LITERATURE AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Reid Barbour’s study takes a fresh look at English Protestant culture in the reign of Charles I (1625–49). In the decades leading into the Civil War and the execution of their monarch, English writers explored the experience of a Protestant life of holiness, looking at it in terms of heroic endeavors, worship, the social order, and the cosmos. Barbour examines sermons and theological treatises to argue that Caroline religious culture comprised a rich and extensive stocktaking of the conditions in which Protestantism was celebrated, undercut, and experienced. Barbour argues that this stocktaking was also carried out in unusual and sometimes quite secular contexts; in the masques, plays and poetry of the era as well as in scientific works and diaries. This broad-ranging study offers an extensive reappraisal of crucial seventeenth-century themes, and will be of interest to historians as well as literary scholars of the period.

Reid Barbour is Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of two previous books on early modern England: Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction (1993) and English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture (1998). He has contributed articles to journals such as English Literary Renaissance, Studies in Philology, Studies in English Literature, the John Donne Journal, and Renaissance Quarterly.
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To Marion Durwood and Mary Anne Baker Barbour,
and Steven and Carol Arndt Wolfe
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