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## Ritual, Space, and Authority in Seventeenth-Century English Cathedral Cities

*EDITORS' INTRODUCTION* In seventeenth-century English cathedral cities, a lively and important group of urban communities during the late medieval and early modern periods, public rituals were acted out in spaces where forms of worship, benefits of royal favor, and assertions of local authority were all contested. A close examination of these rituals in their spatial context is essential to a thorough understanding of serious disputes linking the struggle for civic autonomy to religious culture. Just as important, it provides a window onto the role of public space in the devotional, communal, and political experience of English urban dwellers during a turbulent and transitional period. Up until the outbreak of civil war in the 1640s, sacred and secular authorities appropriated one another's sites and symbols to underscore status and claim legitimacy. In the tumultuous decades leading up to civil war, cathedral officials waged a symbolic battle to demarcate and delimit their sacred space more visibly, invoking royal adjudication to fend off the appropriation of sacred symbols by civic authorities. After the interregnum, civic authorities exerted more power over the use of cathedral spaces and symbols. Ritual was transformed and, in the process, public space and public authority were redefined.<sup>1</sup>

The long history of public ritual in cathedral cities was not without its moments of tension, but the seventeenth century was a pivotal period in this regard. Centuries before the English civil wars

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In seventeenth-century England, cathedrals were located in twenty-two urban communities, many of them county towns and administrative, economic, and cultural centers of their regions. St. Paul's and Christ Church cathedrals were subject to the unusual influences of the metropolis and the university. Arguably, Ely, for lack of a major town, should be identified, along with London and Oxford, as unrepresentative of provincial cathedral cities. Bath had been subsumed by the diocese of Wells by the Reformation. Westminster was a Henrician foundation that lasted only two years. Coventry cathedral was suppressed in 1539 and not revived until 1918.

of the 1640s, civic authorities and high clergy in English cathedral cities had shared secular and sacred space, making exploratory use of one another's symbolic repertoire. Civic authorities had enjoyed access to cathedral enclosures, even to sanctified spaces within the cathedrals, and had deployed sacred objects, texts, and gestures in their own civic performances. High clergy, in turn, had occupied a prominent place in civic processions and public spaces. In the decades leading up to the civil wars, cathedral chapters, supported by royal authority, challenged the use of sacred elements and spaces in civic ritual. In response, to assert local autonomy in the face of centralizing authority, the laity in cathedral communities grappled with the high clergy for control over the liturgy itself in local parish churches closely tied to civic leadership. By the interregnum of the 1650s, cathedral chapters were abolished along with monarchy and episcopacy. Although cathedral chapters were renewed after the Restoration of monarchy in 1660, cathedral cities exploited the diminished position of the chapters and revived pre-Reformation practices incorporating sacred, even liturgical, elements into civic ritual. For all the actors involved in this long story, the control over contested spaces and performance elements of public ritual was itself an exercise, as well as an assertion, of power. Thus, the place of cathedrals in seventeenth-century English civic culture was situated in local competitions over contested spaces, royal audiences, and sacred elements of ritual performance at a time when the jurisdiction of space, the locus of power, and the ambiguous boundary between sacred and secular were all subject to lively negotiation.

This article looks closely at illustrative cases concentrated in the early and late decades of the seventeenth century (without delving into the details of the civil wars and interregnum during which cathedral chapters were actually abolished). The analysis is supported by records of civic corporations, parish churches, cathedral chapters, and royal administration, as well as by court records treating disputes among all these contestants. The argument unfolds more or less chronologically, but follows the shifting thematic emphases of the historical actors rather than a continuous narrative of events. It begins with a discussion of ecclesiastical spaces and the theatrical aspects of the rituals performed in them. It then establishes the importance of sacred liturgy in disputes between cathedral clergy and civic leaders. This approach illuminates

the increasingly problematic role of the Crown as a remote arbiter of devotional and ceremonial orthodoxy; ritual processions were also a form of theater in which hierarchies of performers appealed to a royal audience for favor. Charles I's divisive notions of religious conformity, which alienated many lay and clerical subjects by the 1630s, also empowered cathedral clergy to police, with jealous zeal, a more strict separation of the sacred and the secular in public ritual.

All of these findings permit, at the close of the argument, a revised understanding of the decades following the Restoration, a period commonly associated with the renewed consolidation of royal and diocesan authority. It will be argued here that throughout the course of the seventeenth century, ritual performance in contested spaces expressed a redistribution of power not in favor of cathedrals, with their connections to authority at the center, but in favor of the local communities in which those cathedrals stood.<sup>2</sup>

As a subject of study, the relationships among central authority, Anglican high clergy, and the cities in which their cathedrals occupied such prominent physical and symbolic space invites further investigation. There is some dispute among historians about the extent to which the local laity in cathedral cities readily deferred to the remote authority of the Crown and the ecclesiastical authority of cathedral chapters in their midst. The Crown recognized the need to cultivate "local cliques of reliable men" to serve its interests above those of the urban communities themselves. On the other hand, it has been argued that while renewing corporate charters in the early seventeenth century, royal authorities reserved more local autonomy for those very cities where leaders were proven servants of the Crown. Recently, Patterson has argued that civic corporations—growing anxious about social disorder in the turbulent decades leading up to the civil wars—were

2 Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1658–1667* (Oxford, 1985), 158–161, characterizes the first Restoration settlement as a "connivance" by which the Crown installed royal nominees in civic offices and revoked the localist terms of corporate charters issued during the interregnum. Tim Harris, *Politics under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society, 1660–1715* (London, 1993), 39–41, 152–153, points out that the Corporation Act of 1661 placed restrictions on civic officeholding that undermined local autonomy. For the revival of capitular and diocesan authority, see: I. M. Green, *The Re-establishment of the Church of England 1660–1663* (Oxford, 1978), 61–142; J. Spurr, *The Restoration of the Church of England, 1646–1689* (New Haven, 1991), 29–104, 166–233, arguing that Restoration nonconformity is more visible in the historical record precisely because Anglican authority was, if anything, increasingly effective in confronting it during that period.

happy to cooperate with royal authority because its agents could provide effective supervision in the localities. Lehmberg has characterized relations between citizens and ecclesiastical authorities in cathedral cities as symbiotic, apart from lapses produced by the civil war in the 1640s, during which cathedrals were victims of unprovoked lay animosity. This view, however, has been called into question by evidence voicing the experience of civic leaders and parishioners in cathedral cities. These communities were antagonized by the high clergy who exercised potentially abusive levels of power over the laity until the civil wars and interregnum left cathedral chapters in reduced economic and political circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to remember that the high clergy in cathedral cities were among royal appointees in those localities, but this aspect of the story is also more complex than is generally understood. During the 1630s, as lay hostility to Charles I and his archbishop, William Laud, intensified, the royal adjudication of disputes between urban communities and the high clergy in their midst usually favored the latter to the detriment of local autonomy. To be sure, cathedral cities are among those urban communities most frequently mentioned in discussions of active resistance to outside influence in the early seventeenth century, but many of these cathedral cities eventually sided with the royalists in the

3 Peter Clark, "The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good: Urban Change and Political Radicalism at Gloucester 1540–1640," in Jonathan Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town 1530–1688* (Harlow, 1990), 261; Clark and Paul Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700* (London, 1972), 22; Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540–1640* (Oxford, 1998); Catherine Patterson, "Conflict Resolution and Patronage in Provincial Towns, 1590–1640," *Journal of British Studies*, XXXVII (1998), 1–25; Stanford E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation of Cathedrals: Cathedrals in English Society, 1485–1603* (Princeton, 1988); *idem*, *Cathedrals under Siege: Cathedrals in English Society, 1600–1700* (University Park, 1996). These are admirably detailed studies of early modern English cathedrals (as opposed to cathedral cities), based on records generated and held by the chapter clergy themselves. Estabrook, "In the Mist of Ceremony: Cathedral and Community in Seventeenth-Century Wells," in Susan D. Amussen and Mark H. Kishlansky (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (New York, 1995), 133–161. For indications of earlier periodic strain in the relationship between cathedrals and the cities in which they were located, see James W. F. Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1956); R. V. Burne, *Chester Cathedral: From Its Founding by Henry to the Accession of Queen Victoria* (London, 1958); Tom Atkinson, *Elizabethan Winchester* (London, 1963); Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973); G. E. Aylmer and Reginald Cant (eds.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977); David M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979); A. Rosen, "Winchester in Transition, 1580–1700," in Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-industrial England* (New York, 1981), 143–196.

1640s. In appealing to the Crown for the submission of civic bodies before the civil wars, cathedrals staked an exclusive claim to sacred elements and spaces often used in traditional civic ritual. When civic bodies asserted their counter-claims, they were not necessarily taking an antiroyal stance. Rather, the citizens stood in opposition to the cathedral chapters with which they competed, through public ritual, for royal favor in the struggle for urban space, a marker for local authority. Under the circumstances of the Restoration period, civic leaders were in position to appropriate religious practices again as part of civic ritual. They occupied cathedral space, in its grandeur, as their own, with little concern for royal approval. Thus, a nuanced reading of ritual performances in contested spaces suggests that citizens, cathedrals, and royal authorities engaged one another in ways that have been overlooked, or oversimplified, by historians stressing the activities of the Crown's secular agents in the localities.<sup>4</sup>

The contests over ritual space in cities were waged in terms of staging and performance, as the contestants themselves were surely aware before and after the Reformation. There was a long tradition in which monasteries and cathedrals collaborated with civic leadership, under corporation sponsorship, to stage publicly performed religious plays. But in the early seventeenth century, civic-chapter disputes in cathedral cities were complicated by what is normally studied as the religious controversy between Puritanism and its opposition, Arminianism in particular. Although such was the case in cathedral cities, city-chapter disputes also revolved around the performance aspects of the liturgy, the use of sacred elements in civic ritual, and the competition for center stage. Civic procession and pageantry comprised a kind of rogation writ large, a fluctuating mixture of sacred and secular elements, in which the relative power of civic and ecclesiastical authorities was disputed

4 Cathedral charters of the new foundation stipulated that deans and canons be Crown nominees. This stipulation applied to all existing English cathedrals after the Reformation. As Lehmborg, *Reformation of Cathedrals*, 260, plainly states, "the high road to episcopal office was paved with cathedral preferments." Concerning cathedral cities' resistance to outside influence see, for example, Clark, "The Civic Leaders of Gloucester 1580–1800," in *idem* (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600–1800* (London, 1984), 321–322; *idem*, "'The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good,'" 262–264, 272, 262 n. 50, where he also notes that compared to most cathedral cities, Gloucester experienced less tension between corporation and chapter; *idem* and Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (Oxford, 1976), 136, which notes Privy Council rulings in favor of bishops over corporations in Salisbury, Chichester, and York.

and renegotiated in seventeenth-century English cathedral cities. For some time, scholarship has discussed the political elements of formal theater and the theatrical elements of formal politics, but the performance aspects of religious observance deserve attention as well, since they were central to the contests waged over public rituals and spaces.<sup>5</sup>

The most modest parish churches and the most splendid cathedrals all provided public spaces in which audiences attended scripted performances. Despite the fact that worship, not entertainment or diversion, was the ostensible purpose of a church, the use of recitation, symbolic gesture, music, and costume in sacred spaces indicates the importance of the performative aspects of religious rituals. The narrative elements of the liturgy have long been

5 C. Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450–1550," in R. Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town 1200–1540* (New York, 1990), 238–64; M. E. James, "Ritual, Drama, and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," *Past & Present*, 98 (February 1983), 3–29; Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto, 1984); P. Borsay, "All the Town's a Stage: Urban Ritual and Ceremony, 1660–1800," in Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600–1800* (London, 1984), 190–227. For more general treatments of staging and performance, see Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York, 1985); Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997). For extensive documentation, *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto, 1979–2000), 15v. R. H. Nicholson, "The Trial of Christ the Sorcerer in the York Cycle," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, XVI (1986), 125–169; A. Hughes, "Liturgical Drama: Falling between the Disciplines," in Eckehard Simon (ed.), *The Theatre of Medieval Europe: New Research in Early Drama* (Cambridge, 1991); David Mills, *Recycling the Cycle: The City of Chester and Its Whitsun Plays* (Toronto, 1998); John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford, 1963); A. Patterson, "The Country Gentleman: Howard, Marvell, and Dryden in the Theater of Politics," *Studies in English Literature*, XXV (1985), 491–509; M. Butler, "Politics and the Masque: The Triumph of Peace," *The Seventeenth Century*, II (1988), 117–141; A. R. Walkling, "Politics and the Restoration Masque: The Case of Dido and Aeneas," in Gerald MacLean (ed.), *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History* (Cambridge, 1995), 52–60; Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969; 2d ed., 1997); Joan Brewer, "Theatre and Counter-theatre in Georgian Politics," *Radical History Review*, XXII (1979/80), 7–40; R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia 1987); David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley, 1989); B. F. Klein, "Between the Bums and the Bellies of the Multitude: Civic Pageantry and the Problem of Audience in Late Stuart London," *London Journal*, XVII (1992), 18–26; Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford, 1993); J. P. Montano, "The Quest for Consensus: The Lord Mayor's Shows in the 1670s," in MacLean (ed.), *Culture and Society*, 31–51. This literature contains considerable debate about the distinction between the substance of power (with its moral suasion and coercive tendencies) and the trappings of power (with its iconographic language). Older work, widely influenced by Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages* (New York, 1963), tends to present the performance elements of politics as consensus building. Most recent scholarship is critical of this view.



recognized. Worshipers in an Anglican church are conveyed, on a spiritual journey, through the nave, an inverted hull of a ship decorated with images of biblical stories, including the ministries of Jesus and his disciples, and the scripture is recited as a chronicle. Communicants migrate, like pilgrims, to their spiritual nourishment. In the communal space of the cathedrals—and in those parish churches with pre-Reformation spatial arrangements—communicants pass through the rood screen, a daunting arboreal passageway depicting Jesus's own travail and passion upon the tree. Their story culminates beyond this primeval forest at the redemptive summit, an elevated sacrament. All of this is acted out upon the stage of a communal gathering space.<sup>6</sup>

After 1633, Archbishop Laud's controversial interpretation of the prayer book put renewed emphasis on performance elements of the liturgy associated with Arminian devotional practice: rehearsed gestures, sumptuous costumes, copious accoutrements, elaborate altar decorations, and rood screens—all designed to make the "beauty of holiness" visible in sacred spaces and rituals. As a result, the laity became even more aware of the liturgy's theatrical aspects, as well as the arbitrary nature of its staging. Those members of the high clergy who adopted an Arminian view suspended those parish clergy who refused to wear the more elaborate vestments of the Laudian church or who administered communion to parishioners without enforcing the new choreography of standing, kneeling and bowing on cue. Hence, the archdeacon's court at Chester cathedral disciplined clergy who performed the Eucharist outside the confines of churches, even in the private homes of their elderly, infirm, or otherwise immobile parishioners.<sup>7</sup>

6 F. E. Wilson, *An Outline of Christian Symbolism* (New York, 1933); George W. O. Addleshaw, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Inquiry into the Arrangements of Public Worship in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London, 1948); Geoffrey J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (London, 1982); Nigel Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship: The Liturgical Arrangement of Anglican Churches, 1600–1900* (Oxford, 1991). For a contemporary awareness of the relationship between the Anglican liturgy and the space in which it was performed, with particular attention to the segregation of clerical and congregational spaces, see Foulke Roberts, *God's Holy House and Service According to the Primitive Forme Thereof* (London, 1639). Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records*, stresses the importance of any performance's spatial context.

7 M. Claire Cross, *Church and People: England, 1450–1660* (Blackwell, 1999; 2d ed.), 158. For an exhaustive study of lay and clerical observance of, and resistance to, competing interpretations of the prayer book, see Judith D. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early*



Most parish churches since Elizabeth's reign had celebrated Eucharist at a table brought down into the nave, among the communicants, for this purpose. In 1633, Laud obtained a royal order, issued through Privy Council, requiring all parishioners to conform to the cathedral practice of receiving communion kneeling at a railed altar permanently installed at the far east end of the church, in the chancel. In 1634, John Bridgeman, bishop of Chester, ordered the parishioners of St. Oswald's church in the city of Chester to move their communion table to the position of an altar along the "east wall" of the chancel. But because the space occupied as St. Oswald's church was also the south transept of Chester cathedral itself, St. Oswald's main aisle and focal axis ran north and south, and its east wall was the cathedral transept wall to the left of the congregation. In an eccentric solution, reinforcing local objections to the arbitrary nature of Laudian conformity, the altar was moved not to the east, with its cosmic significance as the position of the rising sun, but to the south, beyond the rood screen that separated the audience from the stage. The bishop also called for the "uniformitie of the seats" in the transept to remove the aldermen's pews from a position of prominence. This elaboration of ritual and staging not only exposed the performance elements of worship; it also placed in question lay claims to both sacred rituals and the spaces in which they were acted out.<sup>8</sup>

Civic leaders in cathedral cities had reason to resent this development because cathedrals had long relied on the material resources of the laity who came to regard cathedral space as publicly accessible. Before the Reformation, cathedral naves had served as civic gathering places or even marketplaces; local lay practice treated them so again during the interregnum. The laity were aware that cathedrals could not have been built without the fruits of secular enterprise. Beginning in the twelfth century, at the feast of Pentecost, representatives of every parish in the diocese of Winchester, for example, converged on the cathedral to make material offering. Bishop William Giffard made these sources of revenue a right stipulated in Winchester cathedral's twelfth-century charter. These processional tributes were also granted by charter at

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*Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998). EDV1/17 Visitation Correction Book for the Archdeaconry of Chester (October 1611), fo. 28r, Cheshire Record Office (hereinafter CRO).

8 Harleian MSS #2103, fo. 29, British Museum.

Ely, York, and Lincoln, where they paid for the expansion of the great naves. In Winchester, by the 1630s, city residents surely felt entitled to celebrate the good works of the community within the confines of the cathedral. In 1633, the dean and chapter issued a letter under the manorial seal of the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity by which they pressured all of their tenants “to contribute towards the great and extraordinary charge of the reparations of the cathedral.” Capitular tenant lists were extensive and, as a rule, included a substantial number of local residents and merchants who paid, above and beyond their rents, for the maintenance of cathedral fabric. But, by this time, cathedrals expected to exact lay subsidy without extending the reciprocal use of cathedral space for civic processions and other ritual expressions of communal identity, order, and hierarchy so important to the local laity.<sup>9</sup>

Such spatial ambiguity was made possible by the fact that the magnificent structures of the cathedrals were located at the hearts of the cities in which they stood but were insulated from city streets, public squares, and secular buildings by an enclosure. A cathedral’s close was within its liberty, a space larger than some of the parishes surrounding it. It was an extramural, extraparochial pocket of privilege under the protection of the episcopacy and the Crown. In both a symbolic and a practical sense, cathedral spaces could be punctures in the communal fabric. During the early seventeenth century, civic leadership increasingly viewed the occupation of privileged space by a cathedral as an encroachment by agents of arbitrary royal and ecclesiastical authority. At the same time, the high clergy increasingly regarded cathedral space as ex-

9 M. J. Franklin (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta* (London, 1993), VIII, No. 19; C. Brooke, “Bishop Walkelin and his Inheritance,” in John Crook (ed.), *Winchester Cathedral* (Chichester, 1993), 9. Winchester’s nave, although a good size by the time of the cathedral’s dedication in 1093, was expanded in the years leading up to 1107 and remodeled under the famous Bishop Wykeham (1367–1404) with the aid of lay processional tributes. See Crook and Y. Kusaba in Crook (ed.), *Winchester Cathedral* (1993), 32, 217; MSS Chapter, Book, 1622–1645 (December 1633), 40r, Winchester Cathedral Library (hereinafter WCL); DCc/RA/25–55 Canterbury Dean and Chapter Receiver’s Accounts (1601–1642), Canterbury Cathedral Archive; MS W54/6/8(EB8) Manors: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, WCL; MS 202M85/3/1343–1351, Hampshire Record Office [hereinafter HRO]. Derek S. Bailey (ed.), *Wells Manor of Canon Grange* (Gloucester, 1985), shows that the chapter of Wells cathedral owned more than 140 properties, including the commercial buildings surrounding the market square, in that small city. Dyer, *City of Worcester*, 230, indicates that by the late sixteenth century, the chapter of Worcester cathedral owned roughly 200 houses in that city, nearly 20% of the residences. Atkinson, *Elizabethan Winchester*, 20, shows that by Elizabeth’s reign, the dean and chapter of Winchester owned much of the shops and commercial space in the High Street.

clusively sacred and, by restricting access to it, stressed a growing divide between lay and clerical space.

Not even in the matter of death, that most sobering of prospects held by the laity to be worthy of public acknowledgement in sacred space, did the high clergy relent. In 1637, the Winchester dean and chapter ordered that burial in the cathedral quire be restricted to bishops and members of the nobility. The bodies of deans, cathedral prebendaries, and their wives could be laid to rest beneath the aisles surrounding the quire enclosure. As civic leaders noted with concern, the commemorative sites of certain women, by virtue of their connection to cathedral clergy, were placed above those of the mayor, aldermen, and other male dignitaries of the city. All others, subject to approval and the payment of costs, could apply for burial in the nave aisles (for a donation of £3) or beyond the altar (for a donation of £10). In the manner of modern theaters, children under twelve—or rather their lifeless remains—were accommodated at a reduced rate (30s.), provided that they were found suitable by the dean and chapter.<sup>10</sup>

Archbishop Laud's order that mayors and aldermen were not to be given seats in cathedral quires was invoked explicitly at Durham, York, and Salisbury where, as at Winchester, civic authorities were excluded from the heart of cathedral space. By 1636, the Winchester canons had taken it upon themselves to ban the laity from cathedral pews within four rows of stalls occupied by the cathedral's dean and his fellow prebendaries. They placed warning signs about the cathedral "to prevent the great abuse of women serving men and tradesmen and other ordinary people that press up into [the chapter's] places on Sundays and holidays [and the chapter] have ordered and decreed that henceforth none shall offer to place themselves here but clergymen and scholars which [sic] are graduates." Such restrictions excluded many aldermen and

10 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), 379–473; MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (1637), 55v, WCL. Ordinary parishes were forced to restrict burial within their churches for lack of space, but not apparently cathedrals. In 1817, 180 years after these stipulations, Jane Austen was buried beneath the north aisle of Winchester Cathedral nave. In parishes, members of the laity serving in the vestry or as churchwardens made decisions concerning the use of church space for burial and other purposes. By contrast, cathedral space was governed by its dean and chapter and not by lay members of its congregation. For more on the placement of buried bodies, see Steven Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead* (Leicester, 1992).

mayors from the cathedral's prominent spaces, even during communal worship.<sup>11</sup>

The use of sacred space was a contentious issue because the functional boundary between capitular and civic space within cathedrals was inherently ambiguous. Chantry chapels—connections between prominent local laity and the interior spaces of cathedrals—had been abolished by the Reformation. Nevertheless, former Lady Chapels and chantries were given over to city parishes where the churches had fallen into decay, as at Norwich or Ely (where the practice persisted until 1938). At Chichester, the nave served as a parish church, but the subdean of the cathedral was its vicar. At Carlisle, the cathedral nave was the civic church, although the dean and chapter worshipped within the exclusive confines of the quire. In other places, parish churches stood within cathedral grounds. At Wells, the vicar of St. Cuthbert's, the city's only parish, was appointed by the cathedral chapter. As we have seen, the south transept of Chester cathedral was used as the parish church of St. Oswald's. Moreover, civic leaders, who led corporate processions in cathedrals, vied with the high clergy for influence and visibility on the expansive, splendid, and consecrated stage. As a result, control over the setting where the liturgy was performed, over liturgical practice, and even over notions of sanctity were dramatic points of dispute related to public ritual and contested space during the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Understanding the premium on ritual space in general requires an examination of the dispute over the performance of the liturgy in ecclesiastical space. Cathedral naves and transepts that served as spaces of worship for parishes associated with civic corporations were arenas of contention. In the first two decades of the seventeenth century, the corporation of Chester still wor-

11 Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford, 1956), 179. For pew disputes and the significance of church seating arrangements in hierarchical display, see Richard Gough (ed. D. Hey), *The History of Myddle* (New York, 1981); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987), 11–12, 121–122; K. B. Dillow, "The Social and Religious Significance of Church Arrangements and Pew Disputes, 1500–1700," unpub. D. Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1992). MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (June, 24 1636), 46v, WCL.

12 Lehmberg, *Reformation of Cathedrals*, 271–273; T. Serel, *Historical Notes on the Church of Saint Cuthbert in Wells* (Wells, 1875), 36–44. The observation about the struggle for control over settings is supported by Katherine French's work on the uses of Somerset churches. For a wider discussion of these themes, see French, G. G. Gibbs, and B. A. Kumin, *The Parish in English Life, 1400–1600* (Manchester, 1997).

shipped with St. Oswald's parish, which, having no church of its own, had been gathering in the south transept of the cathedral since 1488. While relations between the laity and the cathedral were good, St. Oswald's space of worship enjoyed liturgical props and practices that were as elaborate as resources and conformity would allow: gilded display bibles and other "church ornaments"; special candles for morning prayer; incense; "hollens" greenery at Christmas; Holy Week rushes for "communicants to kneel on"; frequent Eucharist, including celebrations on Epiphany and Guy Fawkes Day, whether these holidays fell on Sundays or not—all of which were presented amid the awe-inspiring surroundings of the cathedral. To bless the parish boundaries in rogationtide, St. Oswald's parishioners—aldermen and mayors included—duly followed a perambulation led by cathedral clergy and choir through the streets of Chester.<sup>13</sup>

This tradition came to an end, however, in 1618. By the 1620s, the liturgical ties between the corporation and the cathedral had been severed. Since 1216, the abbot, and later the chapter of the cathedral, had the advowson of St. Oswald's church (the right to appoint its clergy) and exerted direct control over the presentation of the liturgy, the arrangement of seats, and the assignment of preachers there. By the early seventeenth century, this symbol of capitular authority became a site of considerable tension. In 1607, when the mayor and his civic brethren attempted a ceremonial procession into a service at the cathedral, they were halted and rebuked by the high clergy. A chapter canon seized the mayor's sword of office and tossed it to the ground. About two weeks after these histrionics, the swordbearer died. On the holy day of Candlemas, the corporation appeared at the cathedral with his body to hold his funeral, but the chapter barred them at the west front. Being St. Oswald's vestrymen, members of the corporation were able to sneak through the transept door, leaving the corpse conspicuously behind in the city's main square outside the west front, visible to all passersby, to the disgrace of the cathedral. The corporation's subsequent attempts to assume management of St. Oswald's were frustrated beyond the point of reconciliation in 1626, when the chapter moved St. Oswald's pulpit, required the

13 P29/7/2 Chester St. Oswald Churchwardens' Accounts and Vestry Minutes, 1607–1620, CRO.

parishioners to attend sermons in the quire of the cathedral, and forbade Chester parishes to schedule sermons opposite those of the cathedral. The corporation and the mayor, who had been a cathedral chorister in his youth, boycotted cathedral services for the next twelve years.<sup>14</sup>

In 1613, civic allegiance in Chester shifted to the parish church of St. Peter's, which had an adjoining room for civic meetings and records. At St. Peter's, the mayor, not the dean or bishop, adjudicated pew disputes—on one occasion in favor of his own wife. St. Peter's preachers were selected by the corporation, at times in defiance of the dean or bishop. St. Peter's was the Chester parish most often cited for conducting its liturgy without the proper prayer books, homily books, catechism books, and current articles of visitation. In one instance, its churchwardens did not report to the diocese “the names of them that doe not bowe the knee at the name of Jesus Christ.” In St. Peter's church, the corporation had appropriated its own liturgical stage outside the confines of the cathedral.<sup>15</sup>

Because it contained elements of sacred worship and secular performance, traditional civic ritual, like Anglican liturgical practice and the space in which it was performed, was a potential bone of contention between cathedrals and the cities in which they were located. Before the early seventeenth century, however, cathedral cities had achieved a delicate merger of the sacred and the secular in the public rituals performed in and out of ecclesiastical space. By the Tudor period, civic figures in cathedral cities had established a visible place for themselves in festival processions of great importance to the cathedral chapters. For example, as early as

14 George Ormerod, *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester* (New York, 1882), I, 304–306; AB/1 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1539–1624, fos. 297v, 299, Chester City Archives (hereinafter CCA); Cowper MSS, entry for February 2, 1606/7, Ch.C.A. Collectanea Devana. Harleian MSS #2103, fo. 32, British Museum, which includes the details of the dispute between the cathedral and the corporation and a lawyer's argument in favor of the corporation's position; Bishop Bridgeman's Wigan Leger [sic], fo. 119; G. T. O. Bridgeman, *History of the Church and Manor of Wigan* (Manchester, 1888), 296–301; Ch.C.A. AB/1 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1539–1624, fo. 322.

15 P63/7/1 Chester St. Peter Parish Books (1626–1687), fo. 5r, entry for January 4, 1627/8; AB/1 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1539–1624, fo. 290; AB/2 City of Chester Assembly Book 1624–1684, fo. 12v; ML/2 City of Chester Mayor's Letters 1600–1650, fos. 273–274, CCA; Visitation Correction Books for the Archdeaconry of Chester (1604–1625): EDV1/13, fo. 14v; EDV1/17, fo. 40v; EDV1/18, fo. 4v; EDV1/26, fo. 9r; (1628–1630): EDV1/29, fo. 2r, EDV1/31(b), fo. 37r, CRO.

1495 in Hereford, the mayor and aldermen were invited to join the cathedral clergy in their processions, though only at the back of the line. In 1516, the mayor of Worcester and his civic brethren negotiated successfully for the right to have that city's maces borne before them when they processed into the cathedral there. In London, the cooperative gesture of allowing aldermen and the mayor to process in St. Paul's all the way to the high altar grew out of the custom of combining splendid guild and clerical processions to the cathedral on certain festival days of local importance. In Wells throughout Elizabethan times, the cathedral chapter and civic leaders shared power and took part in joint processions from the city's High Cross to the cathedral on festival days. For nearly a century following the Reformation, Winchester's civic figures enjoyed a dignified, but subordinate, place in processions involving the cathedral and its clergy. Indeed, the corporation was required to gather at the city's High Cross every Sunday and festival day to process to the cathedral; those who failed to show up owed the mayor a fine between 4*d.* and 8*d.*, depending on their status. Early in the Reformation, the newly created cathedral chapter at Bristol went so far as to "fetche" the mayor and aldermen "out of the cittie with their crosses and procession," but this unusually solicitous practice on the part of chapter clergy prompted the Privy Council to remark on the "very unseemly" appearance of this hierarchical inversion. The ritual spaces and practices of citizens were less distinct from those of cathedrals before divisive questions concerning local authority and its arbiters at the center began to emerge in the early seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Disputes in cathedral cities concerning the performance of public rituals prompt a reconsideration of the changing role of contested ceremonial space in the broader context of early modern English political culture—particularly in the context of the uneasy relationship between royal and ecclesiastical agents of central authority and lay defenders of local autonomy. The civic leaders of Wells and the clergy associated with the cathedral there competed for prominence in the city's political culture before the

16 Gary D. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: The City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), 110, 259–260; James Stokes (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset* (Toronto, 1996), II, 468. Two members of the cathedral chapter even served as town councilors in Elizabethan Wells. Atkinson, *Elizabethan Winchester*, 65; Lehmborg, *Reformation of Cathedrals*, 273–275.



civil wars. In the early seventeenth century, the high clergy in Wells used the marketplace for processions in which the civic leaders were subordinate. In the summer of 1608, “the Maier and Corporation went in their gowns to the High Cross to waite on the Bishop at his first comeing to Towne.” When the queen, Anne of Denmark, visited Wells in the summer of 1613, the bishop sent a letter of instructions to the mayor who, in compliance, ordered “that the streates should be made handsome and the Town be rid of beggars and rogues.” The Crown’s purpose for Anne’s procession was to provide visible support for the bishop’s status as lord of the manor in Wells. The aldermen and the mayor, in their scarlet gowns, gathered at Brown’s Gate (a notorious barrier point of contention between cathedral liberty and urban community) to await the queen. The burgesses appeared there, too, either in black gowns or their “best apparrele,” as ordered. Contesting their subordination to the cathedral, the civic leaders jostled to position themselves more prominently in the view of the royal guest.<sup>17</sup>

The city of Wells used the ceremony of the queen’s visit to compete with the cathedral for royal favor while proclaiming and celebrating the community’s own enterprise and identity. The mayor ordered the masters of every guild within the city to prepare elaborate shows for Anne’s royal visitation. This pageant featured an unorthodox mingling of biblical and pagan heroes to a none-too-subtle effect. The tilers and blacksmiths portrayed Vulcan working at a forge beside Noah and the ark, under the gaze of Cupid and Venus. A cart of “old virgins” was drawn by tanners clad like beasts in skins and horns with cow tails dangling from their necks. The tailors were even more daring in their sexual imagery, presenting the seductive daughter of Herodias who, veiled in samples of the company’s wares, danced about the severed head of John the Baptist. The streets were sprinkled with morris dancers, giants, and dragons. The proud identification of the guilds with the city, rather than the cathedral, explains their spirited con-

17 The political culture in cathedral cities has recently received close attention. See Estabrook, “In the Mist of Ceremony,” *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, 133–161; P. Withington, “Urban Political Culture in Later Seventeenth-Century England: York, 1649–1688,” unpub. Ph.D. diss. (University of Cambridge, 1998). DD/SAS/SE.28 Wells Corporation Records (July 18, 1608; July 19, through August 16, 1613), Somerset Record Office (hereinafter SRO); Stokes (ed.), *Somerset*, II, 469–470.

tribution in the queen's entertainment. All gesture or reference to the cathedral was conspicuously absent. During the queen's visit, the mayor made a point of inviting the bishop and other dignitaries to a dinner from which the dean and chapter were excluded. The corporation vowed to indict the cathedral at the very next assizes for having refused to open Brown's Gate for civic processions and other purposes of interest to the local laity. The city's strategy when competing for ritual space on such political occasions was to adopt a secular tone in its public performance, to distance itself from the sacred realm in which the city had been made subservient to the cathedral.<sup>18</sup>

These disputes over performance space cannot be explained solely with reference to the political culture of puritanism. In the early seventeenth century, bishops with Puritan leanings still had followings among cathedral high clergy. In Elizabethan and early Stuart Wells, ecclesiastical authorities largely failed in their efforts to keep plays and revels out of parish churches, but the cathedral chapter was able to enforce a barrier between their own sacred space and secular forms of theater. In places such as Winchester, Wells, and Chester, the religious dispositions of cathedral and city were not always opposed when control over ritual space and performance was at issue. Before the civil war, not even lay puritanism was necessarily anti-episcopal. Few of the examples of civic opposition to bishops and their claims to local authority can be associated with puritanism. In medieval Wells, the local political culture had once revolved around the city's opposition to the bishop, the resident lord of the manor, but this antipathy had developed long before the rise of puritanism.<sup>19</sup>

18 DD/SAS/SE.28 Wells Corporation Records (August 20, 1613), SRO. For a detailed analysis of the 1613 cordwainers show as representative of guild street theater, see Stokes, "The Wells Cordwainers Show: New Evidence concerning Guild Entertainments in Somerset," *Comparative Drama*, XIX (1985/86), 332–346. DD/SAS/SE.28 Wells Corporation Records (January 13, 1613/14).

19 Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), 84–91; Stokes (ed.), *Somerset*, II, 486–488; Robert Ashton, *The English Civil War* (New York, 1978), 100; Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982); *idem*, *Anglicans and Puritans: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988); Jacqueline Eales, "A Road to Revolution: The Continuity of Puritanism, 1559–1642," in Christopher Durston and *idem* (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (New York, 1996), 185, 203–206; Margaret Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560–1660," in *ibid.*, 115, shows that even some "rooters" of 1641 (supporters of Root and Branch legislation) quickly recanted their call for the abolition of bishops. Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, 24, 33, 140.

Winchester's civic leaders were on good terms with Bishop Curle who, for his part, attempted conciliation to mollify the disputes there over ritual and liturgy during the decade of mounting tension before the outbreak of civil war. Significantly, Curle's proposals addressed the issue of spatial arrangements. The cathedral's rood screen, which reinforced lay-clerical barriers between nave and quire, was dismantled in 1638 only to be replaced in the same year by the cathedral chapter. Nevertheless, Curle's suggestion that a seat for the mayor be provided in the cathedral quire appealed to Charles I, an Arminian, but appalled the archdeacon of the cathedral whose place of precedence would have been usurped by the mayor in Curle's scheme. Clearly, contests over ritual and its associated spaces in a cathedral city—sometimes shaped by the well-known cultural divide between Puritan austerity and elaborate ceremony—must also be understood in terms of a city's assertion of its own authority against the counterclaims of cathedral clergy.<sup>20</sup>

The ample concern that civic leaders had for moral rectitude was at pivotal times outweighed by their ritual display of civic authority and identity. The periodic performance of festival pageants, Whitsun plays, and midsummer shows in Elizabethan and early Stuart Chester took on a revealing pattern in this regard. Henry Hardware, a Puritan mayor, suppressed religious plays and pageants while other mayors staged them despite the ban imposed by Edmund Grindal, the archbishop of York, in 1572. At some point before 1610, the breviary of the Chester archdeacon, who was connected to the cathedral, recorded triumphantly that the Whitsun plays had been abolished: "And we have all cause to pour out our prayers before god that neither we nor our posterities after may never see the like Abomination of Desolation with such a Cloud of Ignorance to defile with so high a hand the most sacred scriptures of god." Although these Whitsun plays featuring guild dramatizations of Christ's crucifixion and ascension ended in 1578, the mayor's Midsummer Watch festivities and processions continued into the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup>

20 F. R. Goodman (ed.), *Dean Young's Diary* (London, 1928); K. Stevenson, "Liturgy and the Fabric," in Crook (ed.), *Winchester Cathedral*, 53; MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (December 17, 1640), 104r and (1640), 67v, WCL.

21 MS The Breviaries of Archdeacon Rogers and David Rogers (1609), fos. 17–23, CCA, cited in Lawrence M. Clopper (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Chester* (Toronto, 1979), 238, 252.

The Midsummer Show, begun when the cathedral was still the church of St. Werburgh's Abbey, had once involved cooperation between the city and the cathedral in Whitsuntide celebrations. As late as 1600, two-dozen Chester guilds presented the festival pageants according to a revival of the abbey's, and the cathedral's, traditional script. These pageant plays celebrated the craft and commerce of the city through the re-enactment of symbolically relevant biblical stories, in some cases with amusing implications. The mercers staged the Gift of the Magi, while the cooks staged a roasting Descent into Hell and the water bailiffs of the River Dee staged the story of Noah and the flood. The man playing Noah's wife inadvertently swore on stage, taking Christ's name in vain, a neat trick for an Old Testament figure.<sup>22</sup>

In 1611, Chester's corporate assembly ruled that the Midsummer's Eve Show must not be performed when midsummer fell on the sabbath or the night before. In 1615, they banned the performance of all plays after dark or six o'clock in the evening, whichever was earlier, and would no longer permit the use of the city's common hall by "stage plaiers to act their obscene and unlawfull plaies or tragedies." Concerned about unruly conduct, Chester's civic leaders, whose religious position on plays was not unlike that of the cathedral canons at the time, abandoned these midsummer shows during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. The cathedral clergy were mistakenly confident that the shows would not be staged again.<sup>23</sup>

As tension over local authority escalated, however, the corporation of Chester actually sought dramatic ways to make the city's place in public ritual more prominent than that of the cathedral. The midsummer pageant shows, with their combination of civic celebration and sacred imagery, were revived in the 1620s. How could it be that these performances were promoted by the same civic leadership that had so recently banned evening theater, renounced "stage plaiers" as obscene, and prohibited midsummer shows on the sabbath? The city's relaxed stance on festive shows was anticipated in 1610 when the corporation introduced the St. George's Day pageants in which the guilds honored the city's as-

22 Clopper (ed.), *Chester*, xxxi, liii–liv; Harleian MSS #2103, fos. 1–189, "The Chester Pageants or playes as they were Publicly exhibited, A.D. 1600," British Museum.

23 AB/1 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1539–1624, fos. 314, 333v, CCA; Clopper (ed.), *Chester*, xxxi.

sociation with royalty and the realm. This annual pageant opened with a parade featuring an allegorical representation of the city of Chester personified, “with an oration and drums,” accompanied by St. George and Mercury, and flanked by riders on horseback displaying the king’s Crown and arms. In short, despite puritanical influences, Chester reasserted the festive and sacred elements of its civic ritual, while courting royal favor, precisely as the struggle between city and cathedral over local control of liturgy and sacred space intensified. Such illustrative trends in the civic ritual of cathedral cities point to illuminating connections between theater, in its broad sense, and the complexities of religious observance in seventeenth-century England. The moral implications of theater were hotly debated by contemporaries, as any reader of William Prynne’s *Histriomastix* (London, 1633) would have known. But the debate spread beyond the confines of religious polemics and formal theater into the public spaces occupied by ritual assertions of power and authority.<sup>24</sup>

In cathedral cities, at least, the growing divide between citizens and cathedral clergy appeared to be created as much by competition for authority over performance space as by some particular religious or moral dispute. Both civic and ecclesiastical authorities were concerned about the growing disrespect for sacred spaces. At the same time, the liturgical calendar was marked by festive public rituals, pageants, and processions over which some cathedral-city corporations exercised control at Shrovetide, Whitsuntide, Christmas, Epiphany, and other holy days—even after the Restoration when, according to Hutton, the iconography of civic processions shifted from religious to secular imagery. Rogation perambulations also had performance aspects and, as we have seen, the history of their observance traces the contours of the competition between city and cathedral over such rituals. Rituals of a sacred nature were clearly part of the traditional civic repertoire. Nevertheless, in the early seventeenth century, even when citizens and parishioners performed them in the civic or parochial spaces of cathedral cities, they were challenged by the high clergy. Cathedral-city contests over ritual performance in the early seven-

24 Clopper (ed.), *Chester*, xxxi, 258–260. The last performances of the St. George’s Day ceremonies and the Midsummers Show were not until 1678. See Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1994), 230. Harleian MS 2150, fos. 186r–v, St. George’s Day Show (April 23, 1610), British Museum.

teenth century culminated in thwarted attempts by citizens to use cathedral spaces for civic purposes.<sup>25</sup>

As tension mounted in the early seventeenth century, cathedral clergy erected barriers between civic ritual and cathedral ritual, relegating citizens to the role of audience within the sacred space of the cathedrals. On the day of Richard Neile's installation as bishop in his own cathedral church in 1628, which at Winchester involved symbolically charged processions through civic as well as cathedral spaces, the dean of Winchester cathedral did not appear outside of the cathedral itself; the archdeacon of Canterbury, who was also vicedean of Winchester, was sent to greet the new bishop and lead him out of the cathedral. The bishop was "first met at the quire door by the twoe virgers who, with Mr Edward Dee, Notary and Actuary, and divers of the ministers [parish clergy] of the citty, and divers knights and gentlemen and many others with the proctors and apparitors, passed through the body of the [cathedral] church to the churchyard stile by the market house and where met him Mr Martin Yalden, mayor of the citty, (being attended with the aldermen and freemen) to give him his welcome unto the citty." Actors and observers in this ritual surely noted the association of civic leaders with commercial space and the placement of Mayor Yalden and all other civic dignitaries outside the enclosure of the cathedral liberty where they waited, like children or suitors, at the stile.<sup>26</sup>

Even the bishop moved more freely through the city than through the cathedral. The mayor ordered the bells of the city to be rung in "salutation" as he processed with the bishop to the parish church of St. Mary Kalendar, the space of worship identified with the city's corporation. The bishop admitted himself to the church and prayed there in solitude for a short period before returning to the west front of the cathedral, to which he could not admit himself. There he encountered the vicedean before whom he knelt, "a velvet cloth and cushion being provided and set in the porch for him for the purpose," and swore a series of oaths before the canons, the chanter, and the vicars choral of the cathedral. After this ritual assurance "for the observing and mayntayning of the

25 For corporation control of celebrations, see, for example, AB/1 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1539–1624, fo. 67v; AB/3 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1684–1724, fo. 31v, CCA. Hutton, *Rise and Fall of Merry England*, 230.

26 MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (February 7–25, 1627/8), 18v, WCL.

statutes, ordinances, liberties and privileges of the Church, he was received into the church by the dean and chapter.”<sup>27</sup>

The dean and the archdeacon of Canterbury waited within the cathedral to usher the bishop through the quire to the high altar where the bishop placed his tribute of a gold and silver basin. The members of Winchester’s civic leadership were excluded from the procession through the interior spaces of the cathedral. The choir sang a *Te Deum Laudamus* as the chapter passed through the cathedral and a *Veni Creator* after the bishop reached his throne. The dean preached and gave a general benediction. Since no Eucharistic celebration took place, the congregation in the nave could not approach the more sacred interior spaces occupied by the clergy and the choir. Upon departing the cathedral to the sound of its bells, the bishop distributed £25 in alms to the poor of Winchester huddled at the west front.<sup>28</sup>

The day’s processions and rituals spoke volumes about the relation of city and cathedral to great powers at the center of the realm. The liturgical emphasis of the bishop’s installation at Winchester was on the high clergy’s splendor, hierarchy, and paternalism rather than the church’s pastoral, sacerdotal, or sacramental functions. Bishops may have been paternal figures in their cathedral cities, but within four days of becoming bishop of Winchester, Neile, “one of his Majestie’s most noble privy counsels,” returned to London and “made his homage upon his knees to the King’s Majestie and afterwards was restored to his temporalities.” To the dean and chapter, the bishop was an agent of a higher authority serving the interests and privileges of their royally chartered outpost in the localities. The cathedral dignitaries reserved the sacred elements and sacred spaces of the day’s rituals for themselves, contrary to traditional practices involving the city.<sup>29</sup>

In 1637, a bitter squabble about processions at Winchester presented a constellation of issues concerning performance, liturgy, civic autonomy, and jurisdiction over space. An integral

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.* The *Te Deum* is a canticle of praise and deference. The *Veni Creator* is an anthem invoking the Holy Spirit and the blessing of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Note that unlike other special liturgical proceedings (baptismal rites, for example), these did not solicit any active or collective participation from the laity present.

29 *Ibid.*



component was the problematical relation of urban communities to royal authority and its local agents, including the ecclesiastical ones. Indeed, the dispute was adjudicated in Star Chamber. The proximate trigger was the thorny issue of ship money. When the dean and chapter refused to be assessed among the residents of Winchester for the king's ship money subsidy, the stage was set for an aggressive display of civic localism. A Winchester constable entered the cathedral close to arrest vicars choral and imprison them on the grounds that they had not paid ship money dues. This act prompted recrimination in kind against Mayor Ralph Riggs, whom cathedral apparitors and bailiffs took to the prison at the bishop's Wolvesley Palace. In further retaliation, the dean and chapter decided to forbid the appearance of civic emblems in the cathedral close. Both Archbishop Laud and the lord treasurer supported the cathedral in this bitter exchange, commanding the mayor "to discharge the persons already imprisoned and to forebare proceeding against any others."<sup>30</sup>

The city was scarcely surprised. A few days before the rulings of Charles I's Star Chamber and Privy Council, both in favor of the cathedral, the king had proclaimed in a letter to "our trustee and well-beloved, the mayor and aldermen of our City of Winchester," "We do hereby order that from henceforth there shall not be borne before the Mayor of that our city [of Winchester] any maces at all within the quire of our said Cathedral Church at Winchester, neither shall he make any use of these ensignes of authority in any part of the Cathedral Church or liberties thereof but upon courtesy and permission expressly granted by the Dean and Chapter." In the same letter, Charles ordered Winchester's mayor and aldermen to attend divine service on Sundays and holy days in the cathedral, rather than in the parish church favored by the corporation. He added that obedience to religious observance within the cathedral was "for [their] own good": "Whilst you are there you carry yourselves as it becometh you in all obedience and conformity to the canons of the church . . . we having commanded the diocesan and dean of that place to take special care to see this

30 *Ibid.* (1637; March 1636/7), 50v. The dispute about ship money, a forced subsidy revived by Charles I to help finance his government with convening Parliament, was widespread, but, at this point, the legality of it was not effectively questioned. See John S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War 1630–1650* (Harlow, 1980), 24–29; Kenneth Sharpe, "The Personal Rule of Charles I," in Howard Tomlinson (ed.), *Before the English Civil War* (London, 1984), 69–74. MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (March 13, 1636/7), 51r (June 11, 1637), 57v., (March 13, 1636/7), 51r, WCL.

performed, and to give us account from time to time of your demeanors therein.” This order was more than sanctimonious needling from Charles; it was an explicit royal endorsement of the position that cathedrals could exercise arbitrary authority over contested space in the localities without being subject to spatially determined communal obligations.<sup>31</sup>

Mayor Riggs and his aldermen wasted little time before they openly defied Star Chamber, the Privy Council, the pontifications of Archbishop Laud, and the king’s command. On Trinity Sunday, a day of special significance for Winchester cathedral—the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity—Mayor Riggs, accompanied by the aldermen, “came twice to the Cathedral Church above all the Quire, with his maces borne up and his hat on as soon as he was past the upper door of the Quire, and so passed through all the rest of the Church.” Riggs achieved the desired effect: The dean and chapter were beside themselves with rage and the city rallied behind the corporation. Meanwhile, the city of Chester was boycotting cathedral services there because the dean and chapter refused to allow the mayor, a former Chester cathedral chorister, to process in the cathedral with emblems of civic authority.<sup>32</sup>

The Privy Council had made a point of reprimanding the Winchester corporation for poor attendance in the 1630s, but after the 1637 confrontation, Winchester’s mayors and civic leaders began using cathedral space not as a place of worship but as an arena of protest. One mayor even vaulted over Edward Burbey, the archdeacon, as he knelt during a cathedral service. Until the forces of civil war were unleashed, the cathedral had the last word in the ear of the central authorities. Charles assured the dean and chapter in May 1637 that no new royal charter would be awarded the city of Winchester until the cathedral’s position was defended in a new charter of its own. Remarkably, the recalcitrant cities of Chester and Winchester were led by royalist sympathizers in the civil wars.<sup>33</sup>

31 MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (June 18, 1637), 100r–101r, 52v–54r; (June 2, 1637) 51v, WCL. See Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Community c. 1500–1640* (Oxford, 1991), 103, 107–109, about the significance of mayoral maces, vesture, and regalia.

32 MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645 (June 18, 1637), 52v, 100r–101r, WCL.

33 Burne, *Chester Cathedral*, 114–115; MS Chapter Book, 1622–1645, 51v, 52r (May 1637), WCL; Goodman (ed.), *Dean Young’s Diary*; W. R. W. Stephens and F. T. Madge (eds.), *Documents Relating to the History of the Cathedral Church of Winchester in the Seventeenth Century. II. 1636–83* (Winchester, 1897), ix–xiii; A. M. Johnson, “Politics in Chester during the Civil War

After the civil wars and interregnum, cathedral chapters were restored, but their influence and resources were diminished to the extent that the Restoration presented a new context for the relationship between cathedrals and communities. If we accept Lehmberg's point of view, which is based on records created by the cathedral high clergy, a single Presbyterian protest, in which new surplices were shoved down an Oxford privy, was "virtually the only recorded expression of discontent" at the restoration of cathedrals. But given the strained cathedral-community relations of the early seventeenth century, from the laity's point of view, the Restoration, with its renewal of diocesan and capitular institutions and practices, was another test for civic autonomy in cathedral cities. Since the restored monarchy was committed to assuming control over civic government, it was all the more important for these cities to assert their authority over restored cathedral chapters. The city of Winchester gathered ceremoniously at the market High Cross, as well as in the cathedral, to celebrate the Restoration in 1660, but the mayor, not the cathedral dean, issued the proclamations in both places.<sup>34</sup>

After the Restoration, assertions of civic identity and autonomy once again took on performance elements, blurring the distinctions between the sacred and the secular that cathedral chapters had previously tried to impose. Early seventeenth-century "watches" ordered by the Chester corporation had patrolled the city at festivals to repel the desperate strangers, opportunistic miscreants, and infected persons who were drawn to cathedral cities at such times. After the Restoration, however, the corporation revived the Christmas Watch as a grand civic procession in which the dean and chapter joined guild representatives as constituent members of the city. On this occasion, the recorder recited the history of Chester, stressing the antiquity of its foundation by the legendary giant Lleon, who was represented in the procession and whose authority was described as antedating that of the English monarchy and the Anglican church. At the same time,

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and the Interregnum 1640–62," in Clark and Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns*, 204; Rosen, "Economic and Social Aspects of the History of Winchester 1520–1670," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (University of Oxford, 1975), esp. 237–244; *idem*, "Winchester in Transition," esp. 162–170.

34 Estabrook, "In the Mist of Ceremony," 133–161; Lehmberg, *Cathedrals under Siege*. The Oxford privy incident is described on 57–58. Hutton, *Restoration*, 158–161; Harris, *Politics under the Later Stuarts*, 39–41, 152–153; B. C. Turner, "'The Return of the Church': Cathedral and Close, 1660–1662," *Winchester Cathedral Record*, XXIX (1960), 17.

however, the corporation implied that the newly revived Christmas Watch and Midsummer's show had religious, as well as civic, meaning by explaining their suspension in 1678 and 1679 as an attempt to mollify the "apparent feares possessing the minds of his Majesties good Subjects proceeding from the horrible popish plots and contrivances" of those years. In 1684, the mayor of Wells authorized a lavish parade, complete with "trumpets . . . ringers, morris dancers . . . wine and beer, to display the city's new charter. It took place on Epiphany, a holiday that the townspeople traditionally celebrated with revelry but the cathedral observed strictly, along with Christmas and Ascension, in solemnity and white vestiture.<sup>35</sup>

Civic ceremony in Wells underwent changes beginning in the interregnum, when the community expanded its claims on ritual forms, times, and spaces left uncontested by the cathedral. Traditional fairs celebrated by the city of Wells had always taken place in Rogationtide (fifth Sunday after Easter) and Trinity (one of the quarter days), conforming to times allowed, but not reserved, for the observance of secular functions after the Reformation. In the interregnum and thereafter, the city strode outside the guidelines of the traditional calendar to celebrate (and profit from) the autumnal fairs of St. Calixtus and St. Andrew, no doubt savoring, in the latter case, the usurpation of Wells cathedral's own patronal feast day. In 1649, the corporation's church of St. Cuthbert rang seventy knells (exacting £12 3s. 4d. in fees), defiantly disregarding the banning of knells and "superstitious bellringing" within parishes as decreed by Bishop Mawe of Bath and Wells in 1629. By 1663, the city of Wells had retained a full-time bellringer, whose successors in office would wear special civic vestments trimmed with a silver bell. In 1674, after the centenary of a Wells charter had been successfully contested by the Elizabethan bishop, the corporation's parish church of St. Cuthbert's rang bells on ninety-four nonecclesiastical occasions, including Guy Fawkes day, Oak Apple day, private requests for memorial knells, and the arrival of the assize judges in the city.<sup>36</sup>

35 AB/2 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1624–1684, fos. 189r–191v, CCA. For the performance elements of the Chester Christmas Watch, see C. Hole, *Traditions and Customs of Cheshire* (London, 1937), 118. DD/SAS/SE.28, "The General Account of Mr. Broadbeard, Receiver of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of Wells in the Year 1684," SRO.

36 Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989), 10–11, 23–25; Wells Convocation Books: Receiver's Book,

After the interregnum, cathedral cities once again appropriated ecclesiastical ritual for the expression of civic identity and authority. The mayors of Chester revived St. Oswald's parish perambulation as a civic procession over which they presided. By 1695, the dean of the cathedral was included in this processional tracing of parish boundaries but only in the retinue. The cathedral choir, who had performed at St. Oswald's rogationtide observances in the early seventeenth century, did not have a place in these events. The expansion of the corporation's performance repertoire into music included a company of "city waytes" who had been granted their livery gowns and a fixed place in mayors' processions in time for Christmas 1666.<sup>37</sup>

In the spring of 1684, the mayor of Wells, rather than a member of the clergy, led a celebratory perambulation at Rogation; ecclesiastical authorities had formerly presided over it. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, civic leaders presided over the riding of bounds in autumn. After the city of Wells received its charter of 1684, the mayor, in place of the cathedral, began handing out alms at Michaelmas. The desired effect was dampened when the mayor's bonfire spread to a private residence. In all the excitement, the mayor neglected to order the reading and posting of a royal declaration at St. Cuthbert's, an infraction for which an apparitor of the bishop fined the parish 6d.<sup>38</sup>

When the bishop of Wells crossed town for his formal visitation of St. Cuthbert's in 1674, the mayor and the corporation did not bother to attend him ceremoniously. They left this task to the parish sidesmen, who entertained his right reverend lordship with

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1652–1681 (October 14 and November 30 throughout), Wells City Record Office (hereinafter WCRO). The accounts refer specifically to the fairs of St. Calixtus and St. Andrew, not to be confused with another celebration on November 30, the feast of St. Cuthbert Mayne, an Elizabethan Catholic martyr (who is not the Saxon St. Cuthbert for whom the parish in Wells was named). St. Andrew's Day was widely chosen as a fair day by other cities and towns. See Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 16. D/P/W St C/4/1/1 St. Cuthbert's, Wells, Churchwardens Accounts (1649–1677); D/P/Fiv/23/5(i) "Articles to be Enquired of at the Annual Visitation of Bishop Leonard Mawe" (1629), SRO; Wells Convocation Books, 1687–1709 (December 1706), WCRO.

37 P29/7/3 Chester St. Oswald Churchwardens' Accounts and Vestry Minutes, 1671–1704, 220, CRO; AB/2 City of Chester Assembly Book, 1624–1684, fo. 157, CCA.

38 DD/SAS/SE.28 Wells Corporation Records (May 14, 1685), SRO; Palliser, "Civic Mentality and the Environment in Tudor York," in Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town*, 212–213; Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen," 57–85; D/P/W/ St C/4/1/2 St. Cuthbert's, Wells, Churchwardens' Accounts, 1677–1727, SRO.

4s. of beer at the time of the churchwarden's presentments. The parish spent £2 12s. 8d. on a dinner for the bishop's visitation and £1 15s. for a dinner with the dean, but, once again, the high clergy found themselves mingling with the parish sidesmen on these occasions. In 1684, the civic leaders, who had been required to make their way to the cathedral in former times, sat comfortably in their parish church, where the bishop had been brought to consecrate a silver plate donated to St. Cuthbert's by an alderman's mother. Indeed, some of the bishop's own ceremonial jewels were kept within St. Cuthbert's church by this time. That same year, the mayor ordered St. Cuthbert's to spare no expense in "ringing whom [home] the Charter," for which the ringers were paid three times what they had received for ringing in the bishop ten years earlier. Civic celebration in cathedral cities after the Restoration did not so much express former resentment toward the high clergy as it played out the relegation of cathedral space and high clergy to a lesser status in the political culture of the community.<sup>39</sup>

The subjugation of civic ritual by agents of royal and ecclesiastical authority in the early seventeenth century was hardly unprecedented, but it is important to recognize, as contemporaries did, that the performance of public ritual was in itself the exercise of power. The use of contested space dramatically exposed the unsettled boundary between the sacred and the secular in the struggle between local autonomy and central authority. In 1538, Winchester's mayor and aldermen had assisted royal commissioners in the official demolition of the cathedral's shrine of St. Swithun and part of the high altar as well. A century later, however, Winchester cathedral and the Crown were allied in undermining civic autonomy. The lacing of civic ceremony with sacred imagery and ritual had been used by corporations before the Reformation to assert the sanctity of the local community as a self-sufficient, organic microcosm. The Henrician assault on Corpus Christi processions of mayors, guilds, and attending clergy may have had less to do with doctrinal concerns about the celebration of a pre-Reformed ver-

39 D/P/W St C/4/1/1 St Cuthbert's, Wells, Churchwarden's Accounts, 1649–1677 (July and August 1674), 1677–1727 (February 10, 1683/4, and the inventory of parish goods taken by William Paris and Richard Collins for the year 1674), SRO. Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 21 v. XIII (London, 1862–1932), XIII, pt. 2, nos. 401 and 442.

sion of the Eucharistic liturgy than with the Crown's objections to powerfully dramatic expressions of civic authority in the localities. In the early seventeenth century, civic attempts to establish local authority over the performance of ritual in all its forms (including religious ones), its spaces (including ecclesiastical ones), and its audiences (including royal ones) had been limited to the extent that civic authorities could distance performances and venues from the cathedral's sphere of influence over the sacred. After the Restoration, a shift in the distribution of power from cathedrals to the cities in which they stood was readily apparent in the form and content of civic ritual; the corporate sphere of influence in cathedral cities began to extend over both the cathedrals and their spaces.<sup>40</sup>

40 Miri Rubin, "The Living Feast: Sermons, Fraternities, Processions and Drama," in *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), 213–287; Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen"; David H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450–1700* (California, 1991), 131–146; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 10–11, 23–25.