. Notice that the second half of the passage focuses on decreasing negative character traits and increasing virtue. It is also worth noting, moreover, that the Ten Commandments were always read before Holy Communion. The “booke” is law, and the law is supposed to guide actions. Moreover, books themselves were a communal technology. Recall that Bibles were bought by parishes, chained to altars, and then read aloud so that the illiterate would also benefit from the text. Another passage from the first sermon on Bible reading describes the pleasantness of the “reading, *hearing*, searching, and studying of holy Scripture” (1, my emphasis). Reading was an emphatically corporate experience—with a group gathered around the altar listening to what was read—not only an isolating experience between a lone reader and a book. To be turned into the “booke,” then, is to be turned into a thing that is shared by the community—and a set of laws governing human behavior at that.

Since the purpose of these sermons in the *BH* is to guide the congregation in their interactions with the scripture, it is reasonable to take this reading of the character the *BH* works to cultivate into our reading of the *BCP*. At the beginning of the table of the lessons, there is a famous passage that explains that some portions of the Bible have been excluded from the table because they are “least edifying and might best be spared and therefore be left unread” (25). Of course, this passage can be taken as a sign of the hand of the institution as it controls its congregations’ interactions with the scripture. Although I do not mean to contest that reading, it is noteworthy that this passage uses the language of education, especially spiritual and moral education, to justify the exclusion

of these passages.[12] The assumption, then, is that the book's purpose is to educate. Taken together, these passages indicate that the *BH* and the *BCP* work to instruct congregants to adopt a particular spiritual character, one that keeps an eye towards the community and one that is characterized by the logic of forgiveness. It is no coincidence, as we will discuss in due time, that the opening of Morning Prayer is penitential in nature and leads the congregants to seek forgiveness for themselves. First, however, we will examine Holy Communion, since it was still the central corporate ritual.

Forgiveness and Holy Communion

The rite of Holy Communion is distinctly concerned with demarcating the boundary between insider and outsider. Insiders may communicate, and outsiders may not. Consequently, we can conclude that Communion and faith more generally, as it is presented by the *BCP*, are communal, not mere opportunities for internal reflection on the part of the communicants.[13] Moreover, I will show that repentance and forgiveness are the criteria by which the rite demarcates the insider and the outsider. While it is important in and of itself that repentance and forgiveness play such a central role in prayer book morality, their centrality also reveals the fundamental connection between text, action, and community. Repentance in the rite is defined with respect to offenses committed against God's law as recorded in scripture. The prayer book also assumes that these offenses will have harmed neighbors as well. Therefore, another salient concern of the rite is unity. Central to all of these relations is forgiveness.[14]

The demarcating between insider and outsider begins immediately with the rubric at the beginning of the rite. It gives two situations, one concerning a lone sinner and another about two people who are at odds.[15] In the first, the rubric gives the curate instructions about how to handle anyone who is "an open and notorious evil liver, so that the congregation by him is offended" (247). It says that the curate

> shall call him, and advertise him, in any wise not to presume to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former naughty life, that the congregation may thereby be satisfied, which afore were offended; and that he have recompensed the parties whom he hath done wrong unto, or at the least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may. (247)

This rubric makes repentance (along with restitution) and amendment preconditions for participating in Communion. As we have seen, the homily on the worthy reception of the sacrament that we examined earlier says that inherent to Communion is "the mysterie of peace, and the Sacrament of Christian societie," suggesting that it is is a celebration for the body of the faithful. Thus, repentance is a precondition for membership.

The second situation also requires repentance, and the rubric explicitly draws a parallel between the first situation and the second:

> The same order shall the curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's Table until he know them to be reconciled. And if one of the parties so at variance be content to forgive from the bottom of his heart all that the other hath trespassed

> against him, and to make amends for that he himself hath offended, and the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity, but remain still in his frowardness and malice: the minister in that case ought to admit the penitent person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate. (247-48)

As with the first situation, this passage's reference to one party's willingness "to make amends for that he himself hath offended" suggests that the imperative to repent and make restitution applies here as well. Where this passage adds to the first is in making forgiveness another precondition for participating in Communion. It suggests that making amends and giving up negative feelings ("frowardness and malice") are integral parts of the process of forgiveness in a situation of mutual harm. Finally, it indicates that reconciliation and "a godly unity" are the end goals of forgiveness. In short, those who are part of the "godly unity" are those who have repented, made amends for their offenses, and forgiven those who have offended them. These are the characteristic features of those who are genuine members of the body of Christ who may participate in Communion.

Indeed, the rite of Holy Communion emphasizes repeatedly the importance of unity, which suggests that Communion is predicated upon the agreement and concord of the community. To give a couple of examples, the prayer after the collection asks God "to inspire continually, the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name, may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love" and, similarly, the priest's exhortation that the

congregation take Communion warns those who fail to communicate that "ye depart from your brethren" (254, 256).

The means by which this unity is established and maintained is forgiveness. While the importance of repentance is stated a number of times in Holy Communion, the priest's instruction on how to take the sacrament worthily has perhaps the most full expression of the responsibilities of a person who wants to be a member of the body of the faithful:

> The way and means thereto ["the marriage garment"] is: First to examine your lives and conversation by the rule of God's commandments, and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there bewail your own sinful lives, confess yourselves to Almighty God with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offenses to be such as be not only against God but also against your neighbors, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, ready to make restitution and satisfaction according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other, and likewise being ready to forgive other that have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your offenses at God's hand. For otherwise the receiving of the Holy Communion doth nothing else but increase your damnation. (257)

Naturally, the *BCP*'s rite of Holy Communion directly leads the people in the first part of this process. The opening of the rite includes a recitation of God's law in the form of the Ten Commandments (presumably in imitation of the public readings of the law in

Exodus 24, Deuteronomy, Joshua 8, and 2 Kings 23), and it requires that the congregation confess their trespasses against it. As with many other liturgies in the *BCP*, repentance is always the first step. The second step is reconciliation with neighbors, which is accomplished both by amending wrongs committed against others and forgiving others who have offended oneself. Again, these requirements, centered on repentance and forgiveness, are the *BCP*'s requirements for potential communicants in order for them to be members of the body of the faithful and worthy partakers of the elements.

The call to make a corporate confession just before taking the elements reinforces this emphasis on repentance and forgiveness as the essential ethical imperatives for members of the body of Christ, and it also adds some detail to the expected outcomes of this repentance and forgiveness:

> You that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and be in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways: Draw near, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; make your humble confession to Almighty God before this congregation here gathered together in his holy name, meekly kneeling upon your knees. (259)

It is worth noting straight away that, as we will see, the second sermon on charity in the *BH* is about forgiving enemies, suggesting that there is an indelible connection between charity and forgiveness. This passage suggests that the consequences of repentance and forgiveness are an intent "to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and

walking henceforth in his holy ways." A conforming Elizabethan parishioner would understand being a "person of the book" to be inseparable their responsibility to act according to the commandments contained in the book, as opposed to an oversimplified reading of theoretical Lutheranism or Calvinism that would suggest that actions are irrelevant to a person's status vis-à-vis the body of Christ.

The General Confession and Absolution that follows the exhortation above and precedes the consecration of the elements reiterates the importance of the amendment of life following forgiveness. The General Confession begins with language that notably outstrips the General Confession in Morning Prayer in its affective nature. The communicants are to "knowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness" and to declare that "the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable" (259). After a plea for mercy, the communicants go on to ask God to "forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may hereafter serve and please thee, in newness of life, to the honor and glory of thy name" (259-60). When read in the context of a request for amendment of life, the Absolution's prayer that God ("who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them which with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him") "have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strength you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life" can be read along these same lines (260). In particular, it would be inconceivable for the "goodness" in which God is to "confirm and strength" the communicants to fail to entail repentance, forgiveness, love, and charity between neighbors in a material, observable way.

The repetition of the responsibility to perform good works continues through the dismissals. After taking the elements and saying the Lord's Prayer, the priest can choose between two prayers before the Gloria. In the first, the congregation asks God to "grant that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins"; it goes on to add that "although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (264). Clearly, the *performance* of the sacrament ("our bounden duty and service") is essential to the request for forgiveness. The second option thanks God for feeding the congregation the "spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ" and for

> assur[ing] us thereby of thy favor and goodness towards us, and that we be very members incorporate in thy mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and be also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom. . . . We now must humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in. (265)

The point here is that being "very members incorporate in thy mystical body" necessarily entails the performance of the sacrament (which has an undefined relationship, perhaps strategically so, with the reception of God's forgiveness) and "do[ing] all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in."

The most important takeaway here is that the bare minimum requirements for admission into the body of Christ are repenting one's own offenses and forgiving offenses committed against oneself. That these are the minimum requirements reveals that prayer book faith is communal and performative: forgiveness is an action taken between human beings. The products of repentance and forgiveness, the rite repeatedly emphasizes, are unity and good actions as a result of the amendment of one's life. Lastly, the centrality of forgiveness exposes the progression from text (because repentance is framed as a response to offenses against God's commandments), to action, to community.

From Repentance to Good Works: Morning Prayer

Generally speaking, the purpose of Morning Prayer is to care for individual souls, although it never loses sight of the fact that these individual souls make up a congregation.[16] As a daily practice, Morning Prayer is cyclical. Each morning, the members of the congregation should be reminded of their sins before they are sent off into the world to do good deeds throughout the day—only to return the next morning to be reminded that they failed in their task the previous day, which means that they must once again repent before resolving to do good today. It is noteworthy that Morning Prayer begins with penitence, which would seem to be a more natural pairing with Evening Prayer, as it would give the congregation the opportunity to confess the sins they had committed throughout the day at the end of the day before they go to sleep. However, beginning Morning Prayer with penitence has the effect of taking the

congregation through the narrative structure of forgiveness at the beginning of the day: the members of the congregation are to express their shame, ask for forgiveness, be assured of their forgiveness, praise and thank God for his forgiveness, and then plan to act differently, in light of God's forgiveness. In short, the rite begins with penitence so that it may end with the congregation resolving to do good on that day.

Morning Prayer opens by building tension before the turn of forgiveness. The rite begins with the minister's choice to read one of 11 Bible passages, all of which are penitential in nature. Three of these passages come from Psalm 51, a Penitential Psalm, the only chapter from which more than one passage is excerpted. These passages serve as a preface to the General Confession that immediately follows. The minister calls the congregation to "confess them ['our manifold sins and wickedness'] with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart: to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same by his infinite goodness and mercy" (50). This call also avers that the members of the congregation should confess privately but also corporately and publicly: "And although we ought at all times, humbly to knowledge our sins before God: yet ought we most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together" (50). These passages all direct the congregation to lower themselves and to acknowledge their shortcomings.

The beginning of the General Confession continues to build tension: "Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health

in us" (50). The turn appears halfway through the General Confession, however: "But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that be penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name" (51). The word "but" at the beginning of the second half of the General Confession signals the rite's transition from tension building to comfort.

After the General Confession, the priest immediately reads the Absolution, offering the immediate relief of forgiveness without any delay after the tension of the penitent confession. However, the Absolution is not quite as comforting as it might be, and, surprisingly, it is itself penitent in nature:

> Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live: and hath given power and commandment to his ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins: he pardoneth and absolveth all them which truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. Wherefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter, may be pure and holy: so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy: through Jesus Christ our Lord. (51)

Two important features of this Absolution are, first, that it is carefully crafted to be a description, not a performative speech act and, second, that it highlights that absolution

is contingent upon genuine repentance. With respect to the descriptive rather than the performative nature of the absolution, notice that it says that God has given ministers the authority "to declare and pronounce . . . the absolution and remission of . . . sins." In other words, this Absolution does not suggest that ministers have the authority to absolve; instead, it says that they have the authority to state a fact that precedes the declaration of the absolution, namely, that God pardons and absolves penitent sinners. Therefore, moving into our second important feature, the priest does not offer the congregation the certainty of absolution, just the certainty of absolution as a consequence of genuine repentance. Instead of validating the congregation's penitence, then, the Absolution offers more encouragement to adopt a penitent attitude.[17] Still, the Absolution does include assurances that genuinely penitent sinners will be pardoned, and it also ends on a high note by alluding to "eternal joy."

After reading the Absolution, the priest and the congregation recite the Lord's Prayer together, the first of two times that Morning Prayer directs the congregation to do so. The second takes place after the Creed before the concluding prayers. The Lord's Prayer is also said twice during Holy Communion: once at the very beginning and again after the priest has given both elements to each member of the congregation. It is recited during Public Baptism after the children have been baptized, at the end of the Litany, and again during Evening Prayer. Therefore, on an ordinary weekday, a congregant would say the Lord's Prayer three times. And congregants may say it up to seven times on a Sunday.

If sheer repetition is any indication, the Lord's Prayer and its connection of God's forgiveness with interpersonal forgiveness would have had a considerable influence on how ordinary English folk understood forgiveness. The Lord's Prayer frames God's forgiveness as indelibly connected to forgiveness between human beings. Of course, Tyndale would make the argument that forgiveness between human beings reflects God's forgiveness but does not merit it. In any event, parishioners in early modern England would have been reminded of the connection between their forgiveness for one another and God's forgiveness for them, regardless of which forgiveness is understood to come first.

After the Lord's Prayer, Morning Prayer becomes focused on praise to God. The next reading in the liturgy is Psalm 95, *Venite exultemus domino*, "O come let us sing unto the Lord" (52). The first lesson comes next, followed by *Te Deum laudamus*, "We praise thee, O God," or *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino*, "O all the works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord" (53, 54). After the second lesson comes *Benedictus*, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," or Psalm 100, *Jubilate*, "O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands" (57). Morning Prayer thus begins with penitence, moves to absolution, and then praises God, a rational narrative progression.

To conclude Morning Prayer, following the Creed and the second recitation of the Lord's Prayer, are three Collects. The first Collect is the Collect of the day, the second is the Collect for Peace, and the third is the Collect for Grace.

The Collects of the day include requests for forgiveness, relief, right desires and intentions, and good actions. A few representative examples will suffice to illustrate my

point. The Collect for the First Day of Lent asks that God "create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and knowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ" (108). This Collect includes both a request for right desires ("new and contrite hearts") and forgiveness. The Fourth Sunday of Lent depends on a spirit of penitence, naturally, but it also asks for relief: "Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we which for our evil deeds are worthily punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord Jesus Christ" (114). The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity asks "that thy [God's] grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works" (201). The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity asks that God "grant thy people grace to avoid the infections of the devil, and with pure heart and mind to follow thee" (202). The Collect for Saint John Baptist [*sic*] combines a couple of these themes, requesting a penitent attitude and good actions: "Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Savior by preaching of penance: Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching, and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake" (230). Although penitence is a constant theme, these Collects focus for the most part on engendering in each member of the congregation the fruits of penitence and God's subsequent forgiveness.

The two Collects that "shall never alter, but daily be said at Morning Prayer" continue this trend. The Collect for Peace, the first daily Collect, says, "O God, which

art author of peace, and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies, that we surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesu Christ our Lord. Amen" (59-60). This Collect has three features that are relevant for our discussion. First of all, it is set up to offer solace to the congregation. The first half of it calls God the "author of peace" and a "lover of concord," and it reminds the congregation of the promise of eternal life and the "perfect freedom" that accompanies God's service. The second half is a request for defense and freedom from fear. Second of all, the vagueness of the request for defense from "all assaults of our enemies" and "the power of any adversaries" lends itself to at least two interpretations: (a) defense from visible assaults and (b) defense from spiritual assaults. Interpretation (b) falls in line with other requests for right desires, as we have seen in other Collects. Third, the Collect refers indirectly to good actions when it says that God's "service is perfect freedom." In essence, it subtly reminds the congregation to exercise their freedom to act in accordance with God's service.

The second Collect that is said every day is the Collect for Grace: "O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, which hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day: Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by the governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (60). Like the Collect for Peace, this Collect asks for defense in such a way that allows for the harms to include both visible and spiritual harms. Of

course, the main focus of this Collect is right action. Its requests include one against falling into sin, one that God would direct all congregants' actions, and one that they "do always that [which] is righteous in thy sight."

The general plot structure, if you will, of Morning Prayer is as follows: it inspires penitence, offers assurances of God's forgiveness, invites the congregation to praise God, and then sends the congregation out into the world. The tone that Morning Prayer uses to send congregants out into the world is complicated. It presents penitence as a constant state, but it also encourages congregants to act rightly. It warns of the dangers awaiting congregants, but it also consoles them by reminding them of God's protection. All in all, Morning Prayer has a number of structural elements that often appear in conceptions of forgiveness. It begins with unreconciled challenges; it involves a turn towards reconciliation emerging from repentance; and it requires confidence and amended behavior as a consequence of repentance and forgiveness.

Repentance, Forgiveness, and Amendment of Life: The Litany

As a whole, the Litany, which was "to be used upon Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and at other times, when it shall be commanded by the ordinary," follows much the same structure as Morning Prayer (68). The Litany can be usefully separated into four main sections, with the first three defined by their refrains: (1) the "have mercy" section, (2) the "deliver us" section, (3) the "we beseech thee" section, (4) a series of closing addresses, requests for mercy (which wrap around to the "have mercy" section), and two closing prayers, excluding the occasional prayers at the end. The Litany leads

congregants (first) to acknowledge their culpability and ask for mercy, (second) to request deliverance from their spiritual and physical ailments, and (third) to make a variety of requests to God, including requests for good leadership and right actions. Once again, the liturgy moves from an assumed position of disharmony between the congregation and God, to a position of harmony because of forgiveness, and finally to spiritual comfort in the knowledge of the reconciliation and to the resolution to act rightly. Unlike Morning Prayer, however, the Litany focuses much more on the congregation than the individual members of the congregation. Still, forgiveness supplies the underlying logic.

The "have mercy" section is comprised of the first 21 lines. In lines 1-16, the members of the congregation address the individual parts of the Godhead twice each and then the Trinity twice, with every address followed by the response "have mercy upon us miserable sinners" (68). This opening establishes a posture of disunity between the Godhead and the congregation—we are to infer that the members of the congregation have done something wrong for which they are asking mercy. The final 5 lines of the opening makes explicit what the opening 16 lines imply. It says, "Remember not, Lord, our offenses, nor the offenses of our forefathers, neither take thou vengeance of our sins: spare us good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us forever. / Spare us good Lord" (68). This passage includes three things that are often associated with forgiveness. First, the action of forgetting or remembering not sins is one way that forgiveness is expressed in scripture. For example, Jeremiah 31:34 says, "No longer need they teach one another, neighbour or

brother, to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, will know me, says the Lord, for I shall forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I shall call to mind no more" (818-819). This logic migrates to the New Testament as well: Hebrews 8 cites this passage from Jeremiah.[18] Second, the end of the "have mercy" section asks that God withhold punishment ("neither take thou vengeance of our sins" and "spare thy people"). Third, the request to "be not angry with us forever" asks God to give up negative emotions resulting from the congregation's offenses. In sum, these opening 21 lines offer a structure of forgiveness: they lead the congregation to repent, to acknowledge their faults, and to ask for God's forgiveness.

The "deliver us" section is comprised of lines 22-48. The things from which this section asks deliverance include "all evil and mischief," "sin," "all blindness of heart," "pride," "vainglory," "hypocrisy," "envy," "hatred and malice," "all uncharitableness," "fornication and all other deadly sin," "deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil," "all sedition and privy conspiracy," "all false doctrine and heresy," "hardness of heart," and "contempt of thy Word and commandment" (68-69). While the previous section leads the congregation to recognize that they have offended in the past, this section, with its refrain "Good Lord deliver us," acknowledges sin's immediate presence. It suggests that these sins are either taking place within the congregation or are tempting the congregation and thus threatening to take place. This appeal for deliverance is a form of repentance because it is a turning away from sin. Moreover, it is also a purgation of sorts because it is a request that God remove evil from the congregation's presence. The "deliver us" section therefore proceeds logically from the request for forgiveness at the

end of the “have mercy” section, and the “deliver us” section transitions into the “we beseech thee” section by putting the congregation into a worthy state from which to make requests of God.

The “we beseech thee” section is comprised of lines 49-116. It begins with a telling request: “We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God, and that it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church universally in the right way” (69). The subject of the request “we sinners” alludes to the first two sections of the Litany that outlined and categorized all of the ways in which the congregation was unworthy. The second half of this entreaty serves as a transition into a series of requests for good governance. Immediately following this opening entreaty are three prayers for Queen Elizabeth; a prayer for “all bishops, pastors, and ministers of the Church”; a prayer for “the Lords of the Council”; and a prayer for the magistrates (70). These prayers are clearly related to the requests for deliverance at the end of the “deliver us” section. The requests for deliverance approach God as an authority figure and ask him to protect their community from sin, and the prayers at the beginning of the “we beseech thee” section essentially ask God that temporal rulers and clergy may be effective agents of this prior request of God. In other words, the rulers are the answer to the request that God protect the congregation from sin and corruption.

The next series of requests in the “we beseech thee” section focuses on the people themselves, beginning most broadly with a prayer for “all nations” (70). The congregation then asks “[t]hat it may please thee to give us an heart to love and dread thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments” (70). This passage explicitly links

the collective's spiritual and affective state with the actions they perform—as well as with text, since that is the medium through which God's commandments are conveyed. The "us" in this passage is not especially well defined; it may be linked with "all nations" in the first request, suggesting all people, and it may be linked with "all thy people" in the third request, perhaps referring more specifically to the body of the faithful. The third request mirrors the second. The second asks for "love and dread" and the power to live by God's commandments, to live free from sin; the third, however, asks for more positive emotions and good works: "That it may please thee to give all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy Word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit" (70). These prayers therefore mirror the general structure of the liturgy and the Litany: penitence and the law are the necessary precondition for grace and good works. Next, the Litany focuses on specific subgroups: "all such as have erred and are deceived"; "such as do stand"; "all that be in danger, necessity, and tribulation"; those that are traveling; and widows and orphans. The order of the first two groups is telling, as it places those who need to repent before those who are focused on good works. Once again, penitence must come first.

The very end of the "we beseech thee" section (lines 104-115) serve as a sort of summary of the Litany to this point, and these lines have the effect of reiterating the importance of penitence and repentance on the part of sinners and God's mercy for them. First, there is a return to a global perspective with an appeal that God "have mercy upon all men" (71). Analogously, the opening "have mercy" section simply begins by asking that God "have mercy upon us miserable sinners" (68). Second, a prayer for forgiveness

for enemies and a request for the "fruits of the earth" parallel the "deliver us" section's requests for aid against spiritual and physical impediments (71). Finally, there are two prayers for God's forgiveness (which merit sustained attention) that focus on the internal, spiritual states of those involved and conclude with a request for the grace to act rightly, which parallels the spiritual focus of the "we beseech thee" section.

Importantly, the first prayer for forgiveness is directed towards enemies and the second is directed toward the speakers, following the logic of Matthew 6, which requires human beings to forgive one another in order to be forgiven by God. Moreover, the two prayers for forgiveness have opposite structures. On the one hand, the prayer for forgiveness for enemies asks "that it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts," which places forgiveness before repentance (71). On the other hand, the prayer for God's forgiveness for the speakers asks "that it may please thee to give us true repentance, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to thy holy Word" (71). This passage begins with repentance, suggesting that the forgiveness to follow is contingent upon the preceding repentance. The closing request ends the summary on a high note, focusing on grace and determination to act differently.

These prayers for forgiveness follow several of the movements of the Litany: starting with others or the corporate body and moving to the self; beginning with repentance before moving to forgiveness; and beginning with a request for help handling bad actions, violations of the law, before a request for help performing good actions (not

performing bad actions and performing good actions always remain distinct). The most basic movement encapsulates portions of each of these more specific movements: there is a clear progression from repentance, to forgiveness, to a change in behavior.

In the fourth and final section, the Litany makes appeals to Christ, and then the congregation says the Lord's Prayer. Two closing prayers follow the Lord's Prayer, presumably implying that these prayers follow the guidelines established by Christ in the Lord's Prayer. The first prayer is ultimately a prayer for deliverance. Predictably, it begins with penitence. It says that the requests are made with a "contrite heart," an allusion to pre-Reformation Penance, and it appeals to God's mercy and grace as it directs the congregation to ask for assistance with "those evils, which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us" (72). In the final lines, the prayer asks God to "pitifully behold the sorrows of our heart" and to "mercifully forgive the sins of thy people," offering yet another example of penitence and repentance preceding forgiveness. The second prayer is another request for deliverance that ends, equally as predictably, with right actions. As with other portions of the Litany, it begins by directing the congregation to "humbly beseech" and to appeal to God's mercy, thus cultivating a penitential disposition. After asking God to "turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved," it concludes by asking God to enable the congregation to "serve thee in holiness and pureness of living" (73).

Viewed as a whole, the Litany is unquestionably a corporate document, one that is oriented toward the spiritual health of the congregation. It repeatedly directs the congregation to take a penitential posture before it grants them the consolation of

forgiveness and allows them to make requests of God. Moverover, it indicates time and again that the product of penitence and God's forgiveness is right actions. These right actions by individuals are invariably connected with the spiritual health of the congregation as a whole. This is hardly a private, meditative, and bookish (in the conventional sense) rite that is, in the theoretical Lutheran sense, unconcerned with actions. Rather, it is a public rite that requires the performance of penance and that indicates that those things that are read should lead to concrete actions in the world.

Community, Actions, and the Praxis of Forgiveness in *The Book of Homilies*

I will now give sustained attention to two sermon series in the *BH*: the two sermons on charity in the Edwardian portion of the book and the three sermons on repentance in the Elizabethan portion. Although these two series are not the only sermons in the *BH* that discuss forgiveness and reconciliation, they are especially relevant for our purposes because they offer specific instruction about forgiveness as a practice: how it ought to be done, to whom it should be given, from whom it should be requested, and so forth.

As we will see, these sermons offer an image of early modern Protestant Christianity that is communal and concerned with actions, not one that is merely relegated to a Christian's interior without regard for works. Moreover, these sermons, particularly those on charity, are examples of how the practical, ethically-oriented hermeneutic described in the *BH*'s opening sermons was practiced. The sermons on charity show the necessity of unilateral forgiveness. They make the case that Christians

must love everyone unconditionally, and they use the term "forgive" to refer to the action of loving an enemy. Since love for enemies is offered unconditionally, this form of forgiveness does not appear to be contingent upon repentance. However, unilateral forgiveness for enemies is not incompatible with punishment. It is the office of a Christian magistrate to love enemies even while punishing them. The sermons on repentance show the necessity of bilateral forgiveness. These sermons suggest that Christians will repent of their sins against God and their neighbors and that they will make restitution to those whom they have offended. Therefore, unilateral forgiveness characterizes relationships between Christian insiders and offending outsiders, and bilateral forgiveness characterizes intra-community relationships. This distinction between unilateral forgiveness and bilateral forgiveness therefore offers a rubric for mapping the line between insider and outsider.

I will begin with the *BH*'s two sermons on "Christian loue and charity," keeping a special eye on the second sermon, which addresses forgiveness at length. The first sermon on charity begins, naturally enough, by defining Christian charity both towards God and towards neighbors. It indicates that "charity is, to loue GOD," which requires "that our heart, minde, and study be set to beleeue his word, to trust in him, and to loue him aboue all other things that wee loue best in heauen or in earth" (40). This passage indicates that charity for God is dependent on text ("his word") as well as faith ("to trust him"). Moreover, it uses teleological language, in true Augustinian and Tyndalian fashion, to describe how God should be loved "aboue all other things." Charity for God is "the first and principall part of charity," but of course charity for neighbors is also

indispensable (40). Charity for neighbors is “to loue euery man, good and euill, friend and foe, and whatsoeuer cause be giuen to the contrary, yet neuerthelesse to beare good will and heart unto euery man, to vse our selues well vnto them, aswell in wordes and countenances, as in all our outward actes and deedes: for so Christ himselfe taught, and so also hee performed indeed” (40-41). This passage requires, first, that the congregation maintain positive emotions for wrongdoers (“to loue euery man . . . to beare good will and heart unto euery man”) and, second, “to vse our selues well vnto them,” which, it would appear, entails acting appropriately in every respect. Importantly, this description of charity for others is rooted in Christ’s teaching (once again, a text).

The first sermon on charity also connects Christian charity to correct interpretation of the law with striking directness:

> And of the loue, that wee ought to haue among our selues each to other, he teacheth vs thus, You haue heard it taught in times past, Thou shalt loue thy friend, and hate thy foe: But I tell you, Loue your enemies, speake well of them that defame and speake euill of you, doe well to them that hate you, pray for them that vexe and persecute you, that you may be the children of your father that is in heauen. . . . And forasmuch as the Pharisees (with their most pestilent traditions, and false interpretations, and glosses) had corrupted, and almost clearly stopped vp this pure Well of GODS liuely word, teaching that this loue and charity pertayned onely to a mans friends, and that it was sufficient for a man to loue them which doe loue him, and hate his foes: therefore Christ opened this Well again, purged it and scoured it by giuing vnto his godly law of charity, a

> true and cleare interpretation, which is this: that we ought to loue every man, both friend and foe, adding thereto what commodity we shall haue therby, and what incommodity by doing the contrary. What thing can we wish so good for vs, as the eternall heauenly father, to reckon, and take vs for his children? And this shall we be sure of (sayth Christ) if we loue euery man without exception. And if we doe otherwise (sayth he) we be no better then the Pharisees, Publicans, and Heathen, and shall haue our reward with them, that is, to be shut out from the number of GODS chosen children, and from his euerlasting inheritance in heauen. (41)

As Tyndale does in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, this sermon treats Matthew 5-7 as a reinterpretation of the law. An incorrect interpretation of the law, the *BH*'s sermon on charity suggests, allows people to believe that they may love their friends and hate their enemies, but a correct interpretation shows that Jesus requires love for everyone, friends and enemies. Hence, this sermon assumes that the law gives instruction about how to act and is not only a theoretical tool for exposing sin. The *BH*'s sermon also indicates, on the one hand, that the "commodity we hall haue therby" is that "the eternall heauenly father, [will] reckon, and take vs for his children"; on the other hand, it says that the "incommodity by doing the contrary" is "to be shut out from the number of GODS chosen children." Therefore, the message is clear: in order to be a member of the body of the faithful, a person must, first, glean from the law that universal charity is required for God and for all people and the person must, second, act in

accordance with this interpretation. These are the necessary characteristics of children of God.

While the first sermon on charity argues that showing love for others is the evidence that a person is a child of God, the second sermon on charity illustrates one important way that charity is expressed: forgiveness. Beside a marginal note that reads, "Against carnall men that will not forgiue their enemies," the sermon says, "The peruerse nature of man, corrupt with sinne, and destitute of GODS word and grace, thinketh it against all reason, that a man should loue his enemie, and hath many perswasions which bring him to the contrary" (43). The marginal note and the body of the sermon in conjunction with one another suggest that there is a fundamental connection between love and forgiveness. To love an enemy is to forgive that person, in some respect. The sermon continues, giving an explanation of why it is proper (specifically, Christlike) to love and forgive: "Against all which reasons, wee ought aswell to set the teaching, as the liuing of our Sauiour Christ, who louing vs (when we were his enemies) doeth teach vs to loue our enemies" (43). This second sermon reiterates that those who do not love their enemies have an unsatisfactory relationship with scripture, and, also like the first sermon, this sermon offers the "teaching, as the liuing of our Sauiour Christ" as the antidote. Essentially, each sermon offers a reading of the Gospels as evidence of the necessity to love and forgive.

Not only are love and forgiveness for enemies grounded in textual interpretation, it is itself a form of interpretation:

But to *loue enemies*, is the proper condition of them that bee the children of GOD, the disciples and followers of Christ. Notwithstanding, mans froward and corrupt nature weigheth ouer deepely many times, the offence and displeasure done vnto him by enemies, and thinketh it a burden intolerable, to bee bound *to loue them that hate him*. But the burden should be easie ynough, if (on the other side) euery man would consider, what displeasure hee hath done to his enemie againe, and what pleasure hee hath receiued of his enemie. And if we finde no equall or euen recompence, neither in receiuing pleasures of our enemie, nor in requiting displeasures vnto him againe: then let us ponder the displeasures which we haue done vnto Almightie GOD, how often and how grieuously we haue offended him, whereof *if wee will haue of GOD forgiuenesse*, there is none other rememdy, but *to forgiue the offences done vnto us*, which be very small, in comparison of our offences done against GOD. And if we consider that he which hath offended vs, *deserueth not to bee forgiuen of vs*, let vs consider againe, that we much lesse deserue *to bee forgiuen of GOD*. And although our enemie deserue not *to be forgiuen* for his owne sake, yet we ought *to forgiue him for GODS loue*, considering how great and many benefits we haue receiued of him, without our desertes, and that Christ hath deserued of vs, that for his sake wee should *forgiue them their trespasses* committed against vs. (43-44, my emphasis)

This is perhaps the most important passage for our discussion. Notice that it opens by stating that loving enemies is a necessary characteristic for children of God. Since this statement appears within the context of loving people in spite of offenses (which, recall,

the text has already equated with forgiveness), this passage lists forgiveness among the criteria used to demarcate between insiders and outsiders. In other words, Christians are identifiable by their capacity to love and forgive enemies, and non-Christians are identifiable by their incapacity to love and forgive enemies. After once again stating that people ordinarily do not feel inclined to forgive enemies, this passage begins reorienting the discussion of harm so as to lead congregants to reinterpret harms they have suffered. First, it directs the listeners to consider the possibility that they have harmed their offenders as well. The sermon appears to assume that this consideration will lead some off its listeners to be quick to offer forgiveness to their enemies. However, if the harm that they have suffered is less than the harm that they have caused, the sermon (second) leads its listeners to consider the harm that they have committed against God, which it says is certainly greater than the harms that the listeners have suffered. Alluding to Matthew 6's connection between forgiveness for others and forgiveness from God, the sermon says that its listeners must forgive the offender and the offense (the text does not make a distinction between the two acts of forgiveness) if they expect to be forgiven by God. It is noteworthy that at this point the sermon seamlessly shifts vocabulary from love to forgiveness without comment (notice the italicized passages). This change in vocabulary offers more evidence that this sermon does not differentiate between loving an enemy and forgiving an enemy; the two actions are the same. Also of note is the fact that the kind of forgiveness that is required by this sermon may be unilateral or bilateral. The sermon does not stipulate that forgiveness can only be offered as a response to repentance. This second approach to reorienting moments of conflict relies heavily on

the teleological cosmology. It forces the listeners to place God at the top of the situation as the person who has been harmed most and others ahead of themselves because the listeners have harmed God more than their enemies have harmed them. Finally, the telos here is unquestionably God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice.

The rest of the sermon addresses a fascinating counterargument: "But heere may rise a necessary question to bee dissolued. If charitie require to thinke, speake, and doe well vnto euery man, both good and euill: how can Magistrates execute iustice vpon malefactors or euill doers with charitie?" (44). The sermon's answer is that "charitie hath two offices, the one contrary to the other, and yet both necessary to bee vsed vpon men of contrary sort and disposition" (44). The first office of charity is "to cherish good and harmlesse men, not to oppresse them with false accusations, but to encourage them with rewards to doe well, and to continue in well doing, defending them with the sword from their aduersaries" (44). Notice the adjective "harmlesse." As we saw in chapter 2, living harmlessly is a sign that one is living within the teleological cosmology. The second office of charity, on the other hand, is "to rebuke, correct, and punish vice, without regard of persons, and is to be vsed against them onely that be euill men, and malefactours or euill doers" (44). The sermon further specifies that preachers are to carry out this task with "the word" and public officials with "the sword" (44).

There are a couple of ways that the sermon makes the case that this second office of charity, punishing offenders, is consonant with charity. First, it suggests that punishments can be carried out with charitable affect. It says that leaders "should louingly correct them which bee offendours, vnder their gouernance" (44). In other

words, those in positions of power should forgive offenders affectively even as they punish the offenders—but notice that the sermon still makes the qualification that the offenders have to be "vnder their gouernance," suggesting that there are particular people responsible for carrying out punishments. As we saw in chapter 1, Tyndale makes the same argument in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He says that everyone must forgive affectively; if it is not the victim's place to punish the offender, the victim must also forgive by not seeking revenge, but the victim may have recourse to the person whose position it is to carry out justice; if a person is in a position to carry out justice, that person is responsible for punishing offenders, although, again, this person must still forgive affectively. The second way that the sermon makes the case that punishments can be carried out charitably is with reference to the state of the offender's soul and the rest of the community: the sermon says that magistrates must act out "of loue to procure and seeke their ['those that be euill'] correction and due punishment, that they may thereby either bee brought to goodnesse, or at the least that GOD and the common wealth may be lesse hurt and offended" (45). Thus, the sermon suggests that lovingly punishing an offender can be a means to correct an offender, and, in a worst case scenario, punishment also protects the community, both by defending the harmless and in ensuring that the offender does not "corrupt other good and honest persons" (44).

In sum, these sermons say that a correct interpretation of scripture and the law requires everyone to love everyone else; this love must exist within the teleological cosmology, and it requires Christians to interpret offenses against themselves in light of the teleological cosmology; extending love to everyone is a mark of children of God,

which differentiates them from outsiders; one essential manifestation of universal love is forgiveness for enemies in response to harm; still, magistrates must punish offenders, which they do lovingly and therefore forgivingly, with an eye towards the offender's correction and the community's defense. Wrapped up in these two sermons, therefore, are textual interpretation, community formation, actions, and affect—all unified by the teleological cosmology characteristic of forgiveness.

While the sermons on charity offer instruction for offering forgiveness, the sermons on repentance focus on asking for forgiveness. The first sermon gives four theoretical considerations relating to repentance: "from what wee must returne, to whom wee must returne, by whom wee may bee able to conuert, and the maner how to turne to GOD" (258). The first item refers to sin, of course, but specifically to sin's quality of leading people away from God. The second item dictates that listeners return to God through faith. The third item refers to Christ, and the sermon makes clear that people cannot repent of their own works but that they must depend on the work of Christ's sacrifice. The fourth item essentially requires sincerity. This sermon also offers its listeners evidence that repentance is efficacious, even for those who have fallen away from God through a particularly egregious sin. The second sermon gives a four-part anatomy of repentance: contrition, confession (primarily to God, but also to neighbors when appropriate), faith in God's forgiveness, and "an amendment of life" (268). The third sermon gives four reasons for repenting: that repentance is required by God, the promise of forgiveness through Christ, the distastefulness of sin, and "the vncertaintie and brittlenesse of our owne liues" (272). These sermons by no means suggest that

forgiveness from God is unconditional; rather, they argue that forgiveness is contingent upon repentance and the commitment to perform actions that reflect repentance, although the sermons repeatedly make the caveat that any good works performed must be attributed to the strength of Christ and not to the individual's goodness.

The first sermon states directly that God's forgiveness of sins is contingent upon repentance:

> And verily the true preachers of the Gospel of the kingdome of heauen, and of the glad and ioyfull tidings of saluation, haue alwayes in their godly Sermons and Preachings vnto the people, ioyned these two together, I meane repentance and forgiuenesse of sinnes, euen as our Sauiour Jesus Christ did appoint himselfe, saying, So it behoued Christ to suffer, and to rise againe the third day, and that repentance and forgiuenesse of sinnes should bee preached in his Name among all Nations. (256)

Naturally, these sermons as a whole continually contrast the godly, directly or indirectly, with the Church of Rome.[19] The sermons accuse Roman Catholics of wrenching scripture and espousing justification through works as opposed to faith and Christ's merits. With respect to the Sacrament of Penance, the sermons rehearse the familiar argument that confession is an empty performance without faith or pious affect, and they add that Roman confession is no more efficacious than Judas' confession. The "true preachers" referenced in the passage above, on the other hand, teach repentance. As opposed to confession, repentance requires a sincere affective state that the second sermon refers to, without any sense of irony, as contrition, the very affective state called

for by the Sacrament of Penance. Note that although the genuine site of repentance is internal, it begins in a social space that centers on the preacher. As the sermons present it, therefore, repentance begins on the outside and moves in. Moreover, once inside, it moves back out into the community. A necessary component of repentance, one upon which forgiveness ultimately depends, is "a full purpose of amendment of life" (262). Two examples of successful penitence cited by the second sermon are the Ninevites and, "aboue all other," Zacchaeus, whom the sermon deems especially noteworthy for his generosity to the poor and his willingness to pay restitution that was four times greater than the amount he took from his victims (269). Of course, these sermons repeatedly emphasize that this amendment of life is not a product of the penitent's actions or will and that amendment of life is useless without Christ's aid and merits.

The second sermon also strikes an interesting balance between internal and external facets of repentance. In addition to contrition and faith (the more internal elements), it also discusses confession. The primary example of confession that the sermon discusses takes place directly between a Christian and God without the mediation of a priest or the church. It interprets the commandment in James to "acknowledge your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that yee may bee saued" to foreclose the possibility that it could be referring to confession, but the sermon also places a great deal of importance on confession between Christians (266). It interprets James thus:

> Open that which grieueth you, that a remedie may bee found. And this is commanded both for him that complayneth, and for him that heareth, that the one

> should shew his griefe to the other. The true meaning of it is, *that the faithful ought to acknowledge their offences*, whereby some hatred, rancour, ground, or malice, hauing risen or growen among them one to another, *that a brotherly reconciliation may be had, without the which nothing that wee doe can bee acceptable vnto GOD.* (266, my emphasis)

This passage indicates that the acknowledgment of offenses and the restoration of community are absolutely essential for Christians to do anything that is pleasing to God. In other words, this sermon is yet another example of a text that sets up forgiveness as the sine qua non of a Christian community. In order for a community to have any claim to status as a Christian community, there must be bilateral forgiveness between Christians. It should be noted that this bilateral forgiveness requires restitution: "and if wee haue done any man wrong," the sermon says, we must ". . . endeuour our selues to make him true amends to the vttermost of our power" (269). Amendment of life therefore does not just produce only good works in the individual Christian but also community between Christians; these are necessary "fruits worthy of repentance" and evidence that the penitents are "cleane altered and changed, . . . new creatures" (268). Ultimately, then, although the sermon indicates that one essential site of repentance and forgiveness is internal, it also suggests that repentance produces unity in the community.

The third sermon closes with a convenient summary of repentance as it is presented over the course of the three sermons:

> Whereas if we will repent, and bee earnestly sorry for our sinne, and with a full purpose and amendment of life flee vnto the mercy of our GOD, and taking sure

> hold thereupon through fayth in our Sauiour Jesus Christ doe bring foorth fruits worthy of repentance: hee will not onely powre his manifold blessings vpon vs heere in this world, but also at the last, after the painefull trauels of this life, reward vs with the inheritance of his children, which is the kingdome of heauen, purchased vnto vs with the death of his sonne Jesu Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, be all praise, glory, and honour, world without end. Amen. (274)

This passage begins with an affective state ("earnestly sorry for our sinne") and requires a penitent posture as Christians ask God for forgiveness ("flee vnto the mercy of our GOD"), and it twice reminds the congregation that they must act differently in light of their repentance and God's forgiveness ("with a full purpose and amendment of life" and "bring foorth fruits worthy of repentance"). Finally, it closes with a communal picture, assuring the audience that if it meets the standards of repentance, then they will have a place among God's children in the kingdom of heaven.

The idea that Protestants see an unbridgeable gap between inside and outside, between the state of the soul and the things done with the body, is useful in many respects. However, it is also overstated, giving a picture of Protestant practice that is short on nuance and circumspection. The *BH*'s sermons on charity and repentance assume a fundamental unity between the state of the soul and the actions produced by the body. These sermons argue that Christians will endeavor to live in charity with God and with neighbors. They do not present the Christian's only agency as the interrogation of the soul and an endless cycle of textual interpretation characterized by anxiety over

the distance between sign and referent, soul and body. Rather, they give Christians the responsibility of interpreting text in order to learn their responsibilities toward God and neighbors. Naturally, however, they also assume that Christians will not be able to carry out these responsibilities in all instances. Therefore, Christian communities, as these sermons represent them, are characterized by a willingness to practice forgiveness—in addition, of course, to the examination of the soul and the interpretation of text. Our picture of Elizabethan Christianity would therefore be woefully incomplete if we did not pay careful attention to its emphasis on the energy involved in forgiveness, repentance, and amendment of life when the effort to live in charity with God and neighbors is imperfect.

* * *

Scholars have long noted that the Elizabethan *BCP* allows for a range of theological expressions and understandings of the rites—within certain prescribed boundaries. There are many instances of studied ambiguity in the state-sanctioned liturgy and homilies. What is not ambiguous, I argue, is that the liturgical texts of the Church of England give forgiveness a central place in the formation, life, and health of the community. Forgiveness is often quite present alongside the ambiguity that the texts afford.

We can see this symbiosis in the way that the texts allow confession to subsist. As we saw, the *BH*'s second sermon on repentance interprets James' instruction to acknowledge one's sins to others as a tool for interpersonal reconciliation and community formation, not a command to perform confession. The sermon then goes on

to describe (at some length) all of the reasons that confession is illegitimate—before concluding the discussion with this statement: "I doe not say, but that if any doe finde themselues troubled in conscience, they may repayre to their learned Curate or Pastour, or to some other godly learned man, and shew the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salue of GODS word" (267). To be fair, I should note that the passage says that it is "against the true Christian libertie, that any man should bee bound to the numbring of his sinnes" (267). Even so, the discussion of confession in this sermon essentially says, "Confession is illegitimate and we shouldn't do it! … Unless you want to." This passage is not alone either. Similarly, one optional exhortation before Holy Communion reminds congregants that they must confess their sins to God in order to take Communion worthily, but it also allows for traditional confession:

> If there by any of you which by the means aforesaid, cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, then let him come to me, or some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief that he many receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort as his conscience may be relieved, and that by the ministry of God's Word he may receive comfort and the benefit of absolution, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness. (257)

Finally, the Commination speaks nostalgically about public penance, saying that the Commination itself is a placeholder until public penance "may be restored again (which thing is much to be wished)" (316). Importantly, however, all of these rites have

forgiveness as their center, and these moments of ambiguity ultimately allow for different avenues to forgiveness.

Perhaps even more striking is the different ways that absolutions are worded. The absolutions in Morning Prayer and Communion, for example, entail the priest either declaring that God forgives those who repent or asking God to forgive the congregation in light of their confession. The Order for the Visitation of the Sick, however, is another matter entirely. The sick person has the opportunity to "make a special confession, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter," after which the priest says this absolution: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners, which truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offenses: and by his authority committed to me, *I absolve thee from all thy sins*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (303, my emphasis). This absolution strikes me as a moment of profound compassion. In essence, the priest takes responsibility for the absolution of the sick person, who may well be dying, instead of giving the sick person the responsibility of interrogating the sincerity of her contrition—and the priest effects this absolution even though this statement of absolution does not accord with reformed theology or, indeed, contritionist understandings of the Sacrament of Penance. Just before this confession and absolution, the rubric says, "Then shall the minister examine whether he be in charity with all the world, exhorting him to forgive from the bottom of his heart all persons that have offended him, and if he have offended other, to ask them forgiveness. And where he hath

done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power" (303).

These examples suggest that the Church of England's liturgical texts will tolerate and even give voice to both reformed doctrine and elements from traditional dogma—so long as these doctrinal and ritual expressions lead to forgiveness. Forgiveness in this case serves as a sort of prism in reverse, channeling different expressions of faith toward the teleological cosmology and the body (collectively, communally) of Christ.

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[1] I am not going to discuss which book the English are a people of. Judith Maltby notes that the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer* were both defining books: "A goodly proportion of the English people became 'people of the book'—but as much of the Prayer Book as of the Bible" (17). For the purposes of this chapter, it is perhaps most accurate to say that I am assuming that the English are "people of books" and perhaps especially "people of sacred books."

[2] John N. King taps into some of these assumptions in *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*. He writes: "Reformation literature presupposes a major shift in mimetic theory. In opposition to the artistic externalization of religious feelings, Protestant subjectivity demands inner faith predicated upon spiritual understanding. The unvarying principle of Edwardian literature is the primacy of the Bible; thus the reformers deny that artificial figures contain the spiritual truth that they imitate. Insisting that the truth inheres in the literal text, the Protestants used the Bible as the touchstone for their experience in the world. Neither secular nor religious forms subordinate biblical texts to images or other pictorial forms. Unlike medieval adaptations of the Bible to contemporary circumstances, Protestant art uses the scriptures as a paradigm for present life. Providential patterning guides the dramatization of individual experience by reference to universal biblical models such as the ever-popular topics of conversion, exile, and martyrdom. Insisting on a radical distinction between biblical history and contemporary life, Edwardian Protestants find in biblical events archetypal patterns for current action. They preserve the Pauline distinction between the planes of nature and grace. In the fallen world, human action and art should be dark reflections of primordial truth" (16-17). And again: "The mid-Tudor Protestants looked not to the sword but to the book as the source of freedom and justice—and it is through the books of the entire English Protestant literary tradition that we may discover the power, and the beauty, of unadorned truth" (18-19). Christopher Haigh also comments on the bookishness of Protestant religion: "There were illiterate Protestants, and there were some whose Protestantism prompted literacy; but they were few. Protestants were readers; that was what their leaders expected, and that was how their enemies identified them: 'heretics and two-penny book men.' So it is likely that the spread of Protestant allegiance followed the spread of literacy" (194). Peter Lake and Michael Questier contest the claim about the correlation between Protestantism and literacy in *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*.

[3] For a thorough comparison of the orders produced by Cranmer to his sources (including the Sarum Missal and Breviary, various primers, and the Church Order for Cologne), see *The Godly Order: Texts and Studies relating to the Book of Common Prayer* by Geoffrey Cuming. I am also not concerned with how the prayerbook evolved from 1549 to 1552 to 1559. Haigh covers some of this ground; see pgs. 168, 179-81, and 240-41. It is also an interest of Eamon Duffy's; see, for example, pg. 567.

[4] It is noteworthy, however, that "The second part of the Homily of Repentance" cautions its audience to "beware, that wee doe in no wise thinke that we are able of our owne selues, and of our own strength, to returne vnto the Lord our GOD, from whom we are gone away by our wickednesse and sinne" (264). The *BCP* and the *BH* continually lead its audience to ask for strength from God to repent and do good works. Therefore, it is a careful balancing act between giving the audience responsibility and leading them to ask for help.

[5] Although the classic view of the Reformation would have it that individuals were empowered to examine their own souls, there is some scholarly disagreement about whether this view holds with respect to the *BCP*. In *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*, Ramie Targoff says that the *BCP* actually subjects parishioners to more state authority than the pre-Reformation Mass did: whereas the traditional Mass allowed parishioners to read or pray privately, the *BCP*'s Communion rite requires them to participate actively. In *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England*, on the other hand, Timothy Rosendale argues that the *BCP* allows individuals a measure of authority in devotional meaning making, but this measure of authority must exist within boundaries established by the Church of England. Judith Maltby takes much the same position: "A set liturgy, in this case the Book of Common Prayer, need not be seen only as something imposed 'from above'. . . ." (229).

[6] Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke lament that the homily "Worthy receiving and reverent esteeming of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ" "uses very high-flown language to describe the nature of the communion 'mysteries,' but has little or nothing to say about eucharistic practice" (43). Although the passage I have quoted does not describe Communion practice, it does, I would argue, describe community practices that look towards Communion.

[7] I am referring, of course, to Duffy's seminal work *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580*. This text supplies important information about the nature of pre-Reformation penance. In *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, Thomas N. Tentler surveys penitential literature that offered confessors guidance about how to conduct confession. "Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction" by Peter Biller outlines how a confessant's gender and occupation impacted confession, and it also describes the laity's experience of confession.

[8] Peter Lake has a somewhat similar orientation in *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. He makes the argument that the divisions between the different religious sects in Elizabethan England are not as well-defined as we tend to assume they are. Our inclination to classify and make distinctions often says as much about the commentator as it does about the commentator's subject matter, as R. Emmet McLaughlin implies (in his essay "Truth, Tradition and History: The Historiography of High/Late Medieval and Early Modern Penance") is the case with respect to penance.

[9] In "Practices of Satisfaction, 1215-1700," Bossy writes, "Another direction taken was to argue, against history and language, that the purpose of satisfaction was not vindicative (the appeasement of God's wrath), but what was called medicinal or reformative. . . . The doctrine fitted conveniently with the fifteenth-century movement towards the systematic examination of conscience before confession and otherwise, a polishing, one might say, after the scraping of the soul, and a congruous adjunct to sacramental grace. It turned compensatory pain into a phase of the continuous process of self-monitoring which was the Counter-Reformation's complement to confession" (109). Moreover, in "The Social History of Penance in the Age of the Reformation," Bossy argues that scholasticism made penance more internal, psychological, and personal than it had been. This trend can also be viewed in light of Bossy's argument in "Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments" that the decalogue came to replace the seven deadly sins as the central rubric for classifying sin; he contends that the decalogue is more oriented towards addressing harms against God and that the seven deadly sins are more oriented towards addressing harms against others. In *Imitatio Christi: The Poetics of Piety in Early Modern England*, Perry argues that, in Philip Sidney's view, "the poet's 'conceit' (i.e., 'the divine consideration of what may be and should be' [218]) works analogously to the Word to reorient the reader's desire: if not to incorporation in the body of Christ, then at least to more healthful participation in the body politic, which . . . can be a powerful partner with the Church Eloquent in the propagation of the Word" (51-52). In this view, proper actions proceed from proper desires, which good poetry and *imitatio Christi* can cultivate. We have

encountered similar ideas in chapter 1. Also see Perry's earlier article "*Imitatio* and Identity: Thomas Rogers, Philip Sidney, and the Protestant Self."

[10] Christopher Haigh views the *BH*'s views of works as a sort of compromise: "Though those homilies which Cranmer himself wrote asserted that salvation came by faith, their restraint made the doctrine less objectionable to critics and guarded against extremist interpretation: good works were not irrelevant, but the necessary fruits of living faith. The *Homilies* were tracts for troubled times rather than aggressive Protestant propaganda. . ." (170). I am more inclined to see the *BH*'s exhortations to perform good works as sincere.

[11] King reads the *BH* generally and the second sermon on Bible reading in particular as a way "to avoid pluralism of belief" and as Cranmer's effort to "guide the study of the scriptures and formulate uniform doctrine" (131, 132). He also concludes that Cranmer's effort to reach people of every station "made Paul's Cross and the *Book of Homilies* the most powerful channels for government propaganda" (132).

[12] I am drawing on the *OED*'s definition of "edify, v.," especially definitions 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b.

[13] One interesting subject of some critical debate (that I will not address) is whether or to what extent the dead are part of the reformed community. Duffy suggests that they aren't; see pg. 475. Maltby, on the other hand, is less inclined to see a clean break between the living and the dead; see pgs. 59-63. Peter Marshall tends to agree (cautiously) with Duffy (see pgs. 108-14), but he also notes that the 1559 *BCP* was accused of preserving prayers for the dead (see pgs. 148-56).

[14] For an account of how the orders for Communion differ between the 1549, 1552, and 1559 *BCP*s, see *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700* by Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, especially pgs. 8-52, which also describe how Eucharistic practice changed.

[15] Maltby notes that the goal of excommunication and exclusion from Communion was that they would "prompt people to amend their lives"; see pgs. 50-52.

[16] Maltby notes that the *BCP* was meant "to be 'common' . . . in the sense that the priest and people attended to the same aspects of the liturgy together. Hence the repeated emphasis not only on the vernacular but on clerical audibility, as the opening rubrics for Morning Prayer direct that: 'the minister shall read with a loud voice'" (41). Clearly, Morning Prayer was also congregational.

[17] It would be easy to see this representation of confession and absolution working in line with the Lutheran conception. In "Embracing the 'True Relic' of Christ: Suffering, Penance, and Private Confession in the Thought of Martin Luther," Ronald K. Rittgers argues that Luther dismisses the idea that private confession could merit absolution in and of itself, but he also preserves it as a consolation for those whose consciences are uneasy. Tentler also discusses Luther's views of confession on pages 349-363.

[18] These are by no means isolated examples. Psalm 25:7 says, "Do not remember the sins and offences of my youth, but remember me in your unfailing love, in accordance with your goodness, Lord" (566). A similar expression appears in Isaiah 43:25: "I am the Lord; for my own sake I wipe out your transgressions and remember your sins no more" (751-52). These passages come from the Oxford Study Bible.

[19] In reading these passages that cast the Church of Rome in a negative light, it is important to keep in mind the popular resistance to reformed religion. Commenting on the condemnation of Roman practices in the *BH*'s sermon on good works, Duffy writes, "What was composed in the form of a celebration of the passing of the old religion was in fact, and unmistakably, a manifesto for the forging of the new" (449). Duffy describes some of the resistance to the 1549 *BCP* on pg. 466, as does Haigh on pgs. 174-176. In short, statements in these texts often sound more secure than the situation on the ground merited.

CHAPTER V

"SOME TO LOOK FOR A MIRACLE": FORGIVENESS IN PHILIP SIDNEY'S *OLD ARCADIA*

In *The Old Arcadia*'s dedicatory epistle to Mary Sidney Herbert, Philip Sidney reveals that he wrote the romance not only because Sidney Herbert "desired [him] to do it" but also as an act of self-preservation: "In sum, a young head not so well stayed as I would it were (and shall be when God will) having many many fancies begotten in it, if it had not been in some way delivered, would have grown a monster, and more sorry might I be that they came in than that they gat out" (3). While many commentators have noted that the dedicatory epistle frames the romance as imperfect and an undesirable or monstrous birth, I want to draw attention to the fact that this statement presents Sidney as monstrous as well.[1] After all, the antecedent to the "it" that needs to be delivered from the possibility of growing into a monster is Sidney's "young head," not the romance, meaning that the delivery of *The Old Arcadia* to Sidney Herbert is tantamount not only to the delivery of a child but also to Sidney's deliverance from danger. In his dedicatory epistle, then, Sidney recognizes his own imperfections, suggests that he has recorded those imperfections in the form of *The Old Arcadia* as a scapegoat or purgation, and then gives them over to Sidney Herbert for safekeeping and generous interpretation. This transaction between Sidney and Sidney Herbert looks remarkably like a ritualized confession, with Sidney Herbert playing the roll of confessor.

I argue that *The Old Arcadia* dramatizes forgiveness and the transformative qualities of forgiveness, as illustrated by the epistle. Furthermore, I show that the representation of forgiveness in *The Old Arcadia* parallels the representations of forgiveness in liturgical texts of the Elizabethan Church of England that we examined in chapter 3. Scholars have long argued that *The Old Arcadia* presents the reader with interpretative and ethical problems in order to instruct and cultivate virtue.[2] Among the prevailing critical views is that the romance instructs the reader to judge herself harshly and others forgivingly and "in the balance of goodwill," as illustrated by the forgiving judgment that Pyrocles and Musidorus extend to one another, to name one example.[3] The dedicatory epistle also suggests that the generous interpretation for others extends to texts as well and the romance itself in particular. However, viewing the epistle as a confession—more than only a request for generous interpretation—highlights the connection between the forgiveness in the romance and forgiveness in its author's religious culture.

In this chapter, I make two main claims with respect to this connection between forgiveness in *The Old Arcadia* and in the early modern Church of England. My first claim is that forgiveness in each is an intentional act of misjudgment, within certain boundaries, involving dismissing wrongdoing or esteeming a person to be better than she is. My second claim is that both *The Old Arcadia* and Elizabethan liturgy imbue forgiveness with the miraculous quality of transforming human beings—that forgiveness makes innocents out of offenders and saints out of sinners. For example, the epistle suggests that, should Sidney Herbert accept Sidney's confession and view the romance

forgivingly, the romance and its author will be transformed into the thing that she sees. This transformation aligns with some basic premises of confession: first, that sinners will encode their offenses into language and deliver them to an authority and, second, that this transaction will absolve the confessant of her offenses and transform her into a person in good standing with God and the Church.[4] Similarly, Sidney encodes his offending, bastard fancies into language and delivers them to Sidney Herbert, who, functioning as a kind of priest and a "sanctuary for a greater offender," interprets them as nothing more than a trifle and Sidney as a person worthy of love (3).

I contend that the reader's main ethical and interpretative work when interacting with *The Old Arcadia* is determining the felicity of the acts of forgiveness and the authenticity of the moments of transformation resulting from these acts. This interpretative work entails addressing the impossibility of verifying the sincerity of contrition, which can make moments of repentance and forgiveness (such as those in *The Old Arcadia*) ethically ambivalent because they are impossible to authenticate. While interpreting *The Old Arcadia* through the lens of forgiveness will not make the romance's ethical ambivalence satisfying, it does show that the dissatisfying ethics in the romance is purposefully dissatisfying in the same way that forgiveness can be dissatisfying, since forgiveness involves disregarding, dismissing, or moving past offences. Before considering the concept of forgiveness in *The Old Arcadia*, I will briefly survey some features of forgiveness as practiced in the Elizabethan Church of England, which will show (upon our return to *The Old Arcadia*) how Sidney's representation of forgiveness would have been familiar to his original audience.

"Not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses": The Church of England

There are three trends in the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer* (*BCP*) and *Book of Homilies* (*BH*) that are relevant to our discussion of Sidney's *Old Arcadia*. First, the texts suggest that mutual forgiveness is characteristic of the body of the faithful, as illustrated by the requirement that parishioners repent when they commit an offence and forgive one another. Second, the texts indicate that forgiveness is a form of interpretation, evinced by the requirement that parishioners judge themselves harshly and their neighbors forgivingly. Finally, according to these texts, mutual forgiveness occasions the miraculous transformation of the congregation into the body of Christ.

As we saw in chapter 3, the *BH*'s second sermon on charity requires that Christians always forgive: they must forgive the unrepentant unilaterally (which is not incompatible with punishment), and they must forgive the repentant bilaterally (which is held up as the ideal for the congregation). This sermon says that "to loue enemies, is the proper condition of them that bee the children of GOD, the disciples and followers of Christ" (43). However, it acknowledges that ordinarily, "mans froward and corrupt nature weigheth ouer deepely many times, the offence and displeasure done vnto him by enemies" and for that reason an ordinary person "thinketh it a burden intolerable, to bee bound to loue them that hate him" (43). In response to this objection, the sermon leads the congregation to reinterpret the offenses against themselves. Instead of dwelling on the "offence and displeasure done vnto him by enemies" as the ordinary person does, the sermon directs its listeners to think about the harm that they have done to their enemies and, more than that, "the displeasures which we haue done vnto Almightie GOD, how

often and how grieuously we haue offended him" (43). Finally (for our purposes), the sermon switches terms from "love" to "forgive" and says, "if wee will haue of GOD forgiuenesse [for offenses against him], there is none other rememdy, but to forgiue the offences done vnto us, which be very small, in comparison of our offences done against GOD" (43). In short, this sermon suggests that forgiveness entails interpreting others generously and oneself severely—the congregants are to see their own offenses as being much worse than those they have suffered. More generally, the sermon indicates that forgiveness is a requirement for Christians. The rite of Holy Communion in the *BCP* supports this conclusion. In situations where there is disagreement, the rite directs the curate to include those members who make amends and forgive, but the rite also requires that those who will not make amends and forgive be excluded. Participation in the sacrament, a representation of a person's membership in the body of the faithful, is contingent upon mutual forgiveness between the communicants.

The second sermon on charity also indicates that forgiveness for enemies entails a reinterpretation of those enemies and the harm that they have caused. Instead of relying on common sense notions that loving enemies is a "burden intolerable," Christians are supposed to take into consideration the harm that they have caused to their enemies and their offences against God. In other words, the sermon leads the congregants to reinterpret the harms done against them in a new context. Similarly, Holy Communion gives the curate instructions for reintegrating into the congregation any member who is "an open and notorious evil liver" (247). This process of reintegration requires the

offending member to repent and make satisfaction for their misdeeds, thereby giving the congregation the occasion to reinterpret, to re-deem, a person who had been excluded.

Taken together, the second sermon on charity and Holy Communion suggest that forgiveness is a form of interpretation that requires *something extra*. Congregants are not simply supposed to forgo retribution against their enemies, but they are supposed to love their enemies. The congregation is not simply supposed to see the score settled when the offending member repents and makes satisfaction, but it is supposed to see the offending member as one of the body of the faithful and one of them. Forgiveness is therefore a form of interpretation that has an irrational quality to it. It is rational to balance accounts in situations where harm has been done, but the requirement to love certainly goes beyond balancing accounts. The *BH*'s sermon on the worthy reception of the sacrament illustrates this something extra. After giving instructions about how to achieve reconciliation for specific wrongs, it adds, "Last of all, as there is here the mysterie of peace, and the Sacrament of Christian societie, whereby wee vnderstand what sincere loue ought to be betweixt the true communicants" (204). Simple coexistence and straightforward execution of justice is not enough—there must be mysterious mutual love. While harm would seem to try or strain the bonds of community, forgiveness (as an act of interpretation) more than restores those bonds—it makes manifest a mystery.

The *BCP* and *BH* suggest that God also employs this irrational forgiveness logic, provided that the congregation does. In the first sermon on Christian charity, the *BH* says, "What thing can we wish so good for vs, as the eternall heauenly father, to reckon, and take vs for his children? And this shall we be sure of (sayth Christ) if we loue euery

man without exception" (41). This passage suggests that Christians are not inherently God's children, but rather God chooses to view them as if they were and that choice makes it so. In other words, just as when congregants see a penitent sinner as a member of the body of the faithful (more than simply being someone who has balanced accounts), so God takes those who love everyone without exception as being his children (more than simply being human beings who are loving). In preparing for Holy Communion, the congregation must extend this love and forgiveness to one another. In the dismissals, the *BCP* suggests that Holy Communion is the representation of that miraculous transformation by virtue of forgiveness logic. The first dismissal illustrates forgiveness logic by saying that "although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (264). The choice not to weigh merits but instead to pardon offenses is transparently an irrational one. The second dismissal thanks God for feeding the congregation with "the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ" and says that through this act God "dost assure us thereby of thy favor and goodness towards us, and that we be very members incorporate in thy mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and be also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom" (265). Forgiveness, recall, is required for those who wish to participate in Holy Communion, and this second dismissal serves to remind the congregation of the way that this forgiveness for one another occasions God's forgiveness for them, which transforms them into the body of the faithful.

To review, the *BCP* and *BH* indicate that forgiveness between human beings is required for Christians and that Christians will necessarily form a network of reciprocal forgiveness, which will be a key term throughout my discussion of *The Old Arcadia*. The texts also suggest that forgiveness entails interpretation according to forgiveness logic, which requires something extra. Forgiveness for others is connected to forgiveness from God, and forgiveness from God transforms people (who form an occasionally dysfunctional community where people bicker with one another and where "notorious evil livers" get judgmental glances) into "very members incorporate in thy mystical body."

"Most infamous and most famous, and neither justly": *The Old Arcadia*

At first glance, the end of *The Old Arcadia* appears to provide an example of the transformative and irrational nature of forgiveness that is depicted in the *BH* and the *BCP*. After Gynecia, Pyrocles, and Musidorus are condemned to death, Basilius miraculously awakens and implicitly pardons the condemned by asking for Gynecia's pardon. Because of Basilius' interpretation of the events in the cave, Gynecia comes to be known as and therefore becomes "the perfect mirror of all wifely love," which the reader knows good and well she has not been, since she had attempted to commit adultery with Pyrocles-Cleophila (360). The narrator says that Gynecia's fame is "undeserved" but goes on to add that "she did in the remnant of her life duly purchase [her fame] with observing all duty and faith, to the example and glory of Greece—so uncertain are mortal judgements, the same person most infamous and most famous, and

neither justly" (360). The uncertain mortal judgment gives Gynecia an undeserved reputation, and as a consequence she becomes the person she is deemed to be. In short, Gynecia is transformed by an generous judgment, an act of forgiveness.

Gynecia's transformation lends itself to being read through the lens of piety, considering that she is forgiven by Basilius, a Christ figure.[5] After all, Basilius is apparently dead for three days before he wakes up and saves Gynecia, Pyrocles, and Musidorus from their death sentences. Before his resurrection, the doomed characters are subject to death under the law; after, they are redeemed by unmerited grace. Even more strikingly for our purposes, Basilius models forgiveness as it is described in the *BCP* and the *BH*. After Euarchus recounts the "intricate matters" for him, Basilius, to his credit, determines that "in all these matters his own fault had been the greatest," showing that he emphasized the severity of his own sins rather than the sins of those who trespassed against him (360). And those who trespassed against him have committed some grave crimes. Although Basilius knows that Gynecia is not guilty of killing him (we are reminded that "she had warned him to take heed of that drink"), Pyrocles and Musidorus are indeed guilty of ravishing Philoclea and Pamela by the early modern definition of the term (360). Clearly, Basilius interprets the offenses of the two princes generously and his own offenses severely. Basilius' act of forgiveness also allows the narrator to evoke compassion for Gynecia. When she is summoned after Basilius is resurrected, the narrator calls Gynecia a "poor lady" who "thought she was leading forth to her living burial" (360). The audience knows that she is not going to be buried alive, and for that reason, this passage clearly calls for our compassion by delaying her forgiveness and

fame until we have been reminded of her miserable state and her horrible death sentence. Again, all of these elements would seem to indicate that we have witnessed a Christlike act of unmerited forgiveness that transforms the sinner into a saint.

The final scene is not an unequivocal scene of Christian forgiveness, however, because the sincerity and authenticity of this moment of forgiveness are by no means clear cut. For one thing, Basilius' forgiveness is dubious because it is likely that he is acting out of self-interest by hiding his plans of committing adultery with Pyrocles-Cleophila (which never comes to light) and because he never learns of Gynecia's planned infidelity. (Can one be said to forgive someone without learning that the offender has offended?) Furthermore, Basilius never explicitly forgives Gynecia; rather, he asks for her pardon, and she never responds. For another thing, Gynecia's actions leading up to her climactic silence would seem to call into question the sincerity and authenticity of her forgiveness as well, should she choose to forgive Basilius.

There are two particular scenes that reveal the weight of Gynecia's silence at the end of the romance, to which we will now turn our attention: the initial confrontation with Basilius after Pyrocles-Cleophila tricks them into committing adultery with one another and Gynecia's false confession during the trial. As we will see, her behavior in these scenes makes it seem as though she almost goes out of her way to undermine the principles of forgiveness, regardless of the approach (reformist or traditional) to the concept. While these scenes point to the insincerity of Gynecia's forgiveness and therefore her exclusion from the network of reciprocal forgiveness, the relationship between these scenes and the final silence is not explicitly established by the text,

meaning that it presents the reader with the imperative of determining if Gynecia continues to undermine the principles of forgiveness or if she has a change of heart. The text, then, presents the reader with an interpretative choice. She may choose to see the forgiveness in the closing scene as redemptive, or she may choose to see the forgiveness as corrupt.

Gynecia's behavior after Basilius calls her Cleophila following intercourse, the first episode we will interrogate, casts doubt on the sincerity of her contrition at the end of the romance. After she realizes that Pyrocles-Cleophila has not come to meet her in the cave, we learn that she hopes "it might be the duke's own unbridled enterprise which had barred Cleophila than Cleophila's cunning deceiving of her" (239). In other words, she addresses Basilius still hoping to consummate her lust for Pyrocles-Cleophila. Moreover, she also resolves to "settle in [Basilius] a perfect good opinion of her"—to make him think that she is virtuous and blameless in this situation—which she does successfully (239). She reveals herself to him and suggests that Pyrocles-Cleophila's "gravity" is the reason for her presence, which is to say that virtuous Pyrocles-Cleophila and Gynecia have tricked Basilius into meeting Gynecia in the cave to make him feel ashamed (240). Basilius initially tries to avoid blame, but ultimately "the best rhetoric he had was flat demanding pardon of her" (241). Gynecia, however, refuses to pardon him. She says that "by your good estate my life is maintained" and for that reason "I claim nothing but that which may be safest for yourself" (241). To summarize, Gynecia chooses not to hold Basilius responsible for his actions publicly because it would not be

in her best interest to do so, but she makes no promise to forgive him outright. Basilius, confusingly, is under the impression that Gynecia has pardoned him:

> How much Basilius's own shame had found him culpable, and had already even in soul read his own condemnation, so much did this unexpected mildness of Gynecia captive his heart unto her, which otherwise perchance would have grown to a desperate carelessness. Therefore, embracing her and confessing that her virtue shined in his vice, he did even with a true resolved mind vow unto her that, so long as he unworthy of her did live, she should be the furthest and only limit of his affection. (241)

Basilius' conscience is working just fine—he sees his own shame and knows that he is worthy of condemnation—but apparently his ears are not, as it seems hardly virtuous for Gynecia to keep Basilius' secret out of self-interest. Still, Basilius is relieved that someone knows his faults and has judged him with "unexpected mildness." Regardless of what has motivated the interpretation, Basilius sees it as virtuous, and it draws him to Gynecia. Importantly, this opinion of Gynecia is the one that Basilius takes to his short-lived grave and therefore the one that he has when he is resurrected.

Basilius has the benefit of feeling confessed and absolved, which prevents him from falling into "a desperate carelessness," but Gynecia does not (241). While Basilius is caught red-handed and found out, Gynecia keeps her secret from Basilius, instead choosing to lead him to think highly of her. As a result, Gynecia falls into suicidal despair after Basilius apparently dies. She assumes that she will not receive mercy from other people: "For whither should I recommend the protection of my dishonoured fall?

. . . To men, who are always cruel in their neighbours' faults, and make others' overthrow become the badge of their ill-masked virtue?" (242-43). Naturally, Gynecia, having just interpreted Basilius' faults harshly to make herself appear virtuous, is intimately familiar with the practice she is describing here, and she expects to be on the receiving end of it in short order. Gynecia takes this conclusion further, however. She continues, "To the heavens? O unspeakable torment of conscience which dare not look unto them; no sin can enter there!" (243). Gynecia clearly expects to merit eternal damnation for her indiscretion, even though she sincerely confesses her "detestable love" for Pyrocles-Cleophila (243). The difference between her confession and Basilius', then, appears to be no more than the audience. While Gynecia is witness to Basilius' confession, no one is present when Gynecia admits her shortcomings. Nonetheless, if we approach this scene assuming the priesthood of all believers, she should be confident of her absolution simply by admitting her shortcomings, resolving to behave differently, and choosing to admit her faults to those she has offended. Viewed through the lens of reformed faith, therefore, her despair demonstrates her lack of faith in forgiveness that is not mediated by human beings. Moreover, when viewed through the lens of traditional religion, it suggests that she does not show true contrition, since her shame is rooted in her fear of penalty instead of her love for the divine. To summarize, Gynecia's confession and contrition are entirely unsatisfactory, regardless of theological lens.

If Gynecia wants human-mediated forgiveness, she has the opportunity to obtain it during the trial in Book V, our second important episode. However, in "despairful affliction," she confesses to crimes she did not commit (330). The reason for her false

confession is that she has already passed judgment on herself: "I have been too painful a judge over myself to desire pardon in others' judgement. I have been too cruel an executioner of mine own soul to desire that execution of justice should be stayed for me" (330). Considering the fear of others' harsh judgment that she voices in Book IV, it seems significant that she falsely debases herself here. Perhaps she is unable to share her shame for fear that it will be magnified rather than relieved. Still, she does confess to being "a degenerate woman, an undoer of this country, a shame of my children," which, although vague, could be taken to address her planned adultery (330). Keeping in mind that some within traditional religion took the Sacrament of Penance to transform attrition (imperfect contrition) into contrition, it might be possible to make the argument that this imprecise confession could meet the standards of traditional religion and merit absolution.[6] However, she continues to despair, which would seem to belie any efficacy that this confession could be said to have. Furthermore, her confession in the trial violates the principles of traditional confession: it most likely does not include the requisite information, it is not done with the appropriate affect, and it does not produce the intended effect (contrition). Finally, the text appears to associate Gynecia's despair with superstition, since her despair after her sincere confession in Book IV is immediately followed by Dametas mistaking her running into the woods (still disguised as Cleophila) to be an indication that "all the spirits in hell were come to play a tragedy in the woods" (244). Gynecia and Dametas both fail to see properly the relationship between the spiritual and the mundane. Where Dametas is too eager to see spiritual significance in mundane events, Gynecia fails to see the spiritual import of her

confession. From either doctrinal angle, therefore, Gynecia's confession is wanting. Either she can't see the efficacy of her confession without human mediation, or she refuses to participate in something like auricular confession.

Keeping all of this in mind, we can return to Gynecia's silence at the end of the romance with a fresh perspective. To review, she resolves to set Basilius in a good opinion of her, and, as far as we know, she does not disabuse him of this opinion; she refuses to pardon him once when he asks, but she does not plan to expose him because it would not be in her best interest if he were to fall from grace; she falls into suicidal despair because she believes herself unforgivable; and even at the moment when she is going to die, she makes a false confession instead of confessing to the offenses that she actually committed. What on earth happens in that moment of silence when Basilius asks for her pardon? Perhaps she changes her mind, pardons Basilius with a silent nod, and becomes a part of the network of reciprocal forgiveness. Maybe she is stunned and speechless—simply carried off to a double wedding before she even has the opportunity to make sense of what happened. She might choose to look down on Basilius, since she knows his sin and he doesn't know hers, and pardon him out of self-interest. She might also feel relieved that she has gotten away with planning adultery without needing to confess it publicly. In other words, Gynecia might forgive and become part of the network of forgiveness, or she might simply take this opportunity to mask her virtue to almost everyone within the diegesis (but not to the reader)—and thus this would be another case of "ill-masked virtue." Of course, we would be remiss to fail to consider the gender politics in this scene. As with Isabella in *Measure for Measure* or Hero in *Much*

Ado About Nothing, we are left to assume that Gynecia has acquiesced to the request of a man with considerably more power than she possesses.[7] And what about Pyrocles and Philoclea? Maybe they look on compassionately and forgivingly as the final scene unfolds. They may also look at Gynecia with a wry smile, knowing her faults, or they could look on her with advantageous self-interest, since they know her darkest secret.

The difficulty in interpreting this scene illustrates one of the most prominent difficulties of forgiveness: some people are genuinely transformed by forgiveness, and some people use the accoutrements of forgiveness as a chance to advance their own self-interest and mask their lack of virtue. The act of forgiveness, like the act of engaging with literature, is an act of interpretation. In each arena, misinterpretation will inevitably happen from time to time. Not only is the inevitability of misinterpretation recognized within the realm of reformist treatments of forgiveness, but Sidney acknowledges it within *The Old Arcadia*.

The foremost example of this acknowledgment comes during the conversation between Pyrocles and Musidorus in Book I. The disagreement between Pyrocles and Musidorus sets the stage for a moment of interpretation in which Musidorus can understand Pyrocles either forgivingly or unforgivingly. After Pyrocles tells Musidorus about his plan to crossdress, Musidorus condemns him:

> Remember (for I know you know it) that, if we will be men, the reasonable part of our soul is to have absolute commandment, against which if any sensual weakness arise, we are to yield all our sound forces to the overthrowing of so unnatural a rebellion. . . . And see how extremely every way you endanger your

> mind. . . . So that you must resolve, if you will play your part to any purpose, whatsoever peevish imperfections are in that sex, to soften your heart to receive them—the very first step down to all wickedness. (17-18)

Musidorus chooses to interpret Pyrocles' gender performance as an "unnatural rebellion" and "the very first step down to all wickedness." Following Musidorus' interpretation, Pyrocles must sacrifice his manhood (which Musidorus presupposes is a state of mind, not the possession of a certain set of genitalia) in behaving like a woman.[8] Doing so involves embracing passion and sacrificing reason, which will literally transform Pyrocles into a woman. Indeed, Musidorus says that "this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man" (18). The end result of this course of action, following Musidorus' interpretation, is moral depravity.

Pyrocles defends his decision to crossdress, however, and he offers Musidorus a more generous interpretation of his (Pyrocles') actions: he is acting out of "that heavenly love" that is comprised of two parts, "the one, the love itself; the other, the excellency of the thing loved" (20). Performing his love, Pyrocles says, will allow him to become versed in love itself, which will enable him to "turn it to greater matters," presumably virtue or the divine (20). Musidorus, however, is still inclined to interpret Pyrocles' actions in an unflattering light (rightly). He feels that Pyrocles is motivated by something other than virtue, intimating that Pyrocles' phrase "greater matters" is a euphemism: "Confess the truth, and you shall find that the uttermost was but beauty" (21). Unconvinced, Musidorus threatens to leave his love-stricken friend. Interestingly, the narrator calls this threat a "new unkindness" (22). In turn, Pyrocles looks at

Musidorus "as who should say, 'and is it possible that Musidorus should threaten to leave me?'" (23). This look leads Pyrocles and Musidorus to "paint out the true passion of unkindness" and to forgive Pyrocles, that is, to interpret Pyrocles' actions generously, as the *BCP* and *BH* direct its audience to do (23).[9] Still, Musidorus continues to be unpersuaded that Pyrocles is actually motivated by virtue, even though Pyrocles sticks to his reinterpretation of his "heavenly fancies" (25). We learn that Musidorus watches Pyrocles perform as Cleophila "full of extreme grief" and convinced that the whole enterprise is doomed to failure (25). Interestingly, Musidorus forgives Pyrocles by giving up any antagonistic feelings towards Pyrocles and by choosing not to punish Pyrocles for what Musidorus perceives to be a dangerous and immoral course of action, but Musidorus also does not entirely sacrifice his original interpretation of Pyrocles' actions even as he aids Pyrocles in crossdressing.

Musidorus' act of forgiveness transforms Pyrocles linguistically into a woman. The narrator tells us that he will use the name Cleophila exclusively to refer to this character for a specific reason: "which name for a time hereafter I will use, for I myself feel such compassion of his passion that I find even part of his fear lest his name should be uttered before fit time were for it" (25). Moreover, the narrator is careful to remind the reader that Pyrocles-Cleophila wants to be referred to as a woman: "for still, fair ladies, remember that I use the she-title to Pyrocles, since so he would have it" (34). This act of forgiveness is certainly motivated by goodwill: Musidorus interprets Pyrocles generously for the sake of unity.[10] This episode is also an example of misplaced

compassion: notice that the narrator says that he will refer to Pyrocles as Cleophila because he has such great “compassion of his passion.”[11]

In short, as many others have pointed out, this scene is an example of the dangers of passions, even (and perhaps especially) the loving kind of passion. I am presently interested in this episode, however, because it is an example of forgiveness gone awry. Musidorus forgives Pyrocles, which transforms Pyrocles—but for misguided ends. This example of forgiveness is a corruption, a mirror image of the genuine article. It is a fortunate fall that leads to the nearly tragic events at the end of the romance.

It only seems natural, then, to compare this moment of forgiveness between Pyrocles and Musidorus at the beginning of the romance to the moment of forgiveness between Basilius and Gynecia at the end of the romance. Is Gynecia only transformed in the same way that Pyrocles is transformed; that is, are they each corrupted? Are these each examples of nothing more than vice poorly disguised as virtue? One important difference between these two episodes is the outcome. After all, Gynecia’s forgiveness appears to lead to genuine virtue, but Pyrocles’ does not. For that reason, Gynecia’s actions in her moment of silence appear all the more significant. If she did genuinely forgive Basilius (and if Pyrocles and Philoclea genuinely forgave her), Gynecia would be included in the network of reciprocal forgiveness, which could offer a less cynical reason for her transformation. But is that really enough to redeem what seems to be a highly suspect moment of forgiveness?

As it turns out, there is reason to believe that Gynecia’s act of forgiveness is not quite so cynical as it seems, and that reason can best be described through the

relationship between Gynecia's act of forgiveness and Basilius' act of forgiveness, to which we will now turn our attention. Like Gynecia, Basilius harbors offenses in the final scene, but, significantly, he is able to pardon offenders without causing chaos. Since Basilius' act of forgiveness is a boon and not a disaster (as Musidorus' is), Sidney departs from a suspicion common to religious and political theorizations of forgiveness that public officials' power to pardon is dangerous. The entire second half of the second sermon on charity in the *BH* explains that, while individuals are required to forgive one another, magistrates may punish in accordance with charity and forgiveness, and in fact they are forbidden from forgiving unconditionally because they would jeopardize the wellbeing of the rest of the citizenry if they were to forgive offenders without cause. Similarly, Martin Luther's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount argues that the Beatitudes do not apply to officials in their public capacity, and Tyndale is also careful to separate the Sermon on the Mount from the responsibilities of the government.[12] Moreover, Hubert Languet and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, associates of Sidney, even argue in *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* that the sovereign's power to pardon (the most miraculous quality of God's justice) must be checked, since sovereigns can abuse this power by pardoning criminals who serve their interests.[13] These suspicions clearly point to the distinction of the two kingdoms, according to which the realms of the spirit and government operate according to different laws, laws that should not be mixed.[14] The separation of the temporal law and the spiritual law informed early modern gallows scenes, which, as Peter Lake notes, subjected felons to both (1) execution under the law (and he says that pardoning was viewed as "a very bad idea") at the hand of the

magistrate and (2) forgiveness and salvation at the hand of the minister (131).[15] Forgiveness and penalty took place one after the other.

Following this line of reasoning, Basilius' forgiveness should be disastrous; but it isn't. Instead, it eases the international tensions that the princes' impending executions had caused and transforms Gynecia.[16] Sidney, it would appear, suggests that the sovereign can act according to the law of grace, and that such actions can be a good thing. I would even go so far as to say that *The Old Arcadia* depicts Basilius as resolving the tension between the two laws in the final scene. On the one hand, he exercises the sovereign's power to pardon to good effect. On the other hand, he practices Christian forgiveness, since his request for pardon is motivated by humility and self-awareness. At the end of the trial, Basilius' stirring body leads "some to look for a miracle, most to imagine they knew not what," and I would say that this reconciliation of temporal law and spiritual law through an act of forgiveness is precisely the miracle they couldn't have anticipated (359). These positive effects suggest that Basilius' act of forgiveness is felicitous, and the change in reputation that Gynecia experiences might also suggest that she has been incorporated into the network of reciprocal forgiveness. However, the felicity of Gynecia's act of forgiveness is still uncertain—we will return to her forgiveness shortly.

The text arrives at this miraculous reconciliation of the temporal law and the spiritual law (1) by demonstrating that reason and passion, the ordinary means that human beings use to make choices, are imperfect and limited and (2) by suggesting that a spiritual means of making choices can only be achieved through the diminution and

sublimation of reason and passion. Euarchus is a salient example of the limitations of reason and the law: he does not allow his passions to interfere with his judgment, but his rational, unforgiving judgments are still imperfect. Certainly, he is admirably impartial in his execution of the law. He considers the evidence available to him and applies the appropriate sentence, regardless of the familial relation he has with the accused. However, if we are searching *The Old Arcadia* for virtue or justice, we should not forget that Euarchus condemns Gynecia to be buried alive for a crime she did not commit, as Stillman has pointed out.[17] Furthermore, the text suggests that it is Euarchus' lack of passion that prevents him from understanding Gynecia's confession rightly. After she confesses that she is "the subject that have killed my prince" and "the wife that have murdered my husband," the narrator tells us that Euarchus makes his decision "having well considered the abomination of the fact, attending more the manifest proof of so horrible a trespass, confessed by herself, and proved by others, than anything relenting to those tragical phrases (apter to stir a vulgar pity than his mind which hated evil in what colours soever he found it)" (330, 331).[18] Ironically, had Euarchus attended to the pity Gynecia inspired, he might not have erred so tragically (or nearly tragically) in his verdict and sentencing. This "vulgar pity," which we might more generously call compassion, would have helped Euarchus recognize that Gynecia delivers a false confession "purposely to overthrow herself" because she was suffering from despair (332). In short, Euarchus and his passionlessness are to blame for the unjust sentencing of Gynecia.

Still, passions won't serve us much better in our pursuit of virtue and justice, as evinced by the crowd's judgment during the trial:

> With that again he fell to entreat for Pyrocles, and Pyrocles as fast for Musidorus, each employing his wit how to show himself most worthy to die, to such an admiration of all the beholders that most of them, examining the matter by their own passions, thought Euarchus (as often extraordinary excellencies, not being rightly conceived, do rather offend than please) an obstinate hearted man, and such a one, who being pitiless, his dominion must needs be insupportable. (358)

The beholders misjudge the defendants, as Euarchus does, but in the opposite direction. While Euarchus suppresses his passions and focuses on the trespasses, the beholders are taken by the princes' eloquence and commendable willingness to die for one another. What makes the ending so compelling is that neither side is completely wrong. The reader is supposed to be taken aback (and titillated) by the offenses committed by those on trial, but the reader is also aware of the defendants' potential for virtue. Therefore, she is supposed to see the characters from each perspective—reason and passion. While reason and passion have points in their favor, however, each also presumes to have access to the whole truth of the matter.

The dialogue between Reason and Passion in the Second Eclogues makes explicit the relationship between reason, passion, and the spiritual law, and it shows that the resolution between reason and passion is effected by way of Basilius' act of forgiveness. Reason begins the dialogue by saying to Passion, "Thou rebel vile, come, to thy master yield," to which Passion replies, "No, tyrant, no; mine shall be the field" (119). These

lines capture the subversiveness of passion that is certainly put on full display in the trial by the actions of Pyrocles, Musidorus, Gynecia, and, arguably, Philanax. The lines also illustrate the passionate resistance to reason's ambitions to tyrannical supremacy. The resolution between Reason and Passion comes by way of repentance and "heav'nly rules":

> *R.* Though we cannot o'ercome, our cause is just.
>
> *P.* Let us o'ercome, and let us be unjust.
>
> *R.* Yet Passion, yield at length to Reason's stroke.
>
> *P.* What shall we win by taking Reason's yoke?
>
> *R.* The joys you have shall be made permanent.
>
> *P.* But so we shall with grief learn to repent.
>
> *R.* Repent indeed, but that shall be your bliss.
>
> *P.* How know we that, since present joys we miss?
>
> *R.* You know it not; of Reason therefore know it.
>
> *P.* No Reason yet had ever skill to show it.
>
> *R.P.* Then let us both to heav'nly rules give place,
>
> Which Passions kill, and Reason do deface. (120)

In the first line of this passage, Reason reminds us that it is itself the means to justice. But by the end of the romance, we also know that what appears to be just can be a rational assessment based on incomplete evidence—hence Reason's tyranny: it cannot account for things that it does not know, and it is loath to acknowledge its own limitations. Reason submits itself to "heav'nly rules" because it ceases to presume to be

able to prove or show the whole truth. In the second line, Passion says, “Let us be unjust,” which can similarly point in two directions: it can remind us that passions can lead to lawlessness and transgressions, but it can also remind us that forgiveness entails judging people with an irrational something extra. Each side must therefore acknowledge its limitations. Reason acknowledges that it cannot “o’ercome” and that it cannot show the future joys that Passion will know. Passion repents of its desire to “o’ercome” and reluctantly submits to Reason, not for Reason’s sake but for the sake of “heav’nly rules.” It’s pretty clear, I think, that the “heav’nly rules” refer directly to forgiveness. Both Reason and Passion must acknowledge their own faults and look past the faults of another and are thereby transformed (or sublimated) from a pair of bickering enemies into a harmonious community characterized by mutual forgiveness.[19]

There is therefore much to indicate that the trial scene illustrates the redemptive qualities of forgiveness, and it is through the framing of the trial scene and the trial scene itself that we can see the triumph of forgiveness, not in spite of Gynecia’s silence but because of it. Granted, the text does not say for certain whether she pardons Basilius and joins the network of reciprocal forgiveness, and her despair and self-interest would call the sincerity of such forgiveness into question anyway. If her act of forgiveness is felicitous, the end of the romance serves to show the transformative powers of forgiveness; if infelicitous, it is an example of specious virtue that takes advantage of forgiveness. The same could be said of Basilius’ act of forgiveness: it may either be genuine grace or self-serving and self-indulgent. Neither option seems entirely satisfactory, but, then again, shouldn’t forgiveness seem unsatisfying, since to forgive

someone is to accept a person in spite of an action that should dismiss the possibility of acceptance? If the reader is going to forgive the characters, then she must irrationally afford the characters more love than they deserve.[20] By omitting Gynecia's response, the text forces the reader into the ethical decision-making of the final scene. The reader must determine whether she should judge with reason, follow passion's unjust dictates, or follow the heavenly rules of forgiveness.

Of course, I use the pronoun "she" to refer to "the reader" because we know who "the reader" is: Mary Sidney Herbert. Philip, if you recall, has already set Mary up as a confessor when he confesses his monstrous literary tendencies to her and asks her to deem his work a trifle, transforming him from his monstrous self into a brother worthy of love. Likewise, Gynecia has made her confession in the presence of the reader alone. Gynecia's silence in the trial scene, therefore, is not so much a problem as it is an opportunity for Mary to exercise forgiveness. Mary may either judge Gynecia according to her merits (or, what is more likely, condemn her for her lack of merit, along with Basilius, Pyrocles, and Musidorus), or Mary can imitate God's forgiveness, in keeping with the Lord's Prayer—and the *BCP* reminds us that God's act of forgiveness entails "not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses" (264). Gynecia has certainly erred, and she has botched up just about every procedure for forgiveness that there is; however, all of that might just make her an ideal representation of a Christian according to the 16th-century Protestant literary imagination. Ultimately, it would seem that a forgiving, transformative understanding of Philip and his work must necessarily proceed

from a forgiving, transformative understanding of Gynecia. The forgiveness for the one is linked to the forgiveness for the other.

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[1] For example, see Richard C. McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia*, 63-64; Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, 74-75, and 89; Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet*, 168; and Nancy Simpson-Younger, "Beginning with Goodwill in the Works of Sir Philip Sidney," 803-04.

[2] In "'Unjust Justice' in the *Old Arcadia*," Elizabeth Dipple contends that *The Old Arcadia* presents ethically ambiguous situations for didactic ends. Following Stephen J. Greenblatt's reading in "Sidney's *Arcadia* and the Mixed Mode," *The Arcadia* illustrates the difficulties and dangers of interpretation by mixing different genres; Greenblatt even goes so far as to label Sidney a "connoisseur of doubt" (274). In "Sidney's Didactic Method in the Old Arcadia," Ann W. Astell demonstrates that Sidney's purpose is to lead readers to judge themselves as they judge morally-suspect characters. Robert E. Stillman reveals how *The Old Arcadia* directs its readers to strive to attain a "jump concord" between their wit and will, which entails becoming a capable reader of poetry in order to read the self-loving fictions that we all produce. See *Sidney's Poetic Justice:* The Old Arcadia*, Its Eclogues, and Renaissance Pastoral Traditions*. Blaire Worden argues that *The Old Arcadia* depicts scenes that parallel contemporary political problems with the purpose of inspiring virtue and guiding the reader's actions within the political sphere. See *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's* Arcadia *and Elizabethan Politics*. Some eschew the conclusion that *The Old Arcadia* is didactic. Noting the ethical ambiguity in Sidney's work, McCoy argues that "Sidney is ultimately more interested in sympathy and indulgence than in anything else" and that "his heroes … tend toward an ethical inertia" (64, 205). In "Castigating Livy: The Rape of Lucretia and *The Old Arcadia*," Debora Shuger focuses on the ambivalence of the romance's ending, suggesting that the romance does not fully endorse or condemn either authoritarian aristocracy or lawful republicanism.

[3] A number of the works listed in the previous footnote present this thesis in various forms. Simpson-Younger has developed it quite comprehensively in her article "Beginning with Goodwill in the Works of Sir Philip Sidney."

[4] Michel Foucault famously treats confession in this way in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. Foucault says that confession is a form of truth production, whereby an individual subject's experience is validated and rendered legible through recognition by an authority figure.

[5] McCoy says that Basilius serves "as a scapegoat for the younger men," suggesting atonement (66). See McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia*.

[6] I'm using the term "traditional religion" in the same sense that Eamon Duffy does in *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1580*. For Duffy's description of traditional confession, see pages 58-62. Thomas N. Tentler deals extensively with the idea that attrition can be transformed into contrition. See pgs. 22-27 and 250-273. Tentler argues that the definition of attrition as imperfect contrition is an oversimplification (250); it is, however, an oversimplification that I am willing to live with for my purposes here. Also see R. Emmet McLaughlin, "Truth, Tradition and History: The Historiography of High/Late Medieval and Early Modern Penance." McLaughlin surveys the historiography of penance, including the histories told by attritionists and contritionists to support their positions and how those histories were, in turn, folded into scholarly narratives about the history of penance. Finally, I should note that confession did not simply disappear from England in the 16th century, as Christopher Haigh reminds us. See pgs. 261 and 291, for example.

[7] Commentators have long discussed female agency in *The Old Arcadia* and Sidney's work generally. In *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, Lamb argues that while both versions of *The Arcadia* defend women (to an extent) against some forms of misogyny, they ultimately deny women the same authorial power that men have. Helen Hackett has noted that women have good qualities in *The*

Arcadia but, following her reading, that their goodness is somewhat qualified. She contends that Sidney's work combats misogynist polemic because women are good at all, but Hackett insists that his work requires men to be in control. See *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*, especially pgs. 101-129. Nancy Simpson-Younger shows that, while Sidney illustrates the shortcomings of human judgment, he upholds the power of vision to impart virtue (74)—and she also maintains that the female gazing position is not totally subordinated to the male, rational gaze, because women can impart virtue as well. See Simpson-Younger, "'I become a vision': Seeing and the Reader in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*." In "Love and Lies: Marital Truth-Telling, Catholic Casuistry, and *Othello*," Paula McQuade offers a perspective (with respect to Desdemona, of course) that could lead to a strikingly different reading of Gynecia. McQuade argues that Catholic casuistry allowed a woman who was being interrogated about her fidelity by a jealous husband to lie if she feared for her life or, what amounts to the same thing, for her reputation. McQuade also notes that Protestant understandings of marriage did not allow for this kind of dissimulation.

[8] Lisa Hopkins and Steven Mentz have taken up Greenblatt's view of Sidney as a "connoisseur of doubt" and used it to show how Sidney blurs gender lines. See Hopkins, "Passion and Reason in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*," and Mentz, "The Thigh and the Sword: Gender, Genre, and Sexy Dressing in Sidney's *New Arcadia*."

[9] It might be more precise to say that Musidorus exonerates or exculpates Pyrocles. This interaction might not be precisely the same thing as forgiveness: the two of them come to the conclusion that the course of action that Pyrocles takes is not immoral, and forgiveness proper would seem to require that all parties involved agree that the action taken is wrong. Still, in my view, this interaction shares enough qualities of forgiveness to be relevant for our discussion. Musidorus perceives that Pyrocles' actions are wrong; Musidorus feels some kind of negative emotion and threatens to punish Pyrocles as a result; in the end, Musidorus decides to give up these emotions and to act differently towards Pyrocles (instead of punishing him); and this choice on the part of Musidorus plays some part in Pyrocles' transformation. At the very least, we can conclude that Musidorus chooses to judge Pyrocles forgivingly, and we can also conclude that Musidorus behaves lovingly and forgivingly towards Pyrocles in a way that accords with the instructions in the *BH*, which say (as we saw) that citizens are to behave lovingly and forgivingly towards offenders in the absence of a magistrate, who will determine if there has been an offense and, if so, what sort of punishment is proportional to the offense.

[10] See Simpson-Younger, "Beginning with Goodwill in the Works of Sir Philip Sidney," pages 811-12.

[11] See Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, pages 79-80. Lamb suggests that the crimes committed by Pyrocles and Musidorus are partially due to the excesses of love and compassion—and that the compassion of the narrator and the audience makes us all complicit.

[12] Here is one Beatitude that, in Luther's thinking, does not apply to public officials: "What does it mean, then, to be meek? From the outset here you must realize that Christ is not speaking at all about the government and its work, whose property is not to be meek, as we use the word in German, but to bear the sword (Rom. 13:4) for the punishment of those who do wrong (1 Peter 2:14), and to wreak vengeance and a wrath that are called the vengeance and wrath of God" (23).

[13] See pgs. 104-07.

[14] However, Philip Melanchthon, whose influence over Sidney Stillman has clearly been shown, argues that the two kingdoms are not of necessity in conflict or incompatible: they have different laws because Romans 13 shows that the temporal kingdom was instituted by God. See "Magistrates" on pages 187-89, and Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*.

[15] See especially 126-146.

[16] Recall that Pyrocles is worried that Euarchus will weaken Thessalia and the relations between Macedonia and Thessalia if he executes Musidorus.

[17] According to Stillman, "Euarchus does precisely what the good ruler should do in sentencing the princes to according to the laws of Greece. But . . . we are also unable to acknowledge his justice. . . . Sidney has made us more capable of rendering a just decision than (*mirabile dictu*) Euarchus, the just ruler

himself. . ." (*Sidney's Poetic Justice* 222). Lamb notes that the penalty for lust is still death, so Gynecia is not exactly off the hook. See pg. 79. Still, I'd argue that the narrator's contention that Gynecia is "most infamous and most famous, and neither justly" indicates that the romance finds Euarchus' judgment unjust.

[18] Jenny C. Mann has persuasively argued that parentheses in early English rhetoric may be a disruption and the sign of a divided mind. She also contends that parentheses in Sidney's work serve to disrupt easy divisions between what is essential and what is an addition. Keeping this in mind, I'd suggest that the parenthetical phrase in the passage above serves to direct our attention to the affective quality of Euarchus' judgment, noting that he deems Gynecia's actions to be an "abomination" and that his decision is rooted in his *hatred* for evil. Therefore, this passage shows that Euarchus is not as dispassionate as he might appear.

[19] McCoy also argues that the dialogue between reason and passion parallels the trial scene at the end of the romance, the dialogue between Pyrocles and Musidorus, and the dedicatory epistle. McCoy insists that all of these scenes are ethically ambivalent. See pages 47-53 and 63-68.

[20] This choice to forgive characters whose repentance is dubious has much in common with Peter S. Hawkins' reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Hawkins suggests that the prodigal's repentance looks suspect under scrutiny, as does the older son's. However, Hawkins argues that the father's forgiveness seems to make up for whatever is lacking in the sons' repentance.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In chapter 4, I argue that forgiveness has a central place in Sidney's ethics of fiction, with the transformative moment of forgiveness at *The Old Arcadia*'s conclusion serving as the primary and climactic example. While Sidney illustrates transformation indirectly in *The Old Arcadia*, he speaks directly about transformation in *The Defense of Poesy*. He argues that "the ending end of all earthly learning [is] virtuous action" and that poets exceed historians and moral philosophers in attaining this ending end (220). Historians (with their "bare 'was'") can only recount events as they took place (224). Moral philosophers (with their "largesse . . . of definitions, divisions, and distinctions") can only give "but a wordish description" of virtue, as someone might verbally describe "an elephant or a rhinoceros" to someone who had never seen them (220, 222). Poetry, on the other hand, gives a "speaking picture" that "possess[es] the sight of the soul" and immediately enables readers to understand virtues "without need of any description" (222). It is this property that allows poetry "to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses" (217). Poetry, in other words, transforms readers into Cyrus by enabling them to understand his virtues and by moving the readers (with the "hand of delight") to act virtuously themselves (228).

This description of poetry's ability to inspire virtue has striking parallels with Tyndale's description of the purpose of allegories, which, as we saw in chapter 1, are illustrations of doctrines or principles stated elsewhere in scripture. He says that

allegorical reading, when properly employed, offers “an example or a similitude of the scripture to declare a text or a conclusion of the scripture more expressly, and to root it and grave it in the heart. For a similitude or an example doth print a thing much deeper in the wits of a man than doth a plain speaking, and leaveth behind him as it were a sting to prick him forward and to awake him with all” (158-59). For both Sidney and Tyndale, a story enables readers to learn things more easily and also moves them affectively—Tyndale notes that an example is a “sting to prick [a reader] forward and to awake him with all.” And, of course, Sidney makes a point to defend English poetry, and Tyndale died for his efforts to produce a Bible in English.

The similarities between poetry and Bible reading go still deeper. Sidney says that readers must know the poet’s “*idea* or fore-conceit of the work, not . . . the work itself” (216). Tyndale argues that a responsible Bible reader must go beyond knowledge of the historical events recounted in scripture and attain a feeling faith, because, after all, even demons know the stories in the Bible. As we saw in chapter 2, Askew similarly indicates that readers must move beyond words or physical signs to a spiritual meaning. Tyndale, Askew, and Sidney all see text as an access point to something immaterial, a point of contact with the other. There is also something prophetic about this movement beyond the text. Tyndale, as I observe in chapter 2, says that the New Testament uses the word “prophet” to refer to interpreters of text; Askew assumes a prophet’s voice; and Sidney says that “[a]mong the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet” (214). Each of these thinkers suggests that the essence of what is written exceeds or goes beyond what is written. Furthermore, they all see this

prophetic contact with the other as having consequences for public life in the form of virtuous action or community formation. As we saw in chapter 3, *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Book of Homilies* succinctly represent this movement from text, to action, to community.

However, Sidney begins his *Defense* with an example of misinterpretation—or rather, correct interpretation that misses the point: he says that John Pietro Pugliano attributes such admirable qualities to horses that Sidney almost wishes himself a horse. Sidney satirically goes through all the right stages of interpretation: identify virtue, be moved by virtue, want to imitate virtue—and yet he ends up with a hilariously incorrect outcome.

This potential for misinterpretation is all the more reason for forgiveness to be the climax of *The Old Arcadia*. If the essence of a text is in the idea or fore-conceit of the poet, then it stands to reason that readers will sometimes fall short. And if readers are responsible for ascertaining the idea or fore-conceit of poets, then it stands to reason that observers are responsible for ascertaining the idea or fore-conceit of actors as well, which is the concern of the trial scenes in *The Old Arcadia*. Therefore, it is imperative that readers and observers interpret writers and actors generously—and that each writer and actor occasion this generous interpretation from others by subjecting themselves to harsh interpretation. As we saw in chapter 4, *The Old Arcadia* illustrates harsh interpretation for oneself and generous interpretation for others.

Critically, there is plenty of precedent both for Sidney's assertion that there is an integral literary essence beyond the text and for his indication that interpreting

forgivingly cannot be omitted as a consequence. Forgiveness is central to theories of reading that came before Sidney's—and that clearly anticipate Sidney's. These theories suggest that when performing any act of interpretation, the hermeneut must see the movement of the cosmos toward God through charity, the means to act in accordance with and to make manifest that movement, and the place of the person or book within the cosmos. For all of these 16th-century Protestant thinkers, forgiveness is the contact point between this hypertextual reading practice and lived, performed experience in community with other people, and these thinkers suggest that it is the focus on the spirit above and around any moment of interpretation (despite that the flaws or shortcomings in the object of interpretation) that has the power to transform human beings, or, in Sidney's words, "to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (219).

We might call this approach to interpretation a hermeneutic of forgiveness. I have explored this hermeneutic of forgiveness through a theological lens, and I have tried to develop this theological lens from inside of early modern religiosity (insofar as that is possible) by taking it seriously as a phenomenon. It is my hope that this work contributes to the critical conversation of early modern reading practices by offering a more rigorously theological reading of the texts I have studied, thereby expanding the generally historicist or historiographical approach to reading that scholars most often employ. Of course, scholarly accounts of early modern reading do not generally neglect religion entirely. Still, my approach, rooted in the attempt to recognize the alterity of

early modern religion, helps to expose and catalogue the religious undercurrents in early modern reading.

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