

Religion and the Book

Professor Brian Cummings

The Reformation is strongly connected with the rise of the printed book in European history. A.G. Dickens wittily described the relationship as 'Justification by Print Alone', and Martin Luther himself called print 'God's ultimate and greatest gift', although he added, with an apocalyptic sting in the tail, that it was 'the last flicker of the flame which glows before the end of the world'. However, the relationship between books and religion crosses confessions, and Catholicism, as much as its opponents, defended the faith with books. This course crosses the fields of literature, religion and the history of the book, covering the period from the late Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. It studies books in different contexts: as promoters of ideas (from the humanism of Erasmus onwards); as devotional objects (of scripture and in ritual); and as agents of controversy (often banned or burned). Topics include: medieval books of hours and scholasticism; Erasmus and 'Christian philosophy'; Luther and the Ninety-Five Theses; the Bible in England; the Book of Common Prayer; heresy and censorship; martyrdom and conversion; Catholic and Puritan dissent; religious conflict in the civil war; the work of John Milton. As far as practical, the course will refer to the resources in York Minster Library, and will include visits to view manuscripts and early printed books. The course will also consider theoretical arguments central to early modern studies today: the 'religious turn', and the history of material books and objects.

Some key texts:

Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (Penguin Classics, 1994)

William Tyndale, *The New Testament 1526*, ed. W.R. Cooper (London: The British Library, 2000),

The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662, ed. Brian Cummings (OUP, 2011)

The Bible: Authorized King James Version, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Foxe's Book of Martyrs, ed. John King (Oxford World's Classics, 2009)

Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources, ed. Robert Miola (OUP, 2007)

Divine Right and Democracy, ed. David Wootton (Hackett, 2003)

John Milton, *The Major Works* (Oxford World's Classics, 2008)