Politics and Devotion

The Case of Robert Persons vs. Edmund Bunny, Author of A Book of Christian Exercise

Ronald Corthell

Purdue University Calumet

Ronald.Corthell@purduecal.edu

Abstract

Devotional writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries liked to promote their works as an antidote to the toxic polemical literature of the period. Even Robert Persons, the fiercely tenacious and effective polemicist for the Catholic cause, and a favorite Jesuit “bogeyman” in anti-Catholic propaganda, professed to desire a future when Christians would focus their energies on cultivation of the inner spiritual life. However, the irenic dispositions of these writers were counterbalanced by both polemical pressures of the day and deep-seated convictions regarding the true church. The ideological stake in devotion is foregrounded in Edmund Bunny’s Protestant appropriation of Persons’s devotional best-seller, the *Christian Directory*. This article places Persons/Bunny in the context of the struggles between English Catholics and the English government (and, for that matter, between Catholics) regarding political and religious loyalties. It is argued that the writing—and especially the reading—of such works of devotion in the highly charged polemical environment of this period constitutes a still under-appreciated contribution to the formation of early modern subjectivity. The Persons/Bunny episode is an important chapter in a larger literary struggle for control of conscience.

Keywords

Robert Persons – Oath of Allegiance – conscience – Catholicism – devotional literature – missionary – controversy – Edmund Bunny – authorship

* I wish to thank James Kelly and the anonymous referee for *JJS* for very helpful suggestions incorporated into the final version of this essay.

One of the ironies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English religious history is the double role played by Robert Persons. By common consent the most tenacious and effective polemicist for the Catholic cause and a favorite Jesuit bogeyman in anti-Catholic propaganda, Persons was also well known to be the author of what was arguably the devotional best seller of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.¹ *The first booke of the Christian exercise, appertayning to resolution* was published anonymously in Rouen in 1582. In 1584, Edmund Bunny (1540–1619), the renowned Calvinist preacher and former chaplain to Edmund Grindal (c.1519–1583), published *A booke of Christian Exercise, appertayning to resolution [...] by R.P. Perused and accompanied now with a treatise tending to pacification*. Hence my title, an allusion to the famous Borges story, “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote,” in which Borges brilliantly interrogates common-sense notions of authorship, readership, and plagiarism. (Scholars who have immersed themselves in controversial literature of the early modern period might be forgiven for thinking Borges must have got his conceit from reading such tracts, which routinely re-present the arguments of one’s polemical opponent.) As a revised and augmented edition of Bunny’s work was going to press in 1585, Persons got hold of it and inserted some marginal notations and a preface, which responded sharply to the Protestant appropriation of his work. Thus, somewhat echoing the thesis of this essay, a devotional work took on a polemical edge as Persons squared off against his Protestant “peruser.” The STC lists nearly forty versions of the work, Catholic and Protestant, following the opening publication and counter-publication, including Bunny’s *Brief Answer* of 1589 to Persons’s objections in the 1585 edition. Other religious controversialists also produced and promoted devotions as a sort of antidote to interdenominational pamphlet wars, and, like Persons, professed to desire a future when Christians would focus their energies on cultivation of the inner spiritual life. As already noted, however, the irenic dispositions of these writers were counterbalanced by both polemical pressures of the day and deep-seated convictions regarding the true church.² Indeed, in a blast

- 1 For overviews of English hostility to Jesuits in general and Persons in particular, see Victor Houlston, “The Fabrication of the Myth of Father Parsons,” *Recusant History* 22, no. 2 (October 1994): 141–151; and Arthur F. Marotti, “Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological Fantasies,” in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti (St. Martin’s: New York, 1999), 1–34.
- 2 For a richly detailed account of how an ostensibly devotional work from the eventful decade when Persons’s book first appeared was actually deeply engaged with key controversies in the English Catholic community, see William Sheils, “Polemic as Piety: Thomas Stapleton’s *Tres Thomae* and Catholic Controversy in the 1580s,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

against Bunny inserted in the second edition, Persons cited devotional indifference to institutional affiliation as a symptom of “atheism” brought on by the dispossession of Catholicism in England.

This essay is intended to raise more questions than it answers about the entanglement of issues of politics, inwardness, and authorship in Persons/Bunny. It continues a conversation about Persons and devotion started nearly twenty years ago by Brad Gregory.³ I am also interested in placing Persons/Bunny in the context of the long struggles between Catholics and the English government (and, for that matter, between Catholics and Catholics) regarding political and religious loyalties. Persons’s career spans a period between Elizabeth (r. 1558–1603)—whom he vigorously opposed and who wished to be perceived as “not liking to make windows into men’s hearts”⁴—to James I (r. 1603–1625) and the 1606 Oath of Allegiance, with its famous passage: “I do further swear that I do *from my heart* abhor, detest and abjure, as impious and heretical, this damnable doctrine and position, that princes which be excommunicated or deprived by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever.”⁵ Finally, I mean to affirm Victor Houliston’s promotion of Robert Persons as a major literary figure of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.⁶ I believe that the writing and especially the reading of such works of devotion in the highly charged polemical environment of this period constitutes a still under-appreciated contribution to the formation of early modern subjectivity. My working hypothesis is that the Persons/Bunny episode is part of a larger literary struggle for control of conscience. I think this was a central concern in most of Persons’s work, from the *Reasons of Refusall* (1580), defending recusancy, to *The Judgement of a Catholicke*

60 (January, 2009): 74–94. Sheils argues convincingly that Stapleton’s book, published in 1588, “offered his readers models of patience, adjustment and quiet missionary endeavor rather than those of political action and intrigue as the most effective response to what he and they saw as a persecuting regime” (94). Persons’s writing took a sharply different tack in the 1580s, notably in *The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge*, better known as *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (1584).

3 Brad S. Gregory, “The ‘True and Zealous Service of God’: Robert Parsons, Edmund Bunny, and *The First Booke of Christian Exercise*,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (April 1994): 238–268.

4 See Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (Cape: New York, 1960), 565, n. 49.

5 My emphasis. For a detailed discussion of the Oath and its consequences, see Stefania Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570–1625* (Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2007), 117–137.

6 Houliston’s full assessment of Persons’s career is *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons’s Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610* (Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2007).

English-man, his rebuttal of James's *Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus: or, An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* (1608). For Persons the missionary author the book functioned both as an extension of himself, a portable form of authority, and as a mirror in which devout readers might be strengthened through a process of mutual reflection coincident with the reading of the book. However, readers, including one Edmund Bunny, have a way of turning their reading to their own ends, even becoming authors themselves.

Bunny's career and fame as a preacher would carry special meaning both for his Protestant readers and for Persons. Bunny had achieved considerable success as a cleric, including his appointment as Grindal's chaplain, the rectory at Bolton Percy, and prebends in London, York, and Carlisle, but he had also made his mark as a theologian, issuing an abridgement of Calvin's *Institutes* in 1576 (translated into English by Edward May in 1580), and, even more, as an itinerant preacher who travelled over much of England evangelizing in towns and villages. Bunny's reputation would have "branded" his version of the *Directory* for English readers. His strong identification with Calvinism and evangelizing, as well as his rectory in a region with continuing Catholic sympathies among the gentry and commoners, must have intensified Persons's sense of violation; one wonders if the Jesuit missionary's anger was also fueled by envy of Bunny's freedom to conduct his own mission of sorts by choosing to take his preaching on the road and then, like Persons himself, consigning his messages to readers in textual form.

Scholars have reached widely varying conclusions as to the significance of the differences between the Persons and Bunny versions. Robert McNulty found that most of Bunny's changes may be traced to the Protestant emphasis on faith before works, but that, on the whole, Bunny conveys a spirit of seriousness and moderation while Persons, in responding, abandoned "the missionary spirit of the earlier edition," and "was now writing bitterly as a Roman Catholic for Roman Catholics," having all but given up the hope he had held in 1580–1582 for the reconversion of England by peaceful persuasion.⁷ Brad Gregory added to McNulty's comparisons several other changes motivated by doctrinal differences between the two authors, but the really original argument of his article has to do with fundamental points of *agreement* between

7 Robert McNulty, "The Protestant Version of Robert Parsons' *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 22 (August 1959): 299. I should also mention here earlier summaries of the Persons/Bunny texts by Helen C. White, *English Devotional Literature 1600–1640*, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, no. 29 (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1931), 144–149; and A.C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose 1559–1582* (Sands and Co: London, 1950), 182–193.

the two. Gregory portrays both Persons and Bunny as reformers who urgently promoted what Gregory terms “rigorous religion”; both writers engage in a sort of “sixteenth-century consciousness raising” in order “to propel the reader from Christianity as cultural conformity to Christianity as an active, self-conscious and exacting way of life.”⁸ Gregory’s argument is directed against skeptical histories of early modern religion as forms of social control. Finally, the title of Victor Houlston’s article, “Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified: Edmund Bunny’s Theft of *The Book of Resolution*,” signals Houlston’s purpose of constructing Persons as an author, “a genuine prose artist” whose book was “shaped by the circumstances and vision of a nervous, relatively inexperienced Jesuit missionary agitated by extremes of hope and discouragement.”⁹

I would like to address three issues raised by this debate on the Persons/Bunny texts. First, how partisan is devotional literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Where do polemics end and devotions begin? In his preface to the *Directory*, Persons draws a sharp distinction between the two kinds of works: controversial books, he writes, “fill the heads of men with a spirite of contradiction and contention, that for the most parte hindreth devotion.”¹⁰ He even goes so far as to reach out to Protestant readers: “let us joyne together in amendment of our lyves [...] and God will not suffer us to perishe finallye for want of right faithe” (7). Much seems to hinge on the meaning of the phrase “right faithe,” which is, I believe, clarified in an immediately preceding passage: although “trew faithe be the grounde of Christianitie [...] yet that one principall meane to come to this trew faithe, and right knowledge, and to ende all thes our infinite contentions in religion, were for eche man to betake him selfe to a good and virtuous life, for that God could not of his unspeakable mercie suffer suche a man to erre longe in religion” (6). Persons conceives of devotion as a step in a process of amendment of one’s life that will ultimately bring one to recognition of the true faith, namely Catholicism. Bunny repeats something like this process in a more straightforward presentation in his “perused” version. He proposes a two-step process of devotional softening followed by doctrinal correction: “first to draw them [those attracted to Catholic polemics] somewhat on, to a better advisement of their waies; and

8 Gregory, “True and Zealous,” 255–256.

9 Victor Houlston, “Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified: Edmund Bunny’s Theft of *The Book of Resolution*,” in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1996), 160.

10 Robert Persons, S.J., *The Christian Directory* (1582): *The First book of the Christian Exercise, Appertayning to Resolution*, ed. Victor Houlston (Brill: Leiden, 1998), 5. References to this edition will appear in my text.

then after that to espie their wonted errors likewise, and to joyne with us in the truth of religion.”¹¹ Both writers seem to be acknowledging what Michael Questier discovers in his path-breaking study of the imbrication of politics, religion, and the early modern conversion experience: that, despite the politicizing of conversion by both Protestants and Catholics in this period, polemical tracts in themselves were apparently not a principal cause of conversions. In contrast, he notes, Persons’s *Christian Directory* “was recognized as a solver of confessional doubt. People who were perplexed about the doctrinal division between the Churches and read this book seem often to have resolved their difficulties through reading it.”¹² Bunny is clearly aiming to achieve this purpose for Protestantism.

Although it is not his primary purpose, I believe Questier helpfully shifts the issue of doctrinal differences from the *content* of the texts to the *readers* of the texts. This pivot from the text to the consumption of the text is the second topic raised by the Persons-Bunny controversy. Differently disposed readers of Persons’s work appear to have used it to resolve their doubts with different results in terms of confessional affiliation. As Questier points out, converts in the English College in Rome cited the *Directory* more than any other book as the cause of their conversion.¹³ On the other hand, Richard Baxter (1615–1691) credited “*Bunny’s Resolution* (being written by *Parson’s* [sic] the Jesuit, and corrected by *Edm. Bunny*)” as the book which turned his spiritual life around.¹⁴ Bunny’s relatively effortless appropriation of the *Directory* suggests that instead of thinking in terms of specifically Catholic and Protestant *forms* of devotion shaped by divergent theological views, an approach familiar to literature scholars of this period, we ought instead to recognize devotional *reading* as a zone of instability amidst the ideological conflicts of the period. A focus on the ways readers *use* texts unsettles some of my core ideas as a literary scholar regarding authorship, literary form, and the ideology of form.¹⁵ Devotional

11 *A booke of Christian exercise appertaining to resolution, that is, shewing how that we should resolute our selues to become Christians indeed by R.P; perused by Edmund Bunny* (London, 1609), sig A3^r.

12 Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion, 1580–1625* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), 37.

13 Michael C. Questier, “‘Like Locusts over all the World’: Conversion, Indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England,” in *The Reckoned Expense*, ed. McCoog, 279.

14 Quoted in Gregory, “True and Zealous,” 240.

15 There is a substantial literary scholarship on Protestant devotional literature, inaugurated by Barbara Lewalski in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1979).

reading provided not so much an *escape* from the wrangling of controversy as an opportunity for “resolution,” but one with no predictable result in terms of confessional affiliation. Persons-Bunny in particular, and devotional literature of the period more generally, participates in what Robert Weimann has described as “the loosening” of authority in early modern England, “within which traditional versions of authority could be intercepted by or subjected to the ‘imaginary puissance’ (and empowerment) of the writer’s, reader’s, and interpreter’s conscience.”¹⁶ To this extent, I would agree with Gregory’s argument that devotional literature of the period, or, as I have suggested, *the reading* of devotional literature, challenges the trend “towards understanding the new forms of early modern Christianity as the ideological expression of a desire for social control and social discipline.”¹⁷

Gregory urges instead that we regard this literature as “the external expression of internalized convictions about the nature of reality” (255). But were the personal and the political thus separable in this period of religious contention? As already noted, devotional writers, including Persons and Bunny, were fond of saying they were separable, but both the context and the particulars of Bunny’s “perusal” and Persons’s outrage at being perused would seem to suggest that these writers’ inner convictions about reality were firmly attached to ideological positions. One especially important context was the government’s campaign against the missionary priests and Catholic subjects; Campion had been executed in 1581, fines for recusancy were ramped up that same year, and conversion to Rome was classified as treason. Houliston notes the connections between “resolution,” recusancy, and the endurance of persecution in Persons’s correspondence.¹⁸ The *Directory* was also a writer’s way to undertake missionary work *in absentia*. The method for carrying out this work is detailed in a Jesuit manuscript, written by George Gilbert (1559–1583) and based on the methods used by Persons and Campion, containing instructions on “a way to deal with persons of all sorts so as to convert them and bring them back to a better way of life.”¹⁹ These instructions resonate with the language and purpose of the *Directory*. “In the case of heretics,” the instructions note, “more fruit is gained from sermons giving advice for the directions of one’s life, for the saving of one’s soul and from other such-like meditations, than from those on

16 Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1996), 29. My emphases.

17 Gregory, “True and Zealous,” 244.

18 Houliston, “Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified,” 163.

19 *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Persons, S.J.: vol. I (to 1588)*, ed. Leo Hicks, S.J., Catholic Record Society 39 (CRS: London, 1942), 331–340.

subjects of dispute and controversy" (336). "Schismatics," or church papists, must be disabused of their reasons for delaying their resolution, the subject of chapter 5 of Part 2 of the *Directory*. "Lukewarm Catholics" must be stirred up by holding up for imitation those "who have suffered torments and death with constancy" or others "who despised the world and its delights [...] and lived thenceforward the strictest of lives in order to gain a celestial kingdom" (Instructions, 339; *Directory*, Part 2, Chapter 2). However, important as these devotional texts might have been to promoting resolution or conversion, the absent writer has less control over the responses of his readers than does the priest in conference with a congregant or proselyte. Thus, where Gregory grounds his critique of the social control theory in *texts* such as the *Directory*, I would emphasize the unpredictable *use* of such texts by devout readers (one of whom was Edmund Bunny) rather than the intentions of devotional writers as an alternative to the control model.

That is not to concede that devotional writers were indifferent with regard to the confessional stakes of their works. Both Bunny's "perusal" of Persons and Persons's outrage at being copied seem to argue for a desire on the part of both writers to control the devotional text. This is another way of raising my second question: Why should it matter who authors texts like the *Directory*? But it does seem to matter to Bunny, who speculates, perhaps disingenuously, about the author of the book he peruses, suggesting that the Roman Catholic errors "seem rather to be added by some that had the perusing of the booke [...] than by the proper Author therof."²⁰ Ironically, Bunny seems to be suggesting here that his own perusing of the text is a sort of exercise in textual criticism, a new bibliographer's reconstruction of the author's original intention. Authorship also clearly mattered to Persons himself, who apparently stopped the press of his second edition after seeing Bunny's version to insert an annotation at the end of chapter five and marginal notes thereafter.²¹ Persons's sense of ownership of the text is conveyed in the terms of his protest against the "infinite corruptions, maymes, and manglings" of his work in Bunny's perusal.

One senses that ideological purity was not the only thing at stake in this reaction to Bunny. Houliston detects "writerly pride, as well as Jesuit

20 *A booke of Christian exercise, appertaining to resolution [...] by R.P. Perused, and accomplished now with a treatise tending to pacification. By Edm. Bunny* (London, 1584), sig. *7^r–7^v.

21 See Houliston, "Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified," 170. Houliston notes that the textual history of Persons's book "is one of extraordinary instability" (177). The original *Book of Resolution* was revised as *A Christian Directory* (1585), a book nearly twice the length of the original *Resolution*, reduced in the edition of 1607, and then alternately augmented, reduced, and restored again in editions of 1622, 1633, and 1650.

indignation, in his complaint.”²² But more than pride is at stake here. Beginning during his relatively brief yet extremely busy time as a Jesuit on English soil, Persons’s missionary work became writer’s work, what his biographer Francis Edwards, S.J., calls “the apostolate of the pen.”²³ As a missionary writer situated at varying intellectual and geographical distances from both Rome and England, he was forced to produce a form of authority through the arts of courtship, argumentation, and persuasion.²⁴ Included in pride of authorship, then, is a desire for a measure of control over both text and reader, perhaps reflected in Persons’s change of title from the 1582 *Booke of the Christian Exercise* to *A Christian Directorie* in 1585. By the same token, this pastoral influence becomes increasingly vested in literary qualities; hence Persons’s indignation at Bunny’s “manglings” of his prose vies with his objections to the Protestantization of doctrine in the preface and marginalia of the 1585 edition. “Buny,” he writes, “makes me to speake like a good minister of England.”²⁵ This is a matter of both style and substance. For example, to illustrate the folly of neglecting devotions, Persons develops an extended analogy of a man married to the rich and beautiful Lady Reason but conducting an affair with her handmaid Sensuality (literary scholars may be reminded of Donne’s fair mistress Religion in “Satire III”):

If a man had married a riche, beautifull, and noble gentlewoman, adorned with all gyftes and graces, which may be devised to be in a woman: and yet notwithstanding should be so sotted and entangled with the love of some fowle and dishonest begger, or servile mayde of his house, as for her sake to abandone the companie and friendship of his sayed wife: to spend his tyme in dalliance and service of this base woman: to runne, to goe, to stand at her appoyntment: to putt all his lyving and revenues into her hands, for her to consume and spoyle at her pleasure: to deny her nothing, but to wayte and serve her at a becke: yea and to

22 Ibid., 171.

23 Francis Edwards, *Robert Persons: The Biography of an Elizabethan Jesuit, 1546–1610* (Institute of Jesuit Sources: St. Louis, 1995), 41. On this point see also Nancy Pollard Brown, “Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word,” in *The Reckoned Expense*, ed. McCoog, 193–213, and Ronald Cortell, “Robert Persons and the Writer’s Mission,” in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*, ed. Marotti, 35–62.

24 On this aspect of Persons’s career, see John Bossy, “The Heart of Robert Persons,” in *The Reckoned Expense*, ed. McCoog, 141–158.

25 Robert Persons, *A Christian directorie guiding men to their salvation* (Rouen, 1585), f. 11^r; quoted in Houliston, “Why Robert Persons would not be Pacified,” 171.

compel his sayde wife to doe the same: wolde you not think this mans lyfe miserable and most servile?²⁶

When Bunny replaces Persons's "ladie reason" with "the grace of God's spirit," his correction of doctrine (that is, Persons's tendency to valorize human reason) goes hand in hand with the sacrifice of Persons's personification. Since Bunny retains the controlling comparison of a marriage damaged by an affair, his substitution of a theological abstraction for the personification results in a much diluted, if not incoherent passage.²⁷ In the Persons-Bunny dispute, then, questions of doctrinal purity are intertwined with questions of literary quality.

My final point arcs back from authors to readers. In the opening pages of the *Directory* Persons laments that in earlier times the Catholics who are now his Catholic readers would have received the "grounde of faith peaceably, and without quarelinge from their mother the Church."²⁸ So much history and emotion are embedded in those simple words. Persons's text must stand in for a relationship between the individual (Catholic) Christian and the church, a relationship here represented in the traditional language of maternal care. What seems to be at stake in the dispute over authorship of the *Directory* is not ideology in the form of disputed doctrines, such as the status of human reason, but ideology understood in a broader sense, as a process which includes the formation of the religious subject according to right doctrine but which, more importantly, elicits one's inward and affective affirmation through the practice of "rituals of ideological recognition."²⁹ This is what I understand to be the function of what Persons calls "consideration":

Consideration is the key which openethe the doore to the closet of our harte, where all our bookes of accompte do lye. It is the lookinge glasse, or rather the very eye of our soule, wherby she seethe her selfe, and looke the into all her whole estate, her riches, her debtes, her dueties, her negligences, her good gyftes, her defectes, her safftie, her daunger, her

²⁶ *The Christian Directory*, ed. Houliston, 163.

²⁷ As an aside to literary scholars, it is worth noting that the imaginative incoherence of Bunny's version of the illustration does not seem to stem from any "Protestant" distrust of the imagination, but, rather, from the doctrinal requirement that reason not be privileged.

²⁸ *The Christian Directory*, ed. Houliston, 6.

²⁹ In this formulation of ideology, I am drawing on Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (Monthly Review Press: New York, 1971), 127–186, particularly 172.

way she walkethe in, herpase shee holdeth, and finallye, the place and ende which she drawethe unto.³⁰

Consideration is a process whereby a subject actively recognizes herself or himself through a process of “reflection,” in the more or less literal sense of seeing oneself in the mirror of reality. Gregory puts it succinctly in his characterization of the goal of “rigorous religion”: “the way things are dictates the way people should act.”³¹ The *Directory*, through its analogies and hypothetical cases, holds up to the reader a mirror of “the way things are” and invites recognition of one’s true position in that mirror.

What I also wish to emphasize is that *Persons* frames this process of consideration as an inter-subjective experience of reading. First, consideration is inter-subjective. In the prefatory matter of the book, *Persons* twice identifies himself as a Catholic and asks that the reader,

when thou art amiddest thy deepest devotions [...] have some memorie of me also, poore sinner: as I shall not be forgetfull of thee. [...] [L]ett us bothe be myndefull to praye for our persecutors: who finallie will prove to be our best freendes: being in deed the hammers which beate and polish us, for makynge us fytt stones, for the building of Gods new Jerusalem in heaven.³²

At the conclusion of the book the author anticipates receiving some favor for having assisted in the process of resolution: “And I for my parte (I trust) shall not be voyde of some portion of thy good happe and felicitie: At leastwise I doubt not, but thy holie conversion shall treat for me with our common father.”³³ This author-reader relationship is quite rudimentary, to be sure, but suggestive of an alternative pathway to both confraternity and the cultivation of inwardness in the absence of “their mother the Church.” Second, *Persons* imagines consideration occurring in the act of reading. He opens the book with “a necessarie advertisement to the reader,” which represents “a certayne

30 *The Christian Directory*, ed. Houliston, 17–18.

31 Gregory, “True and Zealous,” 255. In his discussion of the Christian Religious Ideology, Althusser emphasizes the mirror structure of ideology whereby the subject recognizes himself and affirms that “everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right” (Althusser, *Lenin*, 181).

32 *The Christian Directory*, ed. Houliston, 4.

33 *Ibid.*, 325.

principall deceyt of our ghostlye adversarie” as a temptation against “hearinge or readinge any thinge contrarye to theyre present humor or resolution.” His examples are all of being distracted from one’s reading: “As for example, a userer, from readinge bookes of restitution: a lecherer, from readinge discourses against that synne: a worldlinge, from readinge spirituall bookes or treatyses of devotion.”³⁴ The work of consideration coincides with the reading of the book, “For I doubt not, but God maye so pearse these menne hartes before they come to the ende, [...] and that the Angells in heaven (whiche will not ceasse to praye for theym *whyle they are readinge*) maye rejoyce and triumphe of theyr regayninge, as of sheepe most dangerouslye loste before.”³⁵ If we take Persons seriously here and allow that the reading of a book like the *Directory* could hold such enormous consequences for the reader and writer, then we can perhaps understand his outrage at Bunny’s action: in appropriating Persons’s book of resolution, Bunny was also co-opting the Jesuit’s missionary, pastoral relationship with his readers, which was necessarily now also an authorial relationship. And again, it must be emphasized, this relationship is never detached from religious controversy (“be mindfull to praye for our persecutors”).

The stakes in this relationship between devotional writer and reader continued to grow larger over the course of Persons’s career. The Oath of Allegiance had been issued in summer of 1606, and Persons responded to the king’s own defense of the oath (*Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus: or, An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*) with his *Judgement of a Catholicke English-man* in 1608. In order to assure that Catholics declaring loyalty to the English monarch did not in fact harbor the hidden, treasonous belief in the doctrine of papal supremacy, the Oath included the following resolution: “I do further swear that I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure, as impious and heretical, this damnable doctrine and position, that princes which be excommunicated or deprived by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever.”³⁶ As Stefania Tutino has argued, the inclusion in the Oath of a renunciation of the doctrine of papal primacy “offered a new formulation of the separation between inner beliefs and outer conduct, shifting in a fundamental way [...] the ‘boundary between the internal and external forum.’”³⁷ The

34 Ibid., 12.

35 Ibid., 13. My emphasis.

36 Quoted in Stefania Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570–1625* (Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2007), 133.

37 Tutino, *Law and Conscience*, 134. Tutino is quoting from Paolo Prodi, *Una storia della giustizia: dal pluralismo dei fori al moderno dualismo tra coscienza e diritto* (Il Mulino: Bologna, 2000), 321–322.

Oath “was indeed aimed at strengthening the sovereign’s authority in the realm of the subjects’ consciences, which is the new arena in which the battle needed to be fought.”³⁸ Between the issuance of the oath and the *Judgement of a Catholicke English-man* the last edition of the *Directory* published in Persons’s lifetime appeared in 1607. The *Christian Directory* participates in the battle of conscience and, as we have seen, it places that struggle in the scene of reading, in a relationship between the devotional writer and the devout reader. As Bunny’s appropriation shows, however, the outcome is uncertain.

Ethan Shagan has cautioned literary scholars against a focus on private devotional life to the exclusion of the political and ideological dimensions.³⁹ The case of Persons’s and Bunny’s “Directories” suggests that politics and ideology, on the one hand, and devotion, on the other, cannot always be clearly demarcated. Loyalty oaths and tests of fidelity forced public questions into the private arena of conscience. Shagan also urges us to think of ideological disputes in the period as “a *process* by which [...] ideas were peddled, resisted, accommodated, manipulated, and imposed.”⁴⁰ We can observe this kind of dispute being played out in the Persons-Bunny texts. The battle between Persons and his Pierre Menard, Edmund Bunny, played out on two fronts: as a struggle between the Jesuit resistance writer and the renowned Protestant

38 Tutino, *Law and Conscience*, 223–224. Tutino’s reading of the oath controversy continues a debate among historians regarding the true meaning of the oath for English Catholics and the intention of the Jacobean authorities in requiring the oath. The debate is summarized and continued by Johann P. Sommerville, “Papalist Political Thought and the Controversy over the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance,” in *Catholics and the “Protestant Nation”: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2005), esp. 172–178. The chief debating point is whether the oath was focused on the doctrine of the papal deposing power (Sommerville’s position) and therefore functioned as a loyalty test, or whether, as Michael Questier argues, the oath was centered on “the novel ‘impious and heretical’ clause rejecting the ‘damnable doctrine’ that excommunicated or deprived princes ‘may be deposed or murdered by their subjects,’” and therefore functioned as a means of branding papal doctrine as heresy and indirectly conceding the king’s supremacy over the church: Michael C. Questier, “Loyalty, Religion and State Power in Early Modern England: English Romanism and the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance,” *Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 318–319. Tutino’s argument is aligned with Questier’s interpretation of the oath.

39 Ethan Shagan, “Introduction: English Catholic History in Context,” in *Catholics and the “Protestant Nation,”* ed. Shagan, 16.

40 *Ibid.*, 15.

preacher, but also as a tension between the Jesuit missionary writer attempting to exercise some control over his text—and by extension, over his relationship with readers—and those readers (who, like Bunny, could become writers) responding more or less unpredictably to texts that promote the act of “consideration.”