

Introduction

Nowe at the last the holy Ghost bringeth in Iesus Christ vpon the
Theatre of the world, as it were to play his part in this tragedie.

(Arthur Dent, *The Ruine of Rome*, 1603)

This book examines the political uses of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language in seventeenth-century English drama. This rhetoric is part of a Europe-wide Reformed polemical culture that stresses the opposition between the Roman Catholic and Protestant religions. It allows individuals to read spiritual and temporal matters and to participate in disputation. Yet opposition does not imply inflexibility. By the beginning of the seventeenth century in England this is a commonplace and supple language, one that is well embedded in Protestant interpretative culture.¹ After the accession of James to the English throne in 1603 and the Union of the Crowns, Church and state face a number of challenges, some inherited, some new.² The Roman Catholic Church and its theology remains an identifiable common enemy for English Protestantism. However, the attitude of James and his government towards Rome is capable of multiple interpretations. Opposition and accommodation towards Rome strive for precedence in Jacobean England, a political legacy that the later Stuarts never quite manage to contain. This book traces that

¹ By 'Protestant interpretative culture' I mean the exegetical, theological, and polemical modes of analysis and argument commonly used by Protestant writers and that are described in more detail in this chapter and the next.

² On the Union, see Bruce R. Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland, 1603–1608* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986), and *Scots and Britons: Political Thought and the Union of 1603*, ed. Roger Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603–1714* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 65–88, and *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). I use the term 'state' to refer to what Michael Braddick calls a 'coordinated and territorially bounded network of agents exercising political power' (p. 6) – *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

legacy through the varied dramatic uses of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language during the seventeenth century. I argue that this language is not solely the property of Puritans or extremists, is not simply an expression of religious bigotry, and is not just a rhetoric used at moments of political crisis such as the Gunpowder Plot, the Great Fire of London, or the Popish Plot. Rather, it is an expression of ‘true’ religion that is made throughout the century by moderates and militants alike, by those somewhere in between, and even by those sympathetic to Rome.³ It provides a cohesion and order that, for many, is both rational and affectively satisfying. An adaptable and multifarious language, it offers us a mirror onto broader cultural preoccupations. As the epigraph to this chapter intimates, it is also an inherently theatrical discourse. In the aftermath of the ‘turn to religion’ in early modern studies, fine work has been done on religion and the literary sphere.⁴ This book turns our attention to the connections between theatre, theology, and polemic, examining how seventeenth-century playwrights exploit these connections for diverse political ends.⁵

I

I begin with two ideas that are central to Protestant interpretative culture. The first is the polemical Reformist argument that the Roman Catholic Church is religiously corrupt and politically dangerous. The second is the more general religious belief that the world will come to an end as promised in the prophetic and apocalyptic books of the Bible, particularly

³ Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 35–36. My book is indebted throughout to Milton’s study. The terms ‘bigot’ and ‘bigotry’ are first used in 1598 and 1616, respectively – *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴ See Debora Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994); Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002); Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Beatrice Groves, *Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare, 1592–1604* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalms Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and *The Bible and Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michelle Osherow, *Biblical Women’s Voices in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); and Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁵ The etymology of the word ‘polemic’ in Greek relates to war and hostility and the OED records the first usage as 1614 – *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. For related work in this area, see Jesse M. Lander, *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Antoinina Bevan Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions: Polemical Protestant Dialogues in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and *Polemic: Language as Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Discourse*, ed. Almut Suerbaum, George Southcombe, and Benjamin Thompson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

in Revelation.⁶ Apocalyptic and anti-Catholic ideas do not have to go together. Yet during this period they are often closely linked. Between 1522 when Martin Luther's New Testament is first published and 1700, nearly 1000 editions of and commentaries on Revelation are published in England alone.⁷ Most of these commentaries advance an anti-Catholic interpretation of Scripture. They argue that the Book of Revelation describes the emergence and eventual destruction of the Roman Catholic Church in temporal history. This is an event that prefigures the apotheosis of spiritual history: the second coming, last judgement, and end of the world. Revelation is a highly allusive text and has been interpreted in multiple ways in the West. As Christopher Toenjes notes: 'Due to its rich imagery and symbolism, it catered to a thirst for biblical verifications of idiosyncratic interpretations of the past, present, and future.'⁸ In the early modern period Revelation is commonly understood as an allegory of spiritual and temporal history. It also prophesies the end of history itself. Early modern interpretative culture is steeped in imagery drawn from the book: the seven seals and vials (5:1, 15:7), the four horsemen (6:1–8), the Whore of Babylon (17:1–8), the beasts from the sea and earth (13:1–18), Gog and Magog (20:8), and the New Jerusalem (21:1–2). Revelation lends itself to the expression of rhetorical enargia, visual and verbal. Albrecht Dürer's famous woodcut series depicting scenes from Revelation is, as we see from the front cover to this book, irreducibly dramatic, and the visual imagery inspired by Revelation is striking and symbolically rich. Some feared the end; others fervently anticipated it. While some may have been sceptical of the possibility altogether, the belief that the end would come is commonplace.⁹ Clearly not everyone agreed with a Protestant interpretation of the apocalypse, least of all Roman Catholics. They generally see the antichrist as a figure still to emerge, so rejecting the Protestant association of that figure with the institution of the papacy.¹⁰ There is also

⁶ Although I understand 'apocalyptic' as a theological term and 'anti-Catholic' as a polemical term, there is no clear distinction between theology and polemic in the seventeenth century.

⁷ Based on the calculation in Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4, and the bibliography in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁸ Christopher Toenjes, *Islam, the Turks and the Making of the English Reformation: The History of the Ottoman Empire in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), p. 104.

⁹ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 36–37.

¹⁰ See Andrew Crome, *The Restoration of the Jews: Early Modern Hermeneutics, Eschatology, and National Identity in the Work of Thomas Brightman* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), pp. 60–61. See also Bernard McGinn, "'Wrestling with the Millennium': Early Modern Catholic Exegesis of

a fair degree of disparity amongst seventeenth-century Protestant commentators as to how the Book of Revelation should be read, as well as a variety of attitudes to the Roman Catholic Church, ranging from moderate accommodation to militant opposition.¹¹ But whatever approach is taken, the recurrence of anti-Catholicism and apocalypticism in early modern English Protestantism is remarkable.¹²

By 'anti-Catholicism', I mean the polemical argument that the Roman Catholic Church is a doctrinally false and dangerous anti-Church. From John Bale to Christopher Marlowe to John Webster to Nathaniel Lee, playwrights explore this idea in numerous ways. Alison Shell has shown how Italianate settings; tropes of corruption; dazzling objects, ornaments, and idols; hypocrisy; devilry; wolfishness; and damnation are the stock in trade of anti-Catholic imagery on stage.¹³ Roman Catholicism is seen as a kind of drama: alluring but deeply dangerous. These images have political implications. They underlie the commonplace claim that the Roman Catholic Church uses its performative spiritual authority to usurp temporal power and persecute the 'true' Reformed Church. These ideas are regularly connected. As William Perkins writes in 1601: 'by the Whore of Babylon is meant the present Church of Rome: & this whore is said to be drunk with the blood of the Saints . . . they of the Romane Church haue long thirsted for the bloode of prince and people in this land'.¹⁴ Even for a moderate Puritan like Perkins who is interested in conciliation between the Churches, Roman Catholicism is a religious and political threat.¹⁵ To oppose Rome is one's godly duty. In Anthony Milton's words: 'Conflict with Rome was seen as being of the essence of Protestantism.'¹⁶ By 'apocalypticism', I mean the prophetic and providential idea that the final

Apocalypse 20', in *Imagining the End: Visions of the Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Magnus Thorkell Bernhardsson (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 148–167.

¹¹ See Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹² A comparative study of Roman Catholic and Protestant apocalypticism is beyond the scope of this book. Although much less studied, Roman Catholic writers in England such as William Allen, Robert Southwell, Robert Parsons, Richard Crashaw, and those on the continent such as Thomas Harding and Robert Bellarmine, often use Revelation and apocalyptic tropes to counter Protestant polemical attacks. In his *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defence, of English Catholiques . . .* (Rouen: Fr Parson's Press, 1584), Allen defends Roman Catholics from charges of political sedition by criticising those Protestants who defy their Princes as examples of 'Antichristian pride' (p. 208).

¹³ Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 56–104.

¹⁴ William Perkins, *A Treatise of Gods Free Grace, and Mans Free Will* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1601), p. 14.

¹⁵ See William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike . . .* (London: I Legat, 1597).

¹⁶ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 37.

judgement of Christ and the end of the world as described in the Bible, particularly in the last book, will be imminently revealed.¹⁷ I also understand 'revelation' in its more grammatical and literary manifestations as an active uncovering or disclosing of truth (*OED*, def. 2), particularly the exposure in/as drama of 'false', worldly Roman Catholic practices that masquerade as spiritual truths.¹⁸ Of course, to say that a particular conflict feels like the end of the world can simply be a general lament in a period that was not short of terror. And to use the trope of whoredom may just be an expression of commonplace misogyny. Not every theatrical whore is the Whore of Babylon nor is every wicked character on stage an antichrist. This book argues instead for a more flexible, variform way of reading this religious language in drama, one that is sensitive to the possibility of dramatic allegory and analogy but that does not try to reduce plays to these modes of reading.

As I suggest, apocalyptic and anti-Catholic languages are commonly used in conjunction with other literary discourses on the seventeenth-century stage. In Chapter 2 I consider John Marston's ludic, sceptical use of these languages in *The Dutch Courtesan* and how they inform the broader philosophical and political concerns of his drama. As a number of plays, from the medieval Miracle pageants to *Doctor Faustus* to *The Dutch Courtesan*, show, the evocation of the end of the world does not preclude jokes and laughter, however sardonic.¹⁹ In a time where pain and fear are never far away, the idea of end of the world can also be a source of intense hope and joy. Revelation 21, which promises 'a new heauen, and a new earth' (21:1), contains the evocative lines: 'God shall wipe away all teares from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, neither crying, neither shall there be any more paine: for

¹⁷ See Arthur Dent, *The Ruine of Rome ...* (London: Simon Waterson, 1603), sig. AA3v. Millenarianism – the belief that Christ would return to reign for 1000 years as a prelude to the end of the world – is not particularly popular in Elizabethan and Jacobean England and is a phenomenon largely of the Civil Wars, a period when the public theatres are officially closed. See Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

¹⁸ For a classic account of the trope, see Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See too Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 28–52; and Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, pp. 23–55.

¹⁹ On more sceptical views, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 198–206, and Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 218–224. Two Shakespearean characters who combine scepticism, mockery, and apocalyptic or prophetic language are Edmund in *King Lear* and Lucio in *Measure for Measure*.

the first things are passed' (21:4). These words offer the promise of transcendence, that humanity's corrupt, suffering body might be cast off and a pure spiritual existence attained.²⁰ The apocalypse discloses a truth that fallen humans can only ever glimpse dimly: spiritual truth is revealed truth. Such ideas inform dramatic writing too. We see them explored in Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*, Philip Massinger's *Believe as You List*, and in a number of plays written before the outbreak of the Civil Wars.

Although Protestantism stresses a literal interpretation of Scripture, it also draws heavily on typological exegesis. This is an interpretative method that fuses theology and polemic, spiritual and temporal history, national and international politics.²¹ In typological exegesis the Old Testament providentially foreshadows the fulfilment promised in the New Testament. Old Testament events and figures are read in relation to the work, death, resurrection, and judgement of Christ. David is a 'type' of Christ, or the Song of Songs is an allegory of the mystical marriage of Christ and the Church as described in Revelation.²² Typological readings of Revelation stress its eschatological character: it is concerned with the 'last things': death, judgement, heaven, and hell. Other scriptural books are interpreted eschatologically in this period too, including Daniel, parts of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, the Song of Songs, Zachariah, Matthew 24, the Epistles of John (where the antichrist is discussed), the Epistles to the Thessalonians, Timothy and Peter's Epistles, and the apocryphal 2 Esdras.²³ There is nothing particularly new about this kind of exegesis: it is a feature of patristic commentary and is part of the

²⁰ This verse originates with Isaiah 25:8 and is common in *ars moriendi* books. See John Moore, *A Mappe of Mans Mortalitie* . . . (London: T.S. for George Edwards, 1617), pp. 260–261. It is also quoted during the Popish Plot at the end of a prophecy detailing the emergence of a king with powers of *renovatio* – *A Prophecy of England's Future Happiness* . . . (London: Thomas Dawks, 1680), single sheet.

²¹ On typology and biblical exegesis, see Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1995). See also Kevin Killeen, 'Chastising with Scorpions: Reading the Old Testament in Early Modern England', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 73, 3, 2010, pp. 491–506; *Early Modern Drama and the Bible: Contexts and Readings, 1570–1625*, ed. Adrian Streete (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1–26; and Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, pp. 90–94.

²² See Richard K. Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp. 30–35, and Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs*, pp. 13–15.

²³ See Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 5–6, and Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 5–6. A number of these biblical books are also read in an anti-Catholic light.

exegetical method favoured by medieval commentators.²⁴ After the Reformation, though, the religious implications of this way of reading change. The narrative of the temporal rise of the Roman Catholic Church, its perceived corruption, and its eventual displacement by the ‘true’ Protestant Church draws on typological arguments that anticipate this victory in the Bible. As Kevin Killeen puts it, ‘typology worked as a mode of reading the present that was resolutely distinct from allegory, a practice of interpretation liable to the arbitrary and, for English Protestants, deeply tainted with Roman Catholic obfuscation of meaning . . . Typology purported to discover the conjoined nature of historically disparate events or figures.’²⁵ As we will see in the next chapter, the distinction between allegory and typology is perhaps not as absolute as Killeen suggests. Nevertheless, virtually all early modern Protestant commentaries on the book of Revelation offer a typological interpretation. It is also a commonplace in Protestant historiography, as we see in John Foxe’s influential apocalyptic martyrology *Acts and Monuments*.²⁶ The Protestant Church views itself as the true ‘Catholic’ Church. Its emergence during the Reformation is a *restoration* of apostolic purity, not the establishment of a ‘new’ Church as its Roman Catholic opponents claim.²⁷ The anti-papal roots of Protestantism are nourished by typological reading. They support a story based on the emergence, corruption, oppression, resistance, and eventual triumph of the ‘true’ Church in historical and spiritual time. Ecclesiastical and national histories are read in tandem as commentators interpret politics through a typological lens. The influence of this mode of reading

²⁴ The medieval fourfold method of biblical interpretation is literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. The relationship between allegorical and typological exegesis has been much debated by biblical scholars. The former is traditionally seen as more spiritual and symbolic, and the latter as more historical and literal, hence the Reformers’ preference for typology. See Erich Auerbach, ‘Figura’, in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 11–76, and Toenjes, *Islam, the Turks*, pp. 107–108. However, recent work has pointed to the interrelations between the allegorical and typological in Reformed theology. See John S. Pendergast, *Religion, Allegory and Literacy in Early Modern England 1560–1640: The Control of the Word* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), esp. pp. 37–66.

²⁵ Kevin Killeen, *The Political Bible in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 35.

²⁶ Toenjes, *Islam, the Turks*, pp. 100–125. Toenjes notes four general approaches to the exegesis of Revelation: preterite (reading the book mainly in its early Christian context), historicist (investing contemporary history with apocalyptic significance), futurism (reading Revelation beyond the past and present), and idealism (Revelation as ahistorical battle between good and evil).

²⁷ See Alexandra Walsham, ‘History, Memory, and the English Reformation’, *The Historical Journal*, 55, 4, 2012, pp. 899–938 – Walsham notes the link between Reformed historiography and ‘apocalyptic expectation’ (p. 905). See also S.J. Barnett, ‘“Where Was Your Church Before Luther?” Claims for the Antiquity of Protestantism Examined’, *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 68, 1, 1999, pp. 14–41.

can be seen in many genres, including chronicles, antiquarian writing, sermons, poetry, and plays.²⁸

In Protestant interpretative culture, the eventual defeat of the Roman Catholic Church is taken as a necessary temporal prelude to the end of the world.²⁹ Following the defeat of the antichrist, the true Church will be revealed, Christ will return to judge all, the damned will be cast into a lake of fire, and the New Jerusalem of the elect will be established.³⁰ In the word of Augustine Marlorat: ‘whomsoever God hath chosen before the foundation of the worlde, hee cannot perish . . . & that whomsoever he hath reiected he cannot be saued although he do all the workes of sayntes’.³¹ Even if one is disinclined to Marlorat’s Calvinistic gloss on election and reprobation, medieval and early modern Christians of whatever confessional identity are taught that the end of world brings judgement, division, and the triumph of the elect. This view can be found at all levels of Protestant culture, from highly learned, scholarly tracts and commentaries to popular pamphlets and ballads.³² Again, there are those who question aspects of these theories and they are subject to the same ebbs and flows in intellectual assent that all popular explanatory systems are. As we will see in Chapter 4, some Armininans during the reign of Charles I give short shrift to the Calvinistic interpretation. The cleric Richard Montagu provoked controversy by challenging Calvinist orthodoxy on the papal antichrist. During the late 1620s and ’30s more generally, philosophical scepticism drives the development of a more rational theology wary of dogmatic pronouncements. A number of thinkers associated with the Great Tew Circle prefer a more minimal conception of

²⁸ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 31–59, 128–228; Killeen, *The Political Bible*, pp. 22–51. See too David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁹ See Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation: From John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Abingdon: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978); Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*; Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon; The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. Patrides and Wittreich; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Pimlico: London, 2004); and Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen*.

³⁰ The *OED* cites 1340 as the year of first use of the word ‘antichrist’ in English (in a text by the mystic Richard Rolle) – *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

³¹ Augustine Marlorat, *A Catholike and Ecclesiasticall Exposition of the Holy Gospell after S. Iohn*, trans. Thomas Timme (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575), p. 501.

³² For examples of popular anti-Catholic tracts, see William Kethe, *A Ballet Declaring the Fal of the Whore of Babylone* (London: W. Hill, c. 1548), and Thomas Naogeorgus, *The Popish Kingdome . . .* (London: Henrie Denham for Richard Watkins, 1570) – the latter poem was translated ‘for the benefit of the common, and simpler sorte’ (p. 2). See too Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*.

Christian ethics.³³ Here, the discourse of apocalypse and the papal antichrist, although still discernible, is kept at arm's length. William Chillingworth's 1638 book *The Religion of Protestants* uses the language of the papal antichrist rather carefully.³⁴ Indeed, Chillingworth's attempts to find moderate common ground between sectarian religious divisions led to him being accused of Socinianism.³⁵ The fact that apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language is so pervasively rejoined during the run-up to the Civil Wars is in part a reaction against this sceptical, minimalist turn in Caroline theological ethics.³⁶

Some modern revisionist historians are also wary of this language. Kevin Sharpe, a scholar usually so sensitive to the importance of language and ideology, has written: 'Like the European witch craze, English hysteria about popery undoubtedly signals a larger psychological phenomenon: a need to explain ills that could apparently be ascribed to no natural causes.'³⁷ This choice of terms is revealing. Anti-popery is hysterical and irrational, a collective psychological flaw in the populace. It would be foolish to deny that some expressions of anti-popery can be understood in this way. It is not a particularly pleasant phenomenon, and it can be an outlet for bigotry and violence. But to only view anti-popery in this light is reductive. It risks simplifying one of this culture's richest if most problematic languages. As Christopher Hill, Katherine Firth, Peter Lake, Linda Colley, Anthony Milton, and others have shown, it is a language that made good 'rational' sense to many.³⁸ The revisionist account is on much stronger ground when it notes that anti-papal language informs the

³³ See Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 272–278.

³⁴ He refers to debates in English Protestantism about the papal antichrist and questions some of the Church traditions associated with the antichrist – see William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants . . .* (Oxford: Leonard Lichfield, 1638), §v, p. 154.

³⁵ Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 63–87.

³⁶ Apocalypticism and anti-Catholicism are central, although in very different ways, for two of the greatest political thinkers of the period, John Milton and Thomas Hobbes. See David Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 175–201; *Milton and the Ends of Time*, ed. Juliet Cummings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and J.G.A. Pocock, 'Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes', in *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 143–201.

³⁷ Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 287.

³⁸ See Peter Lake's classic essay 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London and New York, 1989), pp. 72–106, as well as Hill, *Antichrist*; Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological*

Whiggish historiography that first emerges in the aftermath of 1688.³⁹ The relationship between anti-popery, Protestant triumphalism, and national identity is a complicated one. We can see why the hegemonic aspects of this narrative have been criticised by revisionists. Nevertheless, while the charge of Whiggery may add piquancy to this historical critique, it is less useful for explaining the political relationship between anti-popery and Protestantism during the seventeenth century.

In the most well-known eighteenth- and nineteenth-century iterations of Whiggish historiography, the triumph of the British nation-state is underpinned by an account of spiritual history that is often deeply anti-Catholic. Such language reflects a common prejudice that by this stage needed little justification.⁴⁰ The problem with the revisionist critique is that it is always in danger of collapsing early modern and modern anti-Catholicism into each other. Early modern anti-Catholicism may be related to its various modern manifestations. But it is not the same thing. During the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, what can look like polemical triumphalism is often deployed to shore up a deeply embattled, unstable sense of nationhood. This is especially the case when considering England's inconsistent, often precarious involvement in European affairs. In a commentary on Revelation published in 1573, William Fulke says: 'in our age, what tumults he [Antichrist] hath raised vp in France, in Germanie, in Spaine, and in Flanders, who is there throw out all Europe which knoweth not? and in England, what hath he practised and wroughte euen this present yeare that we write these thinges'.⁴¹ Important events,

Thought in English Protestantism to 1660 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975); Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*; Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*; Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*; Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (London and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp. 11–54; Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*; Bernard McGinn, *Anti-Christ: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 vols, ed. John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn, and Stephen J. Stein (London and New York: Continuum, 1997–2000); Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*; and Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

³⁹ See Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England*, pp. 4–20.

⁴⁰ On the Victorian rewriting of seventeenth-century foreign policy, see Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650–1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1–4. See too Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England, c. 1714–80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 16–19.

⁴¹ William Fulke, *Praelections upon the Sacred and Holy Reuelations of S. John*, trans. George Gifford (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), sig. H3v. The 'tumults' mentioned here refer to the European conflict over the Low Countries, the French Wars of religion, and the threat of Mary Queen of Scots, who was discussed repeatedly in the 1572 parliament. On the last point, see J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth and Her Parliaments 1559–1581* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958), pp. 241–312.

notably the Reformation, the machinations of Rome, and any number of national and international conflicts, are read as signs of the end times. More locally they also allow writers to comment on England's often volatile involvement in international politics. In this sense, anti-Catholic and apocalyptic interpretations legitimate political interventions that might not otherwise be possible.⁴² This is a period when people are attuned to political events as harbingers of broader spiritual change and can read those signs in multiple ways.

So, apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language is multifaceted: it is capable of expressing reason and emotion, objectivity and prejudice, nuance and belligerence, fact and fantasy, affirmation and doubt, as well as the grey areas between these binary poles. Although I have learned much from the pioneering work of Frances Dolan and Arthur Marotti in this field, both tend to reinforce the view that anti-Catholicism in particular is a 'crisis' language associated with moments of political upheaval.⁴³ By contrast this book argues that this language is used in times of stability and volatility alike, reflecting the unsettled political nature of the state during the seventeenth century. There is no single, monolithic Protestant view of the Roman Catholic Church during this period because there is no political consensus on the nature of the relationship between the two religions. Indeed, as we will see, 'several modes of anti-Catholic discourse developed which did not rely on the simple representation of popery as a satanic inversion of normative Protestant values'.⁴⁴ During this century 'multiple modes of anti-Catholic polemic' exist and we need to understand them on their own terms.⁴⁵

I want to say a word here about the affective power of early modern religious language. The Bible is *verbum Dei* and is venerated as a sacred book. Readers and writers, including dramatists, draw on a rich exegetical culture that includes marginal notes in Bibles, sermons, and commentaries

⁴² This typological mode of thinking is used to read astrological or meteorological occurrences, and even the phenomena of everyday life. See Thomas, *Religion and the Decline*, and Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*.

⁴³ Although both critics do discuss Roman Catholicism and toleration, the association of anti-Catholicism and crisis persists in both studies. See Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 4–5, 23, 31, 38, and Arthur Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 31, 48, 92, 132.

⁴⁴ Anthony Milton, 'A Qualified Intolerance: The Limits and Ambiguities of Early Stuart Anti-Catholicism', in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 88.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See Lake, 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', pp. 72–106.

on biblical books.⁴⁶ To read Scripture is to open oneself up to the possibility of being altered, physically and spiritually, by its words.⁴⁷ It is widely agreed that religious language can alter affect.⁴⁸ As William Tyndale says of the New Testament: 'Evangelion (or what we call the gospel) is a Greek word, and signifies good, glad, and joyful tidings, that make a man's heart glad, and make him sing, dance, and leap for joy.'⁴⁹ Tyndale means this literally. The encounter with Scripture is transformative. It alters the heart, the seat of human passions, producing a spiritual transformation in the reader.⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Erasmus writes of his desire that Christ's gospel 'shuld be so swetely taught that they might be enflamed to love him And that after they shuld procede by a litle and a litle crepinge by the grovnde vntyll that by insensible incrementes they springe vp to be stronge in Christ'.⁵¹ Scripture initiates a change that is physically affective and spiritually affirmative. Polemical writing is similarly directed towards the passions. Here is William Fulke's account of Roman Catholicism as an affective defect:

the corruptions of Antichrist were so depely roted in the hartes of men, that euen vnto this daye, although the LORD in great mercye by placinge a noble and vertuose Prince to raigne ouer vs, whiche hathe set vp and maintayned his holy woorde, hathe outwardlye banished them, they remayne still in the mindes of the people: but whereto maye this be imputed, that in all places almost of this Realme, the greater parte beare more fauour to the monstruose proceedinges of the man of sinne, then to the pure Gospell of Iesus Christ but that they are kepte in such ignoraunce and blindnesse, that they haue not tasted of the power of Gods word.⁵²

Opposition to the Roman Catholic Church is a 'daungerous fighte' to reorder those 'afflicted' by its false ministrations, to convert them back to

⁴⁶ See my 'Introduction' to *Early Modern Drama and the Bible*, pp. 1–26. On biblical interpretation in everyday life, see Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, pp. 9–43.

⁴⁷ In part, this explains the centrality of preaching in the Reformed tradition. See Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ See Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 17–98.

⁴⁹ William Tyndale, *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, in *Writings of the Rev. William Tindal* (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.), p. 110.

⁵⁰ See Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 12–13.

⁵¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *An Exhortation to the Diligent Studye of Scripture . . .* (Antwerp: J. Hoochstraten, 1529), sigs. A4r–A5v.

⁵² Fulke, *Praelections*, *iiv.

righteousness, and to catechise those who waver. This polemical rhetoric tries to claim the passions of the ‘hartes of men’ for the reformed religion.⁵³

Playwrights, preachers, and anti-theatricalists alike often comment on the connection between language, performance, and the passions.⁵⁴ They inherit the Classical idea that the theatre is a place where communal discussion and disputation takes place within the *civitas*.⁵⁵ Of course audiences are not invariably susceptible to a play’s political and religious claims, nor will they respond to them predictably.⁵⁶ A good case in point is the tyrant Alexander Pheraerus, who Sir Philip Sidney describes in his *Defence of Poetry* (1595) weeping at performances of tragedies. Yet the tyrant makes sure that he leaves those performances that move him before they change his basic nature. Sidney’s statement on Pheraerus’ experience – ‘it wrought no further good in him’ – suggests that it is dangerous to put too much trust in theatre’s ability to move affect in the correct moral fashion.⁵⁷ Yet Sidney accepts that drama can stir audience affect in unpredictable ways.⁵⁸ Such an appeal can be read politically. As engaged members of the *civitatis*, dramatists can address the *res publica* through the theatrical manipulation of emotion. One good way of doing this is to harness the power of religious and polemical language. Early reformist plays and interludes by dramatists such as John Bale, Lewis and William Wager, and Nathaniel Woodes use affective language to proselytize Protestantism. By the seventeenth century such overtly religious drama is less common. Yet the affective force of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language remains a powerful tool in the dramatist’s rhetorical

⁵³ Ibid., *iir. On Roman Catholicism as theatrical playing, see Naogeorgus, *The Popish Kingdome*, pp. 11–14. On rhetoric and political culture, see Wayne A. Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men’s Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca and London, 1995).

⁵⁴ Of course, they do so for rather different reasons. See Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Beatrice Groves, “‘Nowewole I a newe game begynne’”: Staging Suffering in *King Lear*, the Mystery Plays and Hugo Grotius’s *Christus Patiens*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 20, 2007, pp. 136–150.

⁵⁵ On early modern theatre’s Classical influences, see John Orrell, ‘The Theatres’, in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 92–112. See too Lily B. Campbell, *Scenes and Machines on the English Stage During the Renaissance: A Classical Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), and John Parker, *The Aesthetics of the Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 15–24.

⁵⁶ See Ann Jennalie Cook, ‘Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention’, in *A New History of Early English Drama*, pp. 305–320.

⁵⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, ‘A Defence of Poetry’, in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 363.

⁵⁸ Following Aristotle, Sidney writes that tragedy stirs ‘the affects of admiration and commiseration, [and] teacheth the uncertainty of this world’ – Sidney, *A Defence*, p. 363.

arsenal. In the light of recent work on early modern emotions, we need to study how playwrights use this rhetoric to move the passions and address politics.⁵⁹

Consider here Barnabe Barnes' play *The Devil's Charter* (1607). Written in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot and performed before James at Court by the King's Men, this avowedly anti-Catholic drama draws on a wide range of imagery to depict the affective and political threat posed by Roman Catholicism and its adherents, the Borgias. Pope Alexander VI is represented as a necromancer, a murderer, and a sodomite who commits incest with his daughter. He is also a politically assertive figure, ruthless in maintaining his 'imperial state of Rome' (I.iv.196) through the machinations of his son Caesar. Barnes shows James and his Court a militant nightmare of a politically dominant papacy. The Pope also manipulates Scripture and religion for his own ends. Speaking in soliloquy about his pact with the Devil, he says he has 'banish[ed] out faith, hope and charity / Using the name of Christian as a stale / For arcane plots and intricate designs' (I.iv.11–13).⁶⁰ This cynical oraculum undermining God's words shows how Alexander uses reason of state – political expediency trumps religious propriety.⁶¹ During this period all Christians are expected to revere the Bible and not to invoke its words lightly. In Matthew 12 Christ warns against blasphemy, saying that 'euery idle worde that men shall speake, they shall giue account thereof at the day of iudgement' (12:36). Some may have recalled this warning when the devil returns to 'judge' Alexander at the end of the play.

The Pope is also represented as a monstrous, sexually ambiguous figure whose corruption emanates from his very person. One character notes that

⁵⁹ Scholars are starting to address religious affect and drama – see some of the essays in *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), and John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 1–42 and 128–143. See more generally Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Paster, *Humoring the Body; Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, ed. Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

⁶⁰ The reference is to 1 Corinthians 13:13.

⁶¹ See Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 31–64; Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 43–53; and Valentina Calderi, 'The End of the Anglo-Spanish Match in Global Context, 1617–1624', PhD thesis (University of Kent, 2015), pp. 43–84.

he is labelled as the 'Antichrist' who 'with the menstruous poison of his breath might choke the whole conclave' (I.iii.23, 32–33).⁶² The Gunpowder Plot is commonly depicted in contemporary polemics as an attempt to choke the political state. This shows the kind of affective language that Barnes is tapping into.⁶³ Moreover, the monstrous and the menstruous are closely connected in anti-Catholic writing.⁶⁴ Alexander's fluid gender and corporal identity is part of his threat. This is not only a figurative association. As generations of polemicists had argued, proximity to the Pope can be deadly. The same logic applies to sex. Alexander's daughter Lucretia dies by the 'burn and sting' (IV.iii.66) of poisoned cosmetics. And the handsome Manfredi brothers are killed by the aspicks applied to their breasts by the Pope, depicted in this scene as a homoerotic Cleopatra (complete with references to Shakespeare's play on the Egyptian queen).⁶⁵ The Devil repeatedly tells Alexander before his damnation that he is 'Polluted' (V.vi.95), his very being 'poison' (V.vi.195) to all who come within his orbit.

Those watching the play in 1607 must therefore have experienced an uneasy frisson. As Peter Lake explains in a seminal essay, anti-popery offers 'a way of dividing up the world between positive and negative characteristics, a symbolic means of labelling and expelling trends and tendencies which seemed to those doing the labelling, at least, to threaten the integrity of a Protestant England.'⁶⁶ Barnes is satirising the papacy along these lines: the audience's closeness to the culturally noxious Borgias makes for exciting, polemically spiced theatre. Indeed, the writing of polemic is a godly activity for Protestants and it is possible that Barnes would have understood his play in this way.⁶⁷ But in pointing out the dangers of the papacy,

⁶² Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil's Charter*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London: Nutt, 1904).

⁶³ See, for example, William Hubbard, *Great Britains Resurrection ...* (London: TC for Arthur Iohnson, 1606), sigs. B3v–B4v.

⁶⁴ References to menstrual cloths and impurity are found in Leviticus 15:19–30, Lamentations 1:17, and Ezekiel 18:6, 22:10, and 36:17. In act III, scene 1, of *The Alchemist*, Ben Jonson's Tribulation Wholesome uses the idea to attack Roman Catholicism. The image is commonly used in theology to discuss righteousness and in polemics to attack Roman Catholics – for a text that does both, see Thomas Beard, *A Retractive from the Romish Religion ...* (London: William Stansby, 1616), pp. 87–88. On monstrosity and anti-Catholicism, see Victoria Brownlee, "Imagining the Enemy": Protestant Readings of the Whore of Babylon in Early Modern England, c. 1580–1625', in *Biblical Women in Early Modern Literary Culture 1550–1700*, ed. Victoria Brownlee and Laura Gallagher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 213–233.

⁶⁵ The association of Roman Catholicism and sodomy is commonplace – see Thomas Williamson, *The Sword of the Spirit to Smite in Pieces That Antichristian Goliath* (London: Edward Griffin, 1613), p. 47.

⁶⁶ Lake, 'Anti-Popery', p. 74.

⁶⁷ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 37–38.

the play also exposes the audience to the same religious affections that are so fatal for the characters on stage. Anti-Catholic polemic has to tread a fine line between ridicule and horror, censure and exposure. In the theatre, polemical passions and representations must be convincing, even transmittable to the audience. So the boundaries between polemic and theatre are dangerously blurred throughout *The Devil's Charter*. As we will see, early modern playwrights explore, even exploit, the religious passions produced between these boundaries.

II

The book begins with the accession of James to the English throne in 1603. It ends with the 'Glorious' revolution of 1688. The first chapter starts with Classical and medieval texts and the conclusion extends the discussion into the latter half of the eighteenth century, examining the literary and cultural legacies of anti-Catholic and apocalyptic thinking. It thus offers a *longue durée* approach to the literary history of the period, considering important continuities and innovations in religious, political, and literary thought.⁶⁸ My methodology is rooted in historical contextualisation and close reading. This allows me to trace a related set of ideas that recur over the span of years covered in this book. Early modern drama is a dialogic form and that dialogue is both generic and historical.⁶⁹ It is also a dialogue that pays little heed to the retrospective designations that we conventionally use to parcel up this period. Such historiographical labels are, to be sure, often necessary. This is a rich and complicated period of literary history and my approach does not claim to answer all the methodological problems that are attendant on the historiography of the seventeenth century. Fernand Braudel's argument that the *longue durée* approach which he famously formulated 'is the only language binding history to the present, creating one indivisible whole' can sound unapologetically Whiggish, especially in

⁶⁸ See Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake, 'Revisionism and Its Legacies: The Work of Conrad Russell', in *Politics, Religion and Popularity: Early Stuart Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell*, ed. Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 14–15. See too Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 1–30. The idea originates in the work of Fernand Braudel – see his essay 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée', in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 25–54.

⁶⁹ On early modern drama as dialogical and dialectical, see Womersley, *Divinity and State*, pp. 10, 115–135.

the aftermath of revisionist and postrevisionist debates.⁷⁰ However, by emphasising continuity and innovation, this book follows an influential collection of essays that aims ‘to tell a dialectically coherent story of cumulative change that runs from the later sixteenth century through the eighteenth century’.⁷¹

The book also gives an international perspective on religious arguments that are often still seen in predominantly English/British terms. Here my work has been influenced by scholars such as Elizabeth Evenden-Kenyon, Barbara Fuchs, Eric Griffin, Jane Pettegree, Jonathan Scott, and Daniel Vitkus, who have encouraged us to take a more transnational view of this period.⁷² By emphasising the national, international, and global imbrications of early modern religious culture, this book traces through the drama shifting attitudes towards England’s engagement with its co-religionists and religious opponents abroad, particularly in relation to the concept of imperial monarchy. Here I am indebted to the work of Thomas James Dandeleet. His recent book has reconsidered the idea of the ‘Imperial Renaissance’, citing it as the ‘dominant master narrative’ in political culture during this period.⁷³ An imperial monarch is the sole ruler in matters temporal and spiritual within his or her realms.⁷⁴ The idea of imperial monarchy draws on ancient Roman models that are apocalyptically inflected during the medieval and early modern periods. Most major seventeenth-century European monarchies

⁷⁰ Braudel, *On History*, viii. On revisionist debates, see Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England*, pp. 3–37.

⁷¹ Lake and Pincus, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, p. 15. See too Paulina Kewes’ essay ‘History and Its Uses’ in her collection *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), esp. pp. 12–13, 22–26.

⁷² Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Eric Griffin, *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Jane Pettegree, *Foreign and Native on the English Stage, 1588–1611: Metaphor and National Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and the work by Evenden-Kenyon referred to at various points in this book.

⁷³ Thomas James Dandeleet, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3, 8. Dandeleet challenges the ‘republican narrative of the Renaissance’ (6) that has dominated political and, more recently, literary scholarship. I read these imperial and republican narratives together at places in my book, most notably in my use of reason of state.

⁷⁴ John Cramsie, ‘The Philosophy of Imperial Kingship and the Interpretation of James VI and I’, in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority and Government*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 43.

consider their crowns imperial, including the Stuarts.⁷⁵ As we saw above, Barnes' Pope Alexander also uses the term to describe his papal monarchy. Protestant polemicists often evoke the spectre of an imperial papacy dominating the spiritual and temporal realms. During the Oath of Allegiance crisis Roman Catholic polemicists such as Robert Bellarmine raise the spectre of Roman Catholic imperial authority in matters temporal and spiritual in order to attack the political authority of the English monarch. Away from the heat of polemical battle, the reality is more tempered. During this period the political domination of Spain and later France meant that the papacy tended to focus on its spiritual imperial power and temporal authority in Rome.⁷⁶ This fact was not unknown in England. Yet the idea of a popish plot retains a tenacious grip on the English political imagination.⁷⁷ It reveals powerful anxieties about the imperial reach of European Roman Catholicism and the weaknesses of English imperial ideology. The recurrence of this idea, and its discussion on stage, tells us much about the political constitution and stability of the English state.

Although they all nominally owe religious allegiance to the papacy, the political aims of Spain's 'three Philips' (II, III, and IV), Henri IV, and Louis XIV sometimes align with Rome and at other times diverge.⁷⁸ So when I discuss Roman Catholic temporal monarchy in this book, it is with the understanding that the political agendas of these various kings are not invariably in harmony with the aims of the papacy. The concept of reason of state is a useful way of understanding the tensions between religion and politics in this period. Richard Tuck and Maurizio Viroli have shown how, as intellectuals across Europe assimilated sceptical, Stoical, and republican thought, the idea that necessity and self-preservation may involve the political use or misuse of religion is central to the development of political theory.⁷⁹ This idea can also be used to understand Protestant conceptions of imperial monarchy and their frequent invocation of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic

⁷⁵ See Dandeleit, *The Renaissance of Empire*. ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁷ On fantasy and reality in anti-Catholicism, see Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, pp. 1–7.

⁷⁸ Henri IV converted from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism in 1593.

⁷⁹ See Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, and Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Reason of state is not the only way of approaching religious politics in this period; constitutional and ethical approaches are also important – see Paulina Kewes, 'Henry Saville's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 74, 4, 2011, p. 525. However, I focus on reason of state because of this book's interest in drama, politics, and polemical culture.

discourses from Elizabeth onwards. Fuchs has drawn our attention to ‘the continuities and interdependence between the formation of early modern nations and their imperial aspirations’ and the connections between ‘internal sovereignty and external expansion’ during this period.⁸⁰ The seventeenth-century Stuart monarchs all see their crowns as imperial.⁸¹ But they inherited a set of problem from the Tudors that had never been systematically resolved. How should Protestant imperial monarchical authority best assert itself internationally in relation to Roman Catholic power, spiritual and temporal? This is a century when, despite the establishment of colonies in the Americas, ‘the overseas British empire remained a nascent phenomenon’.⁸² Imperial power might be asserted through military intervention and economic activity abroad, but neither was likely to produce an Empire to rival Spain or, later, France. Unlike Philip II or Louis XIV, the Stuarts did not concertedly commit to the kind of prolonged military conflicts needed to establish an Empire.⁸³ Engagement with foreign powers necessarily involved a trade-off between political necessity and spiritual values. For instance, when it was revealed in 1678 that Charles II and many of his supporters were in the pay of the French, it seemed to many that Protestant religion was being deliberately undermined for political and economic self-interest. The Whig reaction against Charles draws heavily on apocalyptic and anti-Catholic languages because it enables simultaneously political attack and religious defence. Reason of state thus allows us to explore the trade offs between religion and imperial monarchy that characterize the century.

I focus on five plays by John Marston, Thomas Middleton, Philip Massinger, James Shirley, and John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee. These texts cover comic, tragic, and historical genres, allowing me to explore different political uses of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language on stage. I also look at a number of less well-known playwrights throughout. I do not study Shakespeare directly in this book for two reasons. First, his canonical status means that his interest in religion has been well documented in recent

⁸⁰ Barbara Fuchs, ‘Imperium Studies: Theorizing Early Modern Expansion’, in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern*, ed. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 73.

⁸¹ The term is first introduced in the Henrician ‘Act in Restraint of Appeals’ in 1533 – see G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 344–349. See also David Armitage, ‘The Elizabethan Idea of Empire’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14, 2004, pp. 271–272.

⁸² John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 50.

⁸³ Dandeleat, *The Renaissance of Empire*, p. 272.

years.⁸⁴ Second, by examining a number of fine plays that still do not receive the level of critical attention that they deserve, I want to show how widespread and recurrent these ideas are in early modern theatrical culture. Although I discuss explicitly anti-Catholic drama throughout, this book's main focus is on the more pervasive, relational uses of this language on stage.⁸⁵ Seventeenth-century drama bears out the contention of modern religious historians that this is not just a language of 'crisis'. Rather, it is inscribed into the rhetorical warp and weft of drama written across the period. Hence my interest in the dramatic allusion to Revelation, the reference to religious controversy, the reworking of polemical source texts, and how these relate to other literary narratives at work in a play. My chosen playwrights address a variety of public spheres, some localised and contingent, others more stable and continuous.⁸⁶ Some plays are written by Protestants and some by writers who flitted between this religion and Roman Catholicism. All use anti-Catholic and/or apocalyptic language for a wide variety of reasons. They might attack, satirise, or modify a particular political view; mediate between competing political ideologies; defend a particular political faction or religion from attack; comment on court politics; explore the utility of prophecy; interrogate monarchy, especially in a European context; or defend parliament. Some plays are identifiably anti-Catholic *and* apocalyptic in tone and politics; others focus more or less on one of these languages.

The chapters that follow examine in some detail dramatic language and imagery, much of which is extremely rich and allusive. Doubtless there will be disagreement on particular interpretations: some readers may prefer elusiveness to the readings offered here. There are also other authors and literary traditions that could have been examined. I regret that there is not space to consider masques and city pageants or to look at poetry in more comparative detail.

⁸⁴ For recent work on Shakespeare and religion, see Groves, *Texts and Traditions*; Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010); *Shakespeare and Religion: Early Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); David Scott Kastan, *Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). On Shakespeare and apocalypse, see Cynthia Marshall, *Last Things: Shakespearean Eschatology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); Peter Milward, *Shakespeare's Apocalypse* (Tokyo: Renaissance Institute, Sophia University, 2000); and R.M. Christofides, *Shakespeare and the Apocalypse: Visions of Doom from Early Modern Tragedy to Popular Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

⁸⁵ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, p. 132.

⁸⁶ Lake and Pincus identify the post-Reformation public sphere as a temporary space of debate – see Lake and Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', in *The Politics of the Public Sphere*, ed. Lake and Pincus, p. 6.

At the heart of this book is my conviction that early modern drama should be understood within the broader nexus of religious, political, and intellectual history.⁸⁷ I adopt the practice of historically informed close reading, paying detailed attention to the literariness of these dramatic texts, their analogical and intertextual complexity, especially their religious language and allusions to Scriptural texts.⁸⁸ Periodic legislation prohibiting the direct discussion of doctrine does at times curtail what can be said on stage.⁸⁹ Yet the Bible is the most politically significant book of the early modern period and even ‘a brief allusion to a biblical story could open up a fund of associations, ambiguities, and analogues’.⁹⁰ In a culture that stresses the typological interpretation of Scripture – the sense that all biblical texts point beyond themselves to larger narratives at work in spiritual history – it is important to pay close attention to the implications of biblical allusions in drama.⁹¹ They are often used by playwrights to direct audiences’ political antennae.⁹²

Chapter 1 offers a broad overview of how various Classical and medieval ideas inform early modern formulations of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language. Chapter 2 explores the Elizabethan framework for Anglo-Dutch relationships, attitudes towards the Spanish and Dutch at the start of James VI and I’s reign, and the politics of the Anglo-Spanish peace treaty of London signed in 1604. I argue that John Marston’s play *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605) draws subtly on the language of apocalypticism and anti-Catholicism, offering a sharp and funny critique of Jacobean domestic and foreign policy. This is not an anti-Catholic play; but it does use the language of anti-Catholicism in a politically sophisticated,

⁸⁷ See Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and Streete, ed., *Early Modern Drama and the Bible*

⁸⁸ On close textual analysis as a methodology for studying early modern plays, see Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), esp. pp. 1–19.

⁸⁹ On the legislation and censorship of drama, see Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Reading and Writing in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); and Cynthia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁹⁰ Groves, *Texts and Traditions*, p. 25. See also Richard Dutton’s comments on the ‘audience’s capacity for analogical reading’ of early modern drama’s political significance – *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), xvii.

⁹¹ See *Early Modern Drama and the Bible*, ed. Streete, esp. pp. 1–9, and Hamlin, *The Bible and Shakespeare*.

⁹² On the political uses of the Bible more generally, see Killeen, *The Political Bible*.

amusingly sceptical way. Chapter 3 argues that Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* (1610) offers a dramatic response to the assassination of the French monarch Henri IV and the controversy over the Oath of Allegiance. The play explores questions of loyalty and Roman Catholic subversion, using anti-Catholic language and an apocalyptic structure. I also consider the play's censorship and uncover a new set of historical narratives that Middleton draws on. These complicate existing critical readings and support the contention that this is a drama with an anti-Catholic subtext. Chapter 4 studies Philip Massinger's *Believe as You List* (1631) as a response to Caroline religious and political conflict. During the period in which Massinger is writing this play, apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language comes under attack from the avant-garde wing of the Church. By exploring the play's censorship and fascinating source texts, I argue that Massinger uses this language to mediate between competing religious and political factions.

Chapter 5 examines *The Cardinal* (1641) by James Shirley as a response to the collapse of Charles I's personal rule, the Irish rebellion, and the fall of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. It looks at how apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language is used by moderate royalists and Protestant radicals alike, allowing us to rethink literary 'opposition' in the 1640s. I argue that Shirley's play combines critique and loyalty through its use of this language. Finally, Chapter 6 concentrates on the political crisis surrounding the potential succession of Charles II's brother James, the Popish Plot, and the development of radical Whig political ideology during the 1670s and '80s. This period saw the most concentrated volume of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic drama written during the seventeenth century. I focus on a play, *The Duke of Guise* (1681), written by two men known for different political stances, John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee. A reworking of an earlier anti-Catholic play by Lee, the text tries and fails to mediate between competing 'party' factions. This is effectively a Tory play on a Whig topic, the French wars of religion. Questions of liberty and the political utility of the mob are linked to the language of anti-Catholicism throughout. The Conclusion offers a brief account of theatrical responses to William of Orange's invasion in 1688, as well as the dramatic survival of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic modes into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Focusing on the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, I look at how the threat posed by the Stuart pretenders was discussed on stage. I end by thinking about how certain Enlightenment ideas of liberty, toleration, and secularity are bound up with the legacy of apocalypticism and anti-Catholicism.

III

Apocalyptic and anti-Catholic languages in early modern drama cannot be studied in isolation. I read them in relation to other literary discourses at work in a play, with an understanding of national disputations and with an eye to the broader European contexts within which these arguments are conducted. This is a language with theological and polemical origins. At times it is 'oppositional' or 'intolerant'.⁹³ In this respect, it reflects the embattled nature of national identity during the seventeenth century and the perceived threat of Roman Catholicism at home and abroad. Yet it is also a flexible and sophisticated discourse capable of considerable political nuance and affective persuasion. It provides a common language for various stripes of religious opinion. This is why dramatists from diverse perspectives use this language throughout the seventeenth century. If this book encourages further debate about the variegated modes of religious and political address that are possible in the early modern theatre then it will have served a useful purpose.

⁹³ Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 37.