

EARLY MODERN LITERATURE IN HISTORY

Series Editors: Cedric C. Brown · Andrew Hadfield

"Interesting and timely. Compellingly demonstrating that central texts of English Renaissance literature were shaped in response to the Bible, Ferguson's work is distinguished by a real familiarity with scripture and illuminating close readings."

—**Alan Stewart**, Professor of English and Comparative Literature,
Columbia University

"The publication of the Bible, from Erasmus' 1516 New Testament onwards, might be called the literary event of the century. This is not only a matter of the text itself, but also of the enormous effort of interpretation—and literary theory—which it inspired. Jamie Ferguson carefully takes us through this fascinating and important terrain."

—**Brian Cummings**, Anniversary Professor of English and Related Literature,
University of York

"Through meticulous, historically informed readings, Jamie Ferguson argues that Reformation hermeneutics shaped early modern English language and literature, including not only religious literature like the Sidney Psalms and Donne's sermons but secular works like Donne's erotic poems and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. He compels us to reassess the categories of sacred and secular as well as the relationship between literary authority and the traditions—scriptural, ecclesiastical, rhetorical, Ciceronian, Petrarchan—against which it was tested."

—**Hannibal Hamlin**, Professor of English, The Ohio State University

The expressive and literary capacities of post-Reformation English were largely shaped in response to the Bible. *Faith in the Language* examines the convergence of biblical interpretation and English literature, from William Tyndale to John Donne, and argues that the groundwork for a newly authoritative literary tradition in early modern England is laid in the discourse of biblical hermeneutics. The period 1525–1611 witnessed a proliferation of English biblical versions, provoking a century-long debate about how and whether the Bible should be rendered in English. These public, indeed institutional accounts of biblical English changed the language: questions about the relation between Scripture and exegetical tradition that shaped post-Reformation hermeneutics bore strange fruit in secular literature that defined itself through varying forms of autonomy vis-a-vis prior tradition.

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